

Career and Career Development

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From Career Guidance to Career Coaching

A short introduction

This short introduction gives an overview about career development theories, their limitations and incompleteness and explains the transition from the classical career guidance to the new approach of career coaching.

In the past ...

Research on career guidance started in 1909 with Frank Parsons and others (cited in Walsh, Savickas & Hartung, 2013) who developed the trait-and-factor theory. Later theories of career guidance are mostly (but not all) an extension of the trait-and-factor theory. In the early fifties a radically new theory of career development was created. Its main thesis is, that «career development is a lifelong development process» (Brown, 2002, p.5). But this theory had only little influence on practice. Later, John Holland developed a more comprehensive and dynamic trait-and-factor instrument which «is the most influential model of vocational choice making that is currently in existence» (Brown, 2002, p.6). Holland developed a hexagon model with the six occupation types of realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising and conventional. Most people in our culture can be categorized as one of those six types. People tend to look for environments which correspond to their main type (Holland, 1996).

Also well known in the world of career development is Schein's «Career Anchors» concept (Schein, 1985). While Holland invented six different kinds of occupation types, Schein uses eight different «Career Anchors». These anchors are: Technical/functional, general managerial, autonomy/independence, security/stability, entrepreneurial creativity, service/dedication to a cause, pure challenge and lifestyle. «Research on career anchors has shown that most people see themselves in terms of the eight categories». Today the trait-and-factor models still dominate practice and it seems unlikely that the major theories converge into a single model (Brown, 2002)

In the future ...

The world is getting more and more complex. While the trait-and-factor models do not fit any more and there are no sights of a new «general theory for a single model» different researchers developed new theories like «life-designing», «career construction» (Savickas, 2009) and even more progressive approaches like «the systems theory framework of career development and counseling» (Patton & McMahon, 2006). Savickas career construction theory consists of sixteen propositions. «Life-designing» is a concept for individuals in the knowledge societies of the 21st century, in a global economy and supported/driven by information technology. In those societies individuals are forced to design their professional and personal live dynamically. The issue of «The systems theory framework of career development and counseling» is as simple as complex; it says that everything is interconnected, nothing is absolute, human behavior can only be understood in the context in which it occurs and the only source of knowledge is the subjective frame of individuals.

Conclusion

Career counseling has developed from a static analysis of individual traits and factors to dynamic processes like «career construction» and «life-designing». Those processes link the individual with his personal disposition to the complex social and economic environment. The processes are driven by personal development, changes in society, technical developments and changes in the business environment. It seems that the old idea that career development is a lifelong development process has a revival. And with the systems theory perspective the individual is forced to work on his/her own career.

Because of those ongoing dynamic processes, the classic career counseling will be replaced more and more by solution focused and systemic-constructivist coaching. Those kinds of coaching are focused on the person and its context and the client is the expert in finding his/her own solutions. A good term, which explains this kind of coaching is called «career coaching» (Yates, 2014).

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