

[Reaction Paper]

**Internationalization of Career Counselling:
Reflections on Professional Dynamism and Advancement**

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As a discipline originated from the West, career counselling has been introduced to different countries and regions of the world. This is increasingly discussed and explored as the internationalization of the discipline (e.g., Goodman & Gillis, 2009; Hartung, 2005; Savickas, Van Esbroeck, & Herr, 2005), a process referred as “globalization” (Savickas, 2003, p. 95). In this special issue on “internationalization and career counselling,” contributors from Australia, Japan, India, South Africa, and Taiwan outline and analyze recent developments or studies in their respective environmental and cultural contexts. In responding to their articles, I identify important themes in the process of internationalization and reflect on them, namely making theories and practices responsive to social and environmental changes, addressing cultural appropriateness, as well as progressing through professional training and regulation. Implications will also be drawn on how career professionals can play dynamic roles in enhancing theoretical and professional

advancements in their respective countries in the context of localization and internationalization.

Career counselling originated and developed in the West into a sophisticated discipline with a specific body of knowledge, professional practices, and established systems of professional training, regulation, and accreditation (e.g., Savickas, 2003). Moreover, it has also theoretically advanced to reinvent and reinvigorate itself over time to meet the challenges and needs of different eras characterized respectively by industrialization, corporatization and the current information economy (Savickas, 1993, 2008). To meet the challenges of the 21st century, some revisions have been made to the discipline through adopting constructivist and social constructivist theories and utilizing qualitative and narrative approaches (McMahon & Yuen, 2008). As career counselling has been introduced beyond North America and Europe to different parts of the world, a major challenge is how far it can be adapted to different cultural contexts to meet diverse needs. Such an adaptation process is critical in establishing career counselling as a global discipline.

According to Savickas, Van Esbroeck, and Herr (2005), the process of internationalization is understood as “importing general knowledge about work, workers, and careers and then adapting it to the local language, customs, and caring practices of each country” (p. 78). In doing so, the localization process makes theories relevant in specific local contexts, which in turn extends the applicability of the discipline to diverse regions in the world. In this issue of the *Asian Journal of Counselling*, I am glad to read and respond to the articles from contributors in Australia, India, Japan, South Africa, and Taiwan as a career researcher and practitioner based in Hong Kong. Reflecting on the articles, I found that in all cases presented, career professionals have

played dynamic roles in advancing the discipline. Moreover, I identified important themes in the process of internationalization in reading the contributions, namely making theories and practices responsive to social and environmental changes, addressing cultural appropriateness, as well as progressing through professional training and regulation. I shall reflect on these themes with reference to corresponding contributions.

Making Theories and Practices Responsive to Social and Environmental Changes

Herr (1996) emphasized that all career development practices and policies occur in political, economic, and social contexts. He proposed that individual behaviour, career guidance theory and practice, and public policy are interdependent, and that they are interactive with the characteristics of the ecological context. In this issue, the contribution of South Africa directly addressed the changing macro context, while other contributions (e.g., Watanabe-Muraoka, Michitani, & Okada, 2009, this issue) are related to it. In his article entitled “Transitioning Contexts of Career Psychology in South Africa,” Watson (2009, this issue) presented a strong case for professional repositioning in which career counselling is restricted by the apartheid era and its aftermath in South Africa. He observed that career psychology in South Africa, with its Euro-centric history, served mainly the elite White population in the past. It was characterized by imported models of the trait-factor approach and interventions at the individual level. In the post-apartheid era, the discipline appeared inadequate in addressing the needs of the country under massive macro changes. Watson found that macro problems like poverty, poor educational infrastructure, as well as the gap between rich and poor, had resulted in “career oppression,” and urged the profession to attend to the career development needs of the vast majority of diverse backgrounds. At the same time, he pinpointed a desperate lack of trained professionals for career education and services.

To make career psychology relevant to the changing context, Watson (2009, this issue) proposed to deconstruct career psychology in South Africa. First of all, he called for career counsellors to challenge the grand narrative of their training with the local narratives of the South African society, and to question the relevance of their bounded theoretical and applied frameworks. Also, he advocated that career researchers and practitioners should change their roles to work on macro-environmental issues in South Africa. Moreover, he promoted an integrated national initiative to advance career counselling that involved all stakeholders, including policymakers, academics, and practitioners in the field.

From the perspective of internationalization of career counselling, I regard this contribution as a strong case for revision and repositioning to meet the challenges of major political-socio-economic changes, demonstrating admirable visions and commitments. In retrospect, still, a major challenge for the profession amid massive macro changes will be focusing on the immediate pressing problems and issues of career development on the one hand, and attending to research and theory development for long-term success of the profession on the other.

According to Watson (2009, this issue), career practitioners in South Africa should broaden their perspectives and acquire new skills. In his endeavour to reconstruct career psychology, Watson discussed different possibilities and mentioned some applications of narrative, qualitative, and constructivist approaches of career theories in South Africa, and then affirmed a “call in the international career literature to think across a variety of interrelated disciplines” (p. 140). Developing indigenous theories and practice in the South African culture could definitely be a rich contribution though there is a lack of personnel to do so (Watson, 2009, this issue).

In responding to the application of theories in a rapidly changing context, I would like to highlight theories accounting for contexts. Inkson and Elkin (2008) distinguished two major competing frameworks focusing on personal agency and social structure respectively and pointed out that career theorizing traditionally focuses more on personal agency. In the apartheid era, career psychology was characterized by the trait-factor approach at the individual level, serving the elites. Currently, in order to address the rapid macro changes and needs of diverse people, theorizing will preferably move towards social structure instead of just focusing on personal agency. To account for political, social, and economic forces on individual career development and career guidance, Inkson and Elkin suggested theories that explain both individual agency and social structure like developmental contextualism (Vondracek, Lerner, & Schulenberg, 1986), systems theory (Patton & McMahon, 2006), and contextualist theory (Young, Valach, & Collin, 2002). In considering existing career theories addressing social contexts, I think their suggestions are all worthwhile considerations.

Other writers in this issue also mentioned how career development practices are influenced by macro context and policies. According to Watanabe-Muraoka et al. (2009, this issue), with increasing youth unemployment, job insecurity, and a national goal to provide career service “to vulnerable members of the population, particularly since the collapse of the economy” (p. 172), career counselling gained impetus in Japan for further development and professionalization. Japan has been well known for the smooth transition from school to work and life-long employment of young people. As a result of the economic changes in the 1980s and 1990s, corporations reduced recruitment and there was oversupply of graduates (Herr, 2008), which in turn increased demands for career support. Tien’s article (2009, this issue) highlighted the importance of career counselling for young people amid rapid shifts in political, economic, and educational development, as well as the need

for designing culturally valid interest assessments for school students to decide their majors before entering university in Taiwan.

In McIlveen's (2009, this issue) article, the development of career counselling in Australia is contextualized within the broader career development industry and informed by the *Australian Blueprint for Career Development*, which contributes to its continuous progress and development. As highlighted by Herr (2008), Australia is a large land mass with a relatively small population and emphasis is placed on making information and career support to people all over the country. In light of this, the development of appropriate public policies, especially a good system of regulation in the career industry involving both public and private sectors, is a key concern.

In sum, the various contributions have demonstrated how contextual factors affect the profession of career counselling in different ways. I would like to further suggest that career professionals in specific countries scan and analyze systematically the challenges and opportunities of the environment they are in and formulate their national strategies accordingly. For example, the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis has been applied on a country basis recently to analyze the current state and future development for the profession of counselling psychology in different countries in a special issue in *Applied Psychology: An International Review* (Leong & Savickas, 2007). Formal and explicit strategy formulation will also foster further dialogue and consensus among local and international stakeholders of the discipline.

Addressing Cultural Appropriateness

Most career counselling theories originated in the West, especially the United States, which is classified as individualistic by cultural orientation (Hofstede, 1980, 1984). In the process of internationalization,

how do we make career theories applicable in countries with different cultures? According to cross-cultural studies (Hofstede, 1980, 1984), Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the Chinese mainland, for instance, are inclined to be collectivistic and Australia individualistic in the adoption of work values. In this issue, there are two contributions addressing cultural appropriateness through research results.

Tien's (2009, this issue) article entitled "Cultural Encountering: The Applicability of Holland's Typology in Taiwan" addressed the question of structural validity of Holland's hexagon (Holland, 1985, 1997) in Taiwan. Holland's theory of vocational interest, based on the person-environment typology, is one of the most widely taught and applied career theories all over the world. From the typology, different structural models have been developed, and adopting a particular structure will affect both theory and practice in career counselling. To internationalize career counselling, attention should be definitely paid to Holland's typology (1985, 1997) and its various structures. A fundamental question is whether the structure of the hexagon, which was developed and validated first by Holland in the United States, is applicable in Taiwan. Key characteristics of Tien's study are identified as follows. First of all, she adopted an interest inventory developed in Taiwan for her study. Secondly, a representative and systematic sampling method was employed. Thirdly, multidimensional scaling (MDS) (Davison, 1985) was applied to examine Holland's (1985, 1997) and Gati's (1979) models of vocational interest structure. MDS, as a statistical tool, had been applied previously in testing the hexagon and was found to be more parsimonious than the factor analysis method (e.g., Tang, 2009). Tien's results supported the structure of both Holland's and Gati's models, though Gati's model was found better in interpreting the interest structure of Taiwanese college students. In sum, Tien highlighted the fundamental question of structure equivalence in cross-cultural testing (e.g., Tracey & Gupta, 2008), meaning that the extent to which the

structure of the construct is equivalently represented across cultures. She contributed to developing culturally valid career assessment in Taiwan.

Such culturally valid and reliable instruments developed in the local context are very much in demand in Taiwan for career counselling and facilitating young people to make good educational and vocational choices. Historically and culturally, Chinese people emphasize academic achievement. Chinese people value educational achievements of their children more than the British and Americans (Gow, Balla, Kember, & Hau, 1996), and Chinese students have higher academic achievement motivation compared with their counterparts in the United States (e.g., Lai, Chan, Cheung, & Law, 2001; Stevenson, Lee, & Chen, 1990). In Chinese societies where academic achievement has been strongly pursued and university education highly valued by both students and their families, culturally valid interest tests developed in the local environment will play a special role in fostering self-exploration and systematic deliberation of the various opportunities in the societies. With mass university education growing in Chinese societies like Hong Kong and Taiwan, career counselling and valid assessments are increasingly sought by students for making good educational and vocational choices.

In addition to welcoming this as a valuable contribution towards professional advancement and indigenization of interest assessment, I have two suggestions for further research and extension in developing culturally appropriate vocational testing instruments in Chinese societies. Firstly, I suggest examining the structure of Holland's hexagon in Taiwan together with a line of research endeavours in vocational interests in other Chinese societies. As Tien (2009, this issue) commented, there can be different structures in different Chinese societies. Results could be studied and compared to similar studies in the Chinese mainland (e.g., Long, Adams, & Tracey, 2005; Long & Tracey,

2006) and Hong Kong (e.g., Leung & Hou, 2001). Continuous cross-fertilization and collaboration should be enhanced and promoted not only in validating vocational interest theories, but all other relevant vocational theories and assessments in Chinese societies.

Secondly, I suggest career researchers examine both cultural validity and specificity. According to Leong and Brown (1995), cultural validity refers to the validity of theories and models in terms of constructs, concurrent and predictive validity across cultures, while cultural specificity is regarded as the special relevance of constructs, theories and models to certain cultural groups. In retrospect, both cultural validity and cultural specificity should be explored and enhanced in applying Western models to Chinese societies. In addition to structural validity, a further question in developing vocational assessment in Chinese societies in future studies concerns how far a career construct is important in a second culture (Tracey & Gupta, 2008). As Arulmani (2009, this issue) stated, the construct of vocational prestige affects the viability of applying the Strong Inventory in India. In Hong Kong, the validity of the structure of Holland's hexagon was found to be affected by the traditionality (Farh, Leong, & Law, 1998), meaning holding traditional Chinese values. From an emic perspective, the identification of culture-specific variables in Chinese societies affecting the application of interest theories is also an important area that deserves further research effort.

The contribution from India is also related to cultural appropriateness. Arulmani's (2009, this issue) article entitled "The Internationalization of Career Counselling: Bridging Cultural Processes and Labour Market Demands in India" focuses on the social-cognitive environment which is key to the cultural adaptation of career counselling in India. He started with the basic question of how far a Western counselling framework is appropriate for application in a non-Western

culture. Arulmani emphasized career counsellors' roles in the interface between deep-rooted cultural processes and labour market demands in India, arguing that even with rapid economic growth and the increase of occupational opportunities, career preference of young people is still very much influenced by deep-rooted social cognitions, or habitual thinking patterns held by the community across social groups. Career decisions of young people are affected by the values and beliefs of their families and community, and he saw career development not just as personal development, because "personal attributes unfold within a certain social-cognitive environment" (Arulmani, 2009, this issue, p. 152).

To shed light on the understanding of the social cognitions and social-cognitive environment, Arulmani (2009, this issue) further presented data from his Work Orientations and Responses to Career Choices — An Indian Regional Survey (WORCC–IRS) on work orientation and career of young people. The study generated a list of job titles by occupational prestige, with scientist at the top and blue collar and vocational positions at the bottom. Strong positive correlations were found between prestige with interest, self-efficacy, and parental approval respectively. Young people's selection of subjects and courses of study was very much influenced by occupational prestige across socioeconomic groups. Such a social-cognitive environment has its impact on the career development of young people. For instance, in making study options and occupational choices, students are under the influence of occupational prestige, as well as parental and societal expectation, and may not choose what they really enjoy. Moreover, as science and university degrees are the subject and qualifications strongly favoured by society, young people may be hesitant to choose otherwise even if they want to. In sum, Arulmani's article proved with large-scale research the influence of the social-cognitive environment in general and occupational prestige in particular on the career choice of young

people. He demonstrated the need to identify culture-specific variables in designing policies of vocational training and delivering career services.

I have two responses to Arulmani's (2009, this issue) article. Firstly, I welcome and support his work on testing culture-specific variables. Identifying culture-specific variables does not necessarily restrict the use of Western career theories. Instead, it sheds light on the adaptation and application of such theories and models. For instance, social cognitive career models can be employed to assist clients to learn about contextual barriers and support, as well as their career beliefs. In helping clients to understand their vocational interest, the impact of occupational prestige as an intervening factor on them can also be assessed.

Secondly, I look for opportunities for further sharing and dialogue on how these culture-specific factors inform theories and actual practice. From the study, career theorizing in India will need to accommodate the social-cognitive environment in India, considering the variables occupational prestige, parental support, and career beliefs. Career practitioners will need to facilitate clients to understand the influence of the environment and society on them, and not just focus on personal agency in career development. Practically, career counsellors may need to educate and facilitate the consideration of alternative study options other than the subject of science and university degree qualifications by young people. Based on his findings, there will be specific theoretical models and intervention techniques adopted or developed. Further sharing will be useful at both local and international levels. The culture-specific factors are likely to be applicable to other Asian societies. In Hong Kong, for instance, I find similar situations in which young people are encouraged to explore, or balance, personal goals and social expectations in making educational choices.

Finally, reflecting on cultural appropriateness generally, I suggest further studies on indigenous career constructs in Asian societies. Leung and Chen (2009) explained the process of indigenizing career theories from without and within. Indigenization from without concerns applying a foreign theory, understanding how culture intervenes, as well as working on indigenizing related instruments and interventions. Indigenization from within, in turn, is about developing theories from indigenous variables, like filial piety in Chinese culture. The contributions in this issue have shed light on the application of foreign theories and assessment, which is highly appreciated. On the other hand, theorizing from indigenous variables, for example traditionality (Farh et al., 1998) and *guanxi* (e.g., Song & Werbel, 2007) or personal social networks in Chinese culture, should also be promoted.

Progressing Through Professional Competence and Regulation

As the profession of career counselling gradually localizes and gains initial acceptance in a country, it tends to establish its own identity and unique competence area, and differentiate itself from other helping professions. In other words, it seeks to professionalize itself. This is an important development in the process of internationalization and I shall examine it from the contributions about Japan and Australia.

Watanabe-Muraoka et al.'s (2009, this issue) article highlighted renewed enthusiasm in professional training of career counsellors in Japan with changing circumstances. They traced the development of career counselling in Japan for the past 60 years since it was introduced into the country. Briefly, career counselling had been introduced into Japan alongside counselling psychology, but neither has achieved a distinct professional identity. Career counselling had been separated from counselling and being treated as merely "career consultation," while counselling psychology had not established itself distinctively in Japan. This is in great contrast to the situation in the United States where

counselling psychology is well established as a sophisticated profession and career counselling is linked inherently to it through theoretical development and professional training. Recently, with increasing difficulties in school-to-work transition and adult employment, career counselling has caught the interest of policymakers. Against such a background, the authors proposed a strategic training plan for the professionalization of career counselling which is rooted in counselling psychology:

What we are realistically able to do is to consider career counselling important and to make an effort to retrain the paraprofessional practitioners (i.e., mainly career consultants and career guidance teachers) in elements of counselling psychology. We respect counselling psychology as the core theoretical background in order to develop master's level training programmes for career counselling. (Watanabe-Muraoka et al., 2009, this issue, pp. 185–186)

In my opinion, the establishment of the project to start master's level professional training for career practitioners in Japan is already a breakthrough. It has involved and solicited support from interdisciplinary professionals such as counselling psychologists, clinical psychologists, organizational psychologists, psychiatrists, social economists, labour economists, human-relation consultants, personnel managers in the international companies, and GCDF (General Career Development Facilitator) programme instructors in the project. Through the establishment of professional training and continuous dialogue among stakeholders, the career profession in Japan will be in a better position to define and promote its unique competence and contribution in the Japanese society. Moreover, the authors have emphasized that development of career counselling in Japan is closely related to professionalization of counselling psychology. It should be denoted that Watanabe-Muraoka (2007) proposed to advance counselling psychology in Japan

as “lifespan developmental counseling psychology” (p. 105). This appears to be a critical strategic move that deserves further scrutiny in future. If accepted by the Japanese society, it will set an example in repositioning and advancing the discipline of counselling psychology in Japan. Again, this will have both national and international implications. The disciplines of counselling, career counselling and counselling psychology were all introduced from the West into Asia. How to position and synergize them in an Asian country appears to be another common concern across borders for continuous dialogue and cross-fertilization.

While the contribution from Japan concerns positioning of the discipline of career counselling, the contribution from Australia is about regulating the career development profession and industry for continuous success and development. In McIlveen’s (2009, this issue) article entitled “Career Development Practice and Career Counselling in Australia,” discussion of career counselling in Australia is contextualized within the broader development of the career industry in the country. Key characteristics of the industry as outlined are as follows. First of all, the industry is well regulated by a peak body known as the Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA), a consortium of 12 professional associations as members. Secondly, CICA has made significant achievement through the announcement of its *Professional Standards for Australian Career Development Practitioners*, which defines the national ethical standards, sets competence requirements, and stipulates academic degree qualification recognition for the career development profession in Australia. Thirdly, the core and specialist competences of career development practitioners (career counselling as a specialist competence) facilitate professional development activities in terms of training, supervision, and certification. Fourthly, career development services employ both public and private model of delivery. In public policy especially and remarkably, the Australian Government launched

the *Australian Blueprint for Career Development*, laying down the career development competences for all Australians across the lifespan. Fifthly, career development professionals enhance theory and practice through Australia's own academic journal, the *Australian Journal for Career Development*. They also contribute by creating the Chaos Theory of Careers (Pryor & Bright, 2003) and the Systems Theory Framework (Patton & McMahon, 2006).

The career industry in Australia is highly sophisticated and well regulated for continuous progress and success. Since its introduction into Australia, the discipline of career counselling has evolved and grown substantially. It has achieved both theoretical and professional advancement by first importing career theories and instruments from North America and establishing cultural validity for various instruments. Subsequently, Australia is in a position to share or export some of its career theories and practices to other countries, and further contribute to the internationalization of the profession. With systems in place, Australia is in the position to move ahead with reference to the *Australian Blueprint for Career Development*.

The above discussion highlighted opportunities in different stages of professionalization. Subsequent to its introduction often from overseas, the development of career counselling in a country is related to a number of contextual and cultural factors as discussed. The establishment of a distinct professional identity demonstrates its unique contribution to the society and enhances its acceptance by the society. In Japan, professionalization takes a gradual approach and gains impetus with contextual changes. For Australia, with a regulatory system in place, the career profession is in a position to further progress and support lifespan career development of all in Australia (Patton, 2005). There appear to be both opportunities and challenges for the way ahead.

Reflecting on professionalization generally, I would like to highlight the following for further advancement. First of all, professional training and regulation should proceed in accordance with the local context, how far theories and practice have been adapted to meet the local needs, as well as the extent to which the profession has been accepted by the society. Secondly, all the stakeholders, including academics, policymakers and practitioners related to all types of career work, should be involved. Local research and scholarly work should inform professional practice. Thirdly, setting up national and international professional standards will facilitate further internationalization. As summarized by Arthur (2008), based on the *Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners*, the benefits of professional standards include enhancing the quality of services, recognizing career development as a distinct and specialized discipline, advocating for quality career development services, supporting progress and consistency in career development educational programmes, as well as promoting accountability in service delivery.

Concluding Remarks

In this response paper, I started from the definition of internationalization as the process of “globalization” (Savickas, 2003, p. 95) and explained that the issue can be explored from both globalization and localization perspectives. From the globalization perspective, the main concern is how far models, theories, and assessments tools can be exported across cultures. As for localization, the challenge is to make theories and practice applicable in the local context.

Having considered all contributions, I find that in each society there are unique contextual considerations. Professionals will need to define their missions by addressing local needs, and then adapting or developing

theories, models, and tools creatively. To ensure continuous growth and success, they will need to consider professional training and regulation for long-term development and success. To advance career counselling, professionals in different countries will need to play dynamic roles in localization and globalization. To respond to environment changes, they will devise corresponding strategies. To make theories and practice culturally appropriate, they will adapt and indigenize theories and practice continuously. To champion professionalization, they will position the discipline in specific countries with visions of and commitment to shape the future. In short, colleagues in different parts of the world will continue to play dynamic roles in advancing the field. Such professional dynamism in different parts of the world, from my point of view, is most critical to the further globalization and localization of the discipline.

At the same time, career professionals in different parts of the world will increasingly feel the necessity to connect and learn from others, which will contribute to the advancement of internationalization of career counselling. In reading the contributions in this special issue, I have already identified common themes and interests, for instance, in developing culturally valid and reliable career assessments and professional regulation systems. There is much room for further dialogue, professional sharing and collaboration in research. Moreover, at the international level, professional associations like the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG) and the National Career Development Association (NCDA) of the United States also serve as our platform for communication and advancing the international guidelines and standards of career counselling. To further foster and enhance our professional dynamism, I think we will seek to connect and foster closer collaborative relations with one another continuously.

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事業輔導國際化：有關專業動態與進展的反思

事業輔導是一門源於西方的學科，它已給引進到世界不同國家及地區。近年學者對它的探討，多以事業輔導國際化為題來討論（例如 Goodman & Gillis, 2009; Hartung, 2005; Savickas, Van Esbroeck, & Herr, 2005），而這國際化過程又稱為「全球本土化」（Savickas, 2005, p. 95）。本期專輯探討事業輔導與國際化；來自澳洲、日本、印度、南非及台灣的作者，簡介及分析其所處文化及環境中事業輔導的新發展。本文就本專輯文章的共通課題作反思。這些課題包括：事業輔導理論與社會環境改變的配合，促進事業輔導的文化適切性，以及透過培訓和規範促使事業輔導專業的進展。本文更指出，在國際化及本土化的背景下，各地從事事業發展工作的專業人士可扮演積極主動的角色，推動事業輔導在理論及專業方面的發展。