ARTICOLI SU INVITO

Counseling e Career counseling: avanzamenti e definizioni

Il prezioso contributo di Mario Fulcheri nello scenario italiano

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Sommario

Il presente contributo presenta i rilevanti avanzamenti nel dibattito internazionale e nazionale sul counseling e sul career counseling derivati dal proficuo e incessante lavoro di collaborazione iniziato nel 2001 tra l'Università di Torino (fino al 2005) — poi Università di Chieti-Pescara — nella persona del Prof. Mario Fulcheri e dell'Università degli Studi di Firenze (Annamaria Di Fabio). L'articolo delinea il prezioso contributo offerto da Mario Fulcheri alle attuali forme di aiuto, alle relazioni di aiuto, al career counseling e ai vasti ambiti applicativi del counseling. Inoltre, viene offerto un approfondimento specifico in relazione al career counseling, delineando promettenti prospettive. Questo contributo vuole essere anche un omaggio in onore del significativo lavoro scientifico e professionale del caro collega Mario Fulcheri che tanto ha lavorato per lo sviluppo delle applicazioni del counseling nei differenti ambiti.

Parole chiave

Counseling, Career counseling, Professioni di aiuto.

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Counseling and Career Counseling: Advancements and Definitions

The Valuable Contribution of Mario Fulcheri in the Italian Scenario

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Abstract

This contribution presents relevant advancements in the international and national debate on counseling and career counseling, derived from the fruitful and continual collaboration starting in 2001 between the University of Turin (until 2005), then the University of Chieti-Pescara — in the person of Prof. Mario Fulcheri — and the University of Florence (Annamaria Di Fabio). The article delineates the valuable contribution offered by Fulcheri to the current forms of help, helping relationships, career counseling and the wide application areas of counseling. Furthermore, an in-depth look at career counseling is offered, outlining promising perspectives. This contribution is also intended as a tribute in honour of the significant scientific and professional work of our dear colleague Mario Fulcheri, who worked so hard at developing the applications of counseling in different fields.

Keywords

Counseling, Career counselling, Helping professions.

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Introduction

In the international and national debate on counseling and career counseling, relevant advancements have been realized from the fruitful and continual collaboration starting in 2001 between the University of Turin (until 2005), then the University of Chieti-Pescara — in the person of Prof. Mario Fulcheri — and the University of Florence — in the person of Annamaria Di Fabio. These advancements have enabled progress in the complexity of counseling and career counseling in the national reality, placing it within the international scenario.

The valuable contribution of Prof. Mario Fulcheri to the current forms of help, helping relationships, career counseling and application areas of counseling

Regarding the attempt to define counseling and its different application areas, the work of Prof. Mario Fulcheri was tireless, and he acted as a pioneer in Italy. The first definition of counseling was offered back in 1999 by Fulcheri and Accomazzo, indicating a specific modality of communicative intervention, which can be provided both individually and in groups, with the aim of addressing the emerging difficulties in critical moments of life through a professional helping relationship. In this period, Fulcheri, as an academic clinical psychologist, tried several times to contact Annamaria Di Fabio, another academic pioneer of counseling in Italy, who was publishing on the topic, was working in particular from a career counseling perspective and had a background in work and organizational psychology. They met for the first time in person on the occasion of the first National Congress on Counseling in 2001, which Fulcheri organized in Turin, inviting Di Fabio as one of the speakers. On that occasion, a long-standing academic scientific collaboration arose, which turned out to be incredibly productive and exciting in defining the boundaries and the richness of counseling in its various and continuous new expressions, as well as of career counseling, which already had a scientific framework, albeit one in constant evolution. A subsequent definition of counseling was proposed in 2001, which considered counseling as a specific professional helping relationship, provided through a distinctive communicative intervention in order to face the difficulties encountered in specific periods of life, facilitating the activation and re-organization of the resources of individuals for enhancing their adaptive choices and changes (University Association for Development and Training in Helping Relationships and Counseling [AURAC], 2001).

The work of Fulcheri, in constant and productive exchange and stimulation with Di Fabio, as well as with a distinguished clinical colleague from the University

of Siena, Mario Reda, continued over the following years with the aim of outlining and defining the boundaries, specificities, areas of application and limits of the various helping interventions. Helping relationships have primary specific objectives and a secondary objective (Fulcheri, 2005): the primary specific objectives of helping relationships are objectives of learning; problem solving related to the material sphere; socialization; rehabilitation (according to the different professional skills); the secondary objective is the psychological help that manifests itself indirectly through an increase in self-esteem, emotional stability and social integration. These aspects can be influenced both by new acquisitions on the real level and by the quality of the interpersonal relationship with the professional (Fulcheri, 2005). In this work, Fulcheri traced chronologically the definition of the helping relationship and the definition of counseling in the following way.

Regarding the helping relationship, starting from Rogers (1951), it can be defined as a relationship where at least one of the involved individuals aims to enhance growth, development, maturity and a more integrated and proper way of acting. Brammer (1973) stressed that the helping relationship has the objective of satisfying basic human needs, and this objective is in common with other types of relationship, such as friendships, family relationships and pastoral relationships. Mucchielli (1983) emphasized that the helping relationship is a professional relationship that assists an individual in making a personal adjustment to a particular situation for which they are not able to adjust in a normal way. Recrosio (1999), defining the helping profession, centres on the psychological, emotional, cognitive and relational dimensions, underlining the value of supporting psychological change thanks to a shared contract between professional and user.

Retracing the chronological evolution of the definition of the helping profession, Fulcheri (2005) also reported the contribution by Di Fabio (2002b), who underlined the importance of defining the differences between professions that «involve help» versus specific professions that «are based on help». Professions that «involve help» are all those professions where relationships, communication and help are important but where the aim is not to provide a specific intervention of psychological help. Professions that «are based on help» are all those professions where the various modalities of psychological help are the essential elements. In this regard, Fulcheri (2005) also reflected on primary prevention and secondary prevention. Professions that «involve help» are connected to practices regarding the promotion of well-being and psychophysical health in a primary prevention perspective. Specific professions that «are based on help» are related to both interventions on malaise and discomfort, as to psychopathological-clinical decompensations in a secondary prevention perspective.

In addition, Fulcheri (2005) chronologically retraced a different definition of counseling. The definition of May (1939) stated that the aim of counseling is to balance fundamental tensions of personality, in terms of ambition and social

interest, in order to realize a functional harmony. Counseling is also defined as an interactional process involving counselor and client, aimed at enabling the client to decide on personal choices or problems (Burnett, 1977). The definition of the British Association for Counselling (1985) underlined the role of counselor who explicitly agrees to offer time, attention and respect to a client. Counseling offers clients the opportunity to explore and clarify more effective ways of living for improved well-being. Nugent (1994) highlighted that counseling is focused on personal, social or working problems of normal individuals during their life span.

Furthermore, Fulcheri (2005) offered a valuable and precious contribution in relation to the area of counseling pertinence. Counseling as a specific professional helping relationship has three principal areas of pertinence: clinical, guidance, and health and well-being. Counseling and the generic helping relationship are differentiated on the basis of the fact that counseling has a structure that follows specific principles, rules and strategies and has a continuity funded on a theoretical reference model (Fulcheri, 2005). Different types of counseling have emerged (Fulcheri, 2005): only to cite some of them, we have community counseling, guidance counseling, university counseling, business counseling, career counseling, social-health counseling, medical counseling, counseling in advanced states of illness, counseling in HIV infection and disease, genetic defect counseling, sexological counseling, trauma, emergency and disaster counseling, telephone counseling, online counseling, sport counseling, ecc.

A focus on community counseling (Fulcheri, 2005) underlines how this intervention aims at facilitating communication among members of a community (prisoners, drug addicts ecc.), eliminating obstacles to dialogue and promoting mutual listening and collaborative coexistence among community members.

As reported by Fulcheri (2005), a further in-depth look at guidance counseling was offered by Di Fabio (1999). Guidance counseling aims at enabling clients to take a personal decision, regarding, for example, choosing a career or study path, in situations with particular difficulties. This kind of counseling aims at promoting individual autonomy for more dignity and self-esteem though an individual intervention which allows personal potentiality to emerge. The intervention also facilitates decisional processes, reflecting on options and personal resources. The principal aims of guidance counseling are thus decisional autonomy and consistency in choices.

Fulcheri (2005) concluded his reflections by stressing the need to promote greater collective awareness in order to clarify and better define training courses and counseling application areas.

The fruitful and continual collaboration between Mario Fulcheri and Annamaria Di Fabio also resulted in 2008 in the publication of «Counseling: International Journal of Research and Application» by Erickson (Trento, Italy), of which Annamaria Di Fabio and Mario Fulcheri have been co-editors since the

beginning, then with Guido Sarchielli starting from the year 2015. This journal was designed as a space for theoretical contribution, empirical research and evidence-based interventions in the different applicative fields of counseling. The journal sustains the virtuous circle of deep and profitable exchange between scientific and professional worlds and the awareness of the value of a creative mutual inter-dependence. Over the last few years, to Mario Fulcheri's great satisfaction, the journal has implemented an international vision, becoming open access since 2020 and publishing progressively more articles in the English language.

An in-depth look at career counseling

The advantageous and continuous interaction of scientific reflection between Fulcheri and Di Fabio has progressively allowed new developments and the intensification of national and international scientific collaborations and production in relation to career counseling.

Di Fabio's work on connections between counseling and guidance found a relevant point of reference in her manual of guidance psychology (Di Fabio, 1998), where a chapter was dedicated to the value of counseling for guidance, and she continued to focus on counseling and its various applications over the subsequent years (Di Fabio, 1999, 2003).

The introduction of competence assessment intervention at an Italian level in a perspective linked to career counseling was also advanced by Di Fabio (2002), recognizing competence assessment as an intersection between guidance and counseling (Di Fabio, 2004). In this period, the collaboration between Di Fabio and Fulcheri gave rise to a book on counseling that represented a turning point in Italy due also to the invaluable collaboration of a distinguished colleague, Saulo Sirigatti (Di Fabio & Sirigatti, 2005). In this book, at the level of chapter contributions, Di Fabio (2005) offered an historical perspective on the development of counseling in different international contexts, Fulcheri (2005) delineated psychological-clinical counseling, and Sirigatti proposed the application of an evidence-based approach to counseling (Sirigatti & Casale, 2015).

Inspired also by Mario Fulcheri, the contribution by Di Fabio on the themes of counseling and career counseling in the Italian context continued to advance in this period with a text about professional accompanying and counseling for adults, first developed in French (Di Fabio, Lemoine, & Bernaud, 2008a) and also translated into Italian (Di Fabio, Lemoine, & Bernaud, 2008b). Subsequently, a text on career counseling and competence assessment offering international perspectives (Di Fabio, 2009a) was written, in addition to a handbook on vocational psychology and career counseling in the 21st century (Di Fabio, 2009b). It

is also possible to identify in this period a chapter on career counseling focused on human resource management (Di Fabio & Majer, 2010).

In subsequent years, Di Fabio's international contribution to the field of counseling and career counseling was very wide-reaching and dealt with different themes starting from the psychology of counseling (Di Fabio, 2013b) and charting the path of counseling from the past through the present towards the future (Di Fabio, 2013a), in constant reflective and supportive exchange with Mario Fulcheri on the progress of the topics. So, Di Fabio's contributions of the later period were about psychology of career counseling with a perspective on new challenges for a new era (Di Fabio & Maree, 2013), covering both the construction of identity in the 21st century (Di Fabio & Bernaud, 2014), paying homage to the great contribution of Jean Guichard, and the exploration of new horizons in career counseling by turning challenges into opportunities.

The international contributions in this period also dealt with the theme of decent work and careers, facing the challenges of expanding decent work with using the new paradigm of meaning (Di Fabio & Blustein, 2016), which is at the basis of meaning of working towards meaningful lives (Di Fabio & Blustein, 2016). The value of narrative interventions in post-modern guidance and career counseling and the evaluation of their effectiveness through a quali-quantitative approach (Di Fabio & Bernaud, 2018a, 2018b) were also underlined. In this regard, on the one hand, qualitative interventions were developed, such as the *Constructing my Future Purposeful Life* intervention (Di Fabio, 2014a) and the *Life Design Genogram* (Di Fabio, 2016b), on the other hand, qualitative tools were realized to verify the effectiveness of new post-modern narrative career counseling interventions, such as the *Life Adaptability Qualitative Assessment* (LAQuA; Di Fabio, 2015), the *Career Counseling Innovative Outcomes* (CCIO, Di Fabio, 2016a) and the *Qualitative SIFS Evaluation For Future* (QSEF; Di Fabio & McIlveen, 2018).

In terms of research, other valuable international contributions in relation to career counseling published in the *Journal of Vocational Behavior* regarded help-seeking in career counseling (Di Fabio & Bernaud, 2008) and the power of the audience (Di Fabio & Maree, 2012). Help seeking in career counseling stresses variables that are related to the intention of students to consult a career counseling centre, showing that the initial value attributed by potential clients to career counseling more than the attractiveness of career counseling was related to the intention to consult a career counseling centre. Concerning the power of the audience, it represents a cost-effectiveness methodology in group-based career counseling interventions, where the members of the group are considered as participants in individual career counseling (working individually with the counselor), but at the same time they can also be the audience, listening to other participants without getting directly involved (Di Fabio & Maree, 2012). This methodology allows us to reach more people in an effective way, it is thus

less costly and more efficient, according to accountability principles (Whiston, 1996, 2001).

One further challenge was to integrate personal and career counseling in order to promote sustainable development and change (Maree & Di Fabio, 2018), responding to the new challenges posed by the current new research area of the psychology of sustainability and sustainable development (Di Fabio, 2017b, 2017c, Di Fabio & Peiró, 2018; Di Fabio & Rosen, 2020). Another advancement was the development of the Life Project Reflexivity Scale (Di Fabio et al., 2019) as a new career intervention inventory relative to processes of reflexivity in career counseling.

Finally, Precariousness in the Time of covid-19: A Turning Point for Reforming and Reorganizing Career Counselling for Vulnerable workers (Di Fabio & Svicher, 2022) introduces new career counseling perspectives for vulnerable workers in such a difficult time. This perspective suggests vocational psychologists generate specific career counseling practices for vulnerable workers, promoting sustainable and decent work, and inclusivity.

Career counseling and organizational counseling

Continuing with an in-depth focus on career counseling, these interventions aim at promoting the self-awareness that derives from the attribution of meaning to experiences in different fields (Di Fabio, 2018). In relation to different types of organizational counseling, career counseling can have a preventive function, promoting working choices more congruent with one's self and leading to better work satisfaction and well-being for individuals (Di Fabio, 2018). It is possible to trace similitudes of career counseling with some forms of organizational counseling regarding the construction and reconstruction of professional and life paths (Di Fabio, 2018). Women's re-entry counseling provides processes of reflection that also characterize career counseling, aimed at achieving greater self-awareness in order to plan professional development anchored to one's most authentic self. Outplacement counseling can take the form of career counseling in a specific moment of the client's working life, when they are called to acquire greater self-awareness to build a new professional life project in the face of a transition imposed by the job market. Counseling for aging is an intervention that overlaps with career counseling since clients are facilitated in reflecting on their own interests, values, aspirations and life themes in order to be able to review their own professional path in the last phase of their career up to redesigning their own life at the end of the career itself. Counseling for entrepreneurship can have the objectives of both facilitating a more informed choice of entrepreneurial paths and helping in the construction of the entrepreneurial project from the

very beginning, starting from the definition of the project and its developments. Counseling for harassment and mobbing may include a career counseling perspective useful for the harmonious declination of internal and external complexities, for acquiring awareness and greater objectivity towards the circumstances of the situations in which the individual has been involved. This could enhance proactive reading, human agency and preparing the activation of positive energy to be used profitably in the resolution of internal/external conflicts.

Other useful reflections for the potentialities of career counseling in transitions during the adult age as well as in career paths, job losses, and re-entry were reported by Di Fabio (2020), starting from Bobek and Robbins (2005). In career pathing, career counseling is useful for improving workers' productivity and facilitating transitions to more suitable occupations. Career counseling can offer support for a job loss, which is the career transition that appears to have the most critical effects both on physical and mental health. When job losses become chronic (unemployment), career counseling can act to counterbalance the negative effects, involving individuals in an active search for work. Re-entry refers to individuals who have focused their time, usually several years, and considerable energy on roles other than that of the wage worker. In this case, the most frequent problem of clients is the development of a realistic self-evaluation of their own skills. Di Fabio (2020) also underlines the shift from career counseling to transition counseling as a type of intervention based on five specific changes: expanding the aim of the intervention; including all aspects of life; favouring paths to increase abilities; facing up to all transitions; and constructing a relationship for adaptive development.

Differences emerged between interventions in the 20th century and in the 21st century (Di Fabio, 2018). Interventions in the 20th century answer the question «How can we match individuals and occupations?». In the second half of the 20th century, after the contribution by Super (1957), the question became «What factors, phases and processes characterize the professional development of the individual?». In the postmodern era of the 21st century, the question is «How can people design their lives in the societies in which they live?».

In this framework, inspiring and enlarging the taxonomy by Guichard (2013), Di Fabio (2017a) reflected on the differences between guidance and counseling. Guichard (2013) distinguished between information interventions, guidance interventions and dialogue interventions. Information interventions aim at enabling individuals to find meaningful and reliable information in relation to the world of work. Guidance interventions aim at developing the employability of clients in the dialectic with the reality of the world of work, also by promoting the construction of a vocational self-concept capable of adapting to the constantly changing current context. Dialogue interventions have the purpose, in addition to enhancing employability, of helping individuals to build their own

authentic personal meanings, facilitating them in constructing their own lives and professional identity. Guichard (2013) ascribed information interventions and guidance interventions to career guidance and dialogue interventions to career counseling. Di Fabio (2017a), expanding the taxonomy of Guichard (2013), assigned information interventions both to guidance and information counseling, guidance interventions to both guidance and guidance counseling, and dialogue interventions to both guidance and career counseling. Recently, Guichard (2022) proposed a deep reflection on new interventions in guidance and career counseling in order to facilitate the construction of active lives, calling for sound reflective competencies in relation to our collective future.

Conclusions

In order to respond to the challenges of a fluid society (Guichard, 2013) and of a liquid society (Bauman, 2000), and a world of work which is constantly under construction (Di Fabio & Bernaud, 2014; Blustein et al., 2019), it is fundamental to anchor to the transition from the paradigm of motivation to the paradigm of meaning (Di Fabio & Blustein, 2016). In this paradigm, the solidity of professional projects is based on a meaningful construction (Di Fabio & Blustein, 2016) and a sustainable project is linked to more authentic meanings of individuals (Di Fabio, 2017b, 2017c). Individuals can solidly respond to the instability of the 21st century society by anchoring to meaning. A career counseling intervention is thus configured as an essential instrument for this search for meaning as well as for a deep self-attunement (Di Fabio, 2014b), with the most authentic values to face the current challenges.

The career counseling challenges we currently have to deal with require paying attention to new paradigms, continuing to produce new constructs and new interventions aligned with the new questions that have arisen in societies as well as with the new structures that have taken shape in the ever-changing world of work, also considering the evolution of the current available scientific thinking. An example of this last statement is the advancement in the classification of work precarity (Allan et al., 2021), in terms of three broad categories: precarity of work (fear and concern associated with the continuity of employment), precarity at work (psychosocial or physical safety at work, including discrimination, harassment, and unsafe working conditions), and precarity from work (uncertainty and insecurity due to maintaining employment that does not satisfy the basic needs of workers).

Career counseling in this new era, characterized by Covid-19 difficulties and changes, the resurfacing of war prospects and economic as well as industry 5.0 challenges, requires flexible adaptation by arranging new and updated inter-

ventions. These must be capable of concretely responding to current needs, considering increasingly differentiated targets in reference to clients, and being anchored to the results of empirical research, in a perspective of accountability and cost-effectiveness. This implies seriously considering the evaluation of the effectiveness of the interventions, which can no longer be limited to customer satisfaction alone, but must also consider the technical profile of the results of the intervention in relation to the needs of each individual client, which emerged at the beginning of the intervention.

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