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Delivery models Context and Culture-Resonant Approaches

CONTEXT AND CULTURE-RESONANT APPROACHES

WORK AS CULTURE

Anthropologists describe culture as human phenomena that cannot be attributed to genetic or biological inheritance, but reflective of a cohesive and assimilated system of learned behaviour patterns which characterize the members of a social group (Hoebel, 1966). Other features of culture include the symbolic representation of experiences and the distinct ways in which groups of people classify and represent their collective experience (Geertz, 1973; Liu & Sibley, 2009). From Neolithic times, work was slowly transformed from a raw and primal engagement with the surroundings to an activity that was characterized by the codification of experiences through symbols, the organization and classification of work activities into occupations that were governed by hierarchies, and the transmission of these learnings to others through the process of cultural learning. Work began to be characterized by customs, laws, value attributions, social standards, religious beliefs, and traditions (Scarre, 2005). It has also been observed that populations that were able to organize work around a central principle (for example, principles emanating from religion) were more prosperous (e.g., Bellwood, 2004). Hence, work as a human activity became deeply embedded in human culture.

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Work and career are closely interwoven with human development across almost all cultures. Contemporary ideas of human development have moved away from the supposition that development comprises an invariant sequence of stages, through which the individual must move. In real life, development does not seem to occur in this predictable and rational manner between clearly defined age ranges. An important observation made is that earlier developmental models do not adequately address the vast range of individual and contextual differences and that the attitudes of significant others in the adolescent's life and social expectations could play a significant role in shaping career orientations (Arulmani & Nag-Arulmani, 2004). Blustein (1988) makes the point that the resolution of career developmental tasks is in effect influenced by the simultaneous operation of various historical

factors (e.g., economic slump or boom) and cultural factors (e.g., prestige attributes of an occupation). In other words, “non-normative” factors that are not related to the process of maturation could play a significant role in career development.

The Cultural Preparation Process Model of Career Development

Cultural Preparedness

Cultural preparedness refers to the bi-directional process of influence between a social group and its members, whereby a society directly or indirectly, formally or informally, transmits to its members, the norms and customs by which it characterizes itself and whereby the dynamics of lifelong cultural learning facilitate the absorbing of attitudes, convictions, opinions, and notions which cohere together to create mindsets and beliefs that guide a people's relationship with themselves and their environment. Extending the notion of cultural preparedness to the practice of counselling and guidance, Arulmani (2007) points out that the constructs that undergird Western theories of counselling are embedded in the realities of Western contexts. Methods of counselling that emerged in these settings were in effect developed by a people, for a people with certain cultural orientations. One of the reasons for the success of these approaches could be that both the authors of the service as well as the consumers of the service have been prepared by their cultures to offer and partake of the service in a similar manner. They share a comparable vocabulary of values and cherish a particular approach to life. It is against this background of cultural preparedness that conditions could be created for an approach to counselling that were necessary and sufficient for that context. However, the same

conditions may be neither necessary nor sufficient for a people who have a different cultural heritage. For example, a definition of career that cuts against collectivistic orientations may not find resonance amongst a people whose culture has prepared them over the ages to approach their existence in a community oriented manner and where the exercise of independent decision making is not entirely the prerogative of the individual. The cultural preparedness approach is offered in this writing as a framework that could be considered for the development of culturally resonant theorising and models of practice.

Proposition 1: Global Trends and Transformations

The model proposes that global conditions, trends, and transformations form the backdrop against which human engagement with work and career occurs. These are major external factors that affect the individual/group but over which the individual/group has little or no control. These factors could include social philosophies, economic trends, political changes, technological advances, and natural phenomena. For example, economic liberalisation and globalisation have brought a wide range of new occupations into emerging economies that have a significant impact on career development processes in these economies.

Proposition 2: Influences on Preparedness

Moving from global processes to the level of the individual/group, the model proposes that preparedness for career development is influenced by the following three key factors:

Patterns of social organization. Individualism and collectivism have been extensively discussed and the literature is rich with descriptions and definitions (see Hofst-

ede, 2007; Triandis, 1995). Summarizing this literature, Oyserman, Coon, and Klemmemeier (2002) describe the central features of individualism to be a belief in personal uniqueness and independence while interdependence, duty to the in-group, and maintaining harmony are the main characteristics of collectivism. The model suggests that individualistic–collectivistic cultural environments could differentially shape the individual's cultural preparedness. A concrete example is the individual's expression of career interests, which is a central construct in career counselling. In a collectivistic context, the individual's formation and articulation of vocational interests might in fact be significantly influenced by the values and beliefs of the collective. In an individualistic situation, however, it is more probable that the formation of interests is relatively more independent of the collective and that the individual has greater freedom to express personal preferences rather than those favoured and endorsed by the community.

Patterns of value attribution. The worth, importance, or significance bestowed upon phenomena within a certain cultural group are key influences on cultural preparedness. The meaning and purpose attributed to work and career could be influenced by prevailing mindsets, social and moral frames of reference. Social cognitive environments foster the development of career beliefs: attitudes and opinions that reflect career stereotypes (Arulmani, 2011; Krumboltz, 1994). For example, the Gandhian view emphasises the belief that work has innate value and must be pursued for its own sake. Such social cognitions, in a distinctly identifiable manner, cause the attribution of value to various aspects of work and career which could guide and influence

people's work behaviours and their orientation to career development. The impact of value attributions on the career preparation process can also be marked and critical (Arulmani & Abdulla, 2007).

Processes of role allocation. Relationships within a social group are defined by processes of role allocation. The acting out of a role is regulated by a reciprocal give–receive dynamic between the individual and society and is characterized by culturally defined obligations and expectations (see Merton, 1957). Focusing on occupational role allocation, this model proposes that cultural preparedness for occupational engagement is influenced by the manner in which people are assigned, achieve, or assume occupational roles. The interaction between gender and career provides another strong example. In certain cultures, the primary role ascribed upon the female is that of wife and mother. The definite, cultural expectation is that any career roles she wishes to realise are subsumed under the primary ascribed role.

Proposition 3: The Mediation of Cultural Learning

Cultural learning is a uniquely human feature whereby the learner is not only learning about things from other persons but is also learning things through them and at the same time becoming a vehicle for the transmission of these learnings to others (Tomasello, 2001). The third proposition of the cultural preparation process model suggests that the capacity for cultural learning mediates the interaction between global trends (described in Proposition 1) and influences on preparedness (described in Proposition 2). For example, the tsunami that struck the coasts of South India a few years ago destroyed the wooden boats of

hundreds of fishermen and severely crippled their livelihoods. Rehabilitation efforts brought the practitioners of this traditional occupation to a cross road: They were offered new boats but these boats were made of fibre glass, a material that was entirely new to them. Interviews with a small cross section of this group revealed that initial scepticism was almost unanimous amongst this group (Arulmani, 2006). Long held beliefs pertaining to the “way fishing ought to be conducted” and “displeasing the gods” came into play. At the same time, having lost everything they did not have the means to build the kind of boats they had traditionally used. Left with no other alternative, a few of them were brave enough to try the new boats. They found that they needed to learn new skills to handle these boats. They also found that the new vessels had advantages. Gradually, more and more fishermen, learning from each other, developed mastery over the new boats. In this illustration, the tsunami represents the impact of global forces affecting occupation and livelihood. The scepticism and unwillingness to accept an innovation represents context specific factors that affect preparedness. The learning through experimentation, the adaption of skills to a new task, and the transmission of this learning to others demonstrate the mediation of cultural learning.

Proposition 4: Enculturation and the Emergence of Equilibrium

The cultural learning process by which a social group forms and shapes its individual members to conform to its conventions has been described to be enculturation (e.g., Grusec & Hastings, 2007). Within the cultural preparation process model, enculturation is explained as the process by which people acquire the behaviours that

are obligatory in that culture—for specific practices. In the example of the fishermen cited above, their reference to culturally embedded beliefs related to their occupation and their initial refusal to accept fibre glass is an illustration of enculturated behaviour. The forces of enculturation prepare the members of a culture to respond to each other, their surroundings, other communities, and to global trends in a unique and distinctive manner. Within the model, the socializing forces of enculturation interact continuously and dynamically, individually or severally with global trends (Proposition 1), the three factors that influence preparedness (Proposition 2), and through the processes of cultural learning (Proposition 3), place the individual/group in a unique state of equilibrium to engage with career development. This is the individual/group’s cultural preparation status equilibrium in relation to career development. For example, the cultural preparation status equilibrium of the fishermen in the illustration above was such that they were committed to the belief that wooden boats were essential to practice their occupation.

Proposition 5: Acculturation and the Alteration of Equilibrium.

If enculturation describes internally occurring processes that influence cultural preparedness, acculturation describes how it is influenced by external processes when societies come into contact with each other. The nature of acculturation could be envisioned to lie along a continuum. At one end, acculturation could be entirely reciprocal whereby both cultures are mutually influenced. At the other end, attitudes of cultural imperialism and ethnocentric orientations could deliberately ensure that the dominant culture unidirectionally transfers its values and norms to a less dominant

one (Xue, 2008). Also, secular, global trends could make acculturation a necessity. For example, the fishermen in the illustration had no choice other than to adapt to a new type of boat. In its fifth and final proposition, the cultural preparation process model points out that acculturation has a critical influence on cultural preparedness. If enculturation creates a certain status or quality of cultural preparedness, the necessity for acculturation can cause shifts in cultural preparedness, which may or may not be beneficial to the culture that is required to acculturate. As with enculturation, the forces of acculturation interact continuously and dynamically, individually or severally, with global trends and the three factors that influence preparedness. Acculturative forces that are consonant with the individual/group's cultural preparation status would support, enhance, or further stabilize the existing career preparation status equilibrium. Dissonance would mean that the forces of acculturation disturb the existing career preparation status equilibrium.

Career Beliefs

We have tried to examine the interaction between social-cognitive environments and orientations to work and career by focusing our attention on a specific kind of social cognition: namely, career beliefs. John Krumboltz, when he initially introduced this idea, pointed out that people make many assumptions and generalisations about themselves and the world of work based on their experiences. Beliefs can become so deeply ingrained that they may not even be identified by their holders as beliefs – they are more like unquestioned, self-evident truths. Whether accurate or not, career beliefs exert facilitative or inhibitive influences on individuals' decisions and actions as they attempt to develop and

implement career goals (Krumboltz, 1994). These patterns of thinking may or may not be grounded in rationality. Yet they predispose the individual to making career decisions in a certain manner.

We have tried to explore career beliefs further. Our initial observations have shown that a conglomerate of attitudes, opinions, convictions, and notions seem to cohere together to create mind-sets and beliefs that underlie people's orientation to the idea of a career. It appeared from our field experiences that the impact of career beliefs on the career development process is marked and critical (Arulmani & Nag-Arulmani, 2004). Over the last few years, we have attempted to study the construct more systematically, and have investigated the possibility that certain kinds of social-cognitive environments foster certain kinds of career beliefs. Our methods have included both qualitative and quantitative approaches that have collected data through questionnaires and focus-group discussions as well as intervention studies. Our analysis has consistently thrown up "families" of career beliefs (Arulmani, 2008) that seem to interlock with career development. Four of these types of career beliefs are described briefly in the sections below.

Attitudes, opinions, and convictions come together to create mind-sets and deep rooted beliefs about the idea of a career. The outcomes of career counselling are often rendered meaningless when prevailing career beliefs are left unaddressed.

Proficiency Beliefs

A consistent career belief theme that influences the nature of career preparation is the importance laid on acquiring qualifications, skills, and personal proficiency for an occupation. It may seem obvious to some

that acquiring qualifications and developing proficiency for a specific range of work skills is necessary for career development. In reality, however, there seems to be wide variability in the manner in which social-cognitive environments actually nurture this attitude. For example, in certain Indian contexts, a lower emphasis is laid on acquiring work-skills proficiencies. Our research has found this to be particularly true for socio-economically vulnerable groups (Arulmani, Van Laar, & Easton, 2003). The lower emphasis on acquiring work-skills proficiencies could be the result of the high degree of pressure on the economically disadvantaged to have their children begin earning for survival. Conversely, the typical Indian middle-class family places an extraordinarily high value on acquiring qualifications. Great efforts and significant family resources are directed toward ensuring that the children in the family are "properly qualified".

Our research (Arulmani & Nag-Arulmani, 2005), has shown that if given a choice and the necessary support, families from lower-income homes would be grateful for their children to acquire any kind of qualification. In contrast, middle- and upper- middle-class families were strongly pre-occupied by the prestige attributes that surround further education. Vocationally oriented courses were attributed low levels of prestige, while obtaining a college degree was a *must* for any middle class young person. It was also observed that a large percentage of the middle-class groups linked no specific career goals to going to college other than "I must have a degree". The impact of prestige was such that a large number of middle- and upper- middle-class participants in our research intended to pursue college education, even if this did not lead to direct employment.

Control and Self-Direction Beliefs

Situations and experiences influence the direction that one's life can take. This category of beliefs reflects the individual's sense of control over the trajectory of his or her life. Mind-sets in this category are linked to the career aspirant's belief that he or she could deal with the exigencies presented by life situations and the orientation to direct and take charge of the way in which his or her life progresses.

Here again the influence of social-cognitive environments is significant. Young people from economically disadvantaged backgrounds seem to demonstrate a lower orientation to exercising control over the trajectory of their lives. Their responses reflected helplessness in the face of barriers to career development, with a tendency to view the future in terms of the deprivations they were experiencing in their present situation. The higher-income groups, on the other hand, showed a stronger orientation to creating opportunities for themselves and high motivation to actively engage with career development tasks.

Persistence Beliefs

Successful career development requires the individual to face and attempt to overcome difficulties and hurdles that punctuate progress toward a career goal. The fifth category of mind-sets toward career development extracted by our analysis, describes beliefs that foster persistence toward career goals despite difficulties and barriers that could emerge during the process of career preparation. Beliefs within this category reflect the resolve to persevere with determination toward career goals.

Once again, we have found that the social-cognitive environment that the individ-

ual was a part of coloured the quality of persistence. Persistence amongst young people from disadvantaged homes was lower and less consistent. Their responses reflected a strong predisposition to sacrificing long-term gains for more immediate benefits in the here and now. If a career is to become a reality for an Indian young person from a poor home he or she would be required to make career plans, while simultaneously grappling with poverty, unstable family structures, inaccessible institutional support, and financial constraints. Planning for what could come to fruition only sometime in the future may not be consistent with the reality perceptions of the young person from such a background. The middle-class groups, on the other hand, demonstrated a higher degree of persistence. Their responses reflected a long-term orientation to the future, with evidence of planning, setting goals, and preparing for their future.

Culture and Career Guidance

Career belief themes vary across age groups, socio-economic status, and cultural environments. The foregoing discussion of career belief themes has served to illustrate how attitudes of pride and prejudice could influence career development. Our experience has consistently demonstrated that the outcomes of career counselling were often rendered meaningless when prevailing career beliefs were left unaddressed. The notion of social-cognitive environments and the career beliefs they engender have given us a useful framework within which to understand career development and to plan interventions that are contextually relevant.

It is being increasingly accepted that the success and long term sustainability of programmes and interventions are closely linked to the extent to which they integrate with the local context. For example, the In-

ternational Union of the History and Philosophy of Science (IUHPS) in its position paper (2001) asserts that traditional bodies of knowledge represent time tested methods and systems which are attuned to specific cultural contexts. Most importantly, it is emphasised that indigenous knowledge is not only a repository of practical techniques and empirical information but is also a guide for generating hypotheses, formulating research designs, creating methods, and making interpretations. A further example is the call made by the International Council for Science (ICSU) to its members encouraging them to learn from indigenous knowledge (2002). Today almost all relevant UN institutions are committed to the validity of traditional knowledge sources as valuable reservoirs of knowledge.

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While a careers service that takes a universalist approach does have positive outcomes, an intervention that is contextualised is more effective. An important point to be noted here is that the intention is not merely to point to a “non Western” approach for career guidance. Instead it is to highlight the value of recognising other frameworks as possessing ideas, concepts, and constructs that would enrich a career counselling interaction. The cultural preparedness approach blends universal principles with particular needs.

The cultural preparedness paradigm asks researchers and practitioners irrespective of their backgrounds to recognise that a

given culture has been already prepared in a certain way to engage with work, occupation, and career. Many of us may have had the experience of hearing a glass pane or tumbler vibrate when a bell rings or when a musical instrument hits a certain note. Physicists use the word *resonate* to explain this phenomenon. In similar manner, the effectiveness of a career guidance programme would be determined by how well it resonates with a culture. By this I mean that the effectiveness of an intervention could be higher when the ideas and concepts that lie behind an intervention cohere with the history, values, and beliefs of a particular community. Over the years, geopolitical forces such as colonisation and globalisation have intruded into existing ways of living and eroded the value placed on tenets of local cultures. As a result, age old customs, skills, and knowledge bases are written off in the contemporary context as being unscientific and impractical (Bissell, 2010). Reese and Vera (2007) warn that theoretical or practical applications of educational and health interventions emerging from worldviews that are different from the worldview of the community that the intervention is intended to serve, could face challenges of cultural relevance, community participation, and ultimately, programme effectiveness. This challenge of programme effectiveness is accentuated when “universal” principles that underlie a service delivery theme are used for programme development without considering how they could be adapted to the “particular” characteristics of a specific context (Griffin & Miller, 2007). Sensitive career guidance professionals would ask themselves whether traditions different from their own have something to offer that would enrich their own view of guidance and counselling. Being sensitive to cultural preparedness implies being open to learn-

ing from others’ customs and ways of living with a view to coming closer to delivering services that resonate with needs expressed in a particular situation.

Globalization

The human being’s sojourn on this planet began as a nomad who moved from one place to another seeking greater security, food, and comfort. This tendency continued and the history of human beings travelling from one location to another for the exchange of goods, services, and ideas is an ancient one. Advances in modes of transport and communication have hastened the pace and quality of these exchanges, and today we refer to this international exchange/transfer of resources and ways of living as globalization. Giddens (1991) defines globalization as “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” (p. 64). I now highlight three aspects of globalization that are related to work and cultural preparedness: international trade, the emergence of a global workforce, and the new international division of labour.

International trade. The practice of trading goods and services across international borders is also an ancient one. The Silk Route is an example of a network of trade routes that stretched for nearly 4,000 miles linking China, the Afro-Eurasian landmass, and Asia to Europe. While traditional trade focused on the buying and selling of goods that were not available locally, a key distinguishing feature of contemporary, globalized, international trade is the seeking of trading opportunities that have a cost advantage. In the globalized world, therefore, the exchange of goods and services can occur not merely because they are not available locally, but because it is

cheaper to procure it from elsewhere. This has had a profound impact on local workforces, leading to loss of jobs at some locations and an unprecedented increase in job opportunities at other locations.

Global workforce. One of the outcomes of the globalization of trade is the emergence of a global workforce: the extensive, international pool of workers employed mainly by multinational companies connected across nations to a global network of job tasks and work functions. As of 2005, the global labor pool of those employed by multinational companies consisted of almost 3 billion workers (Freeman, 2008). A key qualifying feature of this workforce is its skill for using communication technologies to interact with professional colleagues in other global locations.

The new international division of labor. This feature of globalization emerges when manufacturing and production are no longer restricted to local economies. With an eye on lowering costs of production and increasing profits, companies relocate production processes and outsource them to locations that offer cost advantages. While this division of labour benefits the outsourcing company, it does not benefit the individual worker in such companies who is laid off or retrenched. For example, between the years 2000 and 2007, a total of 3.2 million manufacturing jobs were lost in the United States due to outsourcing (Crutsinger, 2007). On the other side of the outsourcing pipeline is the recipient country—usually a developing country offering cheap labour—where a massive increase in jobs is seen. A significant proportion of the recently seen economic growth and increase in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in these countries is related to this new international division of labour (ILO, 2013).

The Impact of Globalization on Work Behaviour

These processes impact the interface between culture and work behaviour in many ways. This form of globalized trade requires cultural realignments and usually it is the recipient (developing) country that is required to realign. Let us take the example of the business process outsourcing industry (call centres) in India as an example. This is an industry that has created millions of jobs and is described as an engine of economic development for this country. Seen from another perspective, working in a call centre requires the worker to undergo an acculturation process (discussed in a later section), that could include change of name, alteration of English accent, and imbibing and developing fluency with cultural phenomena (e.g., ways of greeting, language usage, festivals) to suit the client country (Upadhya & Vasavi, 2006). Most of these jobs require the worker to also rearrange sleep–wake patterns to suit the availability of clients across the seas. Further analysis of this phenomenon points to the creation of a cultural dissonance within the individual. An Indian call centre, for example, is structured to mimic the culture of the client country: Accents, the identities, and lifestyles all are moulded to resemble those in the client country. But in reality, the culture of these workers is completely different and sometimes contradictory to the client country (Nadeem, 2009). The psychological fallout of this kind of forced acculturation has been observed and ranges from psychosomatic illnesses and loss of self–esteem to strained friendships and marital discord (e.g., Arulmani, 2005; Upadhya & Vasavi, 2006).

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*Հնդկաստանի Հոգեկան առողջության և նեյրո գիտությունների
ինստիտուտի կլինիկական հոգեբան*

Հեղինակը ներկայացնում է մարդաբանների /անտրոպոլոգ/ բնորոշումը մշակույթ հասկացողության վերաբերյալ, թե ինչպես այն ներկայանում է որպես մարդկային գործոն, որը չի կարելի վերագրել ոչ գենետիկային և ոչ էլ կենսաբանական ժառանգականությանը: Հեղինակը խոսում է նաև մշակութային տարբեր դրսևորումների, հատկանիշների և սկզբունքների մասին, որոնց կոնտեքստում իրականանում է աշխատանքային գործունեությունը: Հոդվածում կարևորվում է աշխատանքի և կարիերայի սերտ կապը մարդու զարգացման գործում՝ գրեթե բոլոր մշակույթներում: Այստեղ խոսվում է նաև այն մասին, թե ինչպես աշխատանքը նաև մշակույթ է:

КОНТЕКСТ И КУЛЬТУРНО-РЕЗОНАНСНЫЕ ПОДХОДЫ

ГИДЕОН АРУЛМАНИ

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Автором представлено антропологическое определение понятия *культуры* как человеческий фактор, который нельзя отнести ни к генетической, ни к биологической наследственности. Автор также обращается к различным культурным проявлениям, особенностям и принципам, в контексте которых осуществляется трудовая деятельность. В статье подчеркивается тесная связь работы и карьеры с развитием человека почти во всех культурах. Также говорится о работе как о новой культуре.

Հոդվածի ներկայացման փաթեթիվը՝ 13.04.14 թ.