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Canterbury Christ Church University

Action without action planning: the potential of the Career Thinking Session in enabling transformational career learning and development

Barbara Bassot, Canterbury Christ Church university

Abstract

This paper examines the application of the Career Thinking Session (CTS) model to career guidance and counselling practice with young people through a critical consideration of a qualitative research study focusing on the case study of a client involved in the transition to higher education. The pilot study is summarised and the setting for the research is described. The origins of the CTS are critically evaluated in relation to a number of relevant strands from published literature. The interpretivist qualitative methodology is then defended. A case study of one client is then presented to highlight themes identified in the data, showing the impact of the CTS model and its possible effectiveness as a tool for enabling agency, building confidence and establishing greater self-efficacy. The paper concludes with some insights into the ways in which critical thinking in relation to self and career development can be encouraged and supported through the use of the CTS.

Keywords

Career Thinking Session, career, critical reflection, limiting assumptions,

The pilot project

Research into the Career Thinking Session (CTS) model began in 2011 as part of the Network for Innovation in Career guidance and counselling in Europe (NICE) project. This project gave the opportunity to explore some new approaches in order to begin to evaluate their effectiveness for practice. Having been introduced to the work of Kline (1999), a pilot project was undertaken to begin to examine the possible application of the model to career guidance and counselling. An in depth qualitative study was carried out with three adults (Author and Reid, 2013) and from this Kline's coaching model was adapted for career guidance and counselling practice.

Kline's model has some similarities with familiar staged models (Egan, 2007; Culley and Bond, 2011); it is goal directed but, unlike other models, focuses specifically on enabling the client to challenge their limiting assumptions. The model demands a deep level of reflection on the part of the client (the Thinker) and finely tuned listening skills on the part of the practitioner (the Listener). The six steps in the model are followed in sequence and the Listener moves on to the next step only when the Thinker has said everything they want to say in response to the question posed in a particular step. Using the model as Kline wrote it, involves asking the same question several times, which can appear odd when using it initially. Kline's model is shown in Figure 1 below.

Findings from the pilot research suggested that the CTS model gave clients a valuable space for deep reflection that they all seemed to appreciate in their busy lives. The model's focus on challenging limiting assumptions meant that a high level of trust was needed on the part of the client, which was achieved through skilful rapport building and intense active listening. In addition, there seemed to be two particularly important facets of the CTS that were worthy of note. First, the absence of any action planning for the future seemed unusual, if not

incongruous in a discussion about career development. However, follow up conversations showed that in spite of this, all clients without exception took action following their participation. Second, in Step 3 Kline uses the word ‘goal’ (see Figure 1) which participants seemed to find difficult. Goal setting appeared to be far from their minds and too specific for the issues that they wanted to discuss in the CTS.

The pilot study also raised a key question, which, following presentations of the research, practitioners began to ask; would this model work with young people or is it only really suitable for adult clients? Interestingly, the researcher’s own limiting assumptions then began to surface; she assumed that the CTS would not work well with young people, that the reflective space would be too difficult and uncomfortable and, as a result, there would be lots of awkward silences. She imagined that many would say “I don’t know” and thereby her initial assumptions that the CTS is only suitable when working with adults would be confirmed. It was when one particular practitioner stated firmly that the model was desperately needed in their school as students simply have no time to think, that she decided to take the research forward and trial the model with some young people.

Background to the research

The research set out to explore the application of the CTS model to career development with young people, encapsulated by the following research question; how effective is the application of the CTS model when engaging with young people in a career discussion? The research was carried out in a youth café in the south east of England. The café is a registered charity that aims to ‘give troubled youth a safe place to go’ (café website). The atmosphere is informal and supportive, and the young people who use the café have a strong say in what

happens and how it is run. A range of different activities are held there including support groups related to health issues (such as mental and sexual health) and guidance and support in relation to drugs, alcohol and a wide range of personal issues such as problems at home, school or college. The work is holistic and young person centred with an emphasis on enabling young people to make their own decisions with support. The café also offers young people opportunities for work experience. It has become a vital source of support for young people in the area since the demise of the local Connexions service.

Working collaboratively with one of the workers in the youth café, two young people volunteered to participate in the research in order to trial the CTS model. Both participants were 17 years old and were in transition; they seemed confused about their next steps. They hoped that the CTS would give them some clarity about their future and were keen to support the research. This paper focuses on the interaction with one young person whom the researcher has called Holly in order to preserve her anonymity. Holly's case was chosen because of the particular insights it gave into the impact of the impact of limiting assumptions on potential career development.

Literature review

Before moving on to discuss the research itself, it is important to critique a range of relevant published literature, starting with Kline's model itself. Because of a lack of published literature and critique of Kline's model, it is also important to critically consider a range of concepts associated with the CTS and the findings from the case study, and the published literature that accompanies them. These are definitions of coaching and its rise in popularity, goal theory, action planning, assumptions and transformational learning.

Kline's (1999) book is extremely practical and includes no reference at all to any theoretical

underpinning. It appears to be drawn solely on her extensive experience in human resource management and organisational development, which is a weakness when seeking to apply it in a research context. A literature search revealed only a small number of academic writers citing her work (de Haan, 2008; Hall, 2013; Brown and Busby-Earle, 2014) and all are writing in the area of coaching. It appears that the model has not yet been subject to critique.

The model itself appears deceptively easy to use, but is extremely demanding in relation to the skills needed from the practitioner. The six steps follow in sequence, but like any linear model, it is questionable whether the session would always be most effective if the steps were followed in their particular order. As stated previously, Kline's model involves asking the same question several times. In practice this can make the session appear somewhat stilted and may not be necessary when used by a skilful practitioner able to pick up on the important cues being offered by the client.

The rise of coaching

Kline's model is widely used in the field of coaching . An online search showed a wide range of individuals and organisations offering coaching, sometimes referred to as career coaching, or life and career coaching. It is important to be clear about what coaching is, but finding a single definition is difficult. Key words and phrases associated with coaching include improving performance, maximising potential, increasing effectiveness, change and action (Pask & Joy, 2007; Rogers, 2012). It is seen by many as holistic (Yates, 2014) and focuses on identifying choices (Rogers, 2012). Many of these resonate with the corporate settings of Kline's experience. Rogers (2012:7) offers the following definition which encapsulates many of these elements.

'Coaching is a partnership whose aim is to achieve speedy, increased and sustainable

> effectiveness through focused learning in every aspect of the client's life. Coaching raises awareness and identifies choices. Working to the client's agenda, the coach and client have the sole aim of closing the gaps between potential and performance.'

The description of coaching as 'speedy' is in stark contrast to Kline's approach (underlined by the title of her book '*Time to Think'*) where she emphasises the importance of taking time to reflect in a deep way. This reveals tensions and differences of thought within the field of coaching theory.

The term coaching also raises some potential difficulties, in particular the question of whether it is the same as career counselling, advice and guidance. The term counselling is not used widely in the UK, and in relation to careers work it differs from therapeutic counselling because 'the problems that clients present with often concern career development.' (Kidd, 2006:2). A term more often used is careers advice, although this is also problematic as it implies receiving wisdom from an expert who directs people in the best way forward. It also assumes that clients already know what they want (a career as a …), are seeking advice from someone who is more knowledgeable than them and that the adviser will tell them what to do. This is clearly contrary to notions of client centredness and enabling clients to make their own decisions. The term career guidance presents similar difficulties and implies that the client is being guided by a knowledgeable expert who lead the way so that the client can follow. Bearing in mind the difficulties that already exist with such terminology, adding the term coaching could serve to complicate things even further. Bearing in mind the difficulties that already exist with such terminology (Barnes, Author & Chant, 2011) adding another term could serve to complicate things even further. However, many agree that coaching is not the same as counselling (Rogers, 2012) and it is also clear that counselling skills are used in all these areas of professional practice..

Goal setting

In the domain of coaching, goal setting is central and Kline's work is no exception to this (Kline, 1999; Brockbank and McGill, 2012). Goal setting is an important element of several guidance models and it can be helpful; many clients find it an effective aspect of planning their next steps. Based on Locke and Latham's (1990) five step approach (clarity, challenge, commitment, feedback and complexity) the notion of SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound) goals is very well known and offers a useful description of action planning with clients. As in the field of sport, the coach encourages the client to set goals (e.g. within the next five years I would like to be at the level of Chief Executive) and then helps them to work out how they can achieve them. This usually involves completing tasks successfully, leading to achievements, in order to make progress towards a desired outcome; often referred to as task and ability goals (Maehr and Anderman, 1983; Nicholls, Cheung, Lauer, and Patashnick,1989).

However, the concept of goal setting is also problematic and a closer examination of Locke and Latham's five steps reveals the dilemmas it raises. The first step (clarity) suggests that it is difficult to set a goal if you do not know what you want to achieve. Many clients (like the young people in the study) come for career guidance because they are very unclear about their future; indeed (like Holly) they might describe themselves as being confused. Setting goals, therefore, is very far removed from their current position and can feel like an impossible task. Thinking about career can simply feel too complex (step five); one way of coping with the level of complexity involved is to erect boundaries around options, thereby making the challenge (step two) more manageable. However, this can also involve lowering aspirations and accepting limiting assumptions. Ongoing commitment (step three) to such a complex process is difficult, particularly when feedback (step four) can be scarce.

There is a vast array of literature on goal setting in addition to that which focuses on tasks and achievements, and a full examination of these lies beyond the scope of this paper. However, two particular areas might shed some light on the CTS. The concept of ability goals as discussed by Dweck and Leggett (1988) concerns the demonstration of ability in relation to others. This can be both positive and negative and could link with the CTS in the area of limiting assumptions; if students compare themselves negatively with those around them, they might then lower their aspirations. The second is the concept of social goals (Urdan and Maehr, 1995), which are concerned with gaining the approval of key people such as parents, friends and teachers. Social goals are described as 'affective' (Urdan and Maehr, 1995:218) as well as being cognitive and linked to performance. The affective dimension appeared important in the case of Holly including the impact of those people around her.

Action planning

Action planning is closely associated with goal setting, and is defined by Borgen and Maglio (2007:174) as 'a goal and systematic and concrete actions to be taken to reach this goal'. Action planning has been seen for many years as an important part of the career guidance process, enabling clients to move forward in their development. For example, following the introduction of the Connexions service in England in the early 21st century, career services were offered with a clear focus on outputs (i.e. reducing the numbers of young people Not in Education Employment or Training or NEET), and action planning with all young people was seen as a central element of tracking their progress towards positive outcomes. However, during this period there was much anecdotal evidence from practitioners about the lack of action taken by their clients following action planning. Research by Colley and Hodkinson (2001:344) showed that what they termed 'prescriptive action planning' imposed by the government at the time 'undermined effective guidance work by driving it towards

information giving'. This somewhat simple, technical rational approach was seen as ineffective in enabling clients to move forward. This brought the value of action planning into question; whilst it can help some, it is by no means a solution for every client.

Assumptions

The notion of challenging limiting assumptions lies at the heart of Kline's model. An assumption is a premise, supposition or belief that something is a fact, and making assumptions involves taking something for granted. Brookfield (1995:2) describes assumptions as 'taken-for-granted beliefs about the world and our place within it that seem so obvious to us as not to need stating explicitly.' Interestingly he uses the term 'hunting' in relation to our search for assumptions; this seems to imply that we know they exist, we want to find them and do something about them, but that they are trying to escape from us. Assumptions are based on previous experiences and can have an enormous impact on career development. In particular negative assumptions can serve to limit what we believe we can do. However, this is not meant to imply that all assumptions are limiting assumptions. Some assumptions are positive and can help us to aspire to achieve more, although overly positive assumptions can also make us over aspire and lead to us aiming for things that are beyond our grasp. Limiting assumptions are identified by the client during the CTS as things that are preventing them from moving forward (see Step 3 in Figure 1) and are part of the client's worldview.

Kline (1999) describes three levels of limiting assumptions each lying at a deeper level than the one before; facts (which tend to be on the surface), possible facts (which again can be fairly superficial and are often based on hearsay) and bedrock assumptions. Bedrock assumptions are deep rooted and include things that we have come to believe about ourselves

and our position in the world (Author and Reid, 2013). The identification of the bedrock assumption is a particularly important aspect of the CTS as this often acts as a significant barrier to an individual's career progression as it serves to limit their self-belief.

Challenging bedrock assumptions can be a difficult process and demands a high level of critical reflection on the part of the client. In the same way as practitioners are asked to demonstrate reflexivity and to challenge their own assumptions (e.g. regarding what a particular client might, or might not, be able to achieve), the CTS demands that the client does this too. Done sensitively, this process could enable the client to foster their self-efficacy beliefs. Done clumsily it could serve to reinforce the client's negative views of themselves. Bandura (1986) describes self-efficacy beliefs as an individual's judgement of their ability to carry out actions in order to reach their goals. Those with a high level of self-efficacy believe that they are capable of organising themselves in order to carry out actions to achieve their goals. This links with the concept of agency, defined by Bruner (1996:35) as 'the sense that one can initiate and carry out activities on one's own.' However, it is important to emphasise at this point that this does not mean that anyone can achieve anything.

Two particular writers offer insights into how assumptions are formed in the light of past experiences. First, Argyris' (1982) "Ladder of Inference" shows that when similar situations occur over time, we tend to see what we expect to see through selective observation. This selective observation in relation to career development can mean that individuals see their future as they expect to see it, following experiences they have had. If their experiences are positive, their aspirations are likely to be high, but if they are negative, they are likely to limit their thoughts about what they can achieve. Second, Mezirow's (1978; 1981) seven levels of reflectivity help us to examine the origins of our assumptions and to begin to question their

accuracy. Mezirow argues that assumptions are always culturally situated and that reflecting within the realm of critical consciousness can begin to change the way we think about things through perspective transformation. This seems particularly important in relation to the CTS as it indicates that our perspectives of self can change as we challenge our assumptions. Like Kline, Brookfield (1995) describes three levels of assumptions; paradigmatic, prescriptive and causal. In particular, there are some clear similarities between Brookfield's paradigmatic and Kline's bedrock assumptions as they both play a vital part in structuring the world as we see it and our views of 'reality'. Interestingly, Brookfield argues that paradigmatic assumptions have become so much a part of an individual's thinking that they will not necessarily be recognised, will only be examined critically after a great deal of resistance, and discovering them can be quite surprising and even shocking for the individual concerned. This indicates that the CTS is likely to be a challenging process for clients and practitioners.

Transformational learning

It is widely accepted that learning has the potential to transform a person's life. Illeris (2014), drawing on the work of Taylor (2009), identifies six principles that can lead to transformative learning; acknowledging individual experience; encouraging critical reflection; engaging in discussion and dialogue with self and others; having a holistic orientation; being aware of context and building authentic relationships. In particular, the second principle (encouraging critical reflection), the third (engaging with discussion and dialogue with self and others) and the sixth (building authentic relationships) seem to be vitally important when considering the focus of the CTS on challenging limiting assumptions for the following reasons. Critical reflection is at the heart of the CTS and offer clients the time and opportunity to think at a deep level. Discussion and dialogue offer clients a space for deep reflection. As in any

counselling situation, this space needs to be safe and relationships need to be authentic for clients to feel comfortable to disclose.

In particular, Illeris (2014) argues that Mezirow's approach places too much emphasis on the cognitive process, and pays too little attention to the impact of feelings and values on learning; an argument also made for some time in relation to career (Kidd, 2004). He argues that a holistic process of 'see – feel – change' is more suited to transformational learning rather than a purely rational one. This seems important as limiting assumptions are not necessarily rational, but are based on past experiences that an individual might construe as being positive or negative, which can sometimes be based on their emotions. The CTS could help people to be aware of their 'habits of mind' or their patterns of understandings. These could be internal or external, are often learned from the process of socialisation in childhood and can be within or outside our awareness. Illeris emphasises the importance of emotional and cognitive processes and their inseparable nature. He is also clear that transformation can be both progressive and regressive.

Methodology

In this section a defence of the research is offered and of the approaches taken. The theoretical framework of the study and its position in relation to the theories of knowledge that informed it was one of social constructivism and interpretivism, with a focus on 'attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them' (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994:2). Unlike the positivist paradigm, from this perspective knowledge and truth are not absolute, but are created through processes of social interaction; this supported a subjectivist epistemology, where the researcher sought to create

understandings via a process of social interaction and interpretation. Collin and Young (1992:2) point to the usefulness of interpretivist approaches when studying career, arguing that people construct career in social contexts, and that 'in order to make sense of the events in their world, people have to interpret those events in terms that are meaningful to them'. In this particular study, knowledge about the ways in which Holly made her decisions was constructed by her with the support of the researcher (Author, 2011); the researcher sought to encourage Holly to communicate and interpret her perspectives by facilitating the CTS. Holly and the researcher created understandings via a process of interaction and interpretation, where 'what we take to be objective knowledge and truth is the result of perspective' (Schwandt, 1994:125). In particular, the research focused on the changes in Holly's perspective during the CTS.

The research was qualitative in method and during the process verbal data was gathered which could then be analysed and interpreted. In this instance it was also important to select a technique that would provide the researcher with an opportunity to engage with clients in the process of constructing meaning through the interaction of the CTS. This meant that the research took on the form of participant observation, where the researcher fulfilled the role of observer as participant (Gold, 1958; Junker, 1960). It was important for the researcher to understand her position in the research, to make a conscious decision to follow the steps in the model and, in particular, not to seek to influence Holly by making any suggestions to her about how she might interpret her experiences and what she might do in the future. The researcher could be criticised for bias in relation to data gathering and data analysis and she was careful to practice reflexively in order to avoid this as far as possible (Etherington, 2004). In addition, a theory testing case study method was employed (Bassey, 1999; Yin, 2014), which provided verbal data that was rich in interpretations and meanings, giving

insights into why Holly did things as well as what she did. This then lead to some 'fuzzy generalisations' (Bassey, 1999) which might be applied by practitioners to some of their clients when using the CTS, although not to wider populations.

The CTS undertaken with Holly was recorded in such a way as to seek to reduce the impact of the recording by making it as unobtrusive as possible. Following this, the data was analysed using the following theoretical frameworks. The three levels of assumptions as discussed by Kline (1999) and Brookfield (1995) were both utilised and the findings in each were compared with the other. In addition, the data was analysed for any evidence of the process of 'see – feel – change' (Illeris, 2014). During data analysis, three key themes were identified as being significant; challenge, clarity not confusion, and limiting assumptions. These were identified through a detailed analysis of the words of Holly in the CTS, which served to immerse the researcher with the data collected. Topic codes based on Holly's words and key words from the literature highlighted above were grouped together to form the themes, and the data was then coded against them.

The case of Holly

At the time of the research Holly was 17 years old. She left a local grammar school (a school that selects pupils on the basis of their high academic ability) when she was 16 to pursue a course in Health and Social Care at a local college with the aim of entering a career in nursing. She was reaching the end of her course when she volunteered to participate in the research. Figure 1 shows the questions that were posed by the researcher.

Challenge

During Step 1 it became clear very quickly that Holly felt disillusioned with her college course. She no longer seemed interested in her studies and began to question deeply whether or not she still wanted a career in nursing. She clearly found the course dull and spoke in an animated way of wanting to do something more challenging. Her lack of motivation was very apparent, and she admitted "I might not even finish the course". She seemed to feel a very real sense of a lack of achievement, summed up by her words "even if I do finish it, I don't think I'll get the grades I need" to gain entry to a degree course in nursing. Her levels of motivation for study seemed extremely low. Holly herself used the word "challenge" when speaking about what she wanted to achieve from the session in Step 2; she expressed a wish to be in a more challenging environment in the future and a desire to do something different. In Step 3 she became much more animated when she began to think about things that she would find more challenging, such as events management. Her words "exciting", "interesting" and "fun" contrasted sharply with her description of her current course as "so boring I often don't bother to attend" and of the prospect of "getting stuck in a career in nursing".

Clarity not Confusion

During Step 2 Holly also used the word "confused" several times; one of her stated outcomes from the CTS was clarity. Here her feelings of anxiety began to come to the fore and her wish to be able to see more of the way ahead; specific goals were not discussed and these did not seem to play a part in Holly's thinking at this point (Locke and Latham, 1990; Brockbank and McGill, 2012). Her state of confusion, would probably have made it very difficult to set goals at this point. She wanted "a clearer idea of what I'm meant to be doing, or at least what I might do, because at the moment I have no idea and there are so many

things I can do." Holly, like many people who face uncertainty, longed to be able to see things more clearly.

During Step 3 Holly appeared to begin to see her situation with greater clarity and used a metaphor to describe her current position. She spoke in an animated way "It's like I can see two roads in front of me". Whilst gesticulating, she pointed to one road (on the left) leading to nursing and the other (on the right) as the road to "other things". Even at this point, the CTS seemed be to helping her to gain some of the clarity she wished for, at least in relation to her current situation, if not regarding her future. Being able to articulate her current position clearly and in her own words seemed to enable her to take a further step forward in her understanding, as she began to recognise her need to make a decision regarding which of the two roads she would follow. She described her current position as a junction on a motorway; she could either stay on the less challenging route to nursing or take the turning towards somewhere else where she might find more stimulation. A lack of a decision would inevitably mean that at best she would drift into something that she would not enjoy, or at worst become totally lost in her state of confusion. This seemed to show that she was becoming more aware of her own agency. She seemed to be able to see that it was time to make a decision regarding which of the two roads she should follow next. It was as if she had reached a junction on a motorway; she could either stay on the route to nursing or take the turning towards somewhere else. During an examination of the factors involved in making that decision she spoke of the enjoyment and motivation that she felt about doing something like events management and used the words "exciting" and "fun" which contrasted sharply with her views of her current studies and the prospect of a career in nursing.

Limiting assumptions

During Step 3 Holly expressed a number of limiting assumptions that she felt were preventing her from taking the road to "other things". These were analysed in relation to each of Kline's (1999) three levels. At the first level of facts Holly was very aware that this was all new for her. She stated "I haven't done anything creative before, I've always done Science". This seemed to make her feel anxious and uncertain about the future. She knew that having spent a year at college, she faced the prospect of "being a year behind, then taking a gap year and being two years behind" her peers. These relationships seemed important to her, in particular the opportunity to study with people of the same age (Urdan and Maehr, 1995). She also raised financial issues which were of concern to her and seemed to limit her horizons. When asked she said "money – nursing courses are paid for, other courses you have to pay for yourself". This was correct at the time of the research but is now no longer the case in the England. This appeared to be stopping her from looking at alternative courses. All of these facts were making the decision difficult.

At the second level of possible facts she said her parents were worried that she might not get a job; they felt that a career in nursing offered security and Holly clearly felt that too. She spoke of a career in nursing as "very safe" and "you'll always have a job for life", although, of course, this will not necessarily be the case. The influence of her mother's own career in nursing was apparent. By contrast, her view of working in events management as "insecure" seemed to make her question this as a possibility. Other possible facts that seemed to be limiting her progress related to her own view of her creative ability; she said "there will always be people who are better than me".

After some deep critical thought and with some prompts from the researcher, such as “is there any more you would like to say about that?” Holly was able to identify her bedrock or paradigmatic assumption by saying “deep down, I suppose I feel I’m not talented enough”. This showed that she questioned her ability and seemed to surprise her (Brookfield, 1995). This was followed by a lengthy pause.

In Step 4 Holly began to challenge her own limiting assumptions by articulating the positive opposites to each of them in turn. For example, in relation to the possible fact of a career in events management being insecure, she said “if I knew that events management could offer me a stable career, how would I feel?” her responses showed that she was beginning to consider her options more openly and deeply and with more enthusiasm. At one point, in relation to her bedrock assumption and a career in health, she posed the question “If I knew I was talented enough to be a doctor, how would that make me feel?” This was followed by a long pause, during which her verbal and non-verbal expressions showed a glimpse of how her thought processes seemed to be developing. Eventually she said that she now felt unsure about a career in health. She felt much more positive when she posed the question “if I knew I was talented enough to do something different, how would that change things for me?” From this Holly was able to phrase the Incisive Question (IQ) for herself as “How can I use my talents?” This IQ cut through Holly’s bedrock assumption and she began to see herself as a person with talents rather than someone who was not good enough; this was evidence of a step forward in the process of perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1978; 1981; Illeris, 2014). This also appears to show that her confidence in her own abilities was beginning to grow.

When the researcher posed the IQ for the first time in Step 5, Holly's whole demeanour appeared to change. She began to speak quickly and freely about how this would change things for her. The researcher posed the IQ several times and Holly spoke of finishing her course, not giving up on her ideas and doing what she herself wanted to do. She appeared to shpw that she was becoming more aware of her own agency in the process (Bruner, 1996). She spoke of being more confident in herself and her abilities as her self-efficacy beliefs seemed to begin to increase (Bandura, 1986). She said that she would examine the possibility of changing her course and taking the "other road", and spoke of applying for something more challenging and enjoyable as her levels of motivation seemed to rise. She also spoke of the possibility of taking a gap year to give her more time for critical reflection regarding her future. By this point her self- efficacy beliefs appeared to be growing stronger.

In relation to outcomes, it appears that the CTS had an impact on Holly, although, because it is not possible to know what Holly would have done without the opportunity for a CTS, this cannot be stated categorically. In Step 6 she was asked what she had appreciated in the CTS and she said "You kept asking me the same questions, so I really had to think about things. Each time you asked me the same question I had to think deeper and deeper as time went on. You made me think a lot – I really needed that." This relates particularly to the IQ and it seems that the CTS gave her time and space to reflect critically on her future. Following the CTS, Holly kept in regular contact with the staff at the café, and through this the researcher was able to track her progress. During the months that followed the CTS, Holly decided to return to school for a year to take more academic qualifications. She then applied to university successfully for a degree in events management. Without planning any action with the researcher, Holly was confident and motivated to take action herself as she took

ownership of her future. This seems to point to the importance of time a space for critical reflection in career learning and development and the need for the client to be at the very centre of the process in order to take ownership of it.

Holly spoke freely of how she saw her current position; she expressed her feelings openly and through the process of challenging her limiting assumptions her perspectives began to change (Illeris, 2014). Expressing her emotions, both the negative ones that she had regarding her current position and the positive ones she had later about her possible future, seemed to help her to challenge her limiting assumptions. This appears points to the value in providing clients with opportunity to voice their emotions, in order to enable them to see the important part they play in career development and, in particular in seeing their limiting assumptions more clearly. This could also have important implications for promoting equality and raising aspirations.

Whilst a single case study cannot be generalised to wider populations, the impact of the CTS on Holly seems apparent, and it is possible, but by no means ceratin, that it could have a similar effect on other clients, particularly those who present as being confused and lacking in motivation. In such instances, instead of being tempted to ask the clients to set goals which they might find extremely difficult, using the CTS model could be a helpful alternative. Of course, no single model will be useful in all situations and selecting an appropriate model to use is a key part of the professional judgement of the practitioner concerned. However, having the CTS as part of a professional ‘toolkit’ can only serve to enhance what can be offered.

Conclusion

It is clear that further research into the CTS model is needed to examine its potential in a range of settings. Learning how to use a new model is challenging; training, practice and feedback would be necessary to help even experienced practitioners to feel confident in using a model that is simple on the surface but extremely demanding in relation to the skills required. This would mean that the full potential of the CTS could be assessed and from this, more case studies might emerge. As a new approach in guidance and counselling that helps clients to navigate confusing and tempestuous labour markets, whilst building their confidence and resilience, it seems fair to say at this point that the CTS shows somet promise.

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Figure 1 Kline's (1999) model

Step 1 – "What do you want to think about?"

Step 2 – "What do you want to achieve from the rest of the session?"

Step 3 – "What are you assuming is stopping you from achieving your goal?"

Step 4 – “If you knew that ... what ideas would you have towards your goal?”

Step 5 - Writing down the Incisive Question.

Step 6 – Appreciation.