

A Research Study by Delphi Technique in School Counseling

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Abstract

This conceptual paper examines the Delphi technique a researcher can apply towards school counselling and how the technique is carried out by various steps to achieve the aim and objective of a study. The application of Delphi technique is developed as a forecasting tool that predicts the future scenarios and it has been widely used in many disciplines. As for this paper, it was applied by a Modified Delphi approach where five main factors was identified based on preselected and screened by the researcher based on synthesized review of literatures. This study can be further developed by the steps of choosing experts or panel, data collection method, conducting interviews, method to set the questionnaire and focus group or further integrating with other research methods such as Structural Equation modelling (SEM), Interpretive Structural Modeling (ISM) and many more. Finally to conclude this paper, recommendations have been provided on how to start a research study by using Delphi Technique.

Keywords: Delphi Technique, School counselling, School Leadership, School Funding, Stakeholders, Stigmatization, Training and Development.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) has been taking various initiatives to improve the national schooling with an aim to produce talents and a generation that can support to develop Malaysia to further heights. In 2013, The Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) launched the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013- 2025 (MEB) and have developed eleven main shifts that need to be focused to achieve the set outcomes and one of the main areas was to improve the school counselling department that eventually will contribute towards creating human capital. Although, there have been various qualitative and quantitative paper published in addressing the factors that should be considered towards the school counselling improvement, there were no study particularly focusing collectively on the factors by using Delphi Technique that can further address the major factors to improve the counselling department.

Therefore, this conceptual paper has been focused towards addressing on how Malaysian

schools counselling center can be improved by a Delphi Technique approach. Hence, it is hope that this paper will support more researchers to further explore this study by the use of Delphi Technique method towards developing a research study in the area of education ecosystem particularly school counselling.

1.1 Problem Statement

The counselling department at Malaysian schools was established since 1963 and have been working to improve the department beside various challenges. Various researchers have pointed out that there is still significant efforts need to be carried out to have a well functional counselling department in the school while ensuring the department is ready to adapt to the education reform that is taking place in Malaysia and around the world. Past researcher have identified that there are five main factors to be addressed if the counselling departments in Malaysian Schools to succeed as plan. Firstly, Amir&Latiff (1984) point out decades back that funding is the major issue

that this department is not able to deliver its objective. This is due to the limited resources that is provided to this department does not allow schools to expand its career development programs and facilities and have to be dependent on sponsorship. Nevertheless, the sponsorship has its limitation for schools that have huge population of students. The sponsorship can only sometimes cater for students numbered from 50 to 200 in hall setting rather than focusing small group for better outcome. Most of the sponsorship has been provided by universities who are keen for student details in a one day program rather a structured program that can have an impact. Secondly, Jin & Sew (2012) stated that the stigmatization on the counselling unit is a major issue that needs to be emphasized. The counselling departments perceives as a department for problematic student rather than a center that can provide guidance for students who seeks career guidance or self-development beside classroom syllabuses. Thirdly, Mukhtar & Muslizah (2004) stated that the "head of the school" is the key factor in how effective the school and the counselling department functions. The leadership of the schools needs to clearly understand that the counselling department needs a robust plan that it integrated with the school plan.

Fourthly, Chai (2000) stated, the collaboration between all the stakeholders including the parents, school administrator, and even local community is crucial for the school counselling departments to have continued progress. Identifying all stakeholders is important and ensuring all stakeholders are clear with their roles and responsibility will create clearer directions for the schools and the counselling department. However, schools are still struggling to work closely with their stakeholders. Nevertheless, the fifth factor that have been addressed by Zulkifli (1986), Aminah (1988), Tan (1989) and Gholamreza, Ananda & Shaheen (2019) is due to is lack of competent counselling skills and relevant training

for counsellors and school administrators that adds on the pressure for the department to function well. Majority of school counsellors are trained as teachers and focused training with relevant strategic pedagogy related to school counselling and career guidance is needed. In addition, various researchers have pointed out that beside the above issues, other factors such as time constraint due to various job functions, lack of cooperation from administrators, teacher and parents, lack of state of art facilities is an added problems that the department is not able to function well and have led to various unethical activities such as school bully, drugs, gangsterism, prostitution and also recruitment as an agent for terrorism. Furthermore, the Malaysia Crime Prevention Foundation (MCPF) 2018 informed that about 4.2 Million Malaysian youth age 16 and above are suffering from mental problems which is leading to delinquency or crime in the country. Therefore, addressing the above factors and challenges is vital and this paper have been compiled to discussed based on the literatures findings and using Dephi Technique method as an option to identify more significant factors that involves in improving the Malaysian School counselling.

2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Based on the literatures and findings, this paper will be discussed on five main factors that cannot be ignored by school counselling department if improvement is needed. The following are addressed below.

2.1 Funding

Amir & Latiff (1984) point out decades back that funding was the major issue that the department was not able to deliver its objective. However, along the way the Ministry of Education have addressed the budget constraint and was able to inject the necessary funding until there the government coffers started to reduced. According to Ibrahim TambyChek & Rosli Samat (2006) the

Malaysian government schools operate mainly by two main source of income. Firstly, the government funding is allocated based on grant per capita over number of students enrolled in schools. The funds are also calculated in various matrix calculations by the allocation for subjects or curriculum delivery, allocations for other school operations such as extra curriculum activities, staff salaries, school maintenance and development that is includes the counselling department. This is where, the funding is very limited for the department to function and carry out activities for students. Secondly, the next source of funding is the non-government funding which involves the money received from various stakeholders such as additional tuition fees, donations and income from school bank deposits or small business activities. Usually the school is very creative to find the funding and it is also highly dependable on the school leadership and the school governors on how they develop the budget for the school and counselling department. Burrup, Vern Brimley & Garfield (1996) stated that budgeting is a financial plan achieved in a specific predetermined financial year that involves at least four elements that are planning, receiving funds, spending funds and evaluating the results. Therefore, having limitation of funding is surely a challenge however, having a well plan budget will create a path to improve and reposition the counselling department at Malaysian schools in the right track.

2.2 Stigmatization

Goffman (1963) pointed out that stigmatization is related to embarrassment if there are strong disapprovals if a person or organisation is seen highly inappropriate. According to Corrigan (2004), stigma is associated with mental illness treatment and this is why many do not seek for counselling to begin with. Similarly, Vogel, Wade, & Haake, (2006) pointed out that many of them have the perception that a person who seeks

psychological treatment is undesirable or socially unacceptable. As for the Malaysian school counselling department, Jin & Sew (2012) stated in the past that the stigmatization on the counselling unit is a major issue that needs to be emphasized and students that seeks for support at this department are labled as problematic or have disciplinary issues. The counselling services in secondary schools are still being misunderstood by students, parents and school staff. The stigmatization came from three main sources, the school administration, the students and the parents. Furthermore, it is undeniable that counselling service are lack of clarity and constantly seen as stigma. This has led to become a barrier to guide students or the future human capital for Malaysia. Aminah (1988) addressed that the higher education trainings need to focus to remove or revamp their teaching materials or their courses to see more productive results. Nevertheless, school bullying is also on the rise and it makes harder for the counsellor to tackle the issues. If the bullied student or the bullying student is sent to the counselling center, then the students feels they are problematic and causes more trouble. Khalim (2014) stated that the usual direction after a bullying case is by providing warning, counselling, and letter of notice to parents or punishment. If it repeats again than the process starts again with more counselling, punishment and finally suspension. This action leads others to avoid their friends and this is where the unethical people begin to show comfort. Corrigan (2004) described that there are two type of stigma where firstly, it is related to public as social stigma and secondly as self-stigma. Sadow, Ryder, & Webster (2002) claims that systematic education can foster and empower any students to improve their life if they are in the process of combating social stigma and that will support to enhance them in their self-stigma. In addition, Hudson (2008) argues that stigma arises due to perception from various stakeholders and this can

create unhealthy issues. Therefore, it is important to have well established programs in creating positive awareness towards tackling stigmatization. Gholamreza, Ananda, Shaheen (2019) described that school counselling department should find ways to reposition or rebrand the counselling department that can remove stigmatize towards the department and there are practical implementation have been piloted since 2014 by working with social enterprise focusing at enhancing school counselling department.

2.3 Leadership

Leadership is difficult to define and there are a large number of proposed leadership models and the vast literature base on leadership topics indicates a history of researchers and professionals attempting to define leadership. As for a learning institution, school managers especially where leadership and governance is concerned needs to be integrated with various departments stated Santrock (2001). Furthermore, the leadership of a learning organization are responsible in establishing the right framework to face the challenges and adapting to the changes. As pointed out earlier, Mukhtar&Muslizah (2004) stated that the “head of the school” is the key factor in how effective the school and the counselling department functions. The leadership of the schools is the major factor a school fails or flourish and school principals need to clearly understand that there must be a robust plan that it integrated with all the departments in the school counselling school plan. The principal should understands and apply effective leadership skills to enable both students and staff to achieve the desired school and student achievements. Moreover, Othman (2001) stated that leadership is necessary to initiate and maintain school improvement in all departments. According to Gladding(1997), school counsellor leadership seemed especially relevant in public education and the increased emphasis on academic achievement. Furthermore, Northouse (2004), stated that leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a

common goal. According to (Bennis, 1994; Northouse, 2004), currently, the most popular theory of leadership and one that seems to mesh well with recent reforms in school counselling is that of transformational leadership.

2.4 Stakeholders

As Chai (2000) stated, the collaboration between all the stakeholders including the parents, school administrator, and even local community is crucial. At present, the main stakeholders that need to work together with the school can be divided to two main areas. Firstly, school leadership and school board should clearly understand the real situation of the school and where the school heading towards. This have to be joined with all other direct stakeholders such as ministries, corporates, enforcement agencies, community and parents associations. Secondly, teachers and students direction that includes all other personnel including school counselling department needs a clear road map which is communicated all the time to the top management of its progress and challenges. According to Freeman and Reed (1983), a stakeholder constituency in terms of a group on which the organization is dependent for its continued survival. It is has to ensure constant focus and communication is established within all stakeholders. Therefore, if schools are seeking to become a real learning institution, identifying and managing all stakeholders is essential. School leadership have the responsibility for coordinating, managing, and prioritizing the interests of diverse stakeholder groups.

2.5 Training

Training is not new for any organisation to continue to grow especially in learning institution having the up to date skills and knowledge is what shapes the institution. According to Daud (1986), training has associated with education and term training is actually education program are used interchangeably. In the context of quality, training

and education program is to provide the necessary skills, knowledge and the abilities to make quality happen and also in the quality improvement environment, everyone is required to gain additional capabilities and competencies to improve the process. As for the Malaysian school counselling center, Zulkifli (1986), Aminah (1988), Tan (1989) and Gholamreza, Ananda & Shaheen (2019) have pointed out that there is a lack of competent counselling skills and relevant training for counsellors and school administrators is needed to have a well functional counselling department. Past researcher have also indicated that majority of school counsellors are trained as teachers and there is a need to focus on training with relevant strategic pedagogy related to school counselling and career guidance. Saylor (1999) described that a comprehensive training and education program is necessary and must be institutionalized within the entire organization. Once the management has the skills to lead the quality improvement process, the rest of the organization should be trained and educated based on the department needs to ensure a systematic, integrated and consistent organization is moving towards the mission. Therefore, training is surely a factor that is needed to improve the school counselling department and this shall not be limited only for counsellor. Every stakeholder must be involved.

2.6 Summary of Literature

Therefore, it is evident that are more than one major issues that is related to the improvement of counselling department at Malaysian school and this conceptual paper is produced on how the counselling department can be improved if Delphi Technique is applied systematically that will allow to capture the factors based on established by literatures and by a series of intensive questionnaires founded on the most reliable consensus of opinion of group expert. Section 3.0 will give the reader an understanding on Delphi

Technique and followed by how it can be applied in a study related in school counselling.

3. UNDERSTANDING DELPHI TECHNIQUE

The Delphi Technique is known to be existed before the 1950s according to Powell, C. (2003). It was claimed that the technique was suggested on individual estimations, verdict, judgment and encouragement. U.S. RAND Corporation in their late 1950s introduced the technique on a scientific research to study the experts opinions related to a military defence project. After a decade of gap, in 1963 Dalkey and Helmer reintroduced the technique as a suitable technique for decision making and it took shape in academic studies and evolved gradually and begun to be used widely and applied in many disciplines. According to various literatures, in summary the Delphi Technique is a method that is generated to forecasting the future scenarios or to find new possible factors or variables that can assist in solving or recognizing complex issues. To name few, Grime and Wright (2016) stated that the Delphi Technique lets new consensus of expert opinion to be developed and it can be structured in stages to allow any complex problems to have a foundation to be built on. Similarly, Linstone & Turoff, (2002) pointed out that the Delphi Technique simply permits an idea to be developed by a group communication and then structuring it towards a consensus. As Linstone & Turoff, (2002) specified, Stone Fish & Busby (2005) also stated that the technique can make any idea or indication to reach to a valuable consensus that the future thinking that goes behind the scene can be validated due to the group experts and approaches within Delphi Technique.

Therefore firstly, researchers who are keen to develop their research study by using this method should clearly understand that the Delphi Techniques is a procedure that can study any subject area that has limited literatures in past or present. It allows new ideas to generate and then

categorized it towards a consensus or agreement. Moreover, it supports in identifying various factors that cannot be agreed. In summary, this method simply allows a researcher to study complex areas that have not been developed by past researchers. Furthermore, this method allows compiling any variables from qualitative, quantitative or mix method that has no direct relationship. As an example, if a person is not well and need a medication, and then the drug store does not have the medication because it has not been developed. What does the person should do? Basically, the sick person will find ways to get the necessary remedy for his illness although it might not be available on the drug store. He/she will seek out for modern medication to traditional medication hoping to resolve the disease. Likewise, Delphi Techniques allows are person to study areas that relates to a problem or issues. It allows a new variable to be developed that had limited solutions. To explain further, another good example is to understand and compare the Grounded Theory. Glaser and Strauss (1967) points out that Grounded Theory was developed with a purpose of building a theory from the available data. It permits raw data to be used where little or no previous theory exists in the subject area. Similarly, Delphi Techniques focuses on the chosen experts to achieve a consensus based on the list of variables available within a new or existing field of study. In addition, new variables can be suggested to improve the study by the panel. According to Custer, Scarcella, & Stewart, (1999), the Delphi Technique can be further defined as “Delphi or Modified Delphi”.

Delphi is explained as a process where panel of experts initiates relevant open ended questionnaires or questions to the selected experts and through a few rounds arrives to consensus. On the other hand, the Modified Delphi will have preselected questionnaires or variables screened by the researcher based on synthesized review of literatures, interviews with selected subject experts before providing to the panel of experts. Modified Delphi is built on solid grounding work developed previously or has a relation on the study. In addition, new variables or questions can be suggested by the panel to improve the study. In a nut shell, Delphi Techniques can set the scene of a study by identifying and laying down the necessary variables in study by using expert opinions integrated with structured measurements until a consensus or saturation point is achieved. Therefore, the researcher believe that any new researcher should be clear why this method is chosen in the first place followed by what they are trying to achieve at the end of their study. Although the methods allow various integrations to be developed, it is important the researcher have a clear research design on the study.

3.1 Developing Delphi Techniques in School Counselling

As stated in section 1.1 there a few major factors were pointed out by the past researcher related to Malaysia school counselling department improvement and have been discussed in section 2.0. Table 3.1 have summarised the factors based on the literatures.

Table 3.1: Factors to improve school counselling

Factors	Authors
Funding	Amir & Latiff (1984)
Stigmatization	Jin & Sew (2012)
Leadership	Mukhtar&Muslizah (2004)

Stakeholders	Chai (2000)
Training	Zulkifli (1986), Aminah (1988), Tan (1989) and Gholamreza, Ananda & Shaheen (2019)

To develop a Delphi Technique, it is vital to firstly to understand how the factors are formulated based on the research design and the literatures findings. There are two main approaches; firstly, it can be formulated by panel of experts with relevant open ended questionnaires to the selected experts through that will suggest the variables and arrives to consensus after few rounds. Secondly, the options is the variables are preselected and screened by the researcher based on synthesized review of literatures, interviews with selected

subject experts before providing to the panel of experts. As for this section, it is applied by the preselected variables based on literatures which are also known as Modified Delphi. (Custer, Scarcella, & Stewart, 1999), Modified Delphi Technique, the next stage can be applied based on Linstone and Turoff (1975) suggested steps. The following steps can be used towards the improvement on counselling department indicated in Figure 3.1.

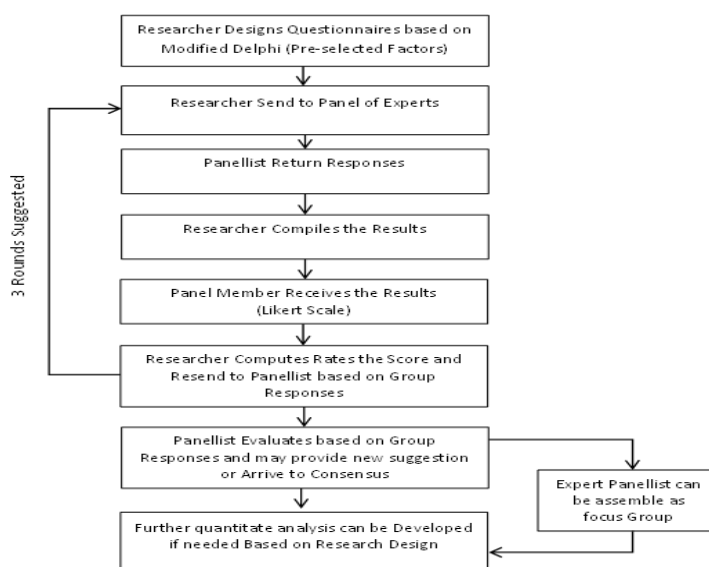


Figure 1: Developing Modified Delphi Study, Linstone and Turoff (1975) adopted by researchers for school counselling

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMEDATION

To conclude, this paper has highlighted the factors that are needed to improve the school counselling department. Although it was discussed based on Malaysian school context, nevertheless it can be used in other countries that are keen to improve their school counselling or career development unit based on the identified factors. Five main

factors were introduced collectively in this paper that has been studied by past researchers since 1964. The study clearly indicates that school counselling in Malaysia needs a strategic approach and the identified factors in this paper shall not be ignored. However, this study was not developed further towards the consensus as this study was only aimed to introduce the Delphi Technique in school counselling. It has to be noted there are

various other methods that can be carry out with Delphi Technique and it has to be based on the research design to start with by the researcher. Any future researchers are able to integrate various research methods based on their scope of study. At this juncture, the researcher calls for further studies in Delphi Technique and other methods such as such as Structural Equation modelling (SEM), Interpretive Structural Modeling (ISM) can be integrated once the Delphi approach is successful completed based on the consensus. As for this conceptual paper, it is purely aimed to identify the factors and how to further develop the research study based on Delphi Technique.

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