

The Development of Counselling in Four Chinese Communities: Editor's Introduction

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Counselling and psychotherapy, from the early Freudian psychoanalytic approaches, to more recent approaches such as cognitive-behavior therapies, have undergone significant development toward maturity during the twentieth century in many Western countries (e.g., Wachtel & Messer, 1997). The universal application of counselling and psychotherapy, however, has been challenged, especially during the past two decades. Many scholars and practitioners have noted that counselling and psychotherapy were developed mainly from a Western cultural perspective, and consequently might not be applicable for individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds unless appropriate modifications are made (e.g., Ponterotto et al., 1995; Sue & Sue, 1999). Despite these calls, counselling and psychotherapeutic interventions have been exported to different parts of the world, and to cultural groups that are quite different from the Western world.

In the Asian region, counselling has also developed rapidly along with economic acceleration during the latter part of the 20th century (e.g., Lin, Tseng & Yeh, 1995). An awareness on the importance of mental health, the increase in educational opportunities, and the development of a more comprehensive social welfare system are some of the factors that have contributed to a wider acceptance of counselling as a viable solution to psychological problems. In this issue of the *Asian Journal of Counselling*, we have asked scholars from four Asian regions to share their views on the development of counselling in their communities. We have chosen four

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regions in which the population is primarily Chinese, or individuals of Chinese descent. The four regions are the Chinese Mainland, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong. I have asked the authors to specifically (a) trace the development of counselling from a historical perspective, (b) identify and discuss social, economic, and political factors that have influenced the development of counselling, (c) examine barriers as well as opportunities related to the development of counselling from a macro level, and (d) to discuss how Western-oriented counselling models could be transplanted in a Chinese community.

In order to identify convergence and divergence in the development of counselling in these four regions, I have invited two leading counselling scholars in Hong Kong, Daniel Shek and Man Ping Lam, to share their reactions and observations, and to sort out idiosyncratic and unifying themes from the four articles. I believe that the format of having scholars react to the four articles have facilitated dialogues between counselling professionals, and have increased the richness and significance of this collection of articles.

Counselling professionals in many Asian countries have worked diligently to transplant Western oriented counselling approaches to their local settings. However, there has not been much communication between these professionals both in terms of theory and practice. It is unlikely that a special issue like this one could serve to break the ice, however, we hope that more exchanges could happen in the future, at a scholarly as well as practice level.

“The Development of Counselling in Four Chinese Communities” is the first collection of articles published in the *Asian Journal of Counselling* under the **Special Topic** section. The **Special Topic** section of the *Journal* is designed as a platform for scholars to analyze and address a special counselling issue from different perspectives, and to promote dialogues and exchanges among scholars (Leung, 1999). It is my hope that we could develop

a body of inter-related literature through articles published in this *Journal*. Meanwhile, I would like to thank all the reviewers who have assisted in reviewing the manuscripts in this special topic. Their comments and feedback have been extremely useful in helping the authors in revising their initial manuscripts.

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