

The Effect of Narrative Career Facilitation on the Personal Growth of a Disadvantaged Student – A Case Study

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This article describes the effect of narrative career facilitation on the personal growth of a disadvantaged undergraduate student at a tertiary institution in South Africa. The participant was selected purposively from among a group of undergraduate students at the tertiary education institution who shared a similar background. The intervention involved Narrative Career Facilitation and occurred over a period of one year. Data on student career awareness were gathered using the Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator, the Differential Aptitude Tests and the Rothwell-Miller Interest Blank, as well as qualitative techniques. (including a collage, the life line, early anecdotes, as well as the life story techniques). Following the intervention, the student evidenced an improved future perspective and a more positive academic self-image. The process of narrative career facilitation had a positive effect on the overall personal growth of the student.

Keywords: narrative counseling, career facilitation, personal growth, disadvantaged student, diversity, qualitative assessment, career

Career counseling has been transformed worldwide over the past number of years, as evidenced by the paradigm shift from a trait-and-factor approach to postmodern (e.g., narrative) counseling. This transformation is marked by a move away from an exclusively quantitative approach towards a combined qualitative-quantitative approach (Savickas, 2000, 2007). Postmodern career counseling emphasizes the use of qualitative assessment techniques, as well as a focus on individuals and the way in which they construct their lives and careers. In the postmodern world view there is great emphasis on the capacity of individuals for lifelong learning and development (Savickas, 1993). Coupled with this change from the modern to the postmodern era, *occupation* is described as a dynamic, personal process that includes the client's social and historic background in the course of the career facilitation process. Career facilitation is seen as a lifelong process during which both facilitator and client should focus on the significance that individuals attach to their job experiences (Maree & Beck, 2004; Savickas, 1993; Thrift & Amundson, 2005; Watson & McMahon, 2005). The lifespan theory of Donald Super (1957; 1990) links up with the statements made above. Career development is seen as a multi-phased process stretching from early childhood years until late maturity – a lifelong period during which clients are empowered to make occupational choices (Langley, in Stead & Watson, 1999).

Until recently, career counseling in South Africa occurred predominantly without regard for the context within which facilitation was taking place or regard for the possibility that a qualitative approach (as a supplementary method) could perhaps render potentially indispensable information (Stead & Watson, 1998). Career counseling interventions must be culturally sensitive (Employment Equity Act No. 55 of 1998; Maree & Molepo, 2007). In a world that is gradually moving towards embracing postmodern¹ thinking, the facilitation of career counseling in South Africa needs to change accordingly. It is of cardinal im-

portance to reconsider the sole use of traditional methods and techniques of career facilitation (Maree, 2007). The career counselor was regarded as the sole expert and central player in the career counseling process (Lamprecht, 2002), inadequate provision was made for the diverse South African population groups, and not all cultures benefited from the use of the traditional approach in isolation (De la Rey & Ipser, 2004).

Career Counseling in the Postmodern Era. According to Maree, Bester, Lubbe and Beck (2001), career counseling in the postmodern era is characterised by a move from a top-down expert approach (*three-interviews and a cloud of dust*, Crites, 1981, p. 49) to a more collaborative approach. These authors maintain that empowering clients, enables the clients not only to potentially make their own career choices, but also to take responsibility for their career decisions and to design a more meaningful personal and career life. This changing/changed focus emphasises the empowerment of clients, rather than trying to counsel them largely on the basis of aspects such as their interests and aptitude. The focus is now on empowering the client in his or her career development (Ebersöhn, 2002).

In the postmodern era, consideration needs to be taken of the diversity of values, culture, styles of learning, personality types and religious convictions within society that influence career development. Interviews to identify life themes of clients (as these manifest within their life stories) play a decisive role in postmodern career facilitation (Savickas, 2007). Whereas the practice of traditional career facilitation on its own is characterised by the use of personality tests, aptitude tests and interest profiles, postmodern career facilitation is marked by the optimal use of conversations aimed at narrative career facilitation (Eloff, 2002). Savickas (2001) compares career counseling to McAdams' (1995) three levels of personality. Accordingly, he argues that interest questionnaires are able to capture the basic traits that are germane to occupational decisions and that

constructivist approaches are able to supplement this information, allowing for a complete picture of the client. In other words, postmodern approaches are able to explore the client's life story and place the questionnaire results (such as aptitude, interests and values) in context.

The narrative approach has great potential in culturally diverse settings (Maree, 2007). According to Stead and Watson (1999) it is important that South African career facilitators develop theories, models and techniques that derive from Africa. Accordingly, in this article we use a narrative career facilitation intervention with a disadvantaged South African student, taking his context and culture into account. In the subsequent section a number of key concepts are discussed so as to facilitate a uniform understanding of relevant concepts.

Narrative (storied) Career Facilitation

Postmodern career facilitation, of which narrative therapy is a corollary, is considered an umbrella term (Maree, 2007). In order to ensure appropriate narrative career facilitation, the facilitator should consider the client as an informed individual who never before had the opportunity to apply his or her own abilities in making sense of his or her problems (Cochran, 2007; Winslade & Monk, 1999). The client is considered the protagonist in his or her own drama (employment) (Cochran, 1997, 2007).

Storied career facilitation starts when the facilitator creates a safe atmosphere within which the client, who is being respected throughout, is invited to tell his/her story (Eloff, 2002). Hoshmand (1993) takes this idea further and states that the central function of storied/narrative career facilitation is to tell a story. He explains that the narrative is a means of bringing the past back to life and of interpreting current as well as future experiences appropriately (Cochran, 2007).

According to Winslade and Monk (1999) the stories that we tell about ourselves, and those that other people tell about us, bring our unique realities to the fore. Stories do not merely describe a person's life, but also compose one's view of oneself as a human being. The stories that are told eventually become a person's frame of reference of him-/herself (Eloff, 2002).

Goals of the Study

In this article we explore the application of qualitative narrative career facilitation to a disadvantaged university student in the form of a case study. The aim of this study is to determine the impact of narrative career facilitation on the personal growth and career choice of this student. The study sought specifically, to answer the following questions:

- a. Can a combined qualitative-quantitative approach be combined to facilitate the growth of a disadvantaged, undergraduate student?
- b. How practical is it to apply qualitative assessment techniques to a disadvantaged, undergraduate student?
- c. Is it meaningful to combine qualitative and quantitative techniques during career counseling to a disadvantaged, undergraduate student?
- d. To which extent does a disadvantaged, undergraduate student resonate positively with such an approach to career counseling?

Method

Paradigmatic perspective

This study is undertaken primarily from the qualitative, interpretivist epistemology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) so as to understand concepts/meanings as suggested by the participant himself. Even though a number of psychological tests have been administered, the comparison in regard to pre-post test was qualitative.

Idiographic/case Study as Research Design

A longitudinal interpretive case study was used as the research design. Time-series research (longitudinal study) was conducted in order to gather the same information about a single person over a certain period with the purpose of insight, discovery and interpretation each time rather than to test a hypothesis. We sought to record stability or change in the client (Neuman, 2000). Whereas both traditional and postmodern career facilitation were applied, the emphasis was on the postmodern approach and the traditional approach was used to supplement the postmodern approach.

Participant and Setting

Purposive sampling was used to select a participant. A disadvantaged student (from a poor economic background) was selected from a group of undergraduate students at a tertiary institution on the basis of his superior academic achievement in Grade 12 relative to peers. Criteria for selection were the following: The student had to be from a disadvantaged background, a university student in education who had achieved good marks at school and was currently studying education. The participant (Lebo²) was a 20-year-old Xhosa-speaking man enrolled in undergraduate studies in education. He is the second eldest of five children from a socio-economically disadvantaged background. At high school Lebo wished to study medicine or information technology, but his Grade 12 marks did not meet the minimum selection requirements for either of these fields of study. Thus Lebo decided to study education. Apparently he was initially sceptical about studying education, but his main motivation was to persist, as he had managed to obtain a study loan for this course and would therefore be able to obtain a tertiary qualification.

Procedure: Multi-method Data-gathering Plan

In total, nine career facilitation sessions were held at the local child and adult guidance facility on the campus of a university over a period of three months. Sessions took place on a weekly basis. The duration of sessions varied between approximately one and two hours. Since the research was part of a dynamic process, information was gathered and verified on an ongoing basis.

During session 1, Lebo and the three researchers (the main researcher as well as her two supervisors) got to know each other better, after which administration of the *Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)* (Martin, 1995) occurred. The *Differential Aptitude Tests (SAT-L)* (Owen, 2000) and the *Rothwell-Miller Interest Blank (RMIB)* (Hall, Halstead & Taylor, 1986) were administered in session 2, followed by Lebo making a during session 3. The main researcher was joined in the counseling session by at least one of her supervisors. The collage technique consisted of two phases. In the course of the first phase Lebo reflected on questions such as: Who am I? What is important to me in my life and where am I going? Have I ever dreamt about something and have I achieved any of my ideals so far? During

the second phase Lebo created the collage. During session 4 Lebo wrote his life story for the first time, he completed an informal workbook, which contained various activities, e.g., informal values, interest, study orientation and personality traits (Lamprecht, 2006) during session 5. A life line (Cochran, 1997) was completed during session 6, while Lebo was requested to identify personal assets and areas of strength, as well as provide early anecdotes as the second version of his life story during session 7. During the penultimate session, the same tests that had been administered prior to narrative career facilitation were administered (the tests were administered one year apart). The last session was devoted to consideration of the entire process of career facilitation as a whole. Lebo's personal growth was discussed and possible future plans were considered.

Informal as well as directed conversation was used prior to and during the research process to establish and sustain a relationship with the participant, as well as to gather information on an ongoing basis. Furthermore, Lebo and the situation were observed while intervention occurred in the form of narrative career facilitation. A period of one year passed between pre- and post-testing. Field notes were made in the course of the research process notes to keep record of conversations, observations, assessment opportunities and all intervention sessions. Lastly, a reflective diary was used to monitor the progress and course of the study. This diary enabled the researchers to direct their thoughts and enhance the credibility of the study by asking the question: "Where did we perhaps go wrong?" To avoid any miscommunication, all interpretations of the discussions were verified with the participant.

Ethics

Measures to ensure the participant's well-being were implemented throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from Lebo and the institution, and confidentiality was maintained. The researchers gave feedback to Lebo during all the phases of the inquiry, and the research findings were reported in a responsible manner. The study was provided with ethical clearance from the relevant educational institution.

Data-gathering

We used both psychometric and qualitative techniques to gather data. Whereas psychometric techniques were used to obtain an 'objective' profile (basic traits), qualitative techniques were used to explore Lebo's life story and place the questionnaire results (such as those pertinent to aptitude, interests and values) in context.

Psychometric instruments. The psychometric tests that were used in the current study (before and after narrative career facilitation) were the *SAT-L* (Owen, 2000); the *(MBTI)* (Van Rooyen, De Beer & Proctor, 2001) and the *RMIB* (Hall *et al.*, 1986). All tests were standardised in South Africa and satisfactory psychometric properties were reported. The tests were scored by an independent person who was 'blind' to the study.

Qualitative techniques. Qualitative data was gathered by conducting in-depth (one-to-one, semi-structured) interviews with Lebo and observing him. The life line technique of Cochran (1997) was used to facilitate the participant's 'inward' and 'outward' phase as suggested by Carkhuff (2009). A value profile was obtained by means of informal questionnaires and oral discussions with the student.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data was analysed during and subsequent to the data-gathering process in an attempt to understand the relationships between concepts, to identify patterns in the data and to determine whether any themes emerge from the data on the basis of which findings may be interpreted (Mouton, 1996). The data analysis strategy was based on the approaches of Marshall and Rossman (1989), as well as Denzin and Lincoln (2000). All the data was studied in order to obtain a complete picture. The data was analysed and broken up into manageable themes and patterns. Themes that were identified from the data repeatedly and that could be considered as the most important, were listed to avoid duplication. The themes were then coded and appraised (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Marshall & Rossman, 1989). For data coding units were first selected for analysis purposes, after which they were identified from the data. A list of codes (significance table) was compiled, groups of data were analysed and categorised and an external encoder (a colleague with many years of experience in the field of data coding) verified the identified themes and categories (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Marshall & Rossman, 1989).

Criteria for Quality Assurance

Trustworthiness. In order to enhance the trustworthiness of the study, issues of credibility, confirmability, transferability, dependability, as well as triangulation and crystallisation were addressed.

Credibility. Credibility (Creswell, 2007; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002) was facilitated first of all, by prolonged engagement with Lebo in the field. Numerous observations were made over time and in different places. Furthermore, continuous observation of the participant was carried out during the research phases. The data obtained, the methods used and the decisions made during the project were thoroughly documented.

Confirmability. The data obtained, the methods used and the decisions made during the project were thoroughly documented.

Transferability. The present study is based on comprehensive and extensive descriptions of the case study and no attempts were made at generalisation. Observations were first of all documented in a research diary. Furthermore, detailed descriptions of the particular setting of the participant and the techniques used were provided, and sufficient information was given on the context of events for readers to judge the applicability of the findings to other known settings.

Dependability. The data were coded independently by an external coder in order to enhance their accuracy and to ensure that the identified themes were an accurate representation of the data.

Triangulation and crystallisation. We utilised triangulation and crystallisation to evaluate contradictory data and to enhance the trustworthiness of the study (Creswell, 2007; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). Richardson (in Janesick, 2000) suggests that the term crystallisation rather than triangulation, be used in qualitative research: "Crystallization is a better lens through which to view the components in qualitative research" (p. 392). For this reason different qualitative data-gathering methods were used in the current study so as to facilitate crystallisation and enhance the trustworthiness of the study.

Intervention

We used Carkhuff's (2009) two-phase counseling strategy, as well as Egan's (2002, 2009) problem-solving approach to counseling to focus on Lebo's current self-exploration first, and subsequently examine his perspective of the future. Each is described next.

Carkhuff's two-phase counseling strategy towards career counseling. Carkhuff's (2009) two-phase counseling strategy applies to narrative career facilitation in that both the client's perspective at a particular moment in respect of him-/herself and the client's perspective of the future are explored (Ali & Graham, 1996). The strategy comprises two stages: an 'inward' phase during which the focus is on the client's current self-exploration and an 'outward' phase during which the client's perspective of the future is examined. The asset-based approach (Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2001) links up with Carkhuff's (2009) two stages. The asset-based approach focuses on the possibilities inside the person (inward phase) for moving forward (outward phase). There is a strong internal focus, which means that problem solving and the development of a mission has to originate from within the person him-/herself (Ali & Graham, 1996; Eloff & Ebersöhn, 2001).

According to this approach, it is the compassionate mindset of the career facilitator that enables the client's progress (planning from the position in which the client currently finds him-/herself, i.e., the 'inward' phase, to where s/he can aim for the future, i.e., the 'outward' phase). Successful career facilitation therefore depends on the career facilitator being attuned to the client's readiness to move between these two phases (Ali & Graham, 1996; Carkhuff, 2009; Thompson & Rudolph, 2000).

Egan's problem-solving approach to counseling. Egan's (2002; 2010) three-stage strategy applies to narrative career facilitation in that an attempt is made to turn clients' weaknesses into strengths and their problems into solutions. An attempt is made to empower clients to take responsibility for their own decisions, to identify their own, salient, comprehensive life themes and build upon these themes to negotiate crossroads (life-defining moments) so they can progress to designing successful careers and lives and make social contributions.

Stage one – initial phase: formulating the problem. The first stage of Egan's (2009) three-stage strategy refers to the client's *present scenario*. During this phase the client is helped to explore any problem situations and/or unused opportunities in terms of his/her *present scenario*. During career facilitation, the client should become aware of his/her career problem, in other words his/her concerns and poor or unused/undeveloped opportunities (Ali & Graham, 1996; Egan, 2002, 2009).

Stage two – middle phase: solving the problem. According to Egan (2002, 2009) the second phase is known as the solution phase. The client is assisted in developing and implementing future plans in order to move from what s/he wants to what s/he should do to achieve that. The crux of career facilitation is helping the client to set objectives/targets and achieve them.

Stage three – final phase: planning. Facilitators and clients focus during the third phase on activities or work that is necessary to actualise the client's desired outcomes. Methods must be found for bridging the divide between the client's present and desired scenario so as to realise the latter (Egan, 2002).

Results

SAT-L (Owen, 2000)

Information about the participant's aptitude (obtained by means of the SAT-L, pre-test as well as post-test, was used qualitatively. Because all SAT-L subtests have a standard error of measurement (SEM) of 1 (Owen, 2000), only Vocabulary (difference = 2) and Verbal reasoning (difference = 4) (the only two sub-tests in respect of which difference scores exceeded 1), are reported on in this article.

The MBTI (Van Rooyen et al., 2001)

According to the *MBTI* (pre-test), the participant's personality type (pre-test) is *ISTJ* (Intuition, Sensing, Thinking and Judging) with the following preferences: his task orientation, dependability and respect for facts draw him to careers that call for an organised approach to data, people and things. The participant's personality type (post-test) was *ISFJ*. The *thinking (T)* function was replaced by the *feeling (F)* function.

The RMIB (Hall et al., 1986)

The following preferential interest fields were identified by means of the *RMIB* (pre-test): Medical, social service, mechanical, numerical and musical. The client's preferred fields of interest (post-test) were numerical, social service, clerical, persuasive and scientific.

Process of Career Facilitation

Session 1. During this session the primary researcher explained the research process to Lebo and he gave written permission for taking part in it. Lebo then completed the *MBTI* personality type questionnaire.

He was initially sceptical about the proposed career facilitation. However, after the career facilitation process had been meticulously explained to him, he mentioned that he was more certain about the aim of the research and what his role involved. Lebo said:

When I came here I did not understand what I was going to do and I did not know what was required of me. Now I seem to understand what is required of me. What we are doing is career counseling. The sessions of this career counseling will also be published in a thesis, provided that my name and particulars remain anonymous.

He added that he had enjoyed filling in the *MBTI* and that he was curious about its outcome. *I found the majority of questions interesting and I am keen to find out what my answers reveal about me.*

Session 2. Lebo inquired about the meaning of sentences or words appearing in the questionnaires and took great care to make sure that all terms were understood properly. Since language barriers impact greatly on the validity of the questionnaire, the researchers were delighted to note the meticulous manner in which Lebo approached this facet of the assessment. He was calm and he worked unhurriedly to complete the questionnaires. While filling in the questionnaires he concentrated very hard and confirmed that he enjoyed filling in the questions: *I hope you don't mind me taking so long to complete the questionnaire but I am keen to do my best and I do not wish to rush.*

Session 3. In the course of the session Lebo decided to make a collage comprising the things he liked and the things he considered important. According to Egan (2002, 2009) this session can be described as the initial phase of his three-stage model. At the same time, Carkhuff's (2009) two-stage model

can also be identified during this session. Throughout the subsequent four sessions (collage, life story, informal workbook and life line) the 'inward' phase of Carkhuff's (2009) stage model was enacted. The 'inward' phase focuses on the participant's current self-exploration (Ali & Graham, 1996).

In the discussion of the collage the following themes were highlighted: *I like beautiful clothes and love dressing up, and thus I would like to be able to afford this one day* (material values) Furthermore he said: *My culture and my traditions are important to me, because that is where I come from* (cultural values).

Lebo worked serenely to complete the collage (See Figure 1).

Session 4. On concluding session 3, Lebo was requested to write his life story; depict it graphically or use any media or aid in doing so. However, he decided – without any hesitation – to write down the story of his life because he did not like drawing, and at the same time wanted to practise his English. He also filled in informal questionnaires during session 3, and we discussed these at the end of the session.

In the discussion of his life story Lebo focused on his personal background rather than on his interests, preferences, etc. This session gave the researcher the opportunity to move through the phases of the participant's life with him. The discussion of his life history also cast some light on his values, life roles and patterns of decision making. Themes that emerged repeatedly included the fact that he had positive family ties, a positive academic self-concept, and that he would love to help

others. He had a need for a tranquil environment; he acted rationally and fairly most of the time; he wanted to help other people, and routine was important to him.

The quality of Lebo's written work was surprisingly high, given that he had so often during the earlier sessions asked the meaning of words or taken time to express himself. His life story was written in a clear and logical in good vocabulary. This session was experienced in a particularly positive way by the participant as evidenced by the remark: *Time went by so quickly! I enjoyed the session even more than I was expecting to.*

Session 5. During the following three sessions (informal workbook, life line and assets), Egan's (2002) middle phase (solution phase) could be identified. In the middle phase, attempts were made to explore, together with Lebo, possibilities for a better future.

Themes that were highlighted during this session were the following: he would love to be able to afford material things (for example beautiful clothes and modern sunglasses); he had a positive future perspective; he was a grateful person; he could persevere and he worked very hard. He very much wanted to help other people and to work with people; he put a lot of pressure on himself to perform well and was very attached to his mother. He wished to improve his social and communication skills; he hoped to experience success and wished to contribute to the community.

Lebo was eager to talk about his role models. He mentioned the following:



Figure 1. Lebo Collage

My class teacher in high school is my role model. She was the person who looked after me; she saw something in me that I never thought of. She supported me very much in such a way that she even sacrificed her profession when they wanted all Xhosa-speaking learners to leave the school. She stood up against that and perhaps something could have happened to her. Besides that she encouraged us to study very hard and she even organised winter classes during winter school holidays.

Lebo stated that, like his role model, he would also like to help other people, and that he was in fact already trying to help others wherever he could.

Session 6. The 'inward' and 'outward' phases of Carkhuff's (2009) two-stage model can be identified during this as well as the next session (life line and assets). The 'inward' phase focuses on the participant's current self-exploration, while the 'outward' phase focuses on his perspective of the future (Ali & Graham, 1996).

From the life line it was clear that Lebo had focused mainly on experiences with regard to his studies. Themes that were identified repeatedly in this session included a positive academic self-concept and a positive future perspective; feelings of having achieved academic success and pressure on himself to perform well. Lebo remarked:

As you can see, I have always been a dedicated and motivated learner. I always wanted to study further and to get a good job so I can take care of myself and my family. I knew from an early age that I was clever and that I could do it.

Session 7. The aim of this session was that Lebo had to identify his assets (areas of strength) and had to recall early memories that he experienced as significant. Lebo wrote a second life story during the session, in which the focus was among other things, on his interests and values, rather than on his personal background.

Initially, Lebo took a while to identify his own assets and areas of strength. It seemed as if he was shy to identify and verbalise those assets and areas of strength. After adequate encouragement by the researcher he named the following assets:

I think I have communication skills that I do not use properly. Sometimes I find myself in a situation where I have ideas that I have to explain to a person, but due to my insufficient communication skills, I find it difficult to properly explain that and the reason behind it [a problem-saturated story]. I have thinking and problem-solving skills when it comes to mathematics [new solution-based story].

Other assets and strengths that were identified were his good communication skills, especially with the opposite gender, his patience, calm disposition and ability to explain concepts to others until they understood them. The positive influence that he could have on learners who had difficulty mastering mathematical concepts was subsequently discussed.

Lebo was again encouraged to write his life story in his mother tongue (Xhosa). However, he wrote one paragraph in Xhosa and completed the rest of the life story in English. According to him, he found it more difficult to express himself in Xhosa than in English. Themes that occurred repeatedly in the life story were a positive perspective on the future, a positive academic self-concept, positive family ties and the fact that he would like to work with people. Lebo remarked among other things: *I did not realise that this is what I can refer to as assets in my life and that I can utilise them more effectively.*

Session 8. Lebo mentioned that he had almost forgotten how exhausting the completion of the questionnaires was. He also mentioned that he found the completion of the tests during the post-test easier than during the pre-test, because he understood English better afterwards. The possibility of test-wiseness and familiarisation with the ability test in particular, need to be mentioned as possible limitations of this facet of the study.

Session 9. This session can be marked as the final phase of Egan's three-stage model. During this phase particular career possibilities were explored with Lebo (Egan, 2002).

Themes that followed from this session were that Lebo was motivated to continue giving his best after he had seen the results of the post-test for the *DAT-L*. He mentioned that it was encouraging to see that he had improved and that he believed it might, inter alia, have been because he had worked hard to improve his English (evidenced by his improved comprehension score). He also said that he learnt more about himself through the process of narrative career facilitation, especially about why he sometimes acted as he did (with reference to the *MBTI*). The *MBTI* is not narrative, and could be considered as more objective as it 'tells' people what their personality is, instead of their corroborating with counselors to discover their personality. Lebo was afforded ample opportunity to verify the results of the test.

During this session all the media that had been used during the nine sessions were discussed. Seeing that Lebo experienced his current field of study in education as satisfactory (for reasons of e.g., finances, interests and his desire to help others), the following possible plans for the future were identified: as soon as he completes his studies, he would like to teach Grade 8 and 9 Mathematics while completing his postgraduate studies. According to Lebo he does not want to remain a job level one facilitator, but wishes to be a head of department (this is in line with his values, i.e., wanting to acquire material possessions, like money, good clothes, cars, etc). Regarding the question as to why Lebo changed his focus from medicine or IT to education, research has shown that interests tend to crystallize in later adolescence and adulthood (Roberts, Caspi, & Moffitt, 2003). One plausible explanation for this change seems that Lebo had incorrect ideas about future career choices and what exactly these careers entailed.

Comparison of the Results of the Pre- and Post-test

SAT-L (Owen, 2000). The post-test scores showed that there had been a statistically significant improvement in Lebo's vocabulary score. As his social and economic environment had earlier been especially poor, it seems possible that this contributed to his initial poorer performance in this test, even though it needs to be acknowledged that a host of other factors, such as the testing environment and time of testing could have impacted his scores.

Lebo's reading comprehension improved statistically significantly too, which may perhaps be attributed to his exposure to English as language of instruction and medium of communication. This view was confirmed by Lebo's remark:

I have never spoken so much English in my life as I did during my time on campus! I was surprised to learn that the predominant language of communication in residence, too, is English and that even the Afrikaans students addressed me in English.

Feedback from Lebo in respect of the SAT-L. Lebo's stanine scores were shown and explained to him. The normal

distribution, as well as the SEM and SEM differences were explained. Lebo found it quite interesting to notice the difference in his test results. He hypothesised that the effort that he had made to improve in English could be clearly observed. He further stated that he was motivated by this, as he had made a great effort to improve his English by communicating with his friends in English, using a dictionary when he did not understand a word. He was extremely motivated to improve his English ability so that he could improve his overall performance.

The MBTI (Van Rooyen et al., 2001). A possible explanation for the change from thinking to feeling may be that the preference in his decision-making function changed gradually over the year, toward a more feeling-oriented decision-making function. We surmise that the change may have been due (at least to an extent) to his personality development, but we are aware that it is not entirely uncommon or strange for someone of Lebo's approximate age to move on the continuum from T to F, especially if the two scores are quite closely related (Van Rooyen, personal communication, 2009).

The RMIB (Hall et al., 1986). As explained earlier, there was a considerable change in the participant's interest profile based on the RMIB between the pre- and post-test. His interests were not shown to be consistent (Holland, 1985) before the intervention, but more consistency was noted post-intervention. The intervention may have helped him obtain insight into his interests, thus helping him to answer the questions in the questionnaire more easily and with greater insight. Lebo commented as follows on this aspect: *Initially, I was unsure about what was expected of me, did not quite know what to do and was afraid to ask too many questions.* During the post-test his numerical and social service interests occurred again. Thus, it could be hypothesised that these are more clearly differentiated interests. This is in line with the ISTJ personality type (Martin, 1995).

"Social service" was in both instances listed as the second strongest field of interest, and in conversations with Lebo, as well as through other media, it was confirmed that he would like to work with people and help others. It was interesting to note that the pre-test identified "mechanical" as the third field of interest, since Lebo achieved a stanine of three for "mechanical insight" during the pre- and post-test. When completing the informal workbook, Lebo confirmed that he did not like practical tasks. It is possible that the language aspect might have affected the results during the pre-test.

Summative Comparison of the Psychometric Test Results

Lebo initially thought that the completion of the questionnaires would be a waste of time, because he felt the same about it as about the general tests that he had to write: *Will this be the same as what happens in class? You write the test, get the results but never go back and discuss it properly like we did with these tests.* However, the researchers were at great pains to explain to him that the envisaged assessment would differ vastly from what he had been experiencing in class. At the conclusion of the sessions, he stated that it was a positive experience to compare the various sets of results, especially because he felt that he had "grown" during the process of career facilitation. When prompted on this issue, he remarked that he, for example, felt surer of himself and his future after the sessions, that he believed in his abilities to a greater extent and that he felt calmer: *I now understand myself, my strong and my weak points, better.* This comment made by Lebo is worth mentioning as it appears from this comment that clearly explaining the reason the test is used, what the client should expect during dis-

semination of results, etc. is important in career counseling assessment.

Admittedly, Lebo opined that the career facilitation was overly long. In his words: [T]his was a valuable experience, but it took too much time and should be shortened. It was interesting to confirm the information that had been obtained during the narrative career facilitation sessions with the test results rendered by the RMIB (interest inventory) and the MBTI. It appeared that the information the researcher had obtained on the basis of the two approaches corresponded to a considerable degree.

Predominant themes that were identified during the nine career facilitation sessions (match-up with the results of the quantitative assessment appears between brackets)

It emerged from the sessions that routine predictability is important for Lebo to function (in line with his J type). He takes his time before responding to questions and reflects carefully before responding (in line with his I type). He appears calm, has good manners and seems to be a grateful person who thrives on positive feedback (in line with his F type). He mentioned that positive feedback by teachers during his school career had motivated him to work hard and be successful. The results show that he is respected by others and that he would like to work with people (in line with his preference for "Social Service" on the RMIB). The results also indicate that he is warm-hearted, patient, dedicated and persevering, and that he would like to give his best and help other people (in line with his F type). His interest in numbers (Mathematics) also emerged (in line with his preference for "Numerical" on the RMIB). Another theme appears to be his positive family ties and great attachment to his mother. He would like to work at his social and communication skills because he believes that he does not always handle the messages that he would like to convey successfully. He has a positive future perspective and would like to be successful in his career and relationship with his family. He has a positive academic self-image, places pressure on himself to achieve, and is keen to establish clear plans to help him attain his career and life goals (in line with his S type).

It seems clear from the preceding paragraphs that the themes identified during the qualitative assessment match positively with the themes identified during the quantitative assessment. The strong alignment between the two sets of themes underscores the utility of the qualitative approach with this client (especially in light of his comments on the difficulties he experienced with the quantitative aspects).

Discussion

Process reflection. We initially thought that the cultural and gender differences between the researchers and Lebo would probably have an effect on the career facilitation process, in that he would perhaps not talk to us openly about his past and his ideals. However, we believe that if we had adopted the traditional approach, we would not have obtained the same quality of information as we obtained with the postmodern approach. The reason for this seems to be that the postmodern approach is more client-centred, and it was possible for Lebo to communicate with us more easily and to create a positive rapport, rather than to consider the test results as the absolute truth, as in the traditional approach (Savickas, 1993).

Client-centred approach. From what transpired from the nine sessions, it seemed as if the person-centred approach of Rogers (1969; also see Thompson & Rudolph, 2000) is (or should be) congruent with postmodern career facilitation. We

tried at all times to maintain a client-centred approach during the sessions.

The narrative career facilitation process as a whole. Although Lebo experienced the process of narrative career facilitation extremely positively, it is true that the entire process was time-consuming. The sessions took place in between the participant's free periods in between lectures. It required valuable time from Lebo to prepare and participate in the sessions. Nevertheless, it was a positive experience to observe the participant's empathy, compassion, humility and hunger for success.

One particular aspect of the narrative career facilitation process that needs to be highlighted, is that both the assessment and intervention were performed in an integrated manner, which made the process truly dynamic. Obstacles identified could be dealt with immediately, without first analysing the test results and only intervening afterwards (as in the traditional approach). Lebo's remark aptly summarises his feelings with regard to the narrative career facilitation process on the one hand and also provides some evidence that he shared his views:

You don't talk to your friends all the time about these things; you try and cope and focus on your studies. Here I got the opportunity to say what I have felt in the past and what is happening in my life now.

Chen (2005) writes about the role of *chance* in people's lives:

The chance factor is a key component that forms the context of careering, despite the scarcity of intellectual debate on the role and function of chance in people's vocational aspects. An effort toward this end will hopefully lead to a better understanding of the dynamic and pivotal nature of the chance occurrence (p. 254).

The role that chance played in the life of the student who participated in this case study is clear from the fact that he "accidentally" became involved in a project that highlights the role of chance in a person's career development. Although he had little control over the specific facet of his professional development, it is nevertheless clear that he grasped his 'chance' with both hands. Lebo embodies the view of Chen (2005) and others (Dawis, 2002; Young, Valach, & Collin, 2002), namely that counselors do not wish to portray career development and life design as determined by chance and entirely out of their control. Indeed, even though there are explicit factors over which no person has any control, every career facilitator should consider it his/her task to empower clients to focus their energy on changing aspects that they can change, rather than to fixating on aspects over which they have no control, like the participant in the current case study (Chen, 2010, personal communication).

Limitations of the study. Because only one participant was involved in the study, the way in which the specific participant responded to the narrative counseling situation within this context is not necessarily representative of the way in which other participants might respond to narrative counseling within other contexts. Although specific steps were taken to enhance the trustworthiness and credibility of the study, the subjective interpretation by the researchers could be viewed as a limitation.

Conclusion

In this article we critically reviewed the literature pertinent to the study, focusing on traditional and postmodern career assessments. We applied narrative focused career counseling to a disadvantaged student, using a case study within the interpretive epistemology to investigate the effect of narrative career fa-

ilitation on the personal growth and career choice of a disadvantaged student, and we compared his initial assessment results with post-test assessment results conducted twelve months after the intervention commenced. Results were discussed in reference to psychometric instruments used (pre- and post-testing) and in relation to several career sessions held with the participant. We believe that we have presented an important area of research – a narrative approach to career counseling – that has the potential to add substantially to the literature, and we hope the findings will contribute to the body of knowledge on postmodern career counseling.

Endnotes

¹ The term "postmodern" in this article is associated with and used interchangeably with "qualitative", "alternative" and "qualitative".

² A pseudonym is used in the case study.

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