

Occupational Exploration Paper

Shanida Goggans

Alliance Graduate School of Counseling

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The integration between career and personal concerns provides a compass for assisting clients in the recognition of the relationship between career issues, and all other life roles. understanding the whole person as a member of complex social systems, is the cornerstone of effective career counseling (Zunker, 2016). There isn't a right way, to make a career-decisions, however there is much to consider in order to make an informed choice. Gaining much insight about a preferred career path, is beneficial in preventing unnecessary pit falls along the way. This writer has developed an interest over the years in the field of counseling. Interviewing someone in the field, gave this writer a clearer understanding of the expectations the profession carries, which included skills needed for the job, cost determinants, avoiding burn out, and promoting the practice, to name a few. Finding a professional employed in the field one is interested in is beneficial however, there are other resources that one can utilize to gain further information about the desired field.

The Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH) and the Occupational Information Network (O*net), are two profitable resources one can use when seeking information about the nature of the work, education and training, working conditions, job outlook and earnings. In addition, they provide an easy way to defining and describing occupations. These types of resources can only enhance what one may already know about the field they are pursuing. They are available to the public free of charge, and they are both interactive applications used to explore and search occupations. In navigating through the Occupational outlook handbook, this writer searched under community and social service and located the job of interest, mental health counselors. The site provided information beginning with a brief summary of the occupation of interest. In the section titled “quick facts” this resource provided a brief breakdown of pertinent information, i.e. Pay, education, work experience, number of jobs, and job outlook (Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2019), all of which was presented in a small box underneath the summary. Other information found in this site included duties, work environment, licenses, certification, and registration. One other aspect of this site that was appealing to this writer was the breakdown of the important qualities needed to become a mental health counselor they include compassion, interpersonal skills, listening skills, patience and speaking skills. Most of these were addressed in the personal interview this writer had with a licensed mental health counselor, however, seeing these qualities mentioned in the OOH site, provides one with enough information to help them begin the journey.

Another asset to the OOH site, is that it provides information on at least 325 occupations covering approximately 4 out 5 jobs. They are broken up into clusters of similar occupations, and it includes an A-Z index you can browse through with ease if you know the specific occupation. The Bureau of Labor Statistics, features employment projections in articles about occupation,

however they do not provide specific career guidance nor advice. The OOH profiles do offer a great deal of general information on the training and education needed to enter the desired occupation. There is also a drop-down menu that offers information on pay range, on the job training, and entry level education. When this writer asked the counselor that was interviewed about the ways in which she got into this line of work, there was no mention of her ever searching on a site such as the above, or a similar one to help give her more insight into the occupation. This type of access may not have been available at the time the interviewee was on her journey, to becoming a health care professional however, this writer believes that access to this type of information is crucial for these times in helping one to decipher between jobs, and assist them in making an informed decision. The more knowledge about a field obtained, the greater the chances of choosing the “right” occupation.

In searching through the Occupational Information Network (O*NET) this writer found it easy to navigate through, and appreciated the additional information presented. For example, the breakdown of the technological knowledge and skill one pursuing mental health counseling should have a form of training in, these included; analytical or scientific software, electronic mail software, enterprise resource planning software, internet browser software, and medical software (Occupational Information Network, 2020). Some of them this writer knew were an asset to the profession, however there were some listed that this writer was not aware would be necessary to learn. Having this information before hand can help one to seek out the training needed. When this writer enquired in her interview about skills needed for the job, none of the above were mentioned, perhaps because some skills are understood to be a necessity, yet others an asset. An additional section that caught this writer’s attention was the section titled “work context.” In this portion, the percentages of the responses were listed i.e. structure vs. unstructured work 84%

responded “A lot of freedom,” contact with others, 91% responded “Constant contact with others,” telephone, 79% responded “Every day,” freedom to make decisions, 72% responded “A lot of freedom” and face to face discussions 84% responded “Every day”(Occupational Information Network, 2020).

Extensive skills, knowledge and experience are necessary for any occupation, the occupations often involve, coordinating, training, managing or supervising. After the interview that was done with Mrs. Susan Grande, this writer was motivated the more to exploring and learning more about the field of counseling. In addition, the sites offered in detail specific responsibilities that need attention from the researcher. Areas that if not attended too, can sabotage, ones’ opportunity to becoming a competent counselor. This writer believes that career planning involves the collection of data that will help one synthesize, gain competencies, and assist in goal setting, decision making and taking, action. Career planning is a continuing process the more one knows about a desired field the easier it is to rule out what is not beneficial for the individual in the season they are in. These sites offer the framework that identifies and organizes information that relates to the field of interest. It also offers the researcher the opportunity to develop industry competency.

Having the opportunity to interview someone in the field of this writer’s interest, offered the space to ask important questions and obtain wise counsel. When asked what advice she would give this writer, Mrs. Grande responded “I think this is a career that is worth-while and necessary now more than ever. You will do well to pursue this line of work.” This writer was encouraged and appreciative of the information obtained. Perhaps the sites previously mentioned can add to their panel a short video where a live person in the field could respond to a few general questions. In addition, it may be beneficial to add to the general information section

for example, counsel on how to avoid burn out; to which Mrs. Grande advised that “setting a time for devotion to the Lord, meditation and prayer are essential” for her. She added, one should be careful not to overbook, and make room for family, and recreation, which helps to foster self-care. Mrs. Grande suggested that a person pursuing this career should themselves have a mental health counselor that would keep them accountable and provide a space in which they can be transparent about their concerns and fears and share their triumphs alike. Becoming a clean scalpel is a continual process, that requires creating a circle of support that would include individuals who will help one stay the course and challenge them to do their job with integrity. This writer believes it is beneficial for the counselor to be counseled, in order to provide optimal care and services.

References

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