

A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO CAREER COUNSELLING FOR CLIENTS WITH DISABILITIES USING COUNSELLING-BASED CAREER ASSISTANCE

Quek Ai Hwa, PhD

HELP University

Malaysia

This research paper addresses the collaborative approach in using counselling-based career assistance, such as clients' strengths for career counselling of persons with disabilities in Malaysia. The paper responds to Malaysia's public policy of social transformation by providing the collaborative approach for career counselling of clients with disabilities. It is noted that the collaborative approach in using counselling-based career assistance is applicable to persons with mild to moderate developmental or learning disabilities and these clients are able to benefit from career counselling so as to hold jobs. In this way, this paper aims to create awareness among career counsellors by highlighting that: (1) counsellors can assist as collaborators to engage clients in therapeutic relationships in the counselling process so as to shift the focus from clients' problems towards focusing on the clients' strengths; (2) counsellors are mindful of the clients' problems but collaborate with the clients to source for clients' strengths; and (3) counsellors collaborate with clients so that clients use these strengths to come up with doable options that clients can implement so as to be more effective in advancing their career and to attain better psychological well-being. As such, it is not intended in this paper to discuss the methodology of building therapeutic relationships and the reporting of the progress of the various stages of counselling. For the purpose of this paper, an example case is selected so that a counselling session can be edited to show portions that illustrate the use of counselling-based career assistance in the collaborative approach. It is important that career counsellors must be trained and educated professionally as well as acquire multicultural counselling competence in assisting as collaborators for clients with disabilities so as to use counselling-based career assistance in career counselling. This calls for more dialogue at the cross-cultural level for members of the counselling fraternity to look into the collaborative approach for promoting inclusiveness in the education and training of career counsellors.

Keywords: collaborative approach, career counselling, clients' strengths

Counselling-based career assistance enables clients with disabilities to attain better psychological well-being. Career assistance is defined as the various facilitative services that include clients' strengths so that counsellors can use

these strengths to assist clients in the counselling process (Corey, 2013; Hays & Erford, 2010; Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2009). Here, strengths refer to the clients' individual strengths and clients' family strengths. Examples of the clients' individual strengths include personal values, past experiences, personality characteristics, skills and outlook in life. Accordingly, counsellors can assist clients to use these individual strengths as facilitative services for making doable actions to promote their career advancement. In addition, the clients' family strengths refer to the strengths of the clients' family members. Examples of the clients' family strengths are family values, past experiences, personality characteristics, skills and family's outlook in life. In career counselling, counsellors can assist clients to utilise their family strengths as facilitative services for working out options toward better career opportunities.

One form of offering counselling-based career assistance to clients with disabilities is to use the collaborative approach. This collaborative approach to counselling-based career assistance involves building and maintaining therapeutic relationships so that clients are enabled to attain new career insights towards the attainment of better psychological well-being (Corey, 2009; Hays & Erford, 2010; Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2009). In this way, clients with disabilities are assisted to focus on their strengths and to utilise these strengths to identify action that client can do or will do in order to advance their career (Ivey & Ivey, 2007; Quek, 2012; Steere, Rose & Cavauiolo, 2007; Wehman & Kregel, 1998). Accordingly, these same researchers reported that career counsellors, in assisting clients to focus on their strengths rather than on their disabilities can motivate clients to work out possible changes so as to experience better psychological well-being.

It is recognised that nurturing psychological well-being of Malaysian including clients with disabilities contributes to Malaysia's public policy of social transformation, which is also referred to as the country's fourth agenda to become a developed nation (Najib Razak, 2013). According to the Prime Minister, strengths sourced from people's values and culture can lead to positive and constructive activities for accelerating Malaysia's social transformation toward national development (Najib Razak, 2013).

Thus, one way to respond to Malaysia's public policy of social transformation is for career counsellors to assist in channelling Malaysians' energy into positive and constructive activities in improving the quality of the efforts to promote excellent human resources. For example, career counsellors can offer the collaborative approach to clients with disabilities in career counselling that uses counselling-based career assistance. This is seen when the career counsellor collaborates in career counselling by assisting clients to seek out their strengths and to work out for themselves positive and constructive activities to carry out changes which clients can implement to become more effective Malaysians so as to live more meaningfully.

The utilisation of clients' strengths for positive and constructive activities reinforces inclusiveness in Malaysia's social transformation towards a developed

nation (Quek, 2009a, 2009b, 2012). Hence, the collaborative approach for practising counselling-based career assistance is relevant in empowering clients with disabilities in their career development. Viewed this way, Malaysians including clients with disabilities can be mobilised to support the country's social transformation agenda that aspires towards attaining Vision 2020 when Malaysia becomes a developed country (Malaysia, 2010).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

To offer clients with disabilities the collaborative approach in practising counselling-based career assistance, it is essential to define the meanings of career and career development. Here, career refers to the sequence of work-related positions, values and roles held by a client with disabilities in his or her lifetime (Nevo & Wiseman, 2002; Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2009; Super, 1994). Following this definition, the career development of a client with disabilities comprises the integration of career decisions, changes and adjustments that shape the client's career throughout his or her lifetime (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2009; Quek, 2003, 2011; Yeh & Wang, 2000).

Empirical evidence indicates that an appropriate career decision or adjustment is intertwined tightly 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 achievement in a lifetime (Chang, 2002; Lee Quek & Chew, 2001; Leung, 2002; Quek, 2000, 2012). Appropriate career decision or adjustment does not occur in a vacuum. However, a career counsellor can provide the collaborative approach of offering counselling-based career assistance to clients with disabilities to help them make suitable career decisions, changes or adjustments. Accordingly, some studies on career involving clients with disabilities are in agreement that counsellors can facilitate as collaborators in counselling-based career assistance to enable clients to decide on making a change or to make career adjustments for improving the clients' psychological well-being at the workplace and at home (Ivey & Ivey, 2007; Quek, 2005; 2012; Steere, Rose & Cavauiuolo, 2007; Wehman & Kregel, 1998).

A Collaborative Approach Using Counselling-Based Career Assistance

As posited in the introduction, the collaborative approach of offering career counselling to clients with disabilities requires counsellors to assist, as collaborators, clients to engage in therapeutic relationships for exploring clients' strengths (Table 1 and Table 2). In the presence of the career counsellor assisting as a collaborator, the client is empowered to take the role of the expert in his or her own life since the client knows best what he or she could have done formerly, and what he or she could do presently as well as in the future so as to attain

better psychological well-being (Hays & Erford, 2010; Manning & Baruth, 2009; Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2009; Quek, 2012; Yeh & Wang, 2000).

In Malaysia, it is officially decreed that counselling including career counselling is a helping relationship that enables each client “to achieve a voluntary favourable holistic change, development and adjustment... throughout the lifespan of the client (Counsellors Act, 1998, p. 8). Thus, a starting point in using the collaborative approach to career counselling is engaging clients in therapeutic relationships in the counselling process for enabling clients to explore their strengths. This means that clients are guided by counsellors to shift from focusing on their problems to focusing on their strengths so that clients are energised to do what they can do and will do with their career to experience better psychological well-being (Quek, 2012; Yeh & Wang, 2000).

Caution is noted that career counsellors in assisting clients with disabilities to focus on their strengths rather than on their problems must not ignore the clients’ problems. When career counsellors overlook the clients’ problems, then counselling is in vain. This means that career counsellors who collaborate with clients must be aware of the clients’ difficulties, and to collaborate with the clients to source for clients’ strengths so as to search for more effective options for advancing their career (Quek, 2012; Yeh & Wang, 2000). In this way, clients are reported to be hopeful and motivated in moving forward to do things that can improve their career (Ivey & Ivey, 2007; Quek, 2012; Steere et al., 2007; Wehman & Kregel, 1998).

Career counsellors as collaborators can guide clients to explore various forms of clients’ individual strengths (Table 1) and clients’ family members’ strengths (Table 2) and seek ways of using these strengths as resources for counselling-based career assistance. Listed in Table 1 are various forms of individual strengths of clients with disabilities such as clients’ values, past experiences, personality characteristics, skills and outlook in life. Table 1 illustrates some ways in which clients can use their individual strengths for counselling-based career assistance. For example, the clients’ past experiences including showing empathy to others at the workplace and feeling happy for having met a financial obligation can be reference points to motivate clients in scheduling new changes based on clients’ past success so as to take actions for attaining career growth (Table 1). Another example is for career counsellors to use clients’ outlook in life as resources by assisting clients to focus on showing loyalty to family members including relatives and friends. The counsellors, in assisting as collaborators, engage clients in positive thinking through brainstorming to get various interpretations of showing loyalty to family members including relatives and friends. The clients then take steps to decide which change is most meaningful for them to show loyalty to their family members and also attain psychological well-being in work and family life.

It is noted that the forms of clients’ individual strengths and the examples of using clients’ individual strengths in Table 1 are not exhaustive and can be extended to meet the clients’ other needs during counselling-based career

assistance. In addition, the forms of clients' individual strengths need not be mutually exclusive but can be considered inclusively for meeting a client's needs in counselling-based career assistance. For instance, the clients' values and past experiences can be used together as resources for reinforcing clients in searching for strengths so that they can change to attain career advancement.

To illustrate this point: The clients' values such as cooperativeness and helpfulness can serve as sources of energy for clients' past success in attending a job interview or even holding a job. It is crucial that career counsellors maintain therapeutic relationships in the counselling process to provide the setting for clients with disabilities to explore their individual strengths and search for possibilities including combining various forms of using these individual strengths to make changes for career advancement (Ivey & Ivey, 2007; Quek, 2012).

Table 1

Individual Strengths of Malaysian Clients with Disabilities for Counselling-based Career Assistance

Forms of clients' individual strengths	Examples of using clients' individual strengths
Clients' values	Some examples of clients' values are cooperativeness and helpfulness that guide changes in clients' behaviour. Other examples when values influence changes include respect for others in making amends and showing restitution when having wronged others at the workplace. These examples of clients' values serve as strengths in career assistance for the career counsellors to empower the clients to change for growth and career development.
Clients' past experiences	Some examples of clients' past experiences include showing empathy to others at the workplace and feeling happy for having met financial obligations. These examples of clients' strengths can be reference points to motivate clients in scheduling changes based on success experienced for further actions to attain career growth. Other clients' past experiences such as being successful in attending a job interview and holding a job are strengths career counsellors may use in assisting as collaborator to enable clients to be experts of their own lives. As such, clients are treated as knowing best in what they can do and what they can use to get on with their lives.
Clients' personality characteristics	Some examples of clients' personality characteristics are being helpful, having respect for law and willingness to participate in teamwork which are seen as individual strengths. The career counsellors in assisting as collaborators can focus on these strengths as career assistance. Thus, clients are encouraged to

shift from looking at their difficulties to focusing on their strengths in working out changes for attaining psychological well-being in their career.

Clients' skills

Some examples of clients' skills are having professional competence, communication skills and talents including artistic abilities Career counsellors in assisting as collaborators can guide clients to reframe their difficulties in ways that allow their skills and talents to be used for making changes that are needed for the clients' work performance.

Clients' outlook in life

Some examples of clients' outlook in life include showing loyalty to family members including relatives and friends, working to improve their community, as well as standing up for their rights and the rights of others. Career counsellors in assisting as collaborators can guide clients to use these examples of outlook in life for making more options available for deciding on a change that is needed to improve clients' career prospects. Clients are enabled with more options when the career counsellors in assisting as collaborators engage clients in positive thinking. One way of engaging clients in positive thinking is to participate in brainstorming. For instance, clients are encouraged to brainstorm various interpretations of showing loyalty to family members including relatives and friends. The clients then take steps to decide what change is most meaningful for them to show their loyalty to their family members and also attain psychological well-being in work and family life.

Note: The forms of clients' individual strengths and the examples of using clients' individual strengths in Table 1 are not exhaustive and can be expanded to meet clients' other needs in counselling-based career assistance. The forms of clients' individual strengths need not be mutually exclusive but can be considered inclusively for meeting a client's needs in counselling-based career assistance.

Listed in Table 2 are various forms of clients' family strengths such as values of clients' family members, their past experiences, their personality characteristics, their skills and their outlook in life. Also found in Table 2 are some examples that illustrate how clients can use their family members' strengths as resources for counselling-based career assistance. For example, the career counsellors in assisting clients as collaborators can engage clients to interpret past experiences of the clients' family members such as success stories and work experiences which had been disclosed to clients by their siblings. As such, clients can use these success stories and work experiences as background in figuring out what the clients can do to experience a desirable change for attaining psychological well-being in their career.

Table 2

Family Strengths of Malaysian Clients with Disabilities for Counselling-based Career Assistance

Forms of clients' family strengths	Examples of using clients' family strengths
Values of clients'	Some examples of the values of clients' family members are sharing in-group values of collectivism such as showing cooperativeness and practice respect with support for each other in times of facing difficulties due to job loss. Career counsellors in assisting clients as collaborators can use these examples as strengths in career assistance to empower the clients to change for growth and career development.
Past experiences of the clients' family members	Some instances of past experiences of the clients' family members are sharing stories, disclosing work experiences and giving opinions. These examples can serve as strengths in career assistance. For instance, the career counsellors in assisting clients as collaborators can engage clients to interpret work experiences of clients' siblings. As such, clients are guided to figure out what the clients can do to experience a desirable change for attaining psychological well-being in their career.
Personality characteristics of the clients' family members	The clients' family members may have diverse personality characteristics. Some examples are being sociable, being helpful, adaptable to meet family needs and willingness to make sacrifices as to help family members. These examples can be used as strengths in career assistance. For instance, career counsellors in assisting as collaborators can guide clients to identify family members who have been helpful and let the clients describe the positive influences that the clients have experienced. The impact of knowing that there are family members that the clients can usually count on for help can motivate clients to think for more options including seeking to return favours to family members. In this way, clients are enabled to seek help when needed and also to give assistance whenever possible. This helps the clients to improve their psychological well-being at work and in interacting with their family members.
Skills of the clients' family members	Some examples of skills of the clients' family members are include caregiving for young children and interacting closely among siblings and providing role models for young family members. These examples can be utilised as strengths in career assistance. Career counsellors in assisting as collaborators can guide clients to look at their family members as a source of skills. For instance, clients who have to work but have young children who must be attended can be guided to seek family

members who are willing to obtain trusted caregiving. Another example is seen in the in-group and collective Chinese families, when needed clients are guided to focus on their families' *guanxi*, or the network of personal relationships among family members and close friends (Lee et al., 2001; Wei, 2013) to link up opportunities for work including doing business.

Outlook in life of the clients' family

Some examples of the outlook in life of the clients' family are the history, traditions, loyalty, filial piety and religion that clients can use as sources of reference in responding to others. For example, filial piety and traditions of pride and honouring the expectations of parents can be interpreted as sources of courage to counterbalance the clients' frustration when making decisions for change. Other examples are family obligations and responsibilities to family members as well as to others (such as family friends and neighbours) that can be interpreted as strengths to enable clients to adopt roles that allow for change towards career development.

Note: The forms of clients' family strengths and the examples of using clients' family strengths in Table 2 are not exhaustive and can be expanded to meet the other needs of clients in counselling-based career assistance. The forms of clients' family strengths need not be mutually exclusive but can be considered inclusively for meeting a client's needs in counselling-based career assistance.

In another instance, career counsellors in assisting as collaborators can guide clients to look into personality characteristics of family members to identify those family members who have been helpful; and then let the clients describe the positive influences that the clients have experienced as a result of being enabled by family members. The impact of knowing that there are family members that the clients can count on for help can motivate clients to think of more options including seeking to return favours to helpful family members. In this way, clients are enabled to seek help when needed and also to give assistance whenever possible. This helps the clients to improve their psychological well-being at work and in interacting with their family members. The various forms of clients' family strengths and the examples of using strengths of clients' family members as presented in Table 2 are not exhaustive as guidelines for use in providing counselling-based career assistance to clients with disabilities. Other examples of using strengths of clients' family members in assisting clients can be added to the list in Table 2 for meeting the other needs of clients in counselling-based career assistance.

It is noted that the various forms of clients' family strengths need not be applied in mutually exclusive ways but can be considered inclusively for meeting a client's needs in counselling-based career assistance. For example, values of the clients' family members and skills of the clients' family members can be used together as resources for assisting clients in their search for strengths for improving their career.

To illustrate this point: in general, among Malaysians who are encultured in sharing in-group values of collectivism such as showing cooperativeness and practicing respect with support for each other in times of facing difficulties (for example job loss) can be sources of resilience to clients who have just experienced a job loss or bypassed in promotion in their workplace (Quek, 2012). Another example is found among the in-group and collective Chinese families. Here, when needed clients are guided to focus on their families' *guanxi*, that is the network of personal relationships among family members and close friends (Lee et al., 2001; Wei, 2013) in order to link up opportunities for work including doing business.

Career counsellors can assist clients to use a matrix of clients' individual strengths and clients' family strengths for making changes towards career advancement. For instance, career counsellors can collaborate with clients to assist them in reconciling their individual values of cooperativeness with the outlook in life of the clients' family members that emphasise upholding traditions of pride as well as honouring the expectations of parents. This matrix of clients' strengths calls for the meaning of cooperativeness as a way in which clients can get a job and then help support their parents financially. In this way, clients aspire to uphold traditions of pride and also being able to make progress in their career. In all these instances, it is important that career counsellors maintain therapeutic relationships in the counselling process so as to provide the setting for the clients with disabilities to search for possibilities of strengths to make changes for career advancement (Ivey & Ivey, 2007; Quek, 2012).

AIMS

At this point, it is important to note that this research paper attends to the collaborative approach in using counselling-based career assistance for career counselling of persons with disabilities in Malaysia. Hence, it is not the intention of this paper to discuss the methodology of building therapeutic relationships and the reporting of progress in various stages of counselling. Here, it is noted that the collaborative approach in using counselling-based career assistance is applicable to persons with disabilities, such as people with mild to moderate developmental or learning disabilities, and these clients are able to hold jobs with the help of career counselling (Graziano, 2002; May & Raske, 2005; Quek, 2000, 2005; 2012; Yeh & Wang, 2000).

As such, this paper attempts to create awareness among career counsellors by highlighting that: (1) counsellors can assist as collaborators to engage clients in therapeutic relationships in the counselling process so as to shift the focus from clients' problems towards focusing on the clients' strengths; (2) counsellors whilst being aware of the clients' problems can collaborate with the clients to source for clients' strengths; and (3) counsellors can collaborate with clients so

that clients use these strengths to come up with options that clients can implement for more effective career advancement.

A SELECTED CASE FOR MAKING ILLUSTRATIONS

Conceptualised this way, this paper presents a selected case in career counselling, which was conducted by the author. This career counselling case was selected to address the two aims of this research paper, namely, (1) To understand the collaborative approach for engaging clients in therapeutic relationships during the counselling process while using counselling-based career assistance for focusing on the clients’ strengths rather than on clients’ pathology and deficits; and (2) to collaborate with the clients to source for their strengths so as to enable them to use these strengths to develop options that they can implement in order to attain career advancement.

Table 3 presents an example case that is selected to highlight illustrations of using counselling-based career assistance in the collaborative approach. At this point, it is appropriate to describe the case briefly. It is noted that some of the demographic background of the selected case were modified in order to protect the client’s identity. The client (referred to as B in Table 3), is a Malaysian Chinese man with a visual disability. Before counselling started the client stated in his information file that he was diagnosed with tunnel vision resulting from severe cataracts found in both his eyes. For the past 10 years the client underwent several eye surgeries with little improvement in eyesight. The eye specialists who conducted various tests concurred in the reporting of his total blindness with passing days. The client was very concerned about his oncoming visual field loss in both his eyes. He graduated with a Bachelor in Commerce and was attending a teacher education programme when he sought career counselling to improve his career opportunities in teaching.

Table 3
An Example Case

A Selected Case of a Client with a Visual Disability

B is a 26 years old Chinese man diagnosed with tunnel vision resulting from severe cataracts found in both his eyes. For the past 10 years, he underwent several eye surgeries with little improvement in eyesight. Tests and consultations with various optometrists and ophthalmologists revealed the extensive loss of vision in both his eyes with experts concurring in reports of total blindness with passing days. B was very concerned about his oncoming visual field loss in both his eyes. B graduated with a Bachelor in Commerce and was attending a teacher education programme when he sought career counselling to improve his career opportunities in teaching.

Illustrating Counselling-Based Career Assistance in the Collaborative Approach

Table 4 contains the counselling session that has been edited to show portions that illustrate the use of counselling-based career assistance in the collaborative approach. As explained earlier, it is intended that Table 3 does not show the sequence of all the five stages of counselling. It is reminded that the selected illustrations of using counselling-based career assistance in the collaborative approach show up in the fourth stage of the counselling process. In this fourth stage, the counsellor assisted the client as a collaborator to explore possible options in using client's strengths to enable the client to seek out what he could do to be more effective in his career advancement. The therapeutic relationships which were already built in the first stage (establishing rapport) were maintained in the counselling process of this fourth stage. The therapeutic relationships provided the framework for the counsellor, who was aware of the client's difficulties but assisted as a collaborator in facilitating the client to focus on his strengths.

For instance, the counsellor assisted as a collaborator by asking a question: *"Can you tell me where you want to go with this teacher education programme?"* Here, the counsellor collaborated with the client by enabling the client to focus on what the client could do with the teacher education programme, rather than diagnosing the client's difficulties. This made it possible for the client to express his goal for attending a teacher education programme: *"I think I can go into teaching. I hope to graduate successfully with a teaching qualification. Well, at least I can go into teaching for the blind."*

Whilst maintaining the therapeutic relationships, the counsellor facilitated the client to find strengths by motivating the client to go into what he could do with the response: *"Hm. Say more about that."* This enabled the client to express: *"I like teaching. You know, it is when many students stared at me and talked among themselves then giggled loudly, this made me uneasy and frustrated."*

Here, the counsellor collaborated by helping the client to work out his strengths in positive ways by asking: *"And what happened then?"* This helped the client to recall what actions were possible for him but were not desired: *"I became anxious and restless. I quickly thought of running away but I didn't."* The counsellor continued to assist the client to work out his strengths by asking: *"What stopped you from running away?"* The counsellor's active involvement in assisting the client served to motivate the client to respond: *"I was afraid that running away would make me feel even more frustrated with myself."*

The counsellor then collaborates by assisting the client in sorting out actions that the client had earlier experienced and had desired outcome. This is seen when the counsellor asked: *"Can you tell me about the times when you successfully faced problems similar to those that you now experience?"* The client was assisted to focus on his strengths such as by expressing: *"It's easy to run away, but I am not getting near to do things in teaching. You see when I*

first joined the university, my classmates made fun about my thick glasses and mimicked the way I read by holding a 'ledger' (accounting book) extremely close to my eyes. But, after some time the teasing and mimicking stopped I guessed my classmates understood my visual disability." In continuing to assist the client to focus on doable actions, the counsellor collaborated by asking: *"Where did you find the courage to handle those problems?"* The client acknowledged that: *"In the past, I used to get anxious and frustrated and I could not get work done."*

The counsellor, whilst maintaining the therapeutic relationships encouraged the client by saying: *"Hm. Say more about that."* The client was spontaneous in expressing: *"I didn't want to get poor results again. I really think that I need to do things to get a degree and get a teaching qualification. This way I can get a job and look after my parents and my five brothers and sisters."* The counsellor in assisting as a collaborator frequently referred to the client's positive strengths, such as by asking: *"How have you managed to cope up to this point?"* As such, the client benefitted from the counsellor's collaboration which involved frequent references to the client's strengths and this served to empower the client as shown by his expression: *"I look to get successfully a degree and then go into teaching. This gave me the courage to join a group in discussing solutions. Most of these solutions I had earlier prepared in great details. The accounts lecturer was impressed by my group's solutions and one group member quickly pointed out to the class that I was the chief contributor and should get the credit for the group's success. I felt good."*

The central task at this point is for the counsellor to collaborate by enabling the client to confirm that the counsellor had heard correctly by saying: *"That's awesome. You did something that you wanted to do for quite a while and you got satisfaction."* The confirmation provided the opportunity for the client to verify what was correctly heard by the counsellor as shown by the client's expression: *"I like this sort of new way of doing things. This change is good. I hope to go on like this."*

Upon the client's confirmation on what was preferred by the client, the counsellor facilitated by asking: *"What would you change about your life?"* The client was assisted by the counsellor to find his own option and this led the client to express: *"I really think that I need to change my way of doing things. I've done it when I was doing my degree and it worked for me to get into teaching. I need to get more skills and hope to be a teacher to the blind."* Here, the client was able to come up with an option to meet his need, namely the need to change his way of doing things. This was translated as something that the client had done before (whilst he did his degree) to help himself in getting more teaching skills in aspiring to be a teacher for the blind. Hence, the counsellor in assisting as a collaborator facilitated the client to use his strengths to work out an option that the client could put into action for his career advancement.

Table 4

Illustrations of Counselling-based Career Assistance in the Collaborative Approach

Edited Counselling Session to Illustrate Portions that Demonstrate the Collaborative Approach

- Co: Can you tell me where do you want to go with this teacher education programme.
- B: I think I can go into teaching. I hope to graduate successfully with a teaching qualification. Well, at least I can go into teaching for the blind.
- Co: Hm. Say more about that.
- B: I like teaching. You know, it is when many students stared at me and talked among themselves, then giggled loudly, this made me uneasy and frustrated.
- Co: And what happened then?
- B: I became anxious and restless. I quickly thought of running away but I didn't.
- Co: What stopped you from running away?
- B: I was afraid that running away would make me feel even more frustrated with myself.
- Co: Can you tell me about the times when you successfully faced problems similar to those that you now experience?
- B: It's easy to run away, but I am not getting near to do things in teaching. You see when I first joined the university, my classmates made fun about my thick glasses and mimicked the way I read by holding a 'ledger' (accounting book) extremely close to my eyes. But, after some time the teasing and mimicking stopped I guessed my classmates understood my visual disability.
- Co: Where did you find the courage to handle those problems?
- B: In the past, I used to get anxious and frustrated and I could not get work done.
- Co: Hm. Say more about that.
- B: I didn't want to get poor results again. I really think that I need to do things to get a degree and get a teaching qualification. This way I can get a job and look after my parents and my five brothers and sisters.
- Co: How have you managed to cope up to this point?
- B: I look to get successfully a degree and then go into teaching. This gave me the courage to join a group in discussing solutions. Most of these solutions I had earlier prepared in great details. The accounts lecturer was impressed by my group's solutions and one group member quickly pointed out to the class that I was the chief contributor and should get the credit for the group's success. I felt good.
- Co: That's awesome. You did something that you wanted to do for quite a while and you got satisfaction.
- B: I like this sort of new way of doing things. This change is good. I hope to go on like this.
- Co: What would you change about your life?
- B: I really think that I need to change my way of doing things. I've done it when I was doing my degree and it worked for me to get into teaching. I need to get more skills and hope to be a teacher to the blind.
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DISCUSSION

At this point, it is recalled that it is not intended in this research paper to discuss the methodology of building therapeutic relationships and the reporting of the progress of the various stages of counselling. As such, this paper will not discuss the other counselling aspects such as the client's planning to implement change and do follow-up.

However, this paper addresses the collaborative approach in using counselling-based career assistance for career counselling of persons with disabilities in Malaysia. In particular, it is noted the collaborative approach in using counselling-based career assistance is applicable for persons with mild to moderate developmental or learning disabilities, and these clients can benefit from career counselling so that they are enabled to hold jobs.

Viewed this way, portions of the edited counselling session of a case example were utilised to demonstrate the collaborative approach which used counselling-based career assistance. Thus, it is illustrated that counsellors can assist as collaborators to engage clients in therapeutic relationships by focusing on the clients' strengths (such as individual and family strengths), rather than on the clients' difficulties to enable clients to have options for attaining career progression and experience better psychological well-being.

Counsellors have to be aware of the clients' problems but they collaborate with their clients to source for clients' strengths to come up with options that clients can implement for more effective career advancement. As explained earlier, one advantage of applying the collaborative approach that uses counselling-based career assistance is that clients with disabilities are motivated when they are assisted by counsellors to explore their strengths rather than to focus on their difficulties. In this way, the clients' motivation adds optimism to the therapeutic relationships for counsellors to assist as collaborators to their clients.

CONCLUSION

As a reminder, it is important that career counsellors must be trained and educated professionally as well as have multicultural counselling competence in assisting as collaborators for clients with disabilities so as to use counselling-based career assistance in career counselling. Career counsellors in understanding their clients' strengths and enabling these clients (with disabilities) to work out doable options for their career advancement can lead to inclusiveness in Malaysia. This calls for more dialogue at the cross-cultural level for members of the counselling fraternity to look into the collaborative approach for promoting inclusiveness in the education and training of career counsellors.

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