

ROLE OF CAREER COUNSELING PROFESSIONALS IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

- There is a notion that schools have responsibility of building the character of the children, provide them right guidance on right time and for their overall well being. Moving in this line, Indian government has made the presence of school counselors mandatory in the school premises. The research paper focuses on understanding the roles, goals and job integrities of school counselor in Indian schools through a semi-structured interview. The perspective of the school counselors, schoolchildren and other teachers has been taken into account.

Keywords: School, Counselor, Role, India

ROLES OF SCHOOL COUNSELORS BY U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS

School counselors typically do the following:

- Help students understand and overcome social or behavioral problems through individual and group counseling
- Provide individual and small group counseling based on student needs
- Work with students to develop skills such as organization, time management, and effective study habits
- Help students set realistic academic and career goals and develop a plan to achieve them
- Evaluate students' abilities and interests through aptitude assessments and interviews
- Develop strategies with teachers, administrators, and parents to help students succeed
- Teach classes on topics such as bullying, drug abuse, and planning for college or careers after graduation
- Identify and report possible cases of neglect or abuse
- Refer students and parents to resources outside the school for additional support

DEFINITION

- Formally speaking, School counselors are individuals with undergraduate or graduate degrees in psychological counseling and guidance (PCG) (Ergene, 2011), who apply cognitive, affective, behavioral, and systemic intervention strategies (Hackney & Cormier, 2008) to ensure that mentally healthy individuals (Myrick, 2003) can fully improve themselves in all of the personal, social, academic, and vocational domains (American School Counselor Association-ASCA, 2007); can cope with the problems they encounter in these domains; reinforce their mental health (Ergene, 2011); improve their psychological resilience, wellness, and empowerment (Korkut, 2003); and ensure their self-actualization (Kepceoglu, 1994)

LITERATURE REVIEW

- Counselor activities differ from state to state, district to district, and grade level to grade level.
- Napierkowski and Parsons (1995) defined the role as involving the duties and responsibilities of counseling, consulting, and coordination of services.
- Cormany and Brantley (1996) argue that counselors must be more involved in assisting the principal in discipline, curriculum development, and education of parents and staff on issues and trends relevant to the student body's welfare. In addition, they state that counselors must be involved with student assistance programs and developing closer ties with business and industry to sharpen students' career development skills.

- Personally**, counseling and guidance services help the individual to know and understand himself, accept his superior and limited features and develop himself, trust himself, develop effective interpersonal relationships, become a personally and socially balanced and harmonious individual (Yesilyaprak, 2001). Thus, they enable the continuously developing individual to manage the developmental tasks at various developmental stages. Counseling and guidance services also aim to prevent, adjust and better the adaptation, development and other personal problems of the individual in educational or other environments (Ozbay, 2004).

- Counselling and guidance services offers services concerning **developmental needs** of the individual in personal and social areas such as developing awareness about interpersonal relationships beginning from the early ages; working on communication skills, life skills (Staley & Carey, 1997), social skills, problem-solving skills, decision-making skills; working on anger management (Uz- Bas, 2007), dealing with peer pressure and developing healthy relationships with the opposite sex (Canel, 2007).

- **Academically**, counseling and guidance services help the students adapt to school, make academic decisions and choices by informing them about academic facilities (Ilgar, 2004). They help the students choose the most appropriate elective course (Canel, 2007), course and student club (Kepeceoglu, 1994) for their interests and abilities and help them learn more effectively (Fitch & Marshall, 2004; Jackson, 2000; Myrick, 2003; Webb, Brigman & Campbell, 2005) by introducing them effective study methods (Kuhn, 2004).
- Counseling and guidance services help the students with **learning difficulties** (Ilgar, 2004). They spot the superior students (Canel, 2007) or students who need special education and offer them the help they need (Yuksel, 2007). They help the students choose an upper school and they carry out practices for reducing exam anxiety (Yesilyaprak, 2001)

- **Vocationally**, counseling and guidance services aim that the student perceives himself realistically; knows his weak and strong points; feels the need to develop his weak points and makes use of opportunities for developing his weak points; searches for job opportunities suitable for himself; possesses the skills that working life requires such as communication, taking responsibility (Kuzgun, 2000), decision making (Cakir, 2004) and problem solving and makes professional plans (Rye & Sparks, 1999; as cited in Quast, 2003). Furthermore, they help the students who are obliged to start working upon finishing elementary or secondary education to be oriented and placed in a job appropriate for his interests and abilities (Baysal, 2004)

- Other researchers contend that counselors should develop activities for students to grow in terms of self-esteem, as well as aid in instructional programs for responsible decision making. Several administrators see the role of guidance personnel as one that is exclusively 'reactive' or simply 'waiting for a crisis to happen' (Murray 1995) or as a quasi-administrator (Napierkowski and Parsons 1995).
- School counselors must effectively articulate their role and function. If not, which unfortunately is too often the case, the school principal will do it for them, often inappropriately (Wittmer 1993). Professional school counselors need to close the gap between what they realistically should do and what others think they do.

REQUIREMENT OF THE TIME

- As our whole market has become knowledge based, the value of competencies and abilities have increased and to harness these competencies a right path leading to right kind of achievement is important for not only the person but for his organization and also his nation as a whole.
- For India its population or its people are its assets, harnessing the talents of our younger generation is what is required at the utmost priority.
- Still in India, the gap between what is needed and what is wanted is clearly visible; this is the outcome of lack of professionalism in the service providers itself. More over the training facilities are lacking which has lead to setting up a loose picture of career counselors as service providers.

CURRENT SCENARIO IN INDIA

- India as a county is lacking in all encompassing laws for school/career counseling but the variety and quantity of ethical issues in counseling shows the extent to which the profession is considered to be in line with ethical values.
- With the importance placed to the ethical concerns, the understanding and need to develop a well verse body controlling not only the ethical aspects but also catering to the needs of the needed is important.
- A major body in India which has held the fire and is trying different sections and levels of society to attain right kind of knowledge and guidance on career development is ICDA- India Career Development Association (ICDA) is a founding Association in India for the overall career development and Management for all segments of diverse Indian society.
But still in India, the different states and sections are facing problems because of less number of such organizations and lack of training facilities.

EMPLOYMENT GROWTH

- **School and Career Counselors**
 - Percentage in employment, projected 2010-20
 - **Community and Social Service Occupations**
 - 24%
 - **School and Career Counselors**
 - 19%
 - **Total, All Occupations**
 - 14%

○ Note: All Occupations includes all occupations in the U.S. Economy.
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections program

OBJECTIVES

- To study the job satisfaction among school counselors.
- To understand the role clarity of a school counselor (by comparison of data as given by the school counselors of different schools)
- To explore the common job descriptions for the school counselors

METHODOLOGY

For Job satisfaction

- Semi-structured interview (3 parts)
 - Part 1: their responsibilities in school
 - Part 2: their level of satisfaction with their work (Warr 1979)
 - Part 3: General roles of school counselors in school

For a common job description

- Part 1 and 3 of the semi structured interview was analyzed and compared among the different school counselors of different schools.
- Sampling
 - Purposive sampling
 - School counselors of 12 CBSE schools in Meerut and Delhi were undertaken.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

- For Job Satisfaction **WARR'S JOB SATISFACTION SCALE**: The job satisfaction scale (Warr *et al.*, 1979); this scale consists of 15 items, seven of which measure intrinsic satisfaction, whilst the remaining eight measure extrinsic job satisfaction. Responses are given on a seven-point scale and can be summed to create an overall satisfaction score as well as an intrinsic and extrinsic value. As the scoring goes from 1 to 7. So the lowest score can be 15 and highest can be 105.
- The mean scores were calculated for estimation.
- For Role clarity and Job descriptions, common themes were identified from the part 1 and part 3 of the semi-structured interview.

DISCUSSION

- Low job satisfaction amongst school counselors, which could be attributed to the ambiguity in roles which are flexible.
- For job description: More ideal responsibilities (as other than Bureau of Labor Statistics) were identified and included in the role of school counselors
 - Such as; authority for admissions and selection of student and teachers, planning the year-round activities and workshops, conducting teachers training programs etc.
- The literature has consistently suggested that the more comprehensive the developmental school counseling programs, the greater the likelihood of increasing student success and counselors satisfaction

- One important reason given by the school counselors for reduced job satisfaction was that there has been no **specific designation** given to them, with post comes certain rights and duties which are clear and helps the person to understand the direction where he needs to work, but as there is no role clarity for these counselors, providing a specified designation is all the more difficult. The standardization of the criteria for these school counselors is also not there. The degrees or experience needed is not specified. Therefore even common teachers or principals are given this role, which creates an ambiguous picture of the work being done by school counselors

- In the **absence of regulatory bodies and/or professional associations, issues of standardization, accreditation, credentialing, and licensure** continue to be major challenges to the development of school counseling models. Countries such as the United States, Britain, and Wales with existing regulatory bodies and clearly defined standards (ASCA 2005; BACP 2011; Phillips and Smith 2011) of practice are often used as models/guides for development. But as there are no well defined modals in the Asian countries, the importance, standardization and value of school counseling is been affected to a greater extent.

- There is **no Indian model** as yet for school counseling but in comparison to the history of school counseling in the US, the development of school counseling in the Asia- Pacific region is relatively young but vibrant and growing (Shen & Herr, 2003; Hui, 2002; Takano & Uruta; 2002). All eastern countries try to copy western modals for their solutions. Many studies have emphasized the adaptation of these modals according to co cultural surroundings of a country. To manage the potential diversity between and within countries, Leong (2002) recommends that a three-step cultural accommodation approach be considered when transferring Western models to Asian countries. He suggests: "(a) **identifying the cultural biases, cultural gaps, or cultural blind spots in an existing theory that restricts the cultural validity of the theory;** (b) **selecting current culturally specific concepts and models from the target culture to fill in the cultural gaps and accommodate the theory to racial and ethnic minorities;** and (c) **testing the culturally accommodated theory to determine if it has incremental validity above and beyond the culturally unaccommodated theory**".

- In India, still school counseling and the purpose it serves are often **secondary to the larger goals of education** in building the economy and socio-political climate. School counseling programs that fail to fit into larger national goals can be deemed as impractical or idealistic at best and luxurious at worst. What this implies for school counselors is threefold: (a) **the importance of understanding the school counselor's role in the larger scheme of nation building and economic stability;** (b) **the need for school counselors to advocate and educate about their role within national departments or ministries of education;** and (c) **to inform the legislative body and general public about the critical work that school counselors do.**
- Also there is a different perspective towards education in India; education here is seldom viewed as an end in itself but as a means to an end. Pressure, stress, and highly competitive national exams characterize the educational experience of students in many Asian countries.

- Psychological, sociological, educational political, economic, spiritual and physical factors affect development. Appropriate intervention strategies that focus upon these factors can influence the quality of individual development.

That why it's very necessary to find out the appropriate needs of the client of different age group and for this government funded researches are necessary as the change could only be brought when there exists an understanding of where and for whom the change has to be developed.

- Researches concentrating on long-term effects of particular career guidance activities on career development and on the influence of the work and educational environments on the career development of students are needed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Building on **curriculum** which could help in providing an output in the form of skilled professionals.
- Different **training programs** are needed at both state and national levels.
- Committees to form the **guidelines** for specifications in this field.
- **Essentials** are to be checked down and no compromise should be done on the quality.
- **Ethical code of conduct** needs to be laid down.
- Proper **assessment** of counselors, for gauging the areas for future improvement

- **Laws** to safeguard the interest of school counselors
- **Licensing**
- **Research** in the area of school counseling to find loopholes both at the induction and the training level.
- More over inculcating a **broader perspective** in school itself for improving the understanding of students about various job opportunities available; with the help of timely seminars and workshops.
- India needs its own **national and state level non profitable organizations** like ICDA, which could scan the needs at their own level and then mend ways to fulfill those needs.

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Thank you