

**THE PROMOTION OF CAREER ADJUSTMENT BY MEANS OF AN EXPERIENTIALLY BASED  
CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME**

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*OPSOMMING*

*Sover dit loopbaanvoorligting en loopbaaninligtingsdienste aangaan, blyk daar volgens die NIPN (1980) 'n tekort aan voldoende dienste en professionele hulp in Suid-Afrika te wees. Die toedrag van sake kan waarskynlik deels toegeskryf word aan die tydrowendheid van onderhoude en toetsing wat deel is van die tradisionele loopbaanvoorligtingsproses. In die studie is 'n poging aangewend om 'n "self-help" metode van loopbaanontwikkeling te ondersoek. Geen statisties beduidende verskille op 'n aantal toepaslike kriteria kon tussen 'n kontrolegroep en 'n groep wat aan die loopbaanontwikkelingsprogram deelgeneem het, gevind word nie. Ofskoon die studie 'n vraagteken oor die doeltreffendheid van "self-help" programme plaas, het 'n aantal faktore gekristalliseer wat toon dat die gevolgtrekking hoogstens tentatief kan wees.*

In view of the centrality of work in the life of the individual (Crites, 1969) and the changing values attached to work, it is not surprising that career adjustment and the promotion of career development has occupied significant attention within the social sciences. Early forms of career assistance tended towards the facilitation of career choice. In this regard choice itself, in terms of the "fit" between the characteristics of the individual and job requirements as well as the steps or ways followed by individuals in their choice of careers or a career direction were emphasised.

Arising from the choice perspectives of career development "vocational guidance" developed into a field which focussed on "helping clients to choose, prepare for, and succeed in selected vocations" (Brammer and Shostrom 1977). The predominant techniques in vocational guidance were interviewing and psychological testing. However, differences in

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emphasis between psychologists seemed to occur. Some regarded the relationship, established through the interview, as central, whereas others tended to value the interview as a means of conveying and interpreting psychological test data.

Career interventions (Sundberg, Tyler and Taplin, 1973) are seen as systematic attempts to influence environments, develop new habits and skills and change perspectives related to careers. In intervening the occupational psychologist makes an experimental entry into an ongoing system to assist such system to move to a new level of interactive adaptation. Holland, Magoon and Spokane (1981) summarised developments in the field of career interventions and classified the scope of interventions as follows:

*Career Counselling* which involves the face-to-face interview approaches characteristic of trait and factor, client-centered, psychodynamic and developmental counselling.

*Group Treatments* consisting of courses implemented through seminars and workshops.

*Instructional material approaches* where use is made of workbooks, texts and printed career relevant materials to assist individuals to find jobs, create resumes, decide on jobs, manage interviews and cope with vocational crises.

Whilst the growth of interventions to facilitate career development has been rapid, attention to the evaluation of career interventions seems to have been neglected.

One of the difficulties in assessing the impact of career interventions has been in the establishment of meaningful evaluation criteria. Four major categories of evaluation criteria have been employed in the past (Watts and Kidd, 1978). These relate to *personal characteristics* where basic attitude and behavioural characteristics are assessed; *output variables* where criteria are concerned with factors such as job satisfaction and performance; *learning variables* where specific training or "course" objectives are evaluated; and finally criteria related to *career developmental tasks* where the individual's actual career development or progress is compared with the tasks associated with a particular career stage.

Research indications are that interview orientated career counselling and group treatments tend to assist individuals with their career development (Watts and Kidd, 1978).

In general it would appear that studies of the "instructional material approach" are rare, that research efforts have mainly been concerned with school going individuals and that studies of the effects of interventions in later career stages tend to be neglected. Furthermore there has been limited research concerning comparisons between interview orientated

approaches and the instructional material categories of assistance. However, Krivatsy and Magoon (1976) compared the costs of two instructional types of counselling with an intervention based on the traditional interview oriented approach. Their results indicated “that all treatments were about equally effective as measured and college users appeared equally satisfied with them. Cost analysis indicated that the traditional counselling treatment cost six times more per subject than the S.D.S. and four times more than the I.V.P.”

On a theoretical level, however, Holland (1978) is of the opinion that the implementation of "instructional material approaches" requires that:

- a belief that the individual can do more for himself than has been assumed in the past, should prevail;
- the approach should capitalise on the individual's knowledge of his competencies and interests;
- emphasise should be given to information and experience and that immediate reinforcement should be provided;
- the individual should be encouraged to examine his experience and explore new dimensions of himself;
- different levels and varieties of treatment should be emphasised;
- structural theories and classification systems should be applied.

In this regard it should be noted that instructional material on career development is freely available and that (on face value) the material would seem to satisfy the requirements proposed by Holland. One possible consequence of these considerations, given a climate conducive to human resources development, is that in-company career development programmes may be expected rapidly to expand.

The aim of this investigation was to establish whether career adjustment could be promoted by means of an instructional material approach. Specifically it was hypothesised that an instructional "self-help" programme should lead to changes in the self concepts of participants, their locus of control and job satisfaction levels.

## METHOD

### *The Career Development Programme*

The instructional programme decided upon for the study was based on the work of Hagberg and Leider (1978). The programme was conducted over 2½ days. Participants were each given a handbook at the onset of the programme. The handbook consisted of nine modules which covered the following: a general career orientation; an outline of the programme; perception; adult growth stages; learning and development; lifestyle; mentors, and work styles (Janse, 1983).

Each module was introduced and the purpose of the module explained to the participants. After this participants completed the exercises and formulated their own conclusions and future objectives.

### *Criteria*

Considering the criteria suggested by Watts and Kidd (1978), three criterion measures were used. These were the California Personality Inventory (C.P.I.), locus of control (James, 1966) and the Hoppock Job Satisfaction Scale outlined in Crites (1969). In addition a questionnaire was used to record the reactions of participants to the career development programme.

### *Subjects*

The study was conducted in a municipality on the Witwatersrand. Sixty subjects were randomly drawn to participate in the study and randomly assigned to a control and an experimental group. Of the 30 assigned to the control group only 25 were finally available. The 30 members of the experimental group attended the career development programme.

### *Design of the experiment*

Both the experimental and control groups were measured on each of the criteria before the career development programme was implemented. Two months after the career development programme had been completed the groups were re-measured. It was felt that it would be premature to evaluate the effects of the programme immediately after its administration, as the intention was to determine whether the anticipated effects would be enduring. The measuring procedure is summarised in Table 1.

**TABLE 1**

**MEASUREMENT OCCASIONS FOR THE EXPERIMENTAL AND CONTROL GROUPS**

	Pre-test: Administered to all groups (1 <sup>st</sup> occasion)	Post-test: no attendance on the career development programme (2 <sup>nd</sup> occasion)	Post-test: after attendance on the career development programme (2 <sup>nd</sup> occasion)
Experimental Group	X		X
Control Group	X	X	

*Results*

The average scores for the two groups of participants on the two measurement occasions in terms of the four classes of factors on the CPI, locus of control and job satisfaction are shown in Table 2.

**TABLE 2**

**THE SCORE AVERAGES FOR EXPERIMENTAL AND CONTROL GROUPS ON BOTH MEASURING OCCASIONS**

	Before (First Occasion)	After (Second occasion)	Losses/ Gains
<u>Class I</u>			
Experimental Group	15,86	15,40	- 0,46
Control Group	15,52	15,33	- 0,19
<u>Class II</u>			
Experimental Group	15,35	15,62	+ 0,27
Control Group	16,29	16,16	- 0,13
<u>Class III</u>			
Experimental Group	7,53	7,56	+ 0,03
Control Group	7,60	7,44	- 0,16
<u>Class IV</u>			
Experimental Group	3,59	3,48	- 0,11
Control Group	3,49	3,50	+ 0,01
<u>Locus of Control</u>			
Experimental Group	4,25	4,24	- 0,01
Control Group	3,94	4,08	+ 0,14
<u>Job Satisfaction</u>			
Experimental Group	2,06	2,03	- 0,03
Control Group	2,12	2,02	- 0,10

Using a split plot design an analysis of variance for repeated measures and unweighted means (Kirk, 1968) was applied to the groups which were of unequal sizes, that is, 30 in the experimental group and 25 in the control group.

The same analysis of variance model was used for the four classes of the C.P.I. measures, locus of control and the Job Satisfaction Blank. The results revealed that despite an overall positive reaction to the career development programme, no statistically significant differences on any of the criterion measures occurred.

As mentioned earlier participants generally found the career development programme useful. Participant reactions to the programme are indicated in Table 3.

TABLE 3  
PARTICIPANT'S REACTIONS TO ATTENDANCE ON THE  
CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Reactions	No use at all	Slightly useful	Useful	A great help
Number of participants	1	4	18	7

### *Discussion*

The result of the study indicates that "self-help" instructional career programmes may not lead to changes in self concept, locus of control and job satisfaction. This finding should not be interpreted without recognising the influence of the following:

### *Group influences*

The career development programme developed for the study was structured on a self-help basis. That is, the purpose of the programme was to develop a self diagnostic approach to career development which would encourage participants to become actively involved in the promotion of their own careers.

The primary focus of the programme was therefore on the individual, with little attention paid to small group dynamics, as part of the intervention strategy.

The reason for this lack of attention to group effects were mainly because it would be difficult to establish whether changes on the criterion measures were due to the effects of the programme or the result of group interactional influences.

In retrospect, it seems that attention to group processes may have been an important aspect to have considered in the initial stages of the study. Attention to developing group cohesion and a supportive group culture may be an essential element to both encourage initial career examination processes and reinforce a continuation of such examination processes.

### *Readiness*

From the results of the study it would appear that the "counselling value" of instructional programmes is significantly influenced by the readiness of participants in such programmes. The implicit claim, particularly by in-company career consultants, that the nature and composition of instructional programmes is sufficient to generate the required level of readiness, need to be investigated.

### *Programme Duration*

The total duration of the career developmental programme was 15 hours spread over two and a half days. An intensive course over a short period of time appeared to be a suitable in-company approach to minimize work disruption.

During the course of the programme participants indicated that they would have preferred more time to study the material and read the experiential exercises. Course participants were generally tired by the end of the day and it may have been unrealistic to have expected them to continue their career examination after returning to their homes.

It is suggested that the value of the career development programme may have been enhanced had it been extended over a longer time period. If an extended time period is not possible then certainly supplementary follow-up sessions may be required.

### *Organizational Factors*

It is possible that the "climate" in the organization where the study took place was not conducive to the kind of growth and development implied by the career development programme. Furthermore time constraints did not allow the preparation of managers with regard to both the nature and scope of the career development programme. Subsequent discussions with course participants suggested that the preparation and involvement of managers may be an important preparatory step to draw managers into a supportive role towards their staff members who were programme participants.

## CONCLUSIONS

From a review of the literature it is clear that attention should be paid to both the development and evaluation of career development interventions. Certainly, in South Africa with an increasing work force, there are indications that current career assistance needs are not being met by present counselling resources and procedures. There appears to be some grounds for further research into instructional category of career interventions.

The lack of change in terms of the criterion measures employed in the present study pose questions about the value of the abundance of self help career books which are freely available. Although the instructional category of career interventions require further research, evaluation and development, the development of criterion measures that are able to determine changes resulting from career interventions would appear to be a priority for the future.

## ABSTRACT

*According to the NIPR (1980) there appears to be a shortage of adequate services and professional assistances in the area of career information and vocational guidance. This state of affairs may partly be attributed to the time consuming nature of interviews and testing which traditionally are associated with the vocational guidance process. In this study an attempt was made to examine a "self-help" method of career development. No statistical significant differences on a number of appropriate criteria could be found between a control group and a group who participated in the career development programme. Although the study questions the validity of "selfhelp" programmes, some factors emerged which suggest that this conclusion be regarded as tentative.*

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