

**A HIERARCHICAL MODEL OF VOCATIONAL
EVALUATION: FLEXIBILITY MEANS BETTER
SERVICE**

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ABSTRACT: The evolution of vocational evaluation is such that there is a greater need for flexibility. This need is created by the greater variety of people being served; by the creation of profit-based vocational evaluation establishments and the private practicing vocational evaluation specialists; and by the need for more cost-effective service capabilities. This article presents a Hierarchical Model for vocational evaluation as one systematic approach for meeting this need for flexibility.

In the past, the predominant use of work samples by vocational evaluation programs was considered to be an enlightened method for assessing the vocational needs and skills of disabled people. Now, work samples are frequently viewed as cumbersome, of questionable validity, time-consuming and expensive. Additionally, there are many factors which have not only changed the nature and use of work samples themselves, but have also caused subtle changes in the concept of vocational evaluation and have created new approaches or improvements on traditional approaches. These factors include the introduction of the computer, the task-analysis approach for job-structuring, the development of standardized tests normed on populations of mentally retarded individuals, the emphasis on vocational development in special education, availability of vocational rehabilitation to worker's compensation recipients, and the need to improve job placement for JTPA clients.

The results of these influences requires vocational evaluation to reference itself less to one approach and one type of population and more to the ability to match the approach to the individual client. Thus, vocational evaluation will expand away from the "voc eval unit" of the special education program and the rehabilitation facility. During the next ten years there should be a surge of private practicing vocational evaluators and profit-based vocational evaluation establishments, which will serve disabled and non-disabled populations. Additionally, public rehabilitation agencies will require greater flexibility of assessment approaches at different fee structures to promote cost-effectiveness. Most importantly, vocational evaluation programs will be more flexible in the way they may serve their clients.

Hierarchical Model

The successful application of

vocational evaluation/assessment shall depend on how well the program relates to the needs of the individuals being served. A flexible system for meeting these needs can be created through a vocational assessment/evaluation menu. This menu consists of a hierarchical model of vocational evaluation/assessment "packages." The basis for the hierarchy is the level of comprehensiveness of each program package. Generally, the more comprehensive the evaluation/assessment, the more time-consuming is the package. Table 1 outlines the Hierarchical Model of Vocational Evaluation.

which imposes specific limitations while not having broader implications to other areas of skills, aptitudes, or interests.

Example

Jim Smith, who is suffering from Carpal Tunnel Syndrome, may need a thorough evaluation of functional manual and finger dexterity skills, for the purpose of determining the feasibility of placement as a cashier. Dexterity tests and a cashier work sample may be administered.

TABLE 1
SUMMARY DESCRIPTION OF HIERARCHICAL MODEL OF VOCATIONAL EVALUATION

FEATURE	SPECIALIZED ASSESSMENT	TRANSFERRABLE SKILLS ASSESSMENT	ONE-DAY VOCATIONAL ASSESSMENT	SHORT-TERM VOCATIONAL EVALUATION	LONG-TERM VOCATIONAL EVALUATION
TIME	Few hours to 2 days, depends on the issue(s) addressed	One to 6 hours, depending on computer capability	Four to Seven Hours	Two to five days	Two to six weeks
PURPOSE	To thoroughly and adequately assess one or two specific skills area; behavior not specifically addressed.	To determine occupational alternatives based on past work history, case records, and/or client interview	To obtain a worker profile for the determination of complimentary vocational alternatives	Either to assess skills and behaviors related to a occupation, and/or to observe specific behaviors and work tolerances.	To determine the educational, occupational, and rehabilitation potential with emphasis on behaviors, habits and work tolerances.
ASSESSMENT APPROACHES	Choice of testing approach depends on the reason for referral	Case review, interview, and thorough analysis of work history.	Standardized tests, some work samples, interview, and limited behavioral observation.	Interview, standardized tests, work samples, situational assessment, on-the-job evaluation.	Relies heavily on situational assessment and work samples.
APPROPRIATE REFERRALS	Individuals for whom the job placement may depend on whether or not the presence of a specific skill can be confirmed.	Individuals who have a significant work history and for whom testing is not appropriate initially.	Client with reading skills at 6th grade minimum, for whom behavior and physical tolerances are either well-defined or not a significant issue.	Individuals with minimal or functional academic skills and minimal need for specialized time-consuming assessment approaches.	Individuals who are severely disabled and for whom either behavioral issues are a main concern and/or special techniques must be used.

Specialized Assessment

The purpose of this assessment is to thoroughly study a specific issue or two. This evaluation may be needed to determine the appropriateness of a job placement or the functional extent of a disability. The Specialized Assessment may use standardized tests and/or work samples, depending upon the issue being addressed. The time needed for this assessment could vary from one hour to more than a day; again, it depends on the issue addressed. The Specialized Assessment is appropriate for individuals who may have a disability

Transferable Skills Assessment

The purpose of this assessment is to determine occupational alternative based on information obtained from the work history, case record, and/or client interview; this based on the premise that a person demonstrates certain aptitudes, skills, and interests through a successful work history. Therefore, by adjusting the worker's "profile" to accommodate to the functional limitations imposed by the disability, potential occupational alternatives can be determined. This is the premise of the computerized occupational

matching systems and the VDARE process. The amount of time can vary from one hour to six hours, depending on access to computer programs. This type of assessment is often used by rehabilitation counselors to determine the evaluation needs of the client. Additionally, it is frequently applied to legal situations and to the vocational evaluation of industrially injured workers.

Example

Jim Smith's rehabilitation counselor or vocational evaluator may have determined the need for the Specialized Assessment by having done a Transferable Skills Assessment.

One-Day Assessment

The purpose of this assessment is to obtain a "worker profile" of skills, aptitudes, interests, and values, which is the basis for the determination of complementary vocational alternatives. It differs from traditional vocational evaluation by not "utilizing work" and by relying primarily on standardized instruments. It does not comprehensively address work tolerances, behaviors, and habits. This assessment usually requires one day of testing (anywhere from four to seven hours), and it relies primarily on standardized tests, client interview, and review of the case records. Work samples are used minimally and behavioral observations made usually result in limited implications.

Appropriate referrals are those individuals who 1) have a 6th grade or better reading skills, 2) are of borderline to average intelligence or better, 3) have work tolerances well established by other means or disabilities that do not significantly affect physical functioning, and 4) have behaviors or work habits that are not of concern.

Example

Mary Jones wants to drop-out

of school but has idea what kind of work she can get. Her teacher would like her to enter the vocational education program and wonders which training curriculum would be best for realistically counseling Mary.

Short-Term Vocational Evaluation

The overall purpose of the Short-Term Vocational Evaluation is to assist the individual and the counselor/teacher with vocational planning. However, emphasis also may be placed on assessing skill, behaviors and work tolerances specific to an occupation or determining a "worker profile," as well as addressing issues of work tolerances, behaviors, and habits. The time needed for this assessment is generally two to five days. All approaches of vocational evaluation may be used, with some emphasis on the use of work samples. Appropriate referrals are usually those individuals with minimal academic skills and a minimal need for the more time-consuming and specialized vocational evaluation approaches, such as situational assessment.

Example

John Cabot is interested in becoming a mechanic and has a learning disability. This evaluation would focus on the skills, aptitudes, etc., requirements for mechanics. Stan Davis has first grade reading skills and has chronic osteomyelitis as a result of a leg fracture. His evaluation would focus on the determination of appropriate vocational goal alternatives and his vocationally-related needs to enable the development of a successful rehabilitation plan.

Long-Term Vocational Evaluation

This assessment is a traditional vocational evaluation, designed to determine the occupational, rehabilitation, or educational potential and needs. Particular emphasis is

placed on work tolerances, behaviors and habits, and special needs to be addressed in the rehabilitation or educational plan. This type of assessment is the most comprehensive and allows the client to receive hands-on experience or preliminary training to prepare for assessment with work samples. It makes extensive use of situational assessment, work samples, and other specialized vocational evaluation techniques. Individuals who benefit from this assessment form include those who have severe disabilities that affect several skills areas or for whom behavioral issues are a primary concern.

Example

Cathy Raines suffered a closed head injury which has affected her language and motor skills as well as her behavior. Her evaluation would focus on the vocational impact of these limitations and more thoroughly assess the functional extent of these limitations.

Implications for the Future

The evolution of vocational evaluation from a historical perspective indicates that the dependence upon work samples and "traditional" long-term vocational evaluation is not appropriate to all disabled individuals. Moreover, vocational evaluation has applicability not only outside the state-federal vocational rehabilitation program, but also outside the disabled population. Many factors have been influential in this evolution. Additionally, current economic restraints on vocational programs require that vocational evaluation specialists provide cost-effective alternatives that better meet the needs of the people they serve.

The Hierarchical Model of Vocational Evaluation enables the vocational evaluation specialist to more effectively select vocational evaluation approaches and techniques that meet the needs of the client. The vocational evaluation

specialist can also offer a cost-effective vocational evaluation service to meet the needs of the referring agency, counselor, or teacher. The Hierarchical Model additionally enables the vocational evaluation specialist to incorporate the new or improved vocational evaluation techniques and approaches into program capabilities. The future evolution of vocational evaluation centers on three areas of concern: 1) The willingness to abandon the philosophy that only time-honored methods of vocational evaluation programs can meet the needs of all disabled people, 2) the access to private-practicing vocational evaluation specialists by both disabled and nondisabled individuals, and 3) The ability to provide greater flexibility in meeting the needs of the client/student. This Hierarchical Model addresses all three areas of concern, of which the need for flexibility may be the greatest.

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