

Reflective Career Thinking: A constructive space for career development

Exploring a model for career
counselling interviews

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Overview

- A constructivist approach
- Reflection, reflectivity and reflexivity
- The benefits of creating space for reflection for professional career guidance practice (practitioners and clients)
- Kolb and beyond!
- A reflective technique for working with clients
- The pilot study and initial indications

A constructive approach

- Wider cultural forms of understanding to elaborate clients' stories
- RP a curriculum subject across the helping professions – superficial or deep and meaningful?
- Purposeful reflection requires a 'safe' space
- In interviews - a dialogical process – a place to pause, for indecision, 'wavering', i.e. opening up a place for creative thinking

What's in a name?

- 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?

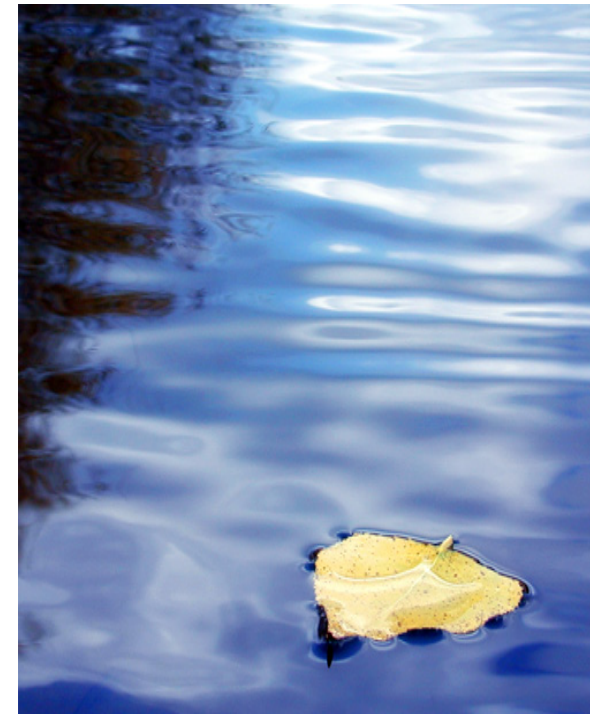
- Good investment in time – more ‘secure’ decisions
- On-going development of practice in a changing world
- Prevents stagnation
- Making practice creative
- Awareness of attitudes and values
- Deeper examination of issue – to avoid assumptions
- An aid for supervision
- Systematic enquiry to improve 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', as is evident in the following reflection on the counselling process:

“A session filled with activity needs to be tempered with a willingness to just “be” in the situation. Certainly this involves periods of silence, but it is more than just sitting quietly. At the most fundamental level it means that I need to have a sense of patience, self-assurance and confidence that the activities will be helpful if I just stay with them. This process proceeds at its own pace (often slower than I would like) and it is important that I don't try to force the situation (p.33)”.



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

Reflective Practice beyond Kolb – avoiding assumptions

- **Boud et al - 7 levels of reflection**

Level 4

Judgemental reflectivity

Level 5

Conceptual reflectivity

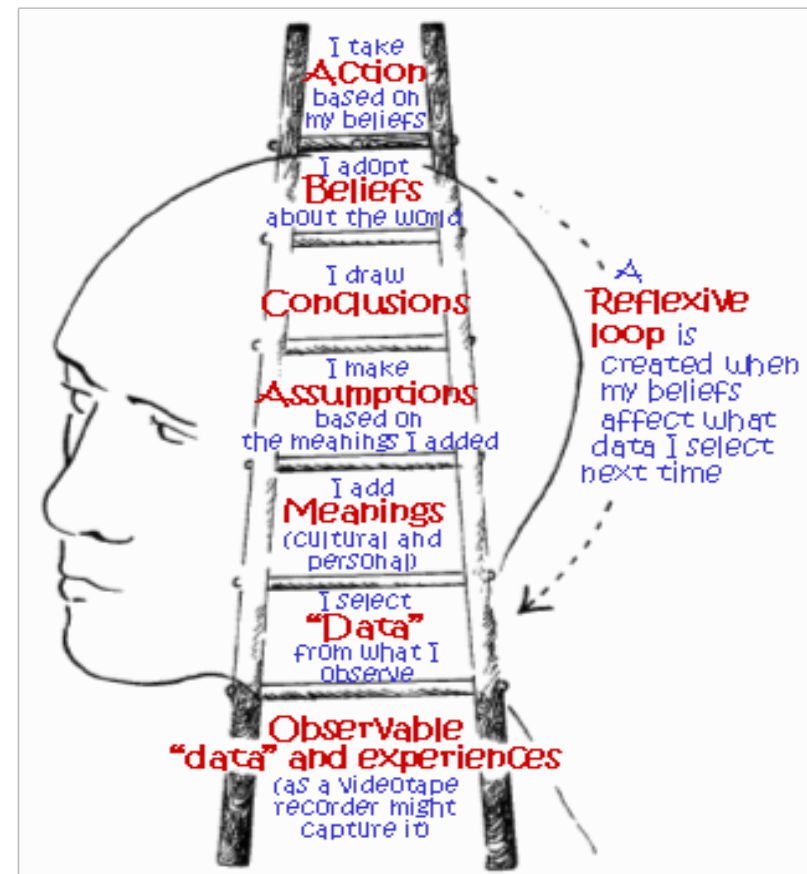
Level 6

Psychic reflectivity

Level 7

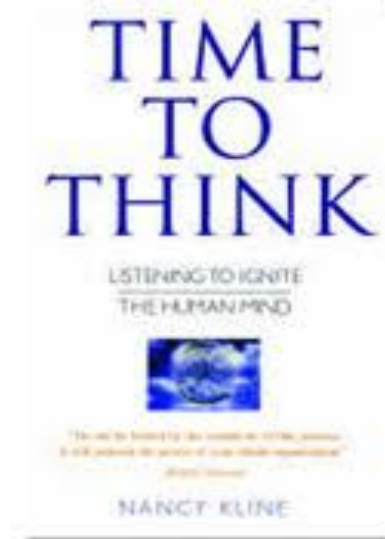
Theoretical reflectivity

- **Argyris's Ladder of Inference**



The Career Thinking Session

- Origins in the work of Nancy Kline (1989)
- Pioneered the theory and process of the Thinking Environment
- Organisational development and coaching
- Aims: to increase the quality of thinking through listening, and to ***challenge negative assumptions (barriers to progression)***



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?'

6 Steps cont.

- 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?

Pilot study

- Three Career Thinking Sessions
- One retrospective
- The three sessions were recorded, transcribed and an initial analysis was carried out
- Notes were taken in the retrospective
- Emerging themes for further analysis

Themes

- Permission and time to think
- A safe space for self discovery
- Indecision, wavering and confusion are fine
- An audience – some one who ‘just’ sits and listens. Saying it out loud makes it more real
- Bringing things into alignment, shifting perspectives
- Limiting assumptions *on both sides*. A reminder of the importance of reflexivity

Thinking about the 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” “from I can’t, to I could, to I can” (Barbara) ... “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)”

Issues

- Never underestimate the power of being listened to
- Asking the same question several times can feel uncomfortable, but I learned just to stay with it
- The Incisive Question had personal meaning – different from the practitioner's assumed question (solution based)
- Questions the need to move to action planning in the space of one interview. Reflection can't be rushed
- Navigating barriers to innovation
- Always a verbal approach?