

# The Career Thinking Interview: a reflective space for career development

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# Overview

- A constructivist approach
- Reflection, reflectivity and reflexivity
- The benefits of creating space for reflection for practitioners and clients
- A reflective model for working with clients (CTS)
- The pilot study and results
- Paper submitted for peer review

# What is meant by a reflective approach?

- Reflection: naming problems and framing the context to reach potential solutions, through an analysis of experience and prior knowledge. But needs a metacognitive space in busy practice
- Reflectivity: the internal process of reflection – how does reflection take place? Co-constructing new meanings with others – to see more clearly
- Reflexivity: a reflexive understanding includes awareness of the personal, social and cultural context and its influence on both the speaker *and the listener* – how we co-construct knowledge about the world and our place within it.



# Creating a space for reflexivity in career guidance practice – why bother?

- Good investment in time – avoids ‘quick fix’ solutions
- On-going development of practice in a changing world
- Prevents stagnation
- Making practice creative
- Awareness of attitudes and values
- Deeper examination of issue – to avoid assumptions
- Systematic enquiry to improve and deepen understanding of practice.

Reid & Bassot (2011) Reflection: A Constructive Space for Career Development in McMahon, M. & Watson, M. *Career Counseling and Constructivism*, New York: Nova Science

# *Residing in silence and wonder: career counselling from the perspective of 'being'.*

A purposefully reflective approach avoids rushing to solutions that close down the opportunity for more meaningful engagement. Hansen & Amundson argue for 'felt presence'. As an example of a deeply reflexive approach to career counselling that is truly centred on the 'client', they write about 'stillness, openness and undoing'.

Hansen, F.T. & Amundson, N. (2009) Residing in silence and wonder: career counselling from the perspective 'being'. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance*, 9, 1, 31-43

In our study:

We wanted to experiment with an approach that moved away from short term work for short term solutions.

We aimed to explore the potential for an approach which stayed with purposeful reflection, slowing the process down in order to construct a 'safe transitional' space (Winnicott, 1971) for meaningful career thinking.



# 6 Steps in the process

- 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?' Finding the positive opposites
- Step 5 Writing down the Incisive Question then posing it a number of times
- Step 6 What have we appreciated in one another?

# 'Hunting assumptions'

## **Kline (1999)**

- Facts
- Possible facts
- Bedrock

## **Brookfield (1995)**

- Paradigmatic
- Prescriptive
- Causal

'Deconstruction and reconstruction' (Savickas, 2011) which can lead to 'perspective transformation' (Mezirow, 1978; 1981)

# Pilot study

- 'Is applying Kline's thinking session model to career counselling useful?'
- A qualitative approach using biographical methods
- One retrospective (notes taken)
- Three Career Thinking Sessions
- The three sessions were recorded, transcribed and analysed



# Themes from the transcripts

- The value in discussing the process of change – individuals saw this differently (e.g. *“walking on sand”* and *“getting to firm ground”*)
- Career in the context of their lives as a whole – work life balance
- All valued the safe space for purposeful reflection: *‘the gift of time to think’*



# Thinking about the Career Thinking Session

*“To have caused me to think and to have caused me a little bit of confusion ... being with indecision is fine as an outcome of this. Hopefully it will prompt me to think more”*

*“it allowed me to think about it. There was magic in that question, there was flexibility – suddenly a barrier was no longer there. It gave me permission to think about it for the first time.”*

# Continued

*“Greater confidence ... changed my perception of my ability to do this ... more of an abundant attitude”*

*“I appreciate having the sort of time and space to talk about all the weird little bits that I’ve been thinking about before and you don’t because it’s not often you get someone who is just going to sit there (laughs)”*



# Implications for practice

- Navigating barriers to innovation: time
- Being able to live with negative capability in trying innovative methods
- CTS does not focus on goals and action planning like other staged models, but on the client's limiting assumptions
- Challenging limiting assumptions is not easy: for practitioners and clients, requires a high level of trust
- Resist the imperative to identify problems and find solutions: reflection can't be rushed
- Further research to identify those clients and practitioners who would find the CTS engaging for career construction