Confronting the effects of unemployment on achievement motivation: The case for postmodern career facilitation

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Abstract

This article describes the ways in which postmodern[1] career facilitation was applied to enhance achievement motivation in a male adolescent from a community with a high unemployment rate. A case study following a mixed-method approach was conducted with a purposefully selected youth and a postmodern career facilitation intervention was developed and implemented. The participant's achievement motivation was assessed pre-intervention and post-intervention by means of the Achievement Motivation Profile (AMP). *Several* AMP *subscales increased significantly after the intervention* (team player, competitiveness, self-confidence and achiever). *Other changes following the intervention included an overall increase in the scores in the subscale 'work habits' (planning/organisation, initiative, team player). Apart from revealing an increase in achievement motivation, the findings indicated self-reported heightened self-awareness and enhanced interpersonal collaboration. We (the authors) conclude that postmodern career facilitation could lead to breadth and depth changes in achievement motivation, which could equip adolescents to negotiate unemployment challenges.*

Keywords: Achievement motivation; career facilitation; postmodern career facilitation; unemployment; cooperation; confidence; work habits; adolescent; narrative career facilitation; *Achievement Motivation Profile*

Background and rationale

How can one cultivate achievement motivation when living in a life world characterised by poverty, unemployment, high illiteracy levels and minimal job opportunities? This article describes case study research into a *postmodern career facilitation* technique which aims to improve a client's *achievement motivation*, specifically in relation to raising that client's capacity to deal with problems associated with harsh economic privations in a South African community, especially unemployment. We explicitly aim to address the psychology of unemployment and socio-economic conditions using the constructivist approach to career development practice and to contribute to the empirical literature on constructivist practice because we believe the literature is sadly lacking in case study research of constructivist practice. We illustrate our contention by means of a case study[2] involving one male adolescent[3] from a previously disadvantaged[4] South African community.

The current study is in many ways a pilot of the intervention under study (a pilot of the AMP for application as an idiographic procedure); after all, we were piloting the intervention for the population of interest (i.e. male youth in poor communities). The question directing this article is therefore: To what extent can postmodern career facilitation enhance (or not enhance) the achievement motivation of a young male adolescent from a community characterised by (among other attributes) unemployment?

The detrimental effects of the current high unemployment rate in South Africa on an individual's career aspirations and academic motivation when making educational and career decisions can be alarming (International Labour Organisation, 2007; Nickell, 2006). However, Meyer and Braxton (2002) suggest a positive correlation between achievement motivation and economic growth.

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[1]   The phrase 'postmodern' is used interchangeably with 'qualitative' and 'constructive'.
[2]   Investigators in this study included the authors.
[3]   For the purpose of this study, 'adolescent' refers to an individual between the ages of 12 and 21 years.
[4]   Previously disadvantaged communities denote South African communities post-1994 that continue to be afflicted by scarcity including limited physical resources, high illiteracy levels, unequal education provision and low socioeconomic levels.

De Lange (1997), on the other hand, found that the environment from which one enters the career world could have either a positive or negative influence on one's future career. In the South African world of work this contextualising classification is apparent. Meyer and Braxton (2002) found that the achievement potential of youths from disadvantaged settings is lower than that of their counterparts in prosperous communities.

The scale of unemployment in South Africa makes career facilitation even more important in preparing the youth to enter the limited careers in a competitive job market. Maree and Beck (2004) found earlier that postmodern career facilitation may be more beneficial in addressing the career needs of youths from disadvantaged settings than traditional career counselling approaches. A related study (Maree, Bester, Lubbe & Beck, 2001) demonstrated client enablement as an outcome of postmodern career facilitation. Furthermore, the decision to use postmodern career facilitation to address unemployment issues is supported by Thrift and Amundson (2005) who stressed the importance of hermeneutic-narrative perspectives in addressing social justice issues. Against this background, a working assumption of the study was that focusing on achievement motivation is essential for stimulating economic development to contend with unemployment.

Literature overview

We begin by giving an overview of theory pertaining to postmodern career facilitation, achievement motivation, and social cognitive theory, and subsequently report the mixed method used here, particularly the quantitative data and use of verbatim data as evidence.

Conceptualisation

In this section, we define core constructs in the inquiry and present our conceptualisation of postmodern career facilitation and achievement motivation in the context of the investigation.

Postmodern career facilitation

Postmodernism[5] relates to the multiplicity of perspectives, contextual influences, social constructions of 'reality' and the importance of the meaning individuals attach to their experiences (Thorngen & Feit, 2001). During postmodern career facilitation, clients are not categorised in terms of their interests and abilities, but, rather, they are helped to make their own choices and assume responsibility for them (Maree *et al.,* 2001; Savickas, 2000). Clients are encouraged to talk, act, think and make decisions by themselves – their subjective experiences are explored to construct career meanings.

Thus, during postmodern career facilitation, the shift is away from the primary use of diagnostic instruments towards understanding the social and historical factors influencing individuals' career challenges. The relevance of postmodern approaches, and specifically the shift to subjectivism, is especially relevant in multicultural, pluralistic societies (Maxwell, 2007).

Narrative career facilitation is derived from postmodern career facilitation (Cohen, 2006; Inkson, 2006). During narrative therapy[6] an atmosphere is created that is conducive to the exploration of potential self-limiting life stories. Clients become authors as well as main characters

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[5]   Postmodern approaches manifest in contextual, constructivist and constructionist contexts (Guindon & Richmond, 2005).

[6]   A word of caution seems appropriate here. Readers should be careful not to conflate "narrative therapy" with narrative career counselling. While both constructs share storying as a counselling process, they have quite different literatures.

in these stories (Christensen & Johnston, 2003). Alternative meanings of the stories are explored, and alternative life stories are written with the aim of developing more inspiring conceptualisations of the self (DeSocio, 2005).

During postmodern career facilitation, clients are helped to construct their subjective career stories taking into account subjective as well as objective meanings. Careers are viewed as stories according to which the client and facilitator can collaboratively identify and scrutinise central life themes. Facilitators thus become co-authors as they assist their clients in writing their careers as stories and help them identify themes and stressful moments in the storylines (Ebersöhn, 2007; Maree & Beck, 2004; Vermaak, 2007). Besides life stories, postmodern and narrative career facilitation activities also include lifelines, genograms, card sorts and structured interviews (McMahon, Patton & Watson, 2003).

In this study, postmodern career facilitation was operationalised by developing and implementing 11 hour-long intervention sessions between a career facilitator and a male youth (Vermaak, 2007). The intervention included postmodern career facilitation and narrative career facilitation activities.

Achievement motivation

On a theoretical as well as an empirical level, achievement motivation has various connected dimensions. Traditionally, achievement motivation constructs included outcome expectations (Atkinson, 1964), self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977), learner helplessness (Dweck, 1975), internal locus of control (Stipek & Weisz, 1981) and attribution theory (Weiner, 1979). Bleuer and Walz's (2002) recent study supports the credence of these classical constructs in relation to achievement motivation. Schunk (2001) adds goal setting, and Benard (1995) adds resilience as relevant factors in promoting the achievement motivation mentioned in contemporary literature. We subscribe to the following definitions of achievement motivation propounded by Huitt (2001): an internal condition that activates and directs behaviour; the need or desire that directs goal-oriented behaviour; the influence of needs or desires on the intensity and direction of behaviour. According to this conceptualisation, failure is thus viewed as an internal state that is subject to change (Slavin, 1991).

As a motivation variable, achievement motivation has been the topic of various studies aimed at determining its effect on learning and academic achievement (Atkinson & Feather, 1966; Lumsden, 1994). Numerous studies have noted complex connections between academic engagement and achievement in terms of variables such as expectations of academic achievement, aptitude beliefs, attributes necessary for language success or failure, and emotional reactions to success or failure (Dweck & Elliot, 1983; Stipek, 2001; Weiner, 1992; Lapadat, 2000).

Achievement-motivated individuals display the following characteristics (Meyer & Braxton, 2002): they use time constructively, have the ability to complete tasks successfully, experience work satisfaction when a task has been mastered, show realism regarding their own abilities and taking risks, have an internal locus of control, have a positive and realistic self-image, set challenges for themselves, accept personal responsibility for goal attainment, demonstrate perseverance, take considered risks to reach goals and assimilate information from feedback for later use in a planned manner.

In this study, we saw achievement motivation as the desire to experience personal success and to persevere in the pursuit of personal goals in the presence of goal-directed behaviour (irrespective of barriers). We measured achievement motivation psychometrically with the *Achievement Motivation Profile Test* (Friedland, Mandel & Marcus, 1982). Qualitatively, constructs synonymous with achievement motivation were aligned with themes that emerged after the data analysis.

Theoretical framework: Social-cognitive theory

Bandura argues that people confronted with contextual adversity have little motivation to act or persevere *unless* they believe that their actions will lead to expected outcomes. It follows that people's perceptions of their self-efficacy play a central role in their adaptation in respect also of career development and career facilitation processes. Osche (2003) supports the view that perceptions of abilities (rather than abilities *per se*) are significant. Similarly, people's convictions that they have strong abilities correlate positively with perseverance and motivation.

The relevance of social-cognitive theory to career psychology has been well documented by Lent, Brown and Hackett (1994; 2000). Ritchie, Flouri and Buchanan (2005) build on this connection by demonstrating how self-efficacy expectations are influenced by the quality and degree of contextual support and personal inputs.

Relating unemployment to motivation beliefs

Future success is largely influenced by people's perceptions as well as by the reality of educational and employment opportunities in the macro-system (Cook, Heppner & O'Brien, 2002). Unemployment can consequently be viewed as a major risk factor hampering positive motivation beliefs and goal setting. Unemployment often leads to negative expectations as well as negative self-concept beliefs. When unemployment is not part of the context, people have more access to educational opportunities, financial resources, role models, career knowledge, and informal and family-related networks (Schoon, 2003). People in societies characterised by unemployment are also less inclined to pursue further education after exiting school or to take up a professional career.

Consequently, unemployment is not conducive to school achievement and success experiences that are prerequisites for optimising potential. Osche (2003) notes that personal motivation can be influenced by positive perceptions, which seem to encourage people to work harder to improve their chances of career success. When unemployment is a socioeconomic reality, research indicates that individuals may benefit from support to develop more positive self-perceptions, expectations and confidence.

Achievement motivation of adolescents challenged by unemployment

From a social-cognitive theory viewpoint, we took cognisance of the influence of context on the development of personal beliefs and self-efficacy expectations. De Lange (1997) demonstrated how socioeconomic factors influence adolescents' learning and motivation orientations. Unemployment would denote an unfavourable socioeconomic factor hindering the development of favourable achievement motivation.

In South Africa, adolescents living in disadvantaged communities are often exposed to more of the negative effects of unemployment than their counterparts in communities with more resources and opportunities. Meyer and Braxton (2002) found that the achievement motivation of adolescents in disadvantaged South African communities is lower than that of their peers in advantaged communities. This finding supports global knowledge in this regard. Terrel, Terrel and Miller (1993) established that adolescents from minority groups living in resource scarce environments performed less well academically and exited schooling earlier than majority group adolescents from advantaged settings. Significantly, De Lange (1997) found that adolescents from disadvantaged settings were more inclined to maintain an achievement-driven, goal-oriented outlook based on external awards and external recognition.

The acquisition of achievement motivation is consequently a difficult developmental challenge facing South African adolescents as unemployment is a pervasive problem in the country. Living in a disadvantaged community merely exacerbates the dilemma for many adolescents.

Methodology

The investigation was based on an interpretivism paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998) involving understanding and interpreting meanings as they are revealed during interactions. The research design was mixed method (QUAN-qual)[7] (Frechtling & Sharp, 1997; Hanson, Creswell, Clark, Petska & Creswell, 2005) in nature resting extensively on the case study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Mouton & Marais, 1990; Neuman, 1997; Rosnow & Rosenthal, 1996). The pre-post quantitative design is the core empirical thread which is implemented to give credence to our conclusions. The particular individual was a purposefully selected (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001) young, black male from a high school[8] in a previously disadvantaged community. Selection criteria called for an adolescent from a disadvantaged South African community experiencing the effects of unemployment (such as limited job opportunities, low levels of literacy and qualifications, poverty and low household income) in his daily life.

An *intervention*, spanning 11 hour-long sessions, was developed and implemented once a week over a five-month period (Vermaak, 2007). The intervention incorporated narrative career facilitation activities (Cochran, 1997) to support the acquisition of achievement motivation in the youthful participant. In order to compile a *baseline image* of the participant, the following psychometric tests were administered prior to the intervention: the *Achievement Motivation Profile* (*AMP*) (Friedland, Mandel & Marcus, 1982), the *Differential Aptitude Tests* (DAT-S) (Owen, 2000), the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* (MBTI) (Van Rooyen, De Beer & Proctor, 2001) and the *Rothwell-Miller Interest Questionnaire* (Hall, Halstead & Taylor, 1986). The results of the DAT-S (average overall aptitudes) and the MBTI in particular offered an indication (and, indeed, supporting explanation) for the client's potential for improvement. According to the MBTI (profile: *ESTJ*), the participant is usually comfortable applying his standards of what is correct, efficient, and sensible to his environments. His systematic approach to getting the job done and his ongoing respect for details and rules communicate a sense of responsibility and reliability to others who feel he can be trusted to follow to completion. Post-intervention, the AMP was again implemented to compare the participant's achievement motivation scores.

Qualitative data sources[9] were (i) *observation* (Angrosino & Mayz de Pérez, 2000) by the investigators, documented in field notes and a research diary (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997), (ii) *visual data* of intervention artefacts of the participant, documented as photographs (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2007), and (iii) *informal conversational* data (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2000) during the interaction between the participant and researchers, which were recorded and transcribed.

For the purpose of *data analysis*, the documented data were organised, and categories, themes and patterns were identified. Finally, the data were evaluated and categorised (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). We focused on themes related to social-cognitive career theory in order to explore and describe any increase (or not) in the achievement motivation of the participant.

Literature control was then conducted in order to compare the identified categories with existing knowledge on achievement motivation.

Ensuring the trustworthiness of the inquiry

Trustworthiness was ensured in the study by using various rigour strategies during the data collection and analysis. Table 1 lists the strategies used to guarantee the quality of the study.

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[7]   QUAN-qual here signifies that the primary mode of investigation in the current study was quantitative but that a qualitative component was present.

[8]   Afrikaans speaking, in Grade 11 in an Afrikaans-medium high school.

[9]   Due to space constraints, we do not report on, report or integrated all data into the results.

Table 1: **Strategies to increase and enhance rigour during data collection and analysis**

Rigour during quantitative research phases	
Triangulation	Information was obtained from the research participant's parents, teachers and the research participant himself. Information was also obtained from the *AMP* measuring instrument, a literature study and a critical text study.
Participant correction	The participant was given the opportunity to read the *AMP* results and the themes that had arisen during the intervention and to comment on them.
Use of rich, penetrating descriptions to indicate the findings	Information on the participant's environment as well as the participant's verbatim responses were used in the study. The systems within which the participant functions were studied in depth.
Focus on possible researcher bias	The researchers' self-reflection on the *AMP* results was open and honest and is reflected in the study.
Presentation of negative/ contradictory information	Information obtained from the *AMP* was reported as fully as possible as was information that could be regarded as contradictory in respect of the categories mentioned.
Peer rating 'debriefing'	The researchers used inputs from other psychologists and therapists who were familiar with the *AMP*.
Member checking	The researchers frequently discussed the *AMP* findings with the participant to validate or invalidate the findings.
Selective use of data	Data were not used to verify findings in a biased way. Knowledgeable avoided colleagues provided assistance in this regard.
Deductions supported by adequate proof	Generalisations were made only if the overall findings could support such generalisations.
Avoidance of subjective interpretation	Because the *AMP* was standardised in the United States of America (USA), the researchers did the data analysis as objectively as possible. The *AMP* has not been standardised on a representative s*AMP*le of students in South Africa.
Rigour during qualitative research phases	
Credibility	Triangulation: many types of evidence were collected for diverging and converging of evidence. Prolonged engagement in the field: numerous observations were made across different times and places. Continuous observation of the participant was carried out during the research phases.
Dependability	Audit trail: this was done to assess the adequacy with which raw data had been reduced and analysed. Verbatim accounts were produced (low inference descriptor).
Confirmability	Chain of evidence: data, methods and decisions made during the project were thoroughly documented Reflexive methodological accounting was done.
Transferability	Reflexivity – observations were documented in a research diary. Detailed description of the particular setting of the participant and the intervention: sufficient information was given on the context of events for readers to judge the applicability of the findings to other known settings.

(Compiled from Creswell, 2003, 196-197; McMillan & Schumacher, 1997:407-409; Seale, 1999)

Ethical issues

Measures to ensure the research participant's well-being were implemented throughout the study. Informed assent (participant) and consent (his parents) were obtained, and confidentiality was maintained. The researchers gave feedback to the participant during all the phases of the inquiry, which precluded any deception on the part of the researchers. The research findings were released in an accurate and responsible manner.

Limitations

The current study has its limitations because the intervention was not piloted and also because the *AMP* was used (this psychometric instrument has not been standardised for use with the diverse South African population).

Presentation of the results

Quantitative results

Table 2 shows a comparison between the *AMP* pre-test and post-test scores of the participant. The *AMP* results indicate that the participant *possessed* certain achievement motivation qualities *prior to the postmodern intervention* in all but one subtest, namely 'work habits'. He revealed average *motivation* in the 'motivation for achievement' subtest. Similarly, in terms of the 'inner resources' subtest, he demonstrated average levels of *patience*. Regarding the 'interpersonal strengths' subtest, he indicated high average *personal diplomacy*.

Table 2: Comparison of the *Achievement Motivation Profile (AMP)* pre-test and post-test scores

Subscale	Description of scale	t-score[10] pre-test	t-score post-test	difference score
Motivation to achieve scale				
Achiever	Degree to which students perceive them-selves as achieving	39	49	+10
Motivation	Need to achieve and motivation to be successful	54	55	+1
Competitiveness	Need to win or exceed previous standards	47	60	+13
Goal directedness	Students' sense of purpose or clarity of goals	49	58	+9
Inner resources scale				
Relaxed style	Perceived level of relaxation or tension	47	50	+3
Happiness	Perceived level of happiness or sadness	43	45	+2
Patience	Perceived level of being steady and persistent	57	51	-6
Self-confidence	Perceived level of self-confidence	39	50	+11
Interpersonal strengths scale				
Assertiveness	Perceived level of assertiveness	52	47	-5
Personal diplomacy	Degree to which students are willing to act diplomatically in person-to-person contacts	60	57	-3
Extroversion	Whether students are externally or inter-nally oriented when interacting with the environment	52	46	-6
Cooperativeness	Degree to which students perceive them-selves to be cooperative or resistive in relationships	44	51	+7
Work habits scale				
Planning and organisation	Extent to which students value planning, organisation, self-discipline, attention to detail and follow-through	48	53	+5
Initiative	Extent to which students perceive them-selves as having the energy or aptitude to initiate action	42	47	+5
Team player	Extent to which students perceive them-selves as able to perform cooperatively as effective team members	42	56	+14

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[10]   Above average: 70-79; High average: 60-69; Average: 50-59; Low average: 40-49; Below average: 30-39.

On the whole, the participant *scored higher on the AMP during the post-test*. The post-test *AMP* scores also indicated a decrease in four subscales – three of which fell within the *interpersonal strengths* scale.

Control of the study

Since this was not an experimental study, we could not control the life circumstances of our client. As far as we could establish, however, there were no significant changes in his life throughout the five month period of counselling. However, the client continued to suffer economic privations and hence we have a situation of *ceteris paribus* which lends support to the argument that the intervention had an effect. Therefore, since we believe that all else had remained relatively equal in his life, we surmise that the results at hand may be cautiously attributed to the counselling.

Qualitative results

In terms of achievement motivation, several themes emerged qualitatively in the study. In the following section, we align these themes with the *AMP* scales and subscales that have significantly higher scores in the post-test. Although the impression may be created that verbatim reports from client's sessions are by and large restated without making more meaningful interpretations inclusive of our own psychological engagement with the client and the resultant data, failing in the process to utilise the full potential of the co-constructive nature of interpretivist research, our intention is to present a nuanced understanding of the participant's achievement motivation as it emerged during the postmodern career facilitation intervention.

Team player

The participant indicated a keen interest in *personal relationships*. Likewise, he articulated the need to *belong* – especially to a group. He also expressed his *willingness to help*, which aligns with a specific role within a team/group setting. To authenticate this theme, we submit some extracts[11] pointing to the ease with which the participant works interdependently:

> To one day have a family. I also want to be a model dad for my children … friendship is important.
> (Session 4, while exploring the collage)
> What makes me happy is that I know there are people who care for me and love me.
> (Session 5, while writing his life story)
> That I often associate with friends and family … that I care for others a lot.
> (Session 6, while discussing descriptions of himself)
> I'm going to open a rugby institute because I want to help kids to reach for their dreams like I do.
> (Session 11, exploring future career options)

Competitiveness

The participant demonstrated the need to be *successful and to achieve*. Correspondingly, he verbalised his insight into *using opportunities*. He was especially vocal regarding competitiveness in the *sports domain*. The following extracts reveal his increased aspiration to win or exceed previous standards.

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[11]   All extracts are translations by the authors of the original Afrikaans transcriptions.

What will also make me happy is when I receive an award for what I do, and if I receive some or other achievement.
(Session 5, when writing his life story)
To reach your goal, you have to use your opportunities.
(Session 4, while exploring the collage)
When I wanted to play in the Craven week, I tried until I got there.
(Session 8, discussing his early memories and success experiences)

Confidence

The participant's *sense of responsibility* was apparent. In addition, he verbalised the need for *self-actualisation*. In the same vein, his verbalisations indicated a *realistic life view*. We present some instances of moments demonstrating his increased assurance and self-reliance:

To make something of myself – become something.
(Session 4, while exploring the collage)
I know I can do something about it, like learn more – then I believe I can do better … don't stress as much as in the beginning.
(Session 7, while constructing his lifeline)
I think like in a name which puts together both, good and bad. Something like 'success story'… . To do the best with what you can.
(Session 9, while constructing a future story)
One should just not set <u>too</u> high dreams which can't happen – you must know yourself and <u>then</u> decide. But now that I'm positive about myself, now I can write and explain the dreams clearly for myself.
(Session 9, while constructing a future story)

Achievement

As stated earlier, the participant expressed his aspiration to *achieve and be successful*. His utterances indicated insight into *self-regulatory* behaviour related to sports achievement and success. He also alluded to *goal directedness*, and the notion of *perseverance* became more characteristic of his speech. We present a vignette of a conversation during Session 7 as well as transcript selections to confirm his movement towards goal achievement and task completion:

(Vignette from Session 7, construction of a lifeline)
Participant: Always watched TV when rugby was on. Thought one day I want to play for this or that province.
Researcher: And then?
Participant: I believed I could do it … keep on practising.
Researcher: What does this tell me about who you are?
Participant: That I just dream bigger dreams … continue, don't stop.
Researcher: Can you control the fact that your knee is injured?
Participant: No, I could not really prevent that.
Researcher: Could you control the fact that you got up and continued?
Participant: Yes, I believe that. I must continue. I must not give up.

What you do, you do fully … when you start with it, and you don't stop…
(Session 4, while exploring the collage)
Afterwards I see … why did I not do what I thought I should do? And then I remember for the next time.
(Session 5, when writing his life story)

I like to control myself and … things that happen around me.
(Session 6, while discussing descriptions of himself)
He has the ability to go on with a thing; he doesn't like doing a thing halfway.
(Session 8, discussing his father as his role model)

Discussion of the data: Advancing achievement motivation through postmodern career facilitation

The pre-test and post-test comparison of the *AMP* results indicates that the postmodern career facilitation *intervention impacted positively* on the development of achievement motivation in the participant. The increase in subscale scores can plausibly be attributed to the postmodern career facilitation intervention. The fact that the participant's *AMP* scores increased in the *overall scores of all but one of the four scales* illustrates the *breadth of impact* of postmodern career facilitation when aimed at developing achievement motivation.

Equally, the high frequency of the subscale increase in the scale *motivation for achievement* suggests the *depth effect* of postmodern career facilitation on the participant's acquisition of achievement motivation. In this regard, the participant's post-test *AMP* scores indicated that his achievement motivation had developed and consisted of high average *competitiveness*, average *goal directedness* and *motivation*, and low average *achiever* aspirations. The participant's increased scores in *self-confidence* (*inner resources* scale) and *team player* (*work habits* scale) similarly indicated progress in his achievement motivation acquisition.

Whereas the scale *work habits* did not feature any established achievement motivation characteristics prior to the intervention, the post-test *AMP* scores indicated improvement in all three subscales. Thus, the participant's *work habits* (planning/organisation, initiative, team player) seem to have been *positively influenced* by the postmodern career facilitation intervention.

Conversely, the participant's *interpersonal strengths* scale shows a decrease in all but one subscale (*cooperativeness*). Interestingly, when we reflected on the participant's achievement motivation characteristics prior to the intervention, we noted that three of these subscales (*assertiveness*, *personal diplomacy* and *extroversion*) fell within the *interpersonal strengths* scale. One explanation could be that he gained self-knowledge during the intervention (as suggested by some of the extracts in the previous section) and re-evaluated his self-beliefs and interaction tactics. The new self-insight may as a consequence have led to a change in his socialisation strategies. Support for this interpretation could be the improvement in his cooperation as well as in his team player approach possibly signalling a *change from individualist-assertive towards collective-collaborative interpersonal strategies*.

Concluding comments

In the current study, we looked at achievement motivation from a social-cognitive perspective taking into account the cognitive, affective and conative aspects of human functioning (Bandura, 2001; Zimmerman, 1989). Whereas our client, who was confronted with contextual adversity had little motivation to act or persevere, it seems as if our intervention instilled in him the belief that action on his side would lead to improved achievement. Seemingly, our intervention, coupled with his newly-acquired perceptions of improved self-efficacy and an ability to achieve at school played a potential role in his adaptation in respect of his motivation to achieve more adequately. This development has the potential to impact positively on his career development and career facilitation processes (Osche, 2003). Our results correlate positively with the views of Betz (2004), who believes that persons' perceptions of their background (including gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, as well as nature and quality of educational opportunities) potentially impact their personal competence.

In order to broaden the applicability of the findings, we believe that the study should serve as a pilot for the postmodern career facilitation intervention (Vermaak, 2007) for replication in a larger number of cases. We do not suggest changes to the sessions, but we do suggest incorporating discussions with meaningful role players in participants' lives as a means of controlling (to some extent) for external influences on achievement motivation. Also, we recommend *future investigations* into the sustained impact (or not) of postmodern career facilitation on the achievement motivation behaviour of adolescents facing unemployment.

The findings of the present study support the use of postmodern career facilitation approaches to stimulate awareness (and possibly change) regarding achievement motivation. Accordingly, we propose that postmodern career facilitation approaches be used alongside more traditional career development processes.

Summary

We believe the participant may be well equipped to start confronting the complexities of negotiating career planning when faced with unemployment. He appears motivated to realise specific goals that could stand him in good stead in his career development. It seems he would be comfortable collaborating with others when seeking a job (or seeking to generate an income). Also, in looking for an income or career, he may well strive to surpass his previous achievements and utilise available opportunities.

We believe the transcriptions of the participant show the efficacy of using postmodern career facilitation to support the adolescent's acquisition of achievement motivation. For instance, exploring the participant's past achievements, and identifying role models during the intervention process, may have resulted in an increase in reported levels of confidence. Similarly, reconstructing alternative future stories may have stimulated awareness of the participant's socialisation needs and abilities, possibly resulting in increased cooperation and team player scores. However, we realise that the article does not provide generalisable evidence that the particular postmodern career facilitation technique under study can make a significant impact upon raising a client's capacity to deal with unemployment. Such a claim is far too ambitious for a single piece of case study research. Our main aim was to provide case study evidence of how the postmodern career development facilitation technique can influence the development of achievement motivation. While the verbatim evidence from the counselling sessions superbly enriches this claim, we cannot conclude that the counselling procedure can impact upon employment aspirations in the South African context *per se*.

Sequel

The authors have learned that the respondent referred to in the case study was recently elected to the Junior Springbok rugby team. We sincerely trust that our intervention has contributed to his phenomenal success, albeit in a very small way.

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