



IO2 UK Final Report

Analysis and findings for needs analysis (24th May 2017)

CCCU, UK.

Introduction

The data gathering was in two parts. For **part one** it was decided that more detailed and nuanced information would be gained by conducting, where possible, 1-1, audio-recorded interviews (n.7), with brief notes taken at the time, followed by a close listening to the recordings to extend the notes via a semi-transcription of the main points expressed (undertaken in March/April 2017). Using interviews, constructed around the questionnaire, allowed for guaranteed engagement, clarification on certain points and for the experts to articulate their views in more depth. The recordings were saved on a USB and these, and the semi transcribed notes, can be made available if required. The first stage of the analysis was a collation of the responses from the nine experts recruited to complete the qualitative questionnaires in part one of the data collection. This provided an 'exhaustive' list of the comments.

During the second phase of data gathering, **part two**, each participant was sent (individually, to preserve their anonymity) the collation of the first phase responses and asked for feedback; four participants who were interviewed were able to respond. This gave them the opportunity to emphasise certain points, identifying what they may not agree with and add further comments. The feedback was collated and was added to refine points in this final report from the UK. In line with the approach, this final report was also sent to participants.

As an annex to the final report, we have included a) the exhaustive list of comments, and b) the collated responses from the feedback forms used in the second phase of data collection.

The expert participants. The nine experts were:

1. An experienced, senior CGC lecturer
2. A counsellor (1) of refugees and migrants, working in a charitable organisation (a former refugee)
3. A CGC student on a MA in Career Management
4. A small group of students studying on a MA in Career Management
5. A counsellor (2) working with refugees in a charitable organisation
6. The line manager/counsellor of 5 above, who completed a questionnaire (not interviewed)
7. A counsellor / careers adviser working in a high school
8. A deputy head teacher from a 'virtual school'
9. A senior researcher/academic experienced in the CGC sector (questionnaire only – not interviewed).

Results

1. What kind of tuition or training would help students of career guidance and counselling tackle the following topics and challenges in their later work for refugees? Please give your answers referring to content as well as to didactics.

a. knowledge gap for consultants and counsellors (respective educational system, professions, labour market, ...)

The comments focused in the main on what counsellors needed to know, although it was noted that consultants (clients) needed to have an understanding of how 'British values' are taught within their political and historical context. This cultural knowledge extends to understanding gender in terms of expectations in work relationships in the UK and how male/ female clients and professionals expect to be treated.

Other areas of knowledge gaps related to both consultants and counsellors. In general, this included an understanding of the rights of refugees, their rights to remain, employment rights, knowledge of education systems including schools, further and higher education and training schemes. Plus, knowledge of the funding rules in terms of opportunities available. Knowledge about the transferability of qualifications was also seen as important.

In terms of knowledge development for counsellors, this can be summarised in the following broad terms:

- Clarification about terminology used and the implications of different 'labels'
- A curriculum must include knowledge of what causes migration and displacement and its effects, a critical understanding of the global and capitalist forces of oppression
- Theoretical understanding of trauma (PTSD), transition theory, anxiety and attachment theory, identity formation and belongingness
- Understanding of the processes of enculturation and acculturation
- A critical understanding of the processes of and 'need' for integration
- The development of an ethical and social justice stance
- An ability to work with translators and awareness of the tensions (and also misrepresentation) that might be involved
- A realisation that Western models of helping and theoretical understandings on decision making and career development, are likely to be unhelpful or irrelevant
- Awareness that clients may not respond to individualistic approaches as their world view may be collective / community based in terms of decision making: cross cultural relevance needs constant checking
- Alternative interventions, strategies and techniques must be appropriate for the individual or group
- Recognition that the counsellor will be seen as powerful – the client may agree to any suggestion even if unsuitable to their interests, i.e. 'presenting issue' may cover real issues

- A need for counsellor reflexivity to understand the impact of the counsellor's world view on the behaviour on the client
- Reliable relationships need to be built to develop trust (indicating a movement from knowledge gaps to skills enhancement for the counsellor)
- Understanding of the impact of body language – own and the client's
- Acknowledgement that time is required to work through the layers of help needed to navigate systems
- Avoidance of a deficit approach – these are resilient, resourceful people who will make a positive contribution to their host country – and many (most) will have a strong work ethic. The tendency to treat survivors as victims must be avoided
- Realisation that clients may have a very different education experience and / or understanding of the meaning of work, but exploration of this can extend the counsellor's world view
- Commitment to multicultural competences alongside an understanding of own assumptions, values and biases and the worldview of the culturally different client.

b. foreign language as a means of counselling (in one-to-one settings and in groups)

Responses highlighted the difference between language and meaning, with a recognition that meaning can be lost, either through the process of translation or because the client is not able to express themselves fully in their own language, or in their 'colonial' language. There is a need to recognise that refugee and migrants are skilled in language (not deficient) and often many languages, but different languages to their host countries. Peer translators can be useful, although they may be presenting their own views at times. Practitioners cannot speak all the languages, but other means of communicating can be helpful, through pictures or other creative methods. Cultural awareness and sensitivity is essential, including awareness of own speech patterns. Counsellors cannot be knowledgeable about all cultures, but should have some knowledge of the political and cultural context of the country from which the person has arrived.

c. language as prerequisite for the integration into the educational system and into the labour market.

In terms of the understanding that clients need, responses indicated that many do not understand the barriers that exist for entry into professional occupations in the UK. There seems to be a lack of understanding that English spoken 'like a native' will be required. Language level also determines the place of entry into education systems and the level, in other words someone may be placed much lower than their ability or age due to language ability in English. Some may not know their actual age. English language learning needs to start immediately and continue as clients progress through education. Many will not understand the complications of employment law and the rules governing work; for example the need to be licensed for a range of manual or practical jobs. Education, employment and training systems may appear unduly complicated. Clients from countries with very low levels of formal education are more difficult to place in the labour market and

may be extremely anxious about learning. Young people may be more adaptable, however it will depend on the context. Adults are often frustrated that their qualifications and experience may no longer be relevant, but are resilient and will be committed to learning if there is a clear outcome to 'recover' or update their previous achievements.

A practitioner needs to know about the different courses for English Spoken as Other Language and how the client can access these (although it would be the course provider who would determine the appropriate course). The counsellor, within the ongoing relationship, needs to check on a regular basis that the help being offered remains appropriate. Language help can also be practical – how to get to places, what to ask when you get there and so on. When clients appear stuck, or dissatisfied at times, or as their confidence increases, there is a need to remember what the client may have experienced in their home country or on their migration: their language – how they present – may continue to reflect this alongside any 'differences' in terms of cultural difference. On the other hand, they should not be fixed in their migration history – many will wish to move on. How the counsellor responds and interacts with the client should be led by the needs as expressed by the client (and informed by the knowledge that the counsellor has developed). The counsellor needs to avoid 'othering' the client. Sensitivity should not extend to pitying or patronising the client, well-intentioned behaviour and comments can be received as misplaced 'sympathy', described by one expert as similar to offering condolences to the bereaved at a funeral. The counselling skills of respect and empathy need to be 'lived', not just 'demonstrated'.

d. access to the educational and vocational system and to the labour market.

Our expert working in a school stated that it was important for young people to attend as many lessons as possible and to avoid restriction of opportunities. Our student experts were keen to have a detailed reference book that they could consult on education, training and employment routes. Nonetheless, it was also noted that each individual would need a tailored package – not a 'one size fits all' approach, based on stereotypes. The client having a back-up plan was viewed as important and how this may relate to a longer term view about career. Above all, it was important to recognise that work may not be the next step, there may be other needs that need to be met first. There can be a danger that conversations about 'career' or education are irrelevant when other more pressing needs have greater priority. Counsellors cannot know all the options, but need to know how they can help their clients to research the opportunities and who and where to refer on to for other help. It was emphasised, however, that advocacy is often required to avoid 'passing on' the client too quickly – the aim being to enable the client to help themselves in due course. There is also a need to work with employers and other opportunity providers to lobby on behalf of migrant and refugee populations, to educate and raise awareness of the potential of the individual / group.

In the UK, quality and compliance standards are specific and trying to navigate these can be very difficult for the counsellor and the client, so finding access courses for clients for particular occupational areas can appear impossible – the example of Civil Engineering was cited. Finally in this section, emphasis was placed on the need to explain the cultural norms

at play in education and in the workplace. “The person needs to know about the small things”, the norms of behaviour – from turning up on time, to where to sit, health and safety rules; and the latter will seem bizarre to those arriving from a war zone. It was viewed as important to ask the client what they did not understand or find strange.

e. recognition of foreign qualifications

In the UK there is a designated national agency that can help with the recognition and comparison of international qualifications: NARIC. But although they may appear transferable on paper, in actuality there can be barriers. These may be cultural or related to language fluency. The person then needs a realistic assessment of the transferability of their qualifications and skills. It can be useful to have knowledge of alternative routes into employment that do not require accreditation. Experts felt that it was important not to appear dismissive of the skills and qualifications of the person and to be respectful and sensitive to the impact that perceived and actual barriers will have on their employability. It was thought that softer competences are valuable and there is a need to help the person identify these to acknowledge the contribution they will make to the labour market, taking into account their previous experience. There is a danger that their capability and potential can be ignored. Practical steps to support this are required.

f. discrimination and traumatisation

There are some cross-overs in this section with aspects raised under other categories - in addition the following points were made:

- A reflexive counsellor will need to have a critical understanding that there are global and historical politics that lead to discrimination and traumatisation
- Discrimination and trauma have an impact on aspiration, mental health and career progression
- The practitioner needs to know the limits of their expertise and who to refer on to – the latter being with the client’s permission
- Bullying and discrimination may be experienced in work and in the community by the refugee, and the counsellor needs to be supported to challenge this and help clients to do so also
- Empathic listening is key, but the counsellor also needs support via clinical supervision to manage their own experiences when undertaking this work
- There must be an awareness of the person’s defences – how much to tell of their experiences is the client’s choice and there will be different levels of trauma experienced and levels of resilience will not be the same
- A reflexive counsellor will be open to the dynamics of the situation
- There needs to be acknowledgement that there are differences within ethnic groups and that conflict travels – i.e. it is not always left behind
- Holistic work is important – a recognition of the tensions is needed alongside an acknowledgement that the person is not defined by the ‘problem’

- Anxiety and stress can block development, as mentioned previously, readiness for CG help needs to be kept in mind
- The counsellor needs to know what agencies can be used to assist in areas related to mental health.

g. assessing clients' potential and empowerment

The notion of assessment can be contentious within career guidance and counselling in the UK. Responses indicated that assessment is needed in terms of English language fluency and fit with the opportunities that might be available, but 'hard' assessment is usually seen as outside of career guidance and counselling work. Tests may also be culturally difficult, particularly if based on Western concepts and values, therefore they may not be measuring what they intend to assess. They may also lead to the individual being labelled as SEN, when they are not, but this can, on the other hand, lead to extra support. How to assess clients in terms of education, training and employment needs has to be considered. Again, it was stressed there is a need to avoid a deficit model and to recognise that migrants and refugees are resilient and may cope with tests better than we expect. In conclusion, formal assessment may be required, but the purpose of the assessment must be made clear and the model of assessment needs to be culturally appropriate.

h. supportive measures and labour market schemes

The comments under this section often repeat aspects already mentioned by other experts. There was an emphasis on teaching counselling students to acknowledge the boundaries of their own expertise in their desire to be useful and helpful. A focus again on how clients will often be polite, but mystified about what is happening to them as they try to navigate UK systems, and therefore counsellors must be sure to explain what is happening and why. The move from advocacy, to enabling and empowerment of the client was seen as dependent on the individual's readiness, their needs at the time, what they need to do next and what they may need to do in the long term – the emphasis being made that this is one step at a time. The need to develop the client's understanding of transitions (and the counsellor's understanding of transition theory) and the skills to manage transitions was mentioned. The development of clear links with other agencies and systems was seen as important, as there is a need to work in multiagency settings. An acknowledgement was made that the counsellor cannot know everything, but they should aim to know (as with any client group) where they can find out or where the client can access the information. Working with employers and opportunity providers was also mentioned in this section, as they are missing out on the potential of migrant and refugees who may have skills for which there is a shortage in the UK. One person said "the more you know the better", but we should also trust the client to tell us if we ask. As in any form of good career guidance and counselling, it is about asking appropriate questions, rather than filling the client up with lots of information which may or may not be useful.

2. What other topics would you wish to be addressed in tuition and training for refugees' counsellors?

In the training of career counsellors, work placement would be useful and observing the work of specialist practitioners. Having specialised speakers / workshop facilitators would be helpful where time is an issue on a short course. A unit on critical reflective practice seems essential. Mention was also made about including refugee and migrant mentors when working with of the newly arrived, in a collaborative approach. A text on cultural awareness to increase sensitivity would be useful, but can lead to stereotyping. More important is the counsellor's own openness and self/cultural awareness. Published multicultural competencies (informed by multicultural counselling practice) should inform the advanced skill set. The counsellor needs to be aware of cross-cultural misunderstanding via misattribution given to the meaning of what is said or done, misunderstanding of the context and a lack of awareness of the impact of different body language. The aim is for anti-oppressive behaviour, a valuing of the individual and their culture, empathy in terms of their experience and an approach that signifies respect and sensitivity – working alongside the client.