

Career counselling

can work to facilitate more direct communication and encourage a more supportive atmosphere. It should be recognized, however, that this involvement can also seem overwhelming unless sufficient client autonomy is maintained throughout.

Discussion

The various strategies which have been outlined represent a number of options for understanding and working with primary group members in career counselling. I have developed these techniques during the past few years as part of my counselling and consultation practice.

The first set of strategies have assumed a very central role in my counselling approach. As standard procedure, I use drawings in the first interview with a sentence completion form and questionnaire being part of the homework assignment. I also include as part of the homework a questionnaire for primary group members (strategy two: indirect). With this broad based approach I am able to elicit considerable information in terms of the social situation and this is discussed in the second counselling session as part of the collaborative analysis. In this second session a decision regarding whether to invite primary group members to a counselling session is made (strategy two: direct). This step is usually employed in situations where the client feels supported by primary group members and values the opportunity to engage in joint planning.

The third strategy represents a very different approach to career counselling. In this sequence clients and primary group members work closely together and the counsellor adopts the role of consultant. As this requires a considerable investment of time and energy on the part of the primary group member(s) it is sometimes more difficult to implement. Nevertheless, it is a direction worth pursuing with those who are interested, particularly in times when there are cutbacks in counselling and a growing need for increased public awareness and support.

In order to be effective in gathering and interpreting information on the primary group it is important to have some theoretical framework as a foundation. To acquire the necessary knowledge in this area, career counsellors must be prepared to consider additional input. This does not mean that they must train as family therapists, it simply means that they

must acquire some basic understanding of family dynamics. With this preparation they will be able to offer a more comprehensive career counselling service.

References

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Analyzing Experiences using an Adaptation of a Heuristic Approach

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There are few who would deny that an analysis of experiences provides a suitable starting point for career exploration. In establishing the nature of experiences, two basic issues emerge. The first concerns which experiences to consider, while the second focuses on the depth and breadth essential for a meaningful analysis. This latter issue seems particularly important since a major shortcoming of many guidance approaches is the failure to achieve a sufficiently comprehensive career exploration (Dudley & Tiedeman, 1977; Super, 1974). In this paper we shall address the issue by showing how a structured interviewing approach can be applied in the systematic analysis of experience. This procedure has the advantage of not only developing a series of in-depth exploratory questions, but also tying these questions to a theoretical framework.

The Heuristic Approach

The basic ingredients of the heuristic approach were developed by Pike (1967) for

the study of languages and human behavior. These ingredients were refined and organized by Young, Becker and Pike (1970) in a textbook on rhetoric. In this book they demonstrate how experiences can be examined from a variety of perspectives in order to: (a) recall a wide range of information; (b) show different relationships between the various segments of information; and (c) facilitate discovery. While their purpose was to facilitate exploration in the context of rhetorical composition, the approach is capable of wide application in other fields and seems particularly appropriate for self exploration and career exploration in the counselling field.

Young, Becker and Pike (1970) suggest that in order to understand any unit of experience, i.e. a physical object, an event or a concept, one must begin by discovering the relevant details in terms of the following factors: (a) contrasting features; (b) range of variation and (c) distribution. Suppose, for illustration purposes, that one was trying to understand and appreciate someone's interest in reading. The contrasting features would be those elements which make reading particularly enjoyable and serve to distinguish it from other activities, i.e. intellectual stimulation, time alone. The range of variation might focus on the fact that enjoyment can only be attained by reading certain types of books. The distribution takes account of the context in which the reading takes place. In pursuing this aspect, relevant information would include information such as where a person does the reading and at what time of day.

In addition to discovering relevant details, a unit of experience may also be approached from a number of other perspectives. These other perspectives focus upon the static (particle), dynamic (wave) and network (field) qualities. Continuing with the illustration that was used above, the interest in reading also can be described from the perspective of particle, wave or field. From a particle perspective, the focus is upon the present format of the activity which is considered as a non-changing entity. With a wave perspective, however, one begins to consider the dynamic features. For example, ten years ago a person may have enjoyed only reading light fiction, today, this interest may include autobiographies and in the future they might see themselves moving toward historical novels. In terms of a field perspective, the interest in reading can be viewed as one part of a larger system. With this focus the relation-

ship of reading to other leisure, work and social activities can be explored.

A comprehensive understanding of any unit of experience is achieved when perspectives (particle, wave, field) and unit characteristics (contrasting features, variation, distribution) are considered together. Listed below are illustrations of how these can be organized into a coherent set of operations and questions (Young, Becker and Pike, 1970, p. 127).

1. *Particle/Contrast*

View each activity as an isolated static entity.

What are its contrastive features, i.e., the features that differentiate it from similar things and serve to identify it?

2. *Particle/Variation*

View each activity as a specific variant form of the concept, i.e., as one among a group of instances that illustrate the concept.

How does each activity vary from time to time?

3. *Particle/Distribution*

View each activity as part of a larger context.

In what context does each activity typically occur?

4. *Wave/Contrast*

View each activity as a dynamic event. What are the highpoints of each activity?

5. *Wave/Variation*

View each activity as a dynamic process. How is it changing?

6. *Wave/Distribution*

View each activity as a part of a larger, dynamic context.

How do contexts merge with and influence each activity?

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7. *Field/Contrast*

View the unit as an abstract, multi-dimensional system.

How are the components organized in relation to one another?

Analyzing experiences

8. *Field/Variation*

View the unit as a multi-dimensional system.

How do particular instances of the system vary?

9. *Field/Distribution*

View the unit as an abstract system within a larger system.

What is its position in the larger system?

What systemic features and components make it a part of the larger system?

By focusing attention, first on one feature of the unit and then another, the basic requirements of effective inquiry (vary your assumptions) can be realized. As a result of this process a great deal of information is brought forward, the relationships between the various segments of information are considered, and the discovery process is facilitated.

In applying this approach, Hayakawa's (1964) distinction between "map" and "territory" needs to be kept in mind. Although a great deal of information can be generated, each aspect only reveals a partial truth about the unit being investigated. Furthermore, the sum of the parts does not equal the whole.

Applying the Heuristic Approach in a Career Counselling Context

In adapting the heuristic approach to career counselling, the first task was to define what would encompass a unit of experience. Rather than focusing on a single experience, we decided to group experiences. After trying a number of possibilities we came to the conclusion that at least five experiences represented a workable unit. One further decision was whether to use a positive (activities I enjoy) or negative (activities I dislike) focus when requesting activities for analysis. The positive approach seemed to offer the most promise and was utilized in the selection of activities.

The process of identifying questions from the nine cells was more difficult. In many respects the approach was so all-encompassing that the inquiry seemed to go on forever. In view of this, we decided to limit the process so that only some of the more obvious questions were included. Listed below are the nine questions which were developed as a brief structured interviewing procedure for use with adults and adolescents.

1. (Adults) Make a list of at least five activities that you enjoy. Try to choose these activities from as wide a range of experiences as possible. What is it about each of these activities that makes it enjoyable?

(Adolescents) Make a list of at least five activities that you enjoy. Try to choose these activities from as wide a range of experiences as possible, including at least three things you enjoy doing in school. What is it about each of these activities that makes it enjoyable?

2. Give some concrete illustrations (at least two) of each activity and give instances where it was really enjoyable and other times when it was less enjoyable.

3. What types of situations (settings) are involved in each of the activities you have listed? In formulating your answer, remember that people are a large part of any situation.

4. Given the various reasons why you like the activities listed, what is the one key thing which makes each activity outstanding for you?

5. (Adults) If you consider the key elements that you have identified in Question 4, how have they developed with the passage of time? What would they have looked like five years ago and what do you think they will look like in the future?

(Adolescents) If you consider the key elements that you have identified in Question 4, how have they developed with the passage of time? What would they have looked like two years ago and what do you think they will look like in the future?

6. Specify ways in which future events might affect the types of activities you take part in.

7. If you examine closely the activities you have listed, can you identify some similarities (central themes)? Do you see any relationship among the themes that you have identified? Try to rank order them in terms of importance.

8. The relationships that you have identified in Question 7 (including the rank ordering) might change in certain situations. Can you think of times when this could happen?

9. The themes that you have identified suggest certain types of jobs and life style. Try to identify what these might be. To assist you with this task you might want to compare your thematic structure with Holland's classification system.

Although the questions that have been listed are basically the same for adults and adolescents, some differences can be found in questions one and five. In asking adolescents for a list of at least five activities that they enjoyed, we noticed that there was a general tendency to exclude school subjects. When asked further about this the standard response was that you couldn't admit to liking a school subject if given an open-ended choice. Thus, we made the request more specific and the range of responses increased. Another difference was the span of time we asked people to look at in the past and future. Due to the rapid level of change that characterizes adolescence, the time span was shortened from five to two years.

As was mentioned earlier, the context for the above questions is a structured interview, part of a preliminary career exploration activity. This procedure has been employed in individual and small group counselling with students at the high school and college level. In a group situation, the students are divided into pairs and take turns being interviewed by each other. The emphasis upon this particular aspect of the counselling is generally covered in two sessions.

Our informal evaluation of this approach indicated that students reacted very favorably. A considerable amount of information in terms

of interests, abilities and values was generated in a relatively short period of time. The information recalled and the patterns that emerged seemed to facilitate the discovery process and to provide a solid foundation for career decision making.

Conclusion

Our attempt to use a heuristic approach as part of the career exploration process seems to have been successful. Rather than relying on the customary hit-and-miss strategy, the emphasis was upon a more systematic inquiry. By adopting the procedure suggested here, counsellors will have the security of knowing that the questions they are asking are comprehensive and have theoretical support.

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