Using various approaches in career counselling for traditionally disadvantaged (and other) learners: some limitations of a new frontier

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Career counselling in a post-modern South Africa needs to shift from an objective approach to a more interpretative process. New and creative ways of assessment need to be developed. Counsellors need to be facilitators rather than experts who do all the thinking and decision making. They should allow their clients to speak, act, think and choose for themselves: in other words, clients must be led to accept responsibility for their own choices and development. In a post-modern, multicultural country this is not always as easy as it may appear to be. The purpose of this study was to compare the traditional and post-modern career-counselling approaches towards traditionally deprived learners and all other learners, focusing specifically on the practical implementation of both approaches. A case study is used as an example of efforts to justify the use of various approaches in the collection and utilisation of comprehensive data (both objective and subjective) for career counselling.

Introduction

The National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE) (Department of Education, 2001:3) highlights the "chronic mismatch between the output of higher education and the needs of a modernising economy", emphasising the "shortage of highly trained graduates in fields such as science, engineering, technology and commerce [which] has been detrimental to social and economic development". This report (2001:4) furthermore defines the agenda for the role of higher education in the reconstruction and development programme, and highlights the importance of "Human resource development: the mobilisation of human talent and potential through lifelong learning". Although the report focuses on the need for programmes intended to correct past imbalances in the fields of science, engineering and technology, it also stresses the need for career-oriented training in the field of education. However, it does not sufficiently deal with the growing crisis in teacher enrolment in South Africa. The fact, that one of the objectives of the NPHE is to shift the balance in enrolments in higher education (humanities: business and commerce: science, engineering and technology) from the current ratio of 49%:26%:25% to 40%:30%:30%, bears testimony to this statement.

The above adjustments should be read in conjunction with the following: Radical changes in people's lifestyle and career planning as a result of the phenomenal technological advancement and information explosion of the 21st century have brought career-counselling practice to a crossroads. New careers requiring new skills emerge and disappear equally quickly. Muller (1999:17) and Naicker (1994:33) claim that people change careers an average of five times during their career-lifetimes. Career counsellors play an increasingly important integrating role in the effective planning of an individual's career, as new skills are constantly required.

According to Stead and Watson (1998), career theories have generally been accepted in South Africa with much of their application focused on white South Africans only. With little or no effort to test underlying assumptions in the South African context, South African career counsellors have traditionally depended on 'proven' assessment methods. These methods can however no longer be used in isolation. As the rapidly changing career situation demands a contemporary approach, it is essential for career counsellors to take cognisance of the shift and to adjust their academic discipline to accommodate these changes. According to Maree, Bester, Lubbe and Beck (2001:325) the modified discipline needs to reflect innovative methods, techniques and structures to ensure effective career counselling. Watson and Stead (2002:29) have the following to say in this regard:

> Clearly emerging from more recent career literature in South Africa is the question of what our theory base should be.

Research questions

This article juxtaposes the traditional approach and a post-modern approach to career counselling. The primary research question, addressed in the current research, was the following:

- How strong is the need for multiple approaches towards the collection of data for assisting learners to make appropriate career choices?

In an attempt to investigate this question, the following secondary questions are considered:

- How does the traditional career-counselling approach compare with the narrative approach?
- Can narrative career counselling be accomplished successfully for learners from traditionally disadvantaged cultures in South Africa?
- What are the major limitations/ shortcomings of the narrative approach towards career counselling from a South African perspective?

Terminology

Career counselling

Plug, Louw, Gouws and Meyer (1987:84) regard career counselling as a composite of all counselling procedures related to the choice of and preparation for a career, namely interviews, interest questionnaires, aptitude tests and personality tests. Super, in Malan (1999:15) defines career counselling as follows:

> The process of helping a person to develop and accept an integrated and adequate picture of him/herself and of his/her role in the world of work, to test this concept against reality and to convert it into a reality with satisfaction to him/herself and benefit to society.

The traditionally disadvantaged learner

According to the Schools Act of 1996 (Department of Education, 1996:5), the term "pupil" has been replaced by the term "learner", which refers to any person who receives education or is obliged to receive education. In line with the Curriculum 2005 approach, the term "learner" emphasises the shift in focus from learning merely to memorise content to learning that utilises certain skills and abilities for thinking analytically and creatively. In this article the term "traditionally disadvantaged learner" refers to learners from the previously disadvantaged black, brown and Indian communities.

Comparison

Juxtaposing the traditional and post-modern approaches is an attempt to identify shortcomings in the traditional approach and to indicate

how the two approaches could enhance one another. Whichever narratives are facilitated for guiding the learner to making responsible decisions, the point of departure should always be that such narratives should complement, rather than contradict or oppose one another. They should therefore be regarded as complementary, mutually enriching and equal.

Traditional career counselling in South Africa

Career counselling in South Africa is still characterised by psychometric assessment. Psychometric tests are suitable mainly for dominant cultural groups in South Africa, namely Afrikaans- and English-speaking (mother tongue) groups. In career-counselling practice these tests are often applied to traditionally disadvantaged learners in an unscientific manner.

Until recently, career counsellors were caught up in the western approach to counselling, which uses psychometric tests to guide the adolescent to make responsible career choices and decisions (Lubbe, 1999:12).

Even now, career counselling in South Africa is available primarily to people who are able to afford this expensive service (Nicholas, Pretorius & Naidoo, 1999:7). Assessment and counselling, moreover, are still based on western principles and do not cater for the unique nature of the various South African cultures.

It is clear that there is a need for alternative approaches to career counselling and career decisions. Regarding this need, Savickas (1993: 207) reminds us that counselling approaches should **fit the spirit of the age, if clients are to accept them as useful**.

Career counselling as discipline traditionally favoured an objective (positivist) perspective. Sophisticated media such as psychometric tests, work sheets and computer programs were utilised to form an objective image of the individual. This image was then matched with the character traits suited to a specific career. If the values, interests and abilities of the individual were considered congruent with the requirements of a specific career, the assumption was made that the individual would find that career stable, productive and satisfying. The 'matching', 'objective' image was accepted as real and true.

According to Maree, Bester, Lubbe and Beck (2001:237), the shortcomings of the traditional approach towards career counselling, which have become apparent in post-modern, post-apartheid South Africa, include the following (Lamprecht, 2002):

- Current career-counselling models and methods have until recently been available only to white Afrikaans- and English-speaking learners. These models are not functional for all cultures, genders and socio-economic groups.
- Counsellors who implement current career-counselling models rely mainly on the results and profiles of psychometric tests. Psychometric tests are problematic in a multicultural context because of the following reasons:
  - ‣ Few psychometric tests were designed specifically for South Africa's multicultural population.
  - ‣ By far the majority of American and European tests are not necessarily valid and reliable for the diversity of South African cultures.
  - ‣ The value of test results is often exaggerated whilst the career counsellor is regarded as an expert whose recommendations should be accepted unconditionally. The learner is often excluded from the decision-making process.
  - ‣ The client often avoids the responsibility of making his/her own choices regarding a future career.
  - ‣ The client is often deprived of the opportunity to explore and develop. Tests should consequently also be interpreted in a dynamic manner.
  - ‣ Test results could contribute to the client being labelled.
  - ‣ Career counselling is not available to the vast majority of the South African population that urgently requires counselling.

To remedy these shortcomings, career counselling needs to move away from the almost sole use of psychometric tests to an approach that recognises the individual's social and historical background.

Savickas (1993:210-212) however believes that objective methods, as the legacy of the modern era, could still be integrated into the post-modern career-counselling context.

To foster self-developers, we need to augment these objective constructs, not replace them. Counsellors are allowed the freedom to implement existing as well as new models and methods to lead their clients to active participation in the process of career counselling (Savickas, 1993:210).

Table 1 provides an evaluative summary of a number of career theories with which the counsellor constructs a theoretical framework.

Career counselling in a post-modern context

In essence the post-modern framework defies definition, yet it may be broadly described as dissatisfaction with and protest against the legacy of the modern era (Steyn, 1996:16). Post-modern resistance should be viewed against the backdrop of modern science's claim to objectivity, rationality, universal validity and certainty (Savickas, 1993:29; Van Niekerk, 1996:210). Post-modernists believe that the cultural relativity and diversity of knowledge need to be considered, as well as various possible interpretations of texts and the idea that knowledge is relative in specific contexts. Culture and language constitute the individual's symbolic world within which meaning and sense are ascribed (Savickas, 1993:29; Van Niekerk, 1996:210).

Lotter (in Maree, Bester, Lubbe & Beck, 2001:326) summarises the characteristics of post-modernism as follows:

- An open attitude toward different races, cultures, religions, moral convictions and sexual orientation.
- A belief that diversity within communities is important and enriching.
- A blend of styles and a selective and creative combination of existing ideas (irrespective of their origin).
- A strong criticism of Eurocentrism, and scepticism about the accuracy of the Western perspective.

According to Savickas (1993:210) career counselling in the post-modern era is characterised by the following innovations:

- No more experts

In the past the career counsellor's main task was to guide clients to careers or occupations that suited their measured interests, personalities and abilities. Although communication was regarded as important at that stage, the counsellor/client relationship was often neglected.

Clients all too often erroneously regarded counsellors as experts in career counselling and career choices. Clients have recently started becoming agents who interpret their own needs and plan their lives according to a whole series of possibilities, rather than just being passive recipients of counsellors' advice. Counsellors no longer regard the client as the problem and themselves as the solution. Instead of seeing themselves as masters of truth, counsellors encourage clients to become active participants. Consequently clients are assisted to improve their decision-making skills and eventually make their own decisions (Savickas, 1993:211).

- Empowerment *versus* fitting in

In the past attempts were made to normalise individuals from diverse cultures to fit into the dominant culture. In this way all individuals who were regarded misfits on account of class, gender or sexual orientation were subjected to a uniform normalising discourse. Counselling that focuses on empowerment affords each individual sufficient freedom to create and implement his/her own life-plan (Savickas, 1993: 211).

Rewriting the individual's narrative

Counsellors should broaden their focus to include more than the work role, in this way equipping each client to create a feasible personal framework for his/her life. No two individuals in a multicultural society share the same framework/narrative.

The post-modern trend is for life design to be part of preparing

Maree & Beck

Table 1   Evaluative summary of a number of career theories

Theory	Proponent	Suppositions	Comment
Trait-factor approach (Brown, 1990a)	Parsons Williamsons	Four main suppositions: • Each individual possesses unique, measurable characteristics. • Careers demand specific employee character traits. • The career choice is apparent and the person can be matched to the career. • The more effective the match between the person and the career, the greater the possibility of success.	The approach focuses on career choice as a cognitive matching process. No feelings, fears, hope, status or race issues are considered. • The theory describes why people make career choices but not how they do it. • The focus is on the use of tests as measuring instruments. The tests are not suitable for all races or for women. • The role of personal values in choosing a career is ignored.
Sociological approach (Hotchkiss & Borrow, 1990)	Hotchkiss Borrow Hall	Sociological factors influence a person's career choice. • Counsellors should focus on structural factors, which condition career choices. • Social factors like promotion, remuneration and culture affect career choices. • The interaction between the individual and the environment is regarded as important. • Individuals are active agents in their own processes.	The widespread emphasis on the objective characteristics of organisations and careers has led to the neglect of the subjective influences of institutions. The social influences surrounding human development and choices are not fully defined (Malan, 1999:29).
Learning-theoretical approach: Social learning theory (Krumboltz & Mitchell, 1990)	Krumboltz Mitchell	The value of directive learning and decision-making skills is emphasised.	The value of the theory lies in the emphasis on skills as requirement for a successful career.
Needs approach (Jacobs, Van Jaarsveld & Von Mollendorf, 1988)	Holland	Needs stem from character traits and experiences, while choices are based on needs.	Aspects such as abilities are overlooked.
Career-conscious individual model (McDaniels & Gyssbers, 1992)	Gysbers & Moore	Assist individuals to facilitate their development by offering a broad overview of their knowledge, skills and possibilities.	An integrated model affording individuals the opportunity to actively participate in their own career development.
Integrated life-planning model (Malan, 1999)	Hanson	A process into which needs, roles and aims are integrated within an employment and family context. Planning focuses on work, life roles and values.	Emphasises a holistic, integrated model of career counselling for the modern young adult.
Developmental approach	Super	Super prefers to refer to his 'approach', rather than his 'theory'. To a large extent, a person's self-concept determines or shapes his/her career choice, as well as the degree to which that person will experience self-fulfilment in that career. His approach (Super, 1990) is 'summarised' with his well-known 14 propositions.	The developmental theory assumes special significance in the light of the importance of the adolescent phase in the career-counselling / decision-making process. The concepts used by developmental theorists (assessing the development of interests, capacities, values, self-concepts, career planning, career exploration, decision making, etc.) are useful when one works with adolescents.
Roe's parental influence theory	Roe	Roe believes that a person's genetic make-up and childhood environment lead to the development of a personality type, and that these influences lead to the choice of a career. Three basic parental behaviours can be distinguished: • Emotional concentration on the child - overprotecting the child or being overdemanding. • Avoidance of the child — emotional rejection or neglect. • Either casual or loving acceptance of the child. Two basic orientations can be distinguished — either towards or not towards persons. These orientations are related to early childhood experiences and to occupational choice (Roe & Lunneborg, 1990).	Interaction between "socio-demographic variables" and career choice (Brown, 1990b:351) is not satisfactorily explained. Focus is on career choice, rather than on career development.

for and choosing a career — hence the concern of post-modern counsellors about the way in which clients structure their lives according to the basic facets of work, leisure, friendships and family life (Super, 1980:285). Current counselling with regard to life roles focuses on the relationship between the work role and other roles, as well as on the effect of a career or work role on the client's interpersonal relationships, family and community (Hanson, 1989).

The role of life design in the counselling process is reflected in the assessment that media counsellors have recently started implementing, for instance the measurement of work ethics and the use of life-style questionnaires.

A career is personal
When work roles are no longer separated from other life roles, there is in fact no longer a difference between career counselling and therapy. The boundary between psychotherapy and career counselling should therefore be examined. The post-modern view is that any person regards his/her career as very personal. Objective methods of counselling used in the past often disregarded the subjective and personal meaning people attach to their occupations. Increased emphasis on personal meaning and the therapeutic relationship narrows the gap between counselling and psychotherapy (Savickas, 1993:212).

Stories *versus* scores
The purpose of traditional trait factor counselling is to match the individual with a suitable career. To this end the individual is objectified by the use of scores regarding self-concept, aptitude, interests and work ethics.

Proponents of a post-modern perspective are more interested in the client's **subjective career** (his/her life story) than in merely interpreting test results. Both the objective and subjective meanings of interests, abilities, values and choices are considered. The clients' interests, abilities and work ethics are thus interpreted as an expression of their career patterns and central life themes. Counsellors regard the individuals' careers as stories, which they assist them to interpret. Clients are therefore encouraged to develop stories about themselves and their work. As co-authors, counsellors are able to assist their clients to narrate their careers as stories, point out certain themes and tensions in the story line, while teaching them the necessary skills for rendering the next episode. (Clearly, the story-telling technique ties in neatly with Super's view of career choice as the implementation of an individual's self-concept and Roe's views on the role of earlier childhood experiences in career choice.)

Case study as an example of efforts to provide motivation for the use of various approaches in the collection and utilisation of comprehensive data (both objective and subjective) to help in career counselling
Badenhorst (in Bester, 1999:197) describes the chief aim of a case study as an investigation of the most important aspect of a matter or situation. The unit used in a case study includes an individual, a social institution or a cultural group.

Malan and Marais (in Maree, Bester, Lubbe & Beck, 2001:332) maintain that case study research has a strong contextual function as it emphasises the distinguishing and unique facets of a situation or event. Bordin (in Bester, 1999:197) proclaims that:

Case records have major functions: supervision and consultation; the aid they give to the counsellor in counselling situations; implementation of agency policies and evaluation and research.

According to Bromley (1986:2) the case study method is "a basic form of scientific inquiry that underpins effective professional practice, especially in relation to human problems".

Merriam (1988:3) maintains that most case studies "are qualitative and hypothesis-generating, rather than quantitative and hypothesis testing". She opines that "nonprobability forms of sampling and inductive data analysis are consistent with the goals and assumptions of this paradigm, as are specific ways of ensuring validity and reliabi-

lity." In the current case study, the following characteristics of the qualitative case study approach will be evident (Guba & Lincoln, Helmstadter, Hoagler *et al.*; Stake; Wilson in Merriam, 1988):
- "Thick description";
- holistic and lifelike;
- conversation-style format;
- illuminates meaning;
- builds on tacit knowledge;
- can be used to remedy or improve practice;
- results are hypotheses;
- design is flexible;
- description of parties and motives;
- description of key issues;
- can suggest solutions;
- inductive;
- specific; and
- particularistic.

The case study discussed here affirms these statements as well as the view that an analysis of the individual case assists (*inter alia*) to constitute the so-called Case Act.

Some researchers may argue that the research reported here is basically a narration of experiences or a report of a research study. This view may be strengthened by the perception that aspects of the vase study under discussion (e.g. the fact that the researchers facilitated the process, the discussions and the brainstorming sessions) may appear to be not just for obtaining information and for better understanding of the case, but also for the purpose of manipulating some variables. It is however clearly not the case here. In any event, the researchers concur with the view of McMillan and Schumacher (2001:399), who state that "... other [case] studies contribute by increasing the participants' own understanding of the practice to improve the practice."

Validity and trustworthiness
Agar (in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2001:107) argues that, in qualitative data collection, "the intensive personal involvement and in-depth responses of individuals secure a sufficient level of validity and reliability", whilst authors such as Hammersley and Silverman (in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2001:107) argue that these grounds are insufficient for ensuring validity and trustworthiness. In the current study, internal validity is ensured in the following ways (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2001:108; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:408):
- Low-inference descriptors are used. (The researchers recorded precise, almost literal and detailed descriptions of the assessment procedure and related aspects.)
- Multimethod strategies are used. (Triangulation in data collection and analysis is ensured via the use of multiple methods, e.g. different assessment instruments, obtaining narratives from multiple sources, and in-depth interviews with different role-players.)
- Participant researchers are used. (During all phases of the assessment, the researchers were part of the activities.)
- Peer examination of the data was facilitated. (Multiple professionals were requested to 'validate' the conclusions that were drawn from the data.)
- Mechanical means were used to record, store and retrieve data. (These include the use of audiotapes and photographs.)
- Member checking was facilitated. (Consistent with the principles of the narrative approach, the testee was requested to check for accuracy during data collection.)
- Participant review was facilitated. (The testee and other role players were requested to review the researchers' synthesis of all interviews and assessment results.)
- Discrepant data were identified. (The researchers actively searched for discrepant data that may have been an exception to patterns or that modified patterns found in the current data.)
- The researchers chose the role of 'participant-as-observer' (Gold, in Schurink, 1998:260) in the sense that they interacted sufficiently close to the testee and other role players to obtain an in-

sider view, but nevertheless refrained from taking part in activi-ties that would have made them part of the setting. Trustwor-thiness was lastly facilitated in the sense that two vastly ex-perienced qualitative researchers in the field handled all aspects of the case study in an attempt to eliminate bias and ensure 'objective' results. The researchers spent a reasonable time with the participant and other role-players before and after the assess-ment in an attempt to establish a positive rapport and facilitate trust and an easy atmosphere.

Case study
Identifying particulars
The subject of this case study is a 17-year old, black Zulu-speaking girl whose parents have no access to (for them) unaffordable career-counselling services. The subject is a Grade 11 learner at an English high school with predominantly white teachers in a traditionally advantaged area. Her language preference is Zulu, with English as a second choice.

Reason for referral
The subject is the only child from a traditional marriage. Her parents are divorced and have both remarried. She has a half-brother and two half-sisters who are all younger than she is. Her father is a self-trained motor mechanic who runs an *unebhizisi lacke* (own business) from his house in the *location* (traditionally disadvantaged neighbourhood). Her mother, who passed Grade 8, works as an *isisebenzi sasendlini* (housekeeper) in Witbank. Although the parents do not agree on the field of study, they both expect her to *ukuzithuthukisa* (study toward a further qualification).

General background
The learner expressed a desire to study medicine or chemical engi-neering. Although she is uncertain about a career choice, she wants to work with people in a helping capacity. She indicated that she wishes to *uxoxa* (converse) and help people *ibencono* (improve) the quality of their lives. Her teachers describe her as hardworking, conscientious, intelligent and well mannered. Her friends regard her ability to *uku-bonisana* (communicate) as her strongest character trait.

Her school marks for the second term of Grade 11 during 2001 are arranged in the client's order of preference:

Subject	Grade	Symbol
English (1st Language)	HG	C
Afrikaans (2nd Language)	HG	B
Physical Science	HG	C
Biology	HG	E
Mathematics	HG	D
Accounting	HG	C

Steps followed in the traditional process
The process consisted of three sessions. The first consisted of a contact interview. During the second session the learner completed a number of psychometric tests. The third was a feedback session.

The following general and traditional media were used during the traditional assessment session:
- Senior Aptitude Tests (SAT) (Fouché & Verwey, 1978)
- South African Vocational Interest Inventory (SAVII) (Du Toit, Prinsloo, Gevers & Harilall, 1993)
- 19 Field Interest Inventory (19FII) (Fouché & Alberts, 1986)
- Jung Personality Questionnaire (JPQ) (Du Toit, 1992)
- High School Personality Questionnaire (HSPQ) (Visser, Garbers-Strauss & Prinsloo, 1992)

The SAT rendered the following information regarding the learner's intellectual ability and aptitude:
- Intellectual ability
  Estimated intelligence   Average   101
- Aptitude

Verbal ability	Average	4,33
Numeric ability	Average	4,00
Visual-spatial reasoning	Weak	2,50
Clerical aptitude	Average	6,00
Memory	Average	4,00
Motor skills	Average	5,50

- Specific aptitudes according to fields of study:

Humanities	4,00
Natural sciences	2,75
Economic sciences	3,66
Co-ordination	5,50

The 19 Field Interest Inventory (19FII) and the South African Voca-tional Interest Inventory (SAVII) yielded the following information:
- Preference profile according to the 19FII:

Science	9	Creative thought	7
Practical (male)	9	Performing arts	7
Language	8	Travel	7

- Preference profile according to the SAVII:

Artistic	19	strongest subfields: 3, 2 and 1
Scientific	14	strongest subfield: 2
Practical (realistic)	11	strongest subfield: 3

The following information about her personality was obtained from the Jung Personality Questionnaire (JPQ) and the High School Personality Questionnaire (HSPQ):

The HSPQ shows her to be withdrawn and influenced by her feelings. She is also trusting, emotionally sensitive and group-dependent. She is relatively introverted and a quiet, conscientious worker. She is orderly and thorough and can be described as a meticulous, responsible person. Her personality type, according to the JPQ, is ISTJ.

The following recommendations are based on the information gleaned from the above tests:
- B Communication Pathology
  This recommendation is based on the client's aptitude for the humanities. Her interests and personality also support this career choice.
- BA Journalism
  The client's strong creativity and preference for languages qualify her for this field.
- BA Languages (with a view to translating and interpreting)
  The client's language aptitude and her orderly, meticulous way of working (her teachers and friends describe her as precise) qualify her for this field. Her white teachers often use her to explain dif-ficult words and concepts to her fellow students.
- BPolSci (Political Sciences)
  The client's strong inclination toward the humanities, coupled with specific character traits such as precision and orderliness, equips her for this field.
- Dip (MH) (Oral Hygiene)
  The client's personality traits and interests, e.g. practical (rea-listic) and scientifically investigative, make this field a possible choice.

Steps followed in the post-modern process:
- A *collage* was created.
- The Draw A Person (DAP) and Kinaesthetic Family Drawing (KFD) were done.
- An autobiography with life chapters was compiled (Cochran, 1997:41).
- Written submissions were obtained from parents and friends.
- Interviews were conducted with the learner and some of her tea-chers.

Episode One (Cochran, 1997:41)
During the first phase the client explained why she had sought assis-tance. In order to orientate her with regard to the counselling process, the following steps were explained to her:

- The counsellor would fulfil the role of facilitator.
- She (the client) would participate actively in the process and would be required to research certain aspects.
- The process would consist of six sessions of approximately 60 minutes each.
- She alone would have to decide on a career.

The client was asked to create a *collage* depicting her past, present and future. The *collage* was used to assist the client to tell her story and to illustrate the narrative.

She was requested to draw her family (KFD), as well as another person (DAP). The counsellor used these drawings during Phase One to make her aware of her desires, interests, strong points, and specific needs.

Episode Two

During this phase the client had to create her own autobiography, and eventually, with the counsellor facilitating the process, allocate headings to important periods/phases in her life. The counsellor then asked reflective questions about each of the following phases created by the client:

- *Learning to run and play (Early childhood)*

During her early years the client lived with different people, namely her mother, father and *ugogo* (grandmother). She repeatedly relocated as her parents divorced and remarried. It was during this period that her half-brother and sisters were born. She describes the times spent with her *ugogo* and her mother as the **safest**.

- *Learning to trust and adapt (Teenage years)*

During her teenage years the client was in regular conflict with her mother who once chased her away — back to her father and step-mother where she felt stifled and was forced to adapt her lifestyle: **I have to constantly change behaviour and adapt because I have to change parents constantly**.

- *I have no place or person to belong to (Feelings of being rejected by her family)*

Continually transferring from one parent's home to the other caused her to experience feelings of rejection. The birth of her half-brother and sisters made her feel that she didn't belong anywhere: **I have no place or person to belong to**.

Despite the feelings of rejection experienced by the client she was worried about her siblings. She said she was concerned about the welfare of both her family and her extended family. She disliked seeing the dysfunction and wanted to help eliminate it.

- *Where the sun shines (School is experienced positively)*

She is able to distance herself from the **dysfunctional extended family** problems to such an extent that they do not influence her schoolwork. She is popular at school and serves on the Students' Representative Council.

- *I love meeting challenges (My future)*

She believes her future will be positive and less **depressing** than her life has been to date.

She was guided through the process of constructing her ideal scenario by using the *collage* and drawings. This entailed assisting her to become aware of her strong points, desires, expectations, needs and possibilities so that she would be able to apply this knowledge in her quest for a suitable career. The *collage* shows that she identifies strongly with white people. (Since white people were by and large the only models available to her, this finding is hardly surprising.)

Written submissions from friends and both biological parents were used to elicit more information about the client. They were asked to write a few paragraphs about their impressions of the client and to indicate which career they thought would suit her.

Discussion of information
- Aptitude and intelligence

According to the data yielded by the SAT the client is of average intelligence and did not do well at all in the visual-spatial domain. Her school reports and interviews with friends and teachers, however, indicate an above average to high intelligence level. Languages and Physical Science are her best subjects and her Physical Science teacher believes that her performance in an English school is an indication of her strong cognitive ability, adaptability and general intelligence. Moreover, she speaks seven languages. This aspect is of cardinal importance, as her language proficiency not only indicates strong verbal ability, but also augurs well for a wide choice of careers.

- Fields of interest

Using the *collage*, she pointed out that she was interested mainly in human and medical science, with a strong emphasis on aid and communication. She is also interested in creative activities: **Sometimes I design my own clothing and try painting. I love singing, acting and writing poetry**. She enjoys working with children and shows some interest in the commercial field.

- Personality

The client is an amiable girl who initiates conversations and has a good sense of humour. She is organised and helpful. People are important to her and she is very co-operative. She tends to be emotional and is a conscientious worker with a high level of integrity.

- Values

The client displays a need to escape her present circumstances. Despite her **depressing** family situation, the **extended family** and family values are important to her. She is very ambitious and determined to achieve success.

- Self-concept

The client has a positive academic self-image. She believes that she can make a success of her school and future careers despite her current situation. She is adaptable and welcomes challenges: **I love meeting challenges**. Notwithstanding her current situation, she sets herself high standards and is intent on achieving her goals.

The following careers, which require tertiary training, were discussed with her at the end of this phase:
- BSocSci (Social work)
- BPsych (Psychology)
- BCur (Community Nursing)
- B Communication Pathology
- BEd General
- BA Journalism

The client's interest in working with people in an aid-capacity, coupled with her desire to improve their circumstances, mark her as an ideal candidate for these courses. Her good communication skills and sympathetic nature reinforce these choices and her current school marks and aptitude qualify her for any of these fields of study.

- BTech Journalism (Technikon)

The client's strong language aptitudes, love of writing, excellent personal interaction and communication skills are possible indicators that she should consider studying journalism.

Episode Three

This phase featured a brainstorming session with the client during which the following aspects regarding the chosen careers were discussed:
- Potential challenges/opportunities related to realising the chosen career.
- Sources of information.
- Steps the client needs to follow in order to actualise her decision.

A potential challenge identified by the client and the counsellor is the lack of financial support for further study. Since her portfolio makes her a potential bursary candidate, the possibility of applying for a bursary from an institution would have to be investigated (the local chamber of business offers annual sponsorships to needy learners for undergraduate courses at tertiary institutions). Although the possibility of a part-time/correspondence course was discussed, the client needed to consider the fact that the chosen courses do not allow for these delivery modes.

The client was encouraged to carry out job analyses in order to gain insight into the careers she had chosen. This would entail work

shadowing and interviewing people currently in the various occupations. She also envisaged joining community projects, working at a pre-primary school in her neighbourhood, and attending open days at various universities and/or technikons.

The client's experience of a post-modern approach to career counselling

The client was interviewed once more in order for the counsellor to gauge her experience of the post-modern process, which she described as *uthathela kude* (long, continuous). She said that she would have withdrawn from the process if she had not been encouraged by the counsellor to persevere. The personal nature of the interview made her feel uncomfortable and she felt that she would probably have offered much less information if she had not had a positive relationship with the counsellor.

At first she could not see the purpose of all the written submissions and interviews with regard to a career choice. Although she realised the significance of these toward the end of the process, she felt that being unfamiliar with the narrative process could very well cause clients to discontinue, especially if they did not understand its purpose. In her community, social status and financial gain (as opposed to career satisfaction) are often the deciding factors when learners choose careers.

This community perception influences all types of career counselling, whether traditional or post-modern. The client, too, is **struggling** to resist the lure of the so-called status careers.

The client's experience of the traditional approach to career counselling

The client describes the process as **fine**. In her opinion the psychometric tests were lengthy, but her teachers had prepared her for this. She is more positive about this process because she managed to complete all the tests, although she felt they were "difficult" ("sometimes hard to answer").

Conclusion and recommendations

A post-modern approach to career counselling addresses a number of flaws in the traditional approach, especially in respect of disadvantaged learners. However, the practical implementation of a post-modern approach shows that the following challenges have yet to be met:

- *Logistics*: Career-counselling services are often not available in traditionally disadvantaged neighbourhoods and clients have to travel long distances to avail themselves of the service.
- *Cost*: A post-modern approach to career counselling is still fairly expensive. This is especially the case since the number of career-counselling sessions tends to increase, placing an even heavier financial burden on already poor communities.
- *Time*: A post-modern approach is a fairly lengthy process, which is exacerbated by the above-mentioned challenges.

It therefore appears that a post-modern approach to career counselling has basic flaws. Career counselling in South Africa could potentially gain by the implementation of this approach if the existing shortcomings are effectively researched and addressed. Failure to do this will prolong the current unsatisfactory situation.

The current research clearly demonstrated the need for multiple approaches to collection of comprehensive data for assisting learners to make appropriate career choices. The actual focus of the research was on the employment of multiple approaches to the collection of comprehensive data for effective career counselling. It should be noted that the "traditional" approaches to career counselling also recognise the value of subjective data. Each of the so-called "traditional" approaches, if considered in isolation from the others, would suffer the limitations of not being capable to provide sufficient information to assist a client in making appropriate career choices. The fact that a number of "traditional" career choice or development theories recognise that choosing a career is not an impromptu affair, but rather a

process that is developmental in nature, attests to comprehensive information (both objective and subjective in nature) being necessary for making an appropriate career choice. Both Super's view of a career choice as an implementation of the individual's self-concept and Roe's needs theory have implications for procedures for collecting subjective data such as "creation of *collage*", "story telling" and "family relationships". This work confirmed that there is a clear need to combine a number of approaches, both objective and subjective, since both objective and subjective data are necessary for making a well-informed or appropriate career decision.

Lastly, the authors would like to stress the fact that they are of the opinion that all learners, whether traditionally advantaged or disadvantaged, need comprehensive information, both objective and subjective, for appropriate career decision making. The focus in career counselling in South Africa should therefore be on the collection and utilisation of comprehensive information to assist all learners in making successful career choices.

Limitations of the study

A number of limitations of the current study have been identified. These include the following:

- The possible general value of the research is limited, as only one case study, which was not representative of the population of school leavers who received career counselling, was used. Each learner has his/her own peculiarities, as well as his/her own idiosyncratic conditions when being studied.
- Subjective interpretation by the counsellor could be regarded as a limitation, since other researchers could well interpret results and information differently.
- The narrative basis of the model used here could limit the effectiveness of the process among clients with language barriers, as the latter would be detrimental to the counselling process.
- One cannot necessarily assume that the findings would be the same for all traditionally disadvantaged learners.

Ethical aspects

The counsellor liaised with the school principal who consulted the governing body prior to the research process. All arrangements were confirmed telephonically and in writing and permission was granted for the research results to be published. The researcher regularly supplied feedback to the client and reported the research findings accurately and responsibly.

Recommendations

The recommendations are not only aimed at improving career-counselling practice, but also serve as an appeal to all stakeholders, namely, the government, corporate business, community, schools, career counsellors, parents and learners to become involved in the refinement of the career-counselling process.

Career counselling should not to be neglected in schools, especially not in the traditionally disadvantaged schools. The current perturbing trend in South African schools is to replace the qualified career-counselling teacher with one who teaches an academic subject. This, and the reduction in the number of career-counselling periods, has had a negative effect in that many learners do not even know how to calculate their merit scores or what the selection criteria are for courses at tertiary institutions. The fact that they know even less about the spectrum of careers from which they may choose, indicates that this alarming tendency should be dealt with expediently.

Learners should be informed about higher-order needs, which are essential for self-development. Factors like work ethics, career satisfaction and remuneration should not be the only measure of career satisfaction.

Further research on post-modern techniques is essential for the refinement and development of the post-modern narrative, which could in future be utilised for groups rather than individuals. This *modus operandi* would be more cost effective and could have a sig-

nificant influence on career counselling.

A reference to the Cosser Report seems to be appropriate here. Cosser (2002:93) found that "career guidance, in whatever form, therefore ... has a positive effect on intention to enter Higher Education". This remark indeed highlights the need not only to improve the quality of career counselling in schools where this facility is available, but even more importantly, to initiate this service in schools where such a service is not offered. From the perspective of the current research, career counsellors should be made aware of the findings contained in this article and should be urged to focus on refining the positive aspects of a post-modern approach when they facilitate career counselling.

Note
The terms "black, brown and Indian", which reflect an artificial way of distinguishing people racially and ethnically, are used in this study in order to highlight inequities in the South African population that should be rectified.

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