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The 5th International Conference on Education Research

SCHOOL COUNSELING AND GUIDANCE IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION;
CURRENT ISSUES AND PROSPECTS

21 October – 22 October, 2004
Hoam Convention Center, Seoul National University
Seoul Korea

Hosted by
Educational Research Institute, Seoul National University

Sponsored by
Seoul National University

SCHOOL COUNSELING IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

The 1998 Counselors Act 580 (Akta Kaunselor 580) has certainly changed the counseling scenario in Malaysia. Together with the implementation of a policy that all secondary schools are to have least one counselor since 1996, the situation of counseling in schools have significantly improved. This paper covers the historical development of the school guidance and counseling movement in Malaysia, role and function of the school counselors, the effectiveness of the counseling services, and the future of school counseling.

INTRODUCTION

In 1998, Counselors Act 580 (Akta Kaunselor 580) was enacted in Malaysia. The Act comprises eight sections: An Introduction, Advisory Council for Counselors in Malaysia, Board of Counselors, Registration and Licensing of Counselors, Setting Up Counseling Practice, Disciplinary Proceeding, Wrong Doing and Penalty, and Others. All counselors in Malaysia became obliged to register or license themselves with the Board of Counselors and abide by this Act in order to be recognized as such. Licensing is required from those who wish to set up a private practice. As of June 2004, Malaysia with a population of about 23 million, has only 167 registered counselors and 83 licensed counselors, i.e. a ratio of 1:137,725 inhabitants. There is certainly a need to have more trained and qualified counselors.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE SCHOOL GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING MOVEMENT IN MALAYSIA

The development of school guidance and counseling in Malaysia takes after secondary school guidance and counseling in the United States. The United States guidance and counseling movement was adopted first by neighbouring Canada, a British

Commonwealth member, and then spread to the United Kingdom and other Commonwealth countries like Malaysia during the 1960s.

An informal arrangement certainly pre-existed during British colonial rule in which guidance and counseling in schools were traditionally practiced through a system of classroom teachers, housemasters, and hostel masters (Othman & Bakar, 1993). A senior education officer, H.R. Cheeseman, outlined the need for guidance services in the Report on Vocational Education in 1938 (Federation of Malaya Annual Report on Education (1955)).

In 1963, a British Commonwealth Colombo Plan consultant, R.K. Mackenzie from Canada, proposed the introduction of a structured guidance service into the schools through the establishment of a guidance unit in the Ministry of Education and in every State Education Department (Ministry of Education Report, Malaysia, 1970, pp. 40). A six-month course on guidance for assistant supervisors of schools from each State Education Department was conducted and it was expected that at its conclusion, the participants would return to their own state to act as trainers and expand the number of guidance teachers. An outcome was the publication of the book entitled "Perkhidmatan Panduan di Sekolah" (School Guidance Services, Ministry of Education and the Language Bureau, 1966) and the establishment of a Guidance Section in the Educational Planning and Research Division (EPRD). The Ministry then ruled that there should be a guidance teacher in each school who would be given approximately only twenty-five periods of academic work and be exempted from other activities (KP 5209/35/(4), 1964).

The Guidance Section under the Educational Planning and Research Development Division, promoted a career in guidance by circulating a series of pamphlets on career guidance in the primary and secondary schools (Awang, 1969). Pamphlets were prepared that explained guidance for schools, cumulative record cards, school orientation, understanding children and problems of the transition into secondary schools. It also inspected schools, did research, and organized seminars and workshops for career teachers (Awang, 1969).

Guidance was accepted as helping an individual make intelligent choices and adjustments since the democratic principle was that one should choose one's own way of life insofar as one's choice does not infringe upon the rights of others. This ability is not innate, but, like other abilities, must be developed and guided. Guidance thus becomes an integral part of education because it promotes or stimulates the gradual development of the ability to make decisions independently without undue influence from others (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 1968). Unfortunately due to the lack of finance and manpower and in spite of further rulings to provide guidance facilities (KP 5209/30/(13), 1968), the plans went awry.

The plans were revived during the 1980's with the establishment of a new guidance and counseling unit under the Schools Division in the Ministry of Education. A book entitled "Panduan Perlaksanaan Khidmat Bimbingan dan Kaunseling di Sekolah" (Guidelines for the Implementation of Guidance and Counseling Services in the School) was published in 1984 to guide school counselors in managing guidance and counseling programmes in secondary schools. A revised edition (Panduan Perlaksanaan Khidmat Bimbingan dan Kaunseling di Sekolah, 1993) continues to be used by schools to this day.

The main objectives of these guidelines include the provision of growth and enrichment services; preventive services such as awareness campaigns and preventive education; remedial / corrective services or orientation programmes; and crisis counseling for the students. The school counselors focused on the corrective or orientation programme comprising of awareness campaigns, seminar or workshop to provide information and guidance activities. Because students in schools often faced problems related to separation or divorce of parents, death in the family and unforeseen situations that cause distress, crisis counseling is therefore a necessity. It comes in the form of individual and group counseling.

The principal appoints the school counselor. In the 1960s, they were called the guidance teacher or the guidance and counseling teacher. Later, they are referred to as the school counselors. School counselors are primarily teachers, and the guidance and

counseling services that they perform are in addition to their teaching responsibilities. In short, they played the dual role of teacher and counselors in the school until 1996, when the Ministry of Education implemented the position of full-time school counselors. By 2000, every secondary school has at least a full-time counselor, also called guidance and counseling officer. Ideally, the Ministry is proposing one counselor to 500 students, but this has yet to be realized. The school counselors no longer play a dual role. They need to keep office hours (8.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.) and provide guidance and counseling services to students from both the morning and afternoon sessions. Although there are about 1,400 secondary schools in Malaysia with each having a full-time counselors, presently only 54 known school counselors are registered with the Board of Counselors (less than 4%). Two possible reasons are that the school counselors do not feel the need to be registered as it makes no difference to their appointment and it incurs an additional expense (licensing, registration, or renewal fees) or that they lack the minimum Board qualifications.

THE GENERAL COUNSELING PARADIGM IN SCHOOL

In the early years, the major duties of the guidance teachers revolved around vocational and academic guidance. However from 1971 onwards, a counseling function was included. Counseling was then defined as

" a learning process, carried on in a simple one-to-one social environment, in which a counselor, professionally competent in relevant psychological skills and knowledge, seeks to assist the client with methods appropriate to the latter's need and within the context of the total personnel programme. The client is guided to learn more about himself and to put such understanding into effect in relation to more clearly perceived, realistically defined goals so that he may become a happier and more productive member of his society" (Ministry of Education, 1971).

Several inadequacies soon appeared. For one, the one-to-one counseling was difficult to maintain in large schools with discipline problems. This is because the

counselors were too busy with their teaching load to deal with the counseling responsibilities. Very often, the counselors themselves were really incompetent from inadequate training. Finally, time was always short and the quick fix was the *de facto* remedy.

From the definition of counseling, it is clear that the task of counseling is a process that spreads over time. For schools to implement and ensure effectiveness in the counseling programme, it becomes imperative that counselors be given a full-time position, the counseling programme be redefined and better training be provided.

The Ministry of Education has since then defined the programme. There are now basically nine guidance and counseling services provided. They include personal inventory and record service; information service; group guidance and instructional service; individual and group counseling; placement service; consultation and referral service; resource coordination service; conference with parents; and evaluation service (Panduan Pelaksanaan Khidmat Bimbingan dan Kaunseling di Sekolah, 1993).

Emerging drug abuse among adolescents soon provided an impetus for serious counseling. A figure of 94,500 drug abusers alone was identified in 1983 (Hussin, 1989). Facing loss of man-hours vital to future development and increasing criminal activities, the government declared drug abuse to be a national security threat. The responsibility for combating drugs in the schools was shouldered by the guidance and counseling teachers through a directive (Surat Pekeliling Ikhtisas No. 7/1975). Subsequently, two more official letters (Surat Pekeliling Ikhtisas No 1/1983 and No 8/1986) added smoking and misuse of inhalants (such as hydrocarbon solvents from glues) to the proscribed activities.

Over the years, the Ministry of Education kept school counselors up with current ideas on counseling practices through official directives such as the Surat Pekeliling Ikhtisas No 5/1976, 9/1978, 1/1979, 3/1988, and 3/1996 which touched upon the duties of the guidance and counseling teachers, and the setting up of guidance and counseling units

and services. The 1980s was the most active years when the Ministry of Education circulated guidelines to all secondary school counselors presenting the rationale, goals, principles, services, and activities that school counselors should perform (Panduan Pelaksanaan Khidmat Bimbingan dan Kaunseling Di sekolah, 1993; 1984). In the developmental guidance and counseling services, school counselors were expected to focus on prevention, enrichment, and remediation. Only general guidelines were given.

Since 1996, a directive was sent to all the school counselors outlining the guidance and counseling services (Surat Pekeliling Ikhtisas Bil. 3/1996). Three main areas were emphasized: (i) academic (choosing subjects; study skills; and placement), (ii) career (career interest inventory; and education and development of career) and (iii) psychosocial and mental health (personality development; psychosocial skills; and personality development). The counselors were given a list of 24 tasks such as (a) preparation of a year plan for the guidance and counseling activities, (b) identification of the needs of the students, (c) planning and management of the records and reports of the students, (d) gathering, preparation and publicity of counseling information, (e) discharging of group guidance and counseling, and instructional base activities to motivate maximum development, (f) planning and discharge of individual counseling, (g) planning, performance and management of study skills programmes, (h) planning, performance and management of programmes to help students select subjects for the Government examinations, (i) planning, performance and management of educational programmes against drug, alcohol, and smoking abuse, (j) assistance to students to continue with higher education, (k) planning, performance, management and evaluation of consultation and referral services related to career and drugs, (l) planning, performance, management and evaluation of conferences with parents, teachers, support staff and Government agencies, related to the process of education and development of students, (m) preparation of modules, instruments and approaches to promote professionalism in the guidance and counseling services, (n) planning, coordination and evaluation of guidance and counseling resources, (o) setting up committees to coordinate the guidance and counseling services, (p) advocating for and provision of in-house training to share understanding of the guidance and counseling services, (q) provision of

crisis counseling to students, teachers, staff and anyone else who needs the service, (r) assumption of role as mediator between the school and outside agencies, (s) assumption of a position on the Curriculum committee, (t) assumption of a position on the School Planning committee (u) role as facilitator in the mentor-mentee program, (v) position as facilitator in the development programmes such as motivation camp, civic education etc., (w) carrying out programmes related to Drug Prevention Education, and (x) carrying out programmes related to HIV/AIDS prevention programmes. The implementation of the 24 tasks listed was left in the hands of each counselor.

On reviewing the present 24 tasks in comparison to the nine services proposed in 1993, there is no mention of the evaluation services (psychological testing and evaluation). At present, there is an emphasis on the academic services ((g) planning, performance and management of study skills programmes and (h) planning, performance and management of programmes to help students select subjects for the Government examinations); preventive programmes ((w) carrying out programmes related to Drug Prevention Education and (x) carrying out programmes related to HIA/AIDs prevention pgorammes); and involvement in the school planning ((t) assumption of a position in the School Planning Committee) where the counselor is the secretary.

SCHOOL COUNSELORS AND COUNSELING

A study on the effectiveness of policy was conducted by the author in 1996 on 48 urban schools and 50 rural schools throughout Peninsular Malaysia. The study was conducted through a Counselor Role Assessment Survey (CRAS) (See, 1996).

One hundred and eighty-three administrators, 190 counselors, and 276 teachers participated in this study. In the urban location, there were 93 administrators, 94 counselors, and 134 teachers whereas 90 administrators, 96 counselors, and 142 teachers were included in the rural segment. There was an average of 1.96 counselors per urban school and 1.92 in the rural schools indicating that the position of counselors had been institutionalized in the public educational system.

The administrators, counselors, and teachers viewed the role of school counselors as important to crucially important. Table 1 displays their perceptions on the importance of the role of school counselors. A large group of counselors placed the role of the school counselors from very important to crucially important, while a large group of administrators and teachers placed the role of school counselors from important to crucially important. The awareness and recognition of the importance of the role of school counselors is clear and has received support from the different branches of service in any one school..

Table 1

Self-Reported View of Administrators, Counselors, and Teachers on the Important of the Role of School Counselors

Scale	Administrator		Counselors		Teacher		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Crucially Important	42	22.95	69	36.31	55	19.93	166	25.58
Very Important	90	49.18	96	50.53	112	40.58	298	45.92
Important	46	25.14	23	12.10	90	32.61	159	24.50
Slightly Important	5	2.73	1	0.53	17	6.16	23	3.54
Unimportant	0	0.00	1	0.53	2	0.72	3	0.46
Total	183	28.20	190	29.27	276	42.53	649	100.00

Table 2 displays the self-reported professional qualification of the counselors. Forty-one percent of the counselors have no training at all. From the 59% of those who had some form of training, 79% reported that they were informed of the role of school counselors during their training. The task of providing more guidance and counseling or

counseling courses and programme to meet this need is left to the teachers training colleges and public universities.

Table 2

Self-Reported Professional Qualification of Counselors

Professional Qualification	Counselors f	%
No Training	78	41.05
Bachelor of Education/Bachelor of Arts (Guidance and Counseling)	26	13.68
Diploma in Psychology (Counseling)/ Diploma in Guidance and Counseling	9	4.74
One Year Course in the University	9	4.74
Certificate in Guidance and Counseling	16	8.42
In-service Course	16	8.42
Three to Six Months Course	9	4.74
Basics/Introduction to Guidance and Counseling	15	7.90
Peer Group Counseling Course	5	2.63
One Course in Dip Ed/BA/B.Sc.	7	3.68
Total	190	100.00

The Six Subscales of Counselor Roles for Malaysia.

After reviewing available literature on the role of school counselors in Malaysia and overseas, the author developed a set of six roles for school counselors. These were (the CRAS subscales): individual and group counseling; developmental, educational and career guidance; assessment and appraisal; consulting; coordination and management of a developmental and comprehensive program; and professional ethics, personal growth and development. Each individual role is discussed in detail in the following section.

1. Individual and Group Counseling

Individual counseling is a personal, private, and a face-to-face interaction between a counselors and a client in which they work together on a problem or topic of interest.

Group counseling involves a counselors working with two or more clients together. The discussions may be relatively unstructured or may be based on structured learning activities.

The counselors

- a. meets with an individual student and/or a group of students to address developmental needs;
- b. counsels an individual student and/or a group of students to resolve or remediate a problem;
- c. meets with an individual student and/or a group of students to discuss academic matters;
- d. meets with an individual student and/or a group of students to discuss career information and/or helps a student in career planning;
- e. helps an individual student and/or a group of students in selecting courses or further training;
- f. counsels an individual student who is facing disciplinary action;
- g. works with parents/guardians to resolve or remediate a student's problem;
- h. trains and uses students as helpers in the peer counseling program; and
- i. counsels a teacher regarding a personal concern.

2. Developmental, Educational, and Career Guidance

Guidance are organized, planned, sequential, and flexible activities which are carried out in large groups, classroom guidance sessions, and small groups to help students develop their social, educational, and career potentials.

The counselors

- a. works with a class size or large group of students to facilitate self-awareness;
- b. conducts a class size or large group workshop for students on topics of developmental needs;
- c. conducts a class size or large group workshop for students to help them develop academic skills;
- d. conducts a class size or large group special program to meet the specific needs of the students;
- e. provides a class size or large group of students with educational and career information;

- f. helps a class size or large group of students to plan steps to take in furthering their education or in looking for a job;
- g. conducts a class size or large group workshop for students to help them develop resume writing, interview and job seeking skills; and
- h. assists students to seek employment (part-time or full-time employment)

3. Assessment and Appraisal

Assessment and appraisal is a process of gathering information, confirming subjective impressions, and evaluating change in the students. The counselors has the responsibility of selecting, administering, and interpreting the results to the appropriate person(s) concerned.

The counselors

- a. administers to an individual or a class size or a large group of students achievement test, ability test, interest inventory, career inventory, personality test, and/or problem checklist; and
- b. interprets and communicates assessment results to administrators, teachers, parents/guardians, and/or students.

4. Consulting

Consultation is defined as a process whereby the counselors works with a second person (or persons), the consultee, to have an effect on third person, the client - in this case, students.

The counselors

- a. consults with teachers, parents/guardians and/or community agencies about the needs or concerns of students;
- b. establishes and maintains open lines of communication with administrators, teachers, and parents concerning the academic and behavioral progress of students;
- c. consults with administrators and teachers in the development of guidance and counseling goals, policies, and activities;
- d. refers students with special needs to other professionals or community agencies; and
- e. designs and conducts an in-service training program for teachers.

5. Coordination and Management of a Developmental and Comprehensive Program

Coordination and management of the developmental and comprehensive program requires that the counselors plans, coordinates, and manages the services specifically and the program generally.

The counselors

- a. formulates guidance and counseling goals and objectives;
- b. plans, coordinates, and administers guidance and counseling activities to achieve objectives;
- c. designs and provides intervention services for students;
- d. explains guidance and counseling program to teachers, parents, and/or community;
- e. presents and discusses guidance and counseling services and/or issues in staff meeting;
- f. plans and provides orientation program for new students to help them adjust to new school environment; and
- g. coordinates a career information resource center.

6. Professional Ethics, Personal Growth, and Development

To ensure high quality practice, counselors need to be committed to continued professional growth and personal development. They should also uphold the ethical standards of the profession.

The counselors

- a. adheres to ethical standards of the counseling profession;
- b. demonstrates positive human relations by showing respect for the worth and dignity of all students;
- c. establishes and maintains cooperative relationships with teachers;
- d. serves as an appropriate role model for students;
- e. is aware and sensitive to cultural differences;
- f. publishes newsletter for students, teachers, and parents;
- g. pursues personal and professional growth and development through conferences, workshops, in-service courses, and participation in Malaysian Counselors Association;
- h. conducts research related to the guidance and counseling program; and
- i. evaluates the effectiveness of the guidance and counseling program.

The questions to ask were: Do the school counselors view these six role functions as important? Are the school counselors performing these six role functions?

Counselors' Perceptions of the Importance of their Role: The importance of the six roles was measured using a scale from unimportant (1), slightly important (2), important (3), very important (4), and crucially important (5) . The following rating system was then used to interpret the means scores:

Unimportant	1.49 or less
Slightly important	1.50 to 2.49
Important	2.50 to 3.49
Very important	3.50 to 4.49
Crucially important	4.50 or over

Table 3 presents the means and standard deviations of six CRAS subscales of the counselors' perceptions for the roles. They viewed as very important, professional ethics, personal growth and development; individual and group counseling; coordination and management; and consulting while assessment and appraisal were considered to be important only.

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations of the Six CRAS Subscales for Counselors' Perceptions on School Counselors' Roles
(n = 190)

Subscale	Mean	SD
Professional Ethics, Personal Growth and Development	4.16	0.53
Individual and Group Counseling	3.70	0.62
Coordination and Management	3.60	0.69
Consulting	3.52	0.74
Developmental, Educational, and Career Guidance	3.46	0.71
Assessment and Appraisal	3.10	0.77
Total	3.61	0.58

School Counselors' Perceptions of Their Actual Role: Having established the roles that they ought to play in their employment, the author next measured the actual frequencies on a five-point scale, that is, from never performing the role (1), rarely performing the role (2), sometimes performing the role (3), often performing the role (4), and always performing the role (5). The following rating system was used to interpret the mean scores:

<u>CRAS Subscale for frequency</u>	<u>range</u>
Never performing the role	1.49 or less
Rarely performing the role	1.50 to 2.49
Sometimes performing the role	2.50 to 3.49
Often performing the role	3.50 to 4.49
Always performing the role	4.50 or over

Table 4 displays the results of the survey. Counselors believed that they often performed in professional ethics, personal growth, and development (mean = 3.75) but only sometimes performed the following four subscales: individual and group counseling (mean = 3.19), coordination and management (mean = 2.95), consulting (mean = 2.74), and developmental, educational, and career guidance (mean = 2.73). They underperformed (rarely) in assessment and appraisal (mean = 2.24). The underperformance in assessment and appraisal could be traced to the absence of in-depth courses on psychological testing or assessment in the counseling programmes at the teachers training colleges and universities. Such courses are only available at the postgraduate (Masters) level.

Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations of Six CRAS Subscales for Counselors' Perceptions on Actual School Counselors Role (n = 190)

Subscale	Mean	SD
Professional Ethics, Personal Growth and Development	3.75	0.59
Individual and Group Counseling	3.19	0.61
Coordination and Management	2.95	0.86
Consulting	2.74	0.83
Developmental, Educational, and Career Guidance	2.73	0.73
Assessment and Appraisal	2.24	0.86
Total	2.97	0.60

Matching Actual Role and Importance of Role: A paired t-test was used to evaluate the match between the ideal situation (the perceived importance) and the actual roles (frequencies). Clearly, at a significance level of 0.05, Table 5 demonstrates that the most frequent task performed by the respondents do not match the relative importance accorded to these roles by the respondents themselves.

Table 5
Comparison of Frequencies Counselors performed a role and the Relative Importance of these Roles on the Six Subscales of CRAS (n = 190)

Subscales	Actual Role		Importance t		p	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Counseling	3.19	0.61	3.70	0.62	-8.09	0.001
Guidance	2.73	0.73	3.46	0.71	-9.84	0.001
Assessment & Appraisal	2.24	0.86	3.10	0.77	-10.30	0.001
Consulting	2.74	0.83	3.52	0.74	-9.60	0.001
Coordination & Management	2.95	0.86	3.60	0.69	-8.09	0.001
Ethics, Growth & Development	3.75	0.59	4.16	0.53	-7.10	0.001

FUTURE OF SCHOOL COUNSELING

The future can possibly be seen from two crucial angles. The first involves the educational model for the training of counselors and the second on the training of the trainers

Adopting a scientist-practioner model for education

As education seems to be the key to a successful counseling programme, it is important to review two models for the training of counselors.

In Malaysia, the teachers training colleges and public universities employ one model - *the educator-practitioner*. Such training essentially focuses on the education of practitioner to equip him with the necessary intellectual background, knowledge and

skills. Since Universiti Putra Malaysia offers a comprehensive Bachelor of Education (Guidance and Counseling) programme, a review of its curriculum may give insight into the types of courses used to train school counselors in Malaysia. The programme occupies a total of 96 credit hours. Thirteen credit hours are assigned to general topics on Malaysian Citizenship, Islamic Civilization, and English for Academic Purposes. The remaining 83 credit hours are devoted to courses with counseling content that include Philosophy of Education, Educational Sociology, Educational Psychology, Educational Technology, Testing and Evaluation, Moral Education, Philosophy and Theories of Guidance and Counseling, Career Development, Multi-cultural Counseling, Individual and Group Counseling, Family Counseling, Testing in Counseling, Learning Strategies, Personnel Management of Students, Conference with Parents, and Drug Counseling.

In the author's opinion, if diversification becomes essential, especially when dealing with increasing numbers of disturbed adolescents, then we must consider moving to the second available model, that of *the scientist-practitioner* model, which is recommended by the American Psychological Association. Counseling and psychotherapy draw heavily on the concept of the scientist-practitioner as a helping professional who picks from research for a more effective practice and who, in turn, uses information from clinical work to generate new research questions and plans. One needs not personally be a researcher, but regardless of the therapeutic model one selects, one should be competent in and understand the scientific background of the field. There must be a binding relationship between practice and research. The strength and accountability of the counseling profession depends on the effectiveness of the Malaysian experience and this can only be shown through indigenous research and experience.

The future of school counseling in Malaysia thus can be considered to be dependent upon three identifiable avenues, which require major improvement to stimulate growth. They are: (1) new theoretical orientations, such as family therapy, developmental approaches, multicultural approaches, spiritual approaches, testing and assessment, creative counseling, mental health counseling etc.; (2) research; and (3) clinical discoveries made through direct practice.

For school counseling to grow, there is a need to move towards accountability - for example, supporting theory with research and contracting with clients for specific results from counseling of Malaysian students. The scientist-practitioner model offers the best outlook if accountability and growth are to be viewed as essential goals,

The need for Supervisor Training

Another aspect that needs considered as crucial to any training is the clinical/internship supervision. In Malaysia, internship/practicum is a component in the programmes offered by the teacher training colleges and the degree programmes in the public universities. The lecturers themselves carry out most of the supervision. Supervisors are “guardians” of the skill training process – they pass on professional standards of practice and assure that quality services are provided to the public, that is, to insure clients’ safety when clients received services from counselors-in-training; and they also impart lasting effects on a counselor’s development. Thus supervisors play a very important role in the skill-training component of the counselors training programme.

Clinical supervision is thus a very important element in the skill training of school counselors since expertise in counseling is the keystone of the counseling profession. The future of the quality and qualified professional school counselors depend on how adequately trained the supervisors are and how effectively the counselors-in-training have been supervised. However, unlike the United States, there is evidence of limited avenues for receiving supervision training in Malaysia. An examination of the courses offered at the teachers training colleges and public universities showed no supervision training for the counselors-in-training. Two factors have been identified that have restricted the implementation of supervision training courses. First, no comprehensive standardized curriculum for such courses are known. Secondly, supervision has not achieved professional status and counseling supervision has not been established as a professional specialty. In order to ensure that supervision is recognized as a professional specialty, counselor educators need to review this aspect in the training of counselors.

To ensure the quality of the counselors and counselor education in Malaysia, it is clear that counselor educators in the teacher training colleges and universities should do their share by reviewing the curriculum and adding a supervision course to train counselors to become supervisors too. The introduction of certification for supervisors will be a welcome sign in the promotion of counseling supervision training that can also ensure that the counselors-in-training receive professional supervision.

Well-trained supervisors will see that in general, clients will benefit from qualified counselors and this feedback will specifically improve the quality of counselors training and the status of the counseling profession will be assured.

CONCLUSION

News reports have recently given prominence to incidents of gangsterism, vandalism, extortion and assault against fellow pupils and teachers. School counseling has therefore become all the more important for the healthy development of the nation's adolescents.

School counselors in Malaysia are faced with challenges such as lack of professional training, administrative workload and unclear role functions which effect their performance as counselors.

The roles of secondary school counselors are recognized to be important to very important, but the actual performance of these roles is mismatched. There is certainly awareness and recognition of the importance of the functions of the school counselors in meeting the needs of the students but there is also criticism that the school counselors are not performing the essential roles according to their importance. This could be due to the fact that school counselors may lack professional training and may not have the skills then to perform these role functions. School counselors are busy with many tasks and may be neglecting some of these primary roles. There is certainly a need to re-define the role of school counselors and avoid encumbering them with non-essential duties.

The success of school counseling depends entirely on the provision of qualified and well trained full-time counselors in schools. To ensure effectiveness of the school counseling programme, the school counselors training programmes at the teachers training colleges and universities should adopt the scientist-practitioner paradigm, and review the curriculum to conform to the requirement for accreditation and the new paradigm. There must be assurances for an adequate, professional, and competent supervision of the neophyte counselors during training. The roles of these school counselors need to be re-defined and made made accountable. Integrating these elements into current policy for school counseling will enhance the effectiveness of school counseling in Malaysia.

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