

Rethinking Counselling-based Career Assistance in Counselling Psychology

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ABSTRAK

Pertimbangan semula kaunseling yang berasaskan bantuan kerjaya dalam perkhidmatan kaunseling membolehkan klien untuk menikmati kesejahteraan psikologi. Sehubungan dengan itu, bantuan kerjaya dianggap sebagai pelbagai perkhidmatan yang dirancang oleh seorang kaunselor untuk membantu klien bagi memahami konstruk kerjaya (seperti nilai kerja, konflik dan matlamat) serta pengaruh kontekstual (umpamanya, dasar awam dan fenomena global) yang mempengaruhi kesejahteraan psikologi klien di tempat kerjanya dan di dalam keluarga. Umpamanya, bantuan kerjaya yang dirancang dengan teliti boleh dilaksanakan sebagai intervensi yang berbentuk perundingan untuk membantu klien bagi (1) mencantumkan nilai dan matlamat kerja pihak majikan dengan nilai peribadi klien supaya klien boleh menghadapi konflik nilai di tempat kerja; dan (2) menyelaraskan pembangunan kerjaya klien dengan tuntutan pihak majikan supaya klien boleh merasa puas hati. Implikasi kaunseling yang berasaskan bantuan kerjaya dalam konteks Malaysia adalah seorang kaunselor perlu: (1) cekap untuk menjalankan kaunseling kerja; (2) memiliki kecekapan silang budaya; dan (3) mahir untuk melaksana pelbagai intervensi seperti yang diperlukan oleh klien dalam proses kaunseling. Dengan ini, seorang klien dibantu untuk mencapai kesejahteraan psikologi demi menyumbang sumber tenaga bagi transformasi negara ke arah Wawasan 2020.

INTRODUCTION

Counselling-based career assistance facilitates clients in career development for better psychological well-being. Accordingly, career assistance refers to the various types of services which benefit clients in the counselling process (Corey, 2009; Hays & Erford, 2010; Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2009). Examples of career assistance conducted by a career counsellor are helping each client's in building insights into: (1) career constructs such as, work values, conflicts and goals (Corey, 2009; Hays & Erford, 2010; Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2009; Quek, 2003; 2005; 2011), and (2) contextual influences such as age, disabilities, gender, government policies, socioeconomic status, domestic violence and global events (Corey, 2009; Chu, 2000; Lee, Quek & Chew, 2001; Malaysia, 2010a; 2010b; Quek, 2011) which impact on each client's career decisions, including career choice and adjustments for career development.

It is recognised that many individuals probably have to live and work under the varied demands of their employers, family needs and also the global influences in their community. For instance, the individual is required to adjust to the employer's work values and goals; as well as to meet the needs of his or her family and face the constraints of global economic conditions so as to enjoy satisfying experiences at the workplace. Since counselling enables each client "to achieve a voluntary favourable holistic change, development and adjustment... throughout the lifespan of the client" (Counsellors Act, 1998, p.8), some studies (Corey, 2009; Izzo & Withers, 2001; Lee, et al., 2001; Quek, 2005) have pointed that career assistance in counselling enables each client to develop workable career decisions and to map out realistic options for career adjustment for attaining psychological well-being at the workplace and in the family. As counselling focuses on enabling each client in making a holistic change for better psychological well-being, therefore when needed in career counselling, the counsellor can help the client to integrate workplace values and goals as well contextual influences into his or her personal value system and to apply these integrated values in the client's career decision and adjustment for meaningful experiences at work and in the family.

It makes sense that career counsellors engage in counselling-based career assistance to help each client in using personal potentials, including experiences as well as other resources in the environment to develop his or her career and to live a meaningful and satisfying life (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2009; Quek; 2011). Viewed this way, rethinking counselling-based career assistance is relevant for engaging Malaysians in career development to support the Economic Transformation Programme (ETP) that aspires towards improving the income per person to more than RM48,000 by 2020 which is doubled the income per person of RM23,700 in 2009; and helping the Malaysian economy to grow at 6 percent annually so as to become a developed country by 2020 (Malaysia, 2010a; 2010b).

COUNSELLING-BASED CAREER ASSISTANCE IN COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY

In order to understand counselling-based career assistance in counselling psychology, it is necessary to look at the meaning of career and career development. Career refers to the sequence of work-related positions, values and roles held by an individual in one's lifetime (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2009; Super, 1994). Career development comprises the outcomes of career decisions, changes and adjustments that shape an individual's career throughout his or her lifetime (Herr, Cramer & Niles, 2004; Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2009; Super, 1994).

It is recognised that an appropriate career decision or adjustment is intertwined closely with where and how the client will spend his or her time including the kind of training and education that will be needed, the amount of income that will be received; as well as the possibilities for development and perhaps achievement in a lifetime (Chang, 2002; Leung, 2002; Quek, 2000; 2011). This means that an appropriate career decision or adjustment does not occur in a vacuum. However, a career counsellor can provide career assistance in counselling to help each client make a suitable career decision, change or adjustment. In this way, the counsellor facilitates each client to make meaningful career decisions and career adjustments for attaining satisfying life and career experiences, which reflect the client's holistic development as well as psychological well-being.

Accordingly, some longitudinal studies on career are in agreement with appropriate career decisions and career adjustments impacting on the attainment of people's psychological well-being at the workplace and at home (Helwig, 2001; Herr, et al., 2004; Lee, et al., 2001; Tracy 2002). This calls to the mind that counselling-based career assistance enables each client to make an appropriate career decision or adjustment. The outcomes of providing appropriate career assistance in counselling were reported as satisfying by enabling the client to fulfil self-developmental needs at work (such as, to feel secure in employment) and also being able to perform family roles at home so as to get on in one's career development in harmony with living from day-to-day (Quek, 2003).

However, other studies reported that for some people the process of making a career decision is a bewildering experience, and this is more evident among some young Malaysians in their transition from school to the world of work (Chew, Lee & Quek, 1995; Lee, et al., 2001). This feeling of anxiety may make the individual uncomfortable and leads to a lack of psychological well-being, which disrupts the individual's career development. These disruptive experiences can be avoided with the application of counselling-based career assistance.

PROVIDING COUNSELLING-BASED CAREER ASSISTANCE

Table 1 shows the various types of career assistance that a counsellor can initiate in counselling-based career assistance. The counsellor provides career assistance in various ways depending on each client's needs for career counselling. In providing counselling-based career assistance, it is noted that the components of career assistance listed under career constructs and contextual influences in Table 1 are not exhaustive and can be expanded to meet the needs of clients in career counselling. It is also pointed out that the career constructs and contextual influences need not be mutually exclusive but can be considered inclusively for meeting a client's needs in counselling-based career assistance.

For instance, the counsellor can assist the client, who is embarking on a career, to integrate the employer's values and goals into his or her personal value system and help the client to apply these values in his or her career decision and adjustment. If needed, the counsellor also helps the client in evaluating contextual influences such as, parental wishes, public policies, workplace culture including its prejudices and discrimination for enabling each client to make a suitable career decision or a culturally appropriate career change and to apply adjustment for satisfying experiences at work and in the family (Corey, 2009; Hays & Erford, 2010). This requires the counsellor to provide career assistance in the form of an intervention so as to enable the client to learn and to adjust to the requirements of the real world of work in order to have meaningful work and life experiences. As such, the client is facilitated in deciding what to do and how to go about putting his or her decision into practice for embarking on a career towards career development with better psychological well-being.

In another instance, the interfacing of counselling-based career assistance with global events by the counsellor enables each client to evaluate career decisions in the context of global changes in the economies of many countries (Table 1). For example, a client who intends to have a marketing career in selling cars can be assisted to know about related global events including the current demand and supply of branded cars including cars that are made in Malaysia and abroad; as well the Malaysian policies such as custom duties imposed on imported cars and other relevant information such as external inflation that influences price hikes and the

availability of loans for customers in purchasing cars. The career counsellor by incorporating such relevant global events into counselling-based career assistance can enable the client to avoid the negative impact of his or her career decision (Quek, 2011).

Table 1
Counselling-based Career Assistance in Career Counselling

Components of career assistance	Career Counselling
Career constructs	
Work values	During the counselling-based career assistance process, the client chooses his or her own values for the counselling process. The counsellor then facilitates the client in clarifying the client's work value. If required, intervention with consultation is conducted to help the client in integrating the employer's values and goals into his or her personal value system and to apply these values in his or her career decision and adjustment. When necessary, the counsellor also helps the client in evaluating contextual influences on his or her behaviour so as to make a suitable career decision or a culturally appropriate career adjustment (Corey, 2009; Hays & Erford, 2010).
Conflicts	Counselling-based career assistance requires the counsellor to help the client to identify the issues of career related conflicts. The career counsellor's role is not to resolve conflicts for the client. If needed intervention is conducted in the form of consultation so as to facilitate the client to learn about human cognition and perception for resolving conflicts so as to attain satisfying work experiences (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2009; Quek, 2003).
Goals	The career counsellor's role is not to set goals for the client, even when a referred client declares that he or she has no career goals. In counselling-based career assistance the client explores his or her expectations with the help of the counsellor. If necessary, intervention enables the client to strategize his or her goals so as to have meaningful experiences that can contribute toward his or her career development (Corey, 2009; Hays & Erford, 2010; Quek, 2003).
Contextual influences	
Age, disabilities, gender and socioeconomic status	Counselling-based career assistance requires the counsellor to be competent multiculturally so as to help each client overcome negative contextual influences. Examples are discrimination, labelling, prejudice, stereotyping and antisocial behaviour that are associated with age, disabilities, gender and socioeconomic status in the workplace. If needed intervention that is embedded with each client's culture is conducted to enable the client to dispel negative thoughts and to build constructive self-concept for attaining satisfying experiences at the workplace (Corey, 2009; Quek, 2011)
Government policies	If needed, the interfacing of counselling-based career assistance with knowledge of government policies by the counsellor enables each client to make legitimate career decisions or adjustments. For instance, the client is enabled to apply and make use of public support and financial facilities for his or her career development

(Hays & Erford, 2010; Quek, 2003).

Domestic violence	In the case of domestic violence, if necessary, the incorporation of counselling-based career assistance with related agencies and support groups by the counsellor enables each client to make advancement in his or her career. Some examples are access to education and employment opportunities for integrating persons who faced domestic violence into society (Corey, 2009; Quek, 2003).
Global events	If needed, the interfacing of counselling-based career assistance with global events by the counsellor enables each client to evaluate career decisions in context of global changes outside Malaysia. A case in point concerned a client who intends to embark on a marketing career in selling cars. As such, having knowledge of potential domestic and global car buyers would be relevant in career assistance for the Malaysian client. In this case, incorporating relevant global events (including the supply of branded cars from General Motors Company, Volkswagen AG, Hyundai Motor Company, Nissan Motor Company and Toyota Motor Company) as well as knowledge of Malaysian consumer tastes in purchasing cars (Business Times, 2012) into counselling-based career assistance enables the client to avoid negative impact in career decisions (Quek, 2011)

Note: The components of career assistance listed under career constructs and contextual influences are not exhaustive and can be expanded to meet the other needs of clients in counselling-based career assistance. Career constructs and contextual influences need not be mutually exclusive but can be considered inclusively for meeting a client's needs in counselling-based career assistance.

IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING-BASED CAREER ASSISTANCE

Rethinking counselling-based career assistance in counselling psychology places a premium upon professional and competent counsellors to conduct career counselling. Professional and competent career counsellors are needed to address career constructs and contextual influences in helping each client experience holistic career development with better psychological well-being. As such rethinking counselling-based career assistance has implications for counselling psychology in Malaysia:

1. Holding Professional Qualifications for Career Counselling

Each career counsellor must have professional knowledge, skills and attitudes for conducting counselling. In Malaysia, compliance with the Counsellors Act 1998 (ACT 580) requires each counsellor to be a licenced and registered practitioner. For conducting career assistance, the career counsellor must acquire additional multicultural competencies to complement the spectrum of professional qualifications (Corey, 2009; Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2009). This is important to enable the career counsellor to be sensitive to the diversity in cultures found among multicultural Malaysians and to help each client in career development in context with the quality of life as it is lived in the Malaysian community.

2. Possessing Multicultural Competencies for Career Counselling

Malaysia is a multi-racial country comprising predominantly Malays and other indigenous races, as well as Chinese, Indian and other races. Even though the values of the multicultural Malaysians are diverse however, it is reported that these values reflect generally collectivism (Hofstede 1983; 1997; 2001). Other expectations of the Malaysian family members include prosocial in-group work values whereby children are expected to decide on careers that fulfil their family's wishes or meet their family's tradition in the world of work (Chu, 2000; Lee, et al., 2001; Quek, 2008). Therefore, it is crucial that career counsellors must possess the competencies for conducting multicultural counselling. For instance, career counsellors in conducting counselling for adult Malaysians are expected if needed to provide career assistance for helping each client identify employers' work

values and goals and then to integrate these work values and goals into each client's personal value system so as to enable the client to experience holistic development with better psychological well-being. It is pointed out that the clients and their counsellors might come from different cultures including varied ethnic background, gender, religion and age groups as well as people with disabilities. Clearly, in Malaysia it is noted that counselling-based career assistance requires the counsellor to be competent in conducting multicultural counselling.

3. Conducting Interventions in Career Counselling

The career counsellor must be prepared to conduct interventions when needed by the client. As career counselling is a helping service therefore interventions conducted in counselling must enhance the psychological well-being of the client. As such, for Malaysian clients interventions must be in Malaysian context and can take the forms of consultation with multicultural counselling (Corey, 2009; Quek, 2003). For instance, in recent times, changes in the work environment brought about by waves of new technologies, trade liberalisation and even the impact of natural calamities (for example, the earthquake and tsunami in Japan in March 2011) have sensitised individuals, including some Malaysians to work risks such as job loss due to downsizing in bad times and job displacement due to re-engineering of business organisations (Quek, 2011). When needed as in helping clients to decide on career options it seems appropriate for career counsellors to provide consultative career interventions that contextualises on the changes in the work environment and their impact on people's careers as mention above. In another instance, in the Malaysian context, individuals such as, nexters (20 to 25 years old) in their search for enhancing work-life balance, were reported as having five times higher than baby boomers in job mobility (Malaysian Trades Union Congress, 2011). In addition, Business Times (2011) reported that in Malaysia the nexters' preference for enhancing work-life balance is in tandem with their higher job mobility that is due to unhappiness at work. If needed, consultative career interventions can be conducted to help young clients in making use of work-life balance for enhancing their psychological well-being. Therefore, having competencies in conducting consultation in interventions with multicultural counselling is important in rethinking counselling-based career assistance.

CONCLUSION

In the Malaysian context, rethinking counselling-based career assistance facilitates clients in career development for better psychological well-being. It seems apparent that counselling-based career assistance has implications for career counselling in Malaysia. It affirms the need for career counsellors to be proficient in conducting counselling and competent in multicultural competencies as well as having skills for conducting interventions in multicultural counselling which includes consultation in career counselling. In Malaysia, counselling-based career assistance in multicultural context is relevant to help clients who are seeking career development to have satisfying experiences at the workplace and at home as well as to contribute to the transformation of Malaysia to become a developed country by 2020.

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