(PAPER PRESENTATION)

CHANGING ROLE OF COUNSELORS IN SCHOOLS AND INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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Education and training are the most important investment in human capital. Schools and institutions of higher education are challenged to provide conducive and humanize environment for learning which includes caring for the welfare and mental health of our students Today, schools and insitutions of higher education are faced with multitude of complex and multifactored problems, including poverty, gangsterism, violence, drugs, poor academic achievement, and mental health problem such as anxiety and depression. The intensity of students' needs has led many to realize the importance of the counseling programs in comprehensively meeting the needs of all students Threfore, school and university counselors need to relook and review their role to guide and counsel students in a changing world and to equip these students with coping skills to become healthy, happy, and productive employees This paper will discuss the role of school and university counseling, the needs of students, and how counselors work towards meeting these needs

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I.   INTRODUCTION

The interim between the Agriculture Age and the Industrial Age brought forth socio-economic changes. We may be now in transition to a new Age Some call it the Information Age All these changes and advancement have led to drastic alterations in human behavior and caused almost seismic changes in lifestyle Schools, colleges and universities are expected to provide an egalitarian education to a large student population of mixed abilities that equips them with the skills and knowledge to be a part of a technologically sophisticated work force (Schlechty, 1997) so that their nation can compete on the global stage All this have to be done while being cognizant of sociological shifts

Some sociological changes seen are
   (a) the change from the traditional working father - housebound mother structure to that of either working parents or a single-parent family
   (b) the growing incidence of poverty and the disparity in economic circumstances among families and among nations,
   (c) the dispersal of the nuclear family, and
   (d) the growth of commercialism that supports popular culture through regimes of violence, and sexualized behavior that are depicted in films, television, music and in print.

As one of the consequences of these dynamic changes in human development, attention is being focused on the mental health and behavior of youths. Many theories and methods have been proposed to help youths adapt to such rapid changes and challenges This then basically describes the functions of a school counselor.

We shall begin a review of the counselor's changing role in the youth education scheme and conflict resolution by comparing and contrasting the historical development of counseling in the United States of America and in Asia Pacific with specific reference to Malaysia.

II.   HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL COUNSELING

United States

One should begin with a review of the development of counseling in the United States because this particular nation has demonstrated the most consistent awareness of the needs for counseling that is coupled with a willingness to act upon such identified needs through legislation and funding.

Early Days

The profession of school counseling in United States can probably be traced back to the 1880s (Coy, 1990). The first recorded school guidance program was introduced in 1889 by Jesse B. Davis, a school principal in a Detroit high school, who incorporated guidance in English classes He was followed by Frank Parsons, who became known as the "Father of Guidance" and who began his vocational bureau in Boston in 1908 to help youngsters who were leaving the public schools with their career choices (Brewer, 1942) While Davis included vocational and moral guidance in his program, Parsons' program was basically a matching of a perceived individual's traits with a vocation These early counselors focused on guidance and concentrated on moral and vocational issues (Mathewson, 1962) which before long

became the measurement of personality traits and individual aptitude or, in other words, vocational guidance and assessment (Brewer, 1942)

Around 1949, as the age of an individual became recognized as a factor for guidance, attention was directed to the developmental needs of individuals (Mathewson, 1962).

The Awakening

The former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics inadvertently revitalized the development of professional school counseling with the launch of their Sputnik satellite in 1957 In reaction and in fear (a rocket that can carry an object into space can certainly deliver heavy nuclear devices across oceans[1]), the United States Congress passed the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) in 1958. The legislation provided for the identification, guidance, and support of students with high aptitudes in mathematics and science so that they might become future technological innovators Funds were specially allocated to train counselors to identify such gifted students and guide them toward science and college.

Other stimuli continued to influence the growth of counseling in the United States In 1962, Wrenn noted that professional school counseling goals should emphasized students' holistic development (Cobia & Henderson, 2003) He proposed further that remedial services be provided together with a multi-level approach to address the comprehensive developmental needs of the students Wrenn's report, together with impetus from the civil rights movement, caused amendments to the NDEA to be made in 1964 that provided funds and momentum for elementary school counseling and extended the search for gifted students to that level.

The Period of Dynamic Growth

The Vocational Education Act Amendments of 1968 subsequently granted funds to support career guidance programs to meet the needs of disadvantaged students and people with disabilities (Herr, 2003). This was followed by Public Law 94-142 (Education of All Handicapped Children Act), now known as Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1975, recognized and expanded the services of school counselors. The bill required that free public education be available for all children with an emphasis on equity for exceptional children (Baker, 2000; Schmidt, 2003). This legislation expanded the school counselors' roles into special education, including appropriate placement services, collaboration in the Individual Education Plan process, record-keeping management, and providing consultation and counseling service to children with disabilities, their parents and/or guardians, and their teachers (Humes, 1978).

In the 1980s, there was a noticeable decline in the enrolment of counselors in schools (Mercer, 1981). This counselors' obligation to preserve confidentiality and counsel students behind closed doors made it difficult to determine outcomes. Administrators began to eliminate counseling positions because of budgetary constraints Consequently, some school counselors began to take on additional roles in the school to assist administrators and give their role more visibility These added duties were administrative in nature and were not counseling-related tasks.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, additional legislation and publications further influenced the US school counseling movement In 1983, as mentioned earlier, the National Commission of Excellence in Education published a paper entitled "A Nation at Risk", which reported on the declining achievement of students and promoted the implementation of reform initiatives (Schmidt, 2003) The reaction to the publication advanced the accountability and testing movement and strongly influenced school counselors The School to Work Opportunities Act of 1994 further reinforced the importance of career guidance and counseling services to support students making the transition from school to employment (Herr, 2003).

Since 1990, the American School Counselors Association has advocated identifying the profession as "school counseling", rather than the previous title of "guidance and counseling" (American School Counselors Association, 2003).

The Present

Professional school counselors are now defined as professional educators who have a master's degree or higher in school counseling (or the substantial equivalent), and are certified or licensed by the state in which they work (American Counseling Association, 2006) Professional school counselors must possess the qualifications and skills necessary to address the full array of students' academic, personal, social and career developmental needs Professional school counselors advocate for and care for students, and are important members of the educational team. They consult and collaborate with teachers, administrators and families to help all students be successful academically, vocationally and personally

Professional school counselors should provide a wide-range of services in the schools, based on individual student needs and student interests, including, but not limited to (a) counseling service for mental, emotional, social, developmental, and behavioral issues, (b) services to students and families, (c) academic guidance and support services, including organizational, study and test-taking skills for students, (d) special education services, including serving as integral member of the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP), (e) career awareness, exploration and planning services, including goal setting and decision making assistance for students, (f) school crisis intervention and response services; and (g) collaboration and coordination of more in-depth services needed through community agencies

In recent years, stakeholders are beginning to demand accountability for the academic achievement of their children and adolescents, especially in view of the increasing "achievement gap" between students living in disadvantaged conditions and students of affluent families (John et al , 2004). Two major initiatives have been

taken to strengthen the impact of school counseling as a profession within the school context in the United States:

- The American School Counseling Association Model proposed four major components that school counselors must manage: (a) foundation, (b) delivery system, (c) management system, and (d) accountability (Hatch & Bowers, 2002),

- The second initiative, Transforming School Counselor Initiatives (Seashore et al., 2001) pays more attention to training school counselors to help close the academic achievement gap between high and low performing students

Generally, the current difficulty appears to be one of identifying measurable key performance indicators for school counselors. How can the outcome or impact of providing services that would gear the students to become healthy and successful be seen or measured?

Asia-Pacific

This section discusses the development of school counseling in Asia-Pacific with specific reference to Malaysia.

The Past

The development of school counseling in the Asia-Pacific region in general, and in Malaysia in particular, is relatively young, at about 50 years. Most cultures in this region have had to adapt Western models of counseling with suitable blending (Othman & Awang, 1993) Existing cultural norms and traditions such as those in helping systems (from family, relatives, and other uniquely community social support systems) were used to come to terms with the modernizing and industrializing lifestyle that results from economic development.

The development of school guidance and counseling in Malaysia and many Commonwealth countries in this region, nonetheless follow the trends of school

guidance and counseling in the United States by way of Canada which adopted them first Canada then, as a member of the British Commonwealth, passed them to the United Kingdom and eventually to other Commonwealth member states during the 1950s

In the 1960s, the major duties of guidance teachers reflected the emphasis in the United States of being centered on vocational and academic guidance. It also evolved to the care of an individual's development.

The Present

From the 1980s onwards, a counseling function was included The inclusion of counseling clearly indicates that the role of these guidance teachers had enlarged to encompass academic guidance, vocational guidance and counseling. However, several snags appeared. (i) the reluctance of students to see the counselor because of the cultural stigma attached to any question on mental health, (ii) one-to-one counseling was difficult to maintain in large schools because of lack of facilities or human resources, (iii) counselors then were also burdened with teaching and other non-counseling tasks, (iv) counselors were not adequately trained, and time was always short so and a quick fix seemed to be norm

In Malaysia, the development of school counseling only took a leap in 1996, when the Malaysian Ministry of Education (MoE) officially sanctioned a position for full-time school counselors. By 2000, every secondary school had at least a full-time counselor, also called guidance and counseling official

The Ministry of Education proposed one counselor to 500 students, but this has yet to be realized. The school counselors also no longer play a multi-task role They do need to keep regular hours (8.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.) during which they provide guidance and counseling services to students from both the morning and afternoon sessions. However although there are about 1,400 secondary schools in Malaysia with each authorized to enlist a full-time counselor, presently only 54

known school counselors are registered with the Board of Counselors (less than 4%) Registration with the Board is required for those who wish to be recognized as a licensed or registered counselor.

Two possible reasons are that the school counselors do not feel the need to be registered as it makes no differences to their appointment and it incurs an additional expense (licensing, registration, or renewal fees) or that they lack of the minimum Board professional qualifications.

Current Issues

In many Asia-Pacific countries, school counseling and the purpose it serves are often secondary to the larger goals of education in the national agenda. School counseling programs that fail to fit into such national goals can be deemed as impractical or idealistic to luxurious.

Education currently is very much more vocation orientated than we wish to admit or believe Pressure, stress, and highly competitive national exams characterize the educational experience of the students in many Asia-Pacific countries. The level of educational attainment opens the doors to good lucrative jobs and influence

School counseling is therefore often justified based on how it proposes to help students attain the highest educational achievement and how it can promote a school's reputation and standing as a result The key performance indicators for any school counseling programs are consequently the counselor's ability to show that they make a different in national development. This is a question similar to the one being asked in the United States.

III. NEEDS OF STUDENTS IN SCHOOLS

The needs of school students have changed due to the transformation brought about by modernization These are exciting times, with an increasingly diverse and mobile society, new technologies, expanding opportunities and many challenges

In facing these challenges, counselors focus on the holistic development of a person that encompasses five areas, namely (a) physical, (b) mental, (c) spiritual, (d) social, and (e) emotional. Furthermore, the critical period is recognized as the time between childhood and adolescence that brings about the most dramatic biological and psychological changes (Mitchell, 1979; Brooks-Gunns & Peterson, 1984, Maline, 1990). The most obvious change is puberty.

There are also changes in the cognition, emotion and social development. According to Maznah and Joseph (1998), the lack of self-understanding causes problem among individuals who will have difficulty adjusting themselves to roles that are in conflict with each other. Maznah and Joseph (1998) also stated that an adolescent's and an adult's perception towards conflict is different. This situation can lead to crisis among students Many researchers now agree that this failure to handle the crisis will lead to unacceptable behaviors, gangsterism, drug addiction, and juvenile crime

According to United States National Centre Education Statistics (2006), in 1996-97 1 in 10 schools reported at least one serious violent crime during that school year. Fifty-seven percent of public elementary and secondary school principals reported that one or more incidents of crime/violence had occurred in their school and were reported to the police or other law enforcement officials. Ten percent of all public schools reported experiencing one or more serious violent crimes (defined as murders, rapes or other types of sexual battery, suicides,

physical attacks or fights with a weapon, or robbery). About 116,000 incidents of theft were recorded along with 98,000 incidents of vandalism.

Globally, unacceptable behavior amongst students remains a serious problem. In 2003, 31, 278 cases of violent behaviors and 23, 351 cases of bullying in Japan public elementary schools and secondary schools were reported to the Japan Ministry of Education. These numbers had increased by 6 2% and 5 2% respectively compared to the year 2002 (Yukiko, 2004).

The latest National Police Agency (NPA) data confirmed that suicide by elementary- and middle-school students in Japan is a serious social problem The suicide rate for this group rose by a massive 57.6% in 2003, representing a total of 93 lives lost, 34 more than in 2002 Among high-school students there was also a sharp rise of 29.3% in 2003. In total, 225 young lives were lost in this category (Asia Times Online, 2004)

According to Malaysian Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (2005), 4,998 juvenile cases were reported to the Malaysia Department of Social Welfare in 2004 and this number had increased to 6,056 cases in 2005 (21 17%)

In 2005, the Royal Malaysia Police (PDRM) reported that 1.74 percent of 5 5 million Malaysian students (95,700 students) had disciplinary problems, such as truancy, rude and aggressive, crime, hooliganism, indecent behaviors and vandalism (Malaysia Today, 2006).

Statistics from the Chinese Health Ministry showed that among the 340 million people under the age of 17 on the Chinese mainland in 2004, 30 million were suffering from mental or behavioral problems A survey of 22 Chinese provinces and cities during the same time showed that 12 97 percent of children and teenagers were found to have behavioral problems (Radio Free Asia, 2004).

Numbers from the Korea National Statistical Office indicated that more than 1,000 students between the ages of 10 and 19 killed themselves from 2000 to 2003. In another report supplied to the Education Committee of the National Assembly by the Ministry of Education, 462 students (both primary and secondary) committed suicide over a five-year period Two surveys, one by the Korea Teachers and Educational Workers Union, the other by the Korea Youth Counseling Institute, found that 43% to 48% of students have contemplated suicide (Asia Times Online, 2005)

According to the Organization for the Protection of Children's Rights (OPCR, 2002), 4 millions of adolescents attempt suicide annually. More than 100,000 young people (15-24 years old) will be successful Another estimate suggests that the ratio of attempts to completed suicides among people under 25 years of age may reach as high as 100-200.1.

Time spent in schools marks the transition of separation from parents to exploring and defining their independence. Students decide who they are, what they do well, and what they will do when they finish secondary education During these adolescent years, students evaluate their strengths, skills and abilities They face increased pressures regarding risk behaviors involving sex, alcohol and drugs while exploring the boundaries of more acceptable behavior and mature, meaningful relationships. They need access to guidance and counseling while making concrete and compounded decisions They must deal with academic pressures as they face high-stakes testing, the challenges of friendship, and grant application processes and entrance into competitive training programs that open into the job market Clearly, school counselors have a significant role to play in meeting these student's needs.

IV. NEEDS OF STUDENTS IN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

In 2001, representatives of the Asia-Pacific Youth Forum of the United Nations System gathered in Bangkok and formulated the Asia-Pacific Youth Declaration (2001). They demanded that

1. There be adequate learning institutions using an integrated and interactive approach to learning, and teaching,

2. The private sector, civil society and governments uphold the rights of young people to secure their livelihood,

3. There be greater participation of young people at every level of decision making within society,

4. There be immediate action toward creating, child-and-youth-friendly services that are adequately accessible and utilized,

5. Young people's issues be given greater priority,

6. Marginalized young people be included in mainstream society and not discriminated against, and

7. There must be more action-oriented research conducted to find out the extent of problems affecting young people that reasonable and practical approaches for need-based services are developed.

From their declaration, these representatives express a desire to be heard in the areas of learning and teaching, career and jobs opportunities, decision making and participation, and accessibility They highlight some of the problems that youths are facing such as sexual abuse and exploitation, substance abuse, HIV/AIDs, discrimination and poverty.

In a major study at Kansas State University, counseling center staff there conducted a retrospective analysis of client problems over 13 years (Benton et al, 2003) These Kansas State researchers found a significant increase in student psychopathology in 14 out of 19 areas, e g , depression, suicidal thoughts, sexual assaults, personality disorders, and the like.

Kitzrow (2003) published a literature review related to the mental health needs of present-day college students Citing a survey of directors of college counseling centers, he reported that from 1996 - 2001, 85% of the directors saw more severe psychological problems In addition, respondents described more cases of learning disabilities, self-injury incidents, eating disorders, alcohol and drug use, warnings to third parties, and stalking.

Young (2004) indicated that the rate of depression among college students rose almost five per cent in just the past four years, with 38% of these students on antidepressant medication and over 25% in therapy.

Levine and Cureton (1998) had already noted that "in general, students are coming to college overwhelmed and more damaged than those of previous years" College students at the United Arab Emirates University had reported that they experience psychological issues such as distress, depression, and anxiety (Al-Darmaki & Alqaydi, 2002; Mahmood et al , 2001)

Student anxiety is high as well In Malaysia, over 25% of college students say they are overwhelmed (Higher Education Research Institute, 2002). Kadison and DiGeronimo (2004), in their recent book "College of the Overwhelmed The Campus Mental Health Crisis and What to Do About It", confirmed that a rising number of students are coping with depression, anxiety, and other major mental health challenges

A study done by See (2003) to identify the needs of students in University Science Malaysia showed that students are likely to encounter· (i) personal problems such as stress, anxiety, negative thinking, anger, and emotional conflict (32 24%), (ii) academic problems such as poor time management, poor academic results, lack of motivation, and lost interest in study (28.33%); (iii) career problems such as lack of skills in searching job, aversion to their study course, uncertainty over career interest (17 68%), and (iv) relationship problems with friends,

roommates, lecturers, and lack of communication and social (13.93%) during their university years

It is importance to periodically assess the identifiable needs of students in institutions of higher education. Kuh (1982), Upcraft and Schuh (1996) noted that such efforts are crucial to student affairs staff in their determination of how best to develop effective services

V.   CONCLUSION

Role of the 21st Century Counselors in Schools and Institutions of Higher Education

Models of effective collaboration are needed to best serve the needs of students in the 21st century schools Schools in the 21st century are facing a multitude of complex and multifactored problems (Paisley & McMahon, 2001). The intensity of students' needs has led some to question whether school counseling programs are actually comprehensively meeting the needs of all students (Green & Keys, 2001, Whiston, 2002) The developmental (e g., Lerner, 1995) and ecological (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1979) models are two that can be used to understand and respond to the needs of today's youth (Whiston, 2002) The present and future role of the counselor will include:

i   Career, educational and personal issues

ii   Teaching functions that extend beyond the school into the community

iii.   Working with groups, including families

iv.   Dealing with administrative concerns such as needs assessments, resource identification, and management

The author proposes that the role of the professionally competent counselors of the 21st century need to focus on the preventive/developmental model with an

added emphasis on diagnosis and treatment strategies. The professionally competent counselor of the future needs the knowledge and skills to work with clients in their respected developmental stages and to provide strategies and approaches that help to prevent mental illness The professionally competent counselor is skilled in group, career, marriage and family, and specialty counseling. In addition, this counselor has the ability and skills to diagnose and treat.

School counselors must also work collaboratively with other school staff to identify common needs across the school population and to design and monitor school-wide institutional change to address those student needs through the use of data and advocacy In this model, school counselors need to walk, so to speak, with family and extended family members and with community (Amatea & Clark, 2005).

The final role is in valuing diversity in the schools. The valuing of diversity in the schools is no longer merely a social goal School counselors need to understand, motivate, teach, and empower each individual student regardless of race, gender, religion or creed We are a nation of diverse populations and groups. The future of our society depends upon our ability to effectively talk with one another, to reach mutual understanding, and to realize that in diversity there is strength School counselors can serve as catalysts to insure that teachers, students and others learn how to value diversity. That is, the valuing of diversity can be taught to others and should be a major part of any school's comprehensive counseling program

Future Directions of Counseling in Schools and Institutions of Higher Education

The author would like to propose that schools adopt the comprehensive school counseling program from United States In Malaysia, the author has proposed six types of services that should be made available to university students· (a) Individual and Group Counseling, (b) Developmental, Educational, and Career

Guidance, (c) Assessment and Appraisal, (d) Consulting, (e) Coordination and Management of a Developmental and Comprehensive Program, (f) Professional Ethics, Personal Growth, and Development, (g) Special Education Program, and (h) Crisis Intervention and Response Service

The author highlight some preliminary tasks needed for establishing a comprehensive systems of counseling, and they are

(a) Study on the Needs of the students

Counselors should identify the actual needs of the students in schools and institutions of higher learning. Till now, there are only limited empirical studies focusing on the needs of the students for counselors to plan/organize and carry out specific counseling and services to meet these needs

(b) The Need to Indigenize Counseling Practices

Counselors need to be sensitive to the cultural norms, values and philosophical orientations of their clients while using Western counseling theories and methods.

(c) The Need to develop Local Resource Materials

Counselors should develop their own local resource materials, such as instruments to aid assessment in counseling in their own cultural context. There is also a need to develop and use proven and standardized counseling tests that are applicable within a cultural band.

(d) Increase and Expand Counseling Training Programs

To ensure effectiveness of counseling, counselor training programs must adopt the scientist-practitioner paradigm, and review the curriculum to conform to the requirement for accreditation and this new paradigm There is also a need to increase and expand training programs in the area of individual counseling, group counseling, marriage and family counseling, stress management counseling,

substance abuse counseling and adolescents counseling. The training should include practicum and internship experiences for counselors. The training should also enhance the skills of counselors in term of prevention and early intervention strategies.

(e) Increase Mental Health Training

Research has showed that there is a need for mental health service among students in schools and institutions of higher learning Therefore, counselors need to prepare themselves with knowledge of mental health, psychological problems and the skills of conducting the psychological assessments and tests for effective therapy

Summary

Over the past several decades, the profession of school counseling has undergone a transformation to align the role and function of the school counselor more closely with the needs of students. The profession has gone from providing a set of loosely connected services to operating from a comprehensive model designed to facilitate the positive development of all students. In addition to the profession itself, this transformation will have a positive effect on the students and their families.

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