

School Guidance and Counseling Services

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ABSTRACT

The function of education is to provide opportunities for each student to reach his/her full potential in the areas of educational, vocational, social, and emotional development. The school leader must ensure that guidance is an integral part of education and that it is centered directly on this function.

In this paper, I examine the aims of guidance and counseling programs, the role of the counselor, major guidance and counseling services, methods of counseling, and evaluation of guidance and counseling programs.

Keywords: school counseling, school guidance

One of the functions of education is to provide opportunities for each student to reach his full potential in the areas of educational, vocational, personal, and emotional development. Guidance is an integral part of education and is centered directly on this function. Guidance and counseling services prepare students to assume increasing responsibility for their decisions and grow in their ability to understand and accept the results of their choices (Gibson, 2008; Kauchak, 2011). The ability to make such intelligent choices is not innate but, like other abilities, must be developed. In this paper, I examine the aims of guidance and counseling programs, the role of the counselor, major guidance and counseling services, methods of counseling, and evaluation of guidance and counseling programs.

Aims of Guidance and Counseling Programs

The aims of the guidance and counseling service are similar to the purposes of education in general—to assist the student in fulfilling her basic physiological needs, understanding herself and acceptance of others, developing associations with peers, balancing between permissiveness and controls in the educational setting, realizing successful achievement, and providing opportunities to gain independence (Heyden,

2011). The purposes of guidance and counseling provide emphasis and strength to the educational program. Some specific aims of the school guidance and counseling program include the following (Gibson, 2009):

To Provide for the Realization of Student Potentialities

To all students, the school offers a wide choice of courses and co-curricular activities. A significant function of education is to help students identify and develop their potentialities. The counselor's role is to assist students to distribute their energies into the many learning opportunities available to them. Every student needs help in planning his major course of study and pattern of co-curricular activities.

To Help Children with Developing Problems

Even those students who have chosen an appropriate educational program for themselves may have problems that require help. A teacher may need to spend from one-fifth to one-third of his time with a few pupils who require a great deal of help, which deprives the rest of the class from the teacher's full attention to their needs. The counselor, by helping these youngsters to resolve their difficulties, frees the classroom teacher to use his time more efficiently.

To Contribute to the Development of the School's Curriculum

Counselors, in working with individual students, know their personal problems and aspirations, their talents and abilities, as well as the social pressures confronting them. Counselors, therefore, can provide data that serve as a basis for curriculum development, and they can help curriculum developers shape courses of study that more accurately reflect the needs of students. Too often, counselors are not included in curriculum development efforts.

To Provide Teachers with Technical Assistance

Pre-service teacher training institutions typically provide very limited experience with the more technical aspects of guidance work. Thus, a need exists in most schools for assistance with guidance and counseling functions essential to the educational program. Specifically, the guidance counselor is qualified to assist teachers with selecting, administering, and interpreting tests; selecting and using cumulative, anecdotal, and other types of records; providing help and suggestions relative to counseling techniques, which teachers can use in counseling their students; and providing leadership in developing and conducting professional development of teachers in guidance functions.

To Contribute to the Mutual Adjustment of Students and the School

Guidance has a responsibility for developing and maintaining a cooperative relationship between students and the school. Teachers and counselors must be cognizant

of students' needs. Students also must make adjustments to the school. They have a responsibility to contribute something to the school. A major contribution of students is that of making appropriate use of the school's resources and working toward accomplishments. Such mutual adjustment of students and school is facilitated by providing suggestions for program improvements, conducting research for educational improvements, contributing to students' adjustment through counseling, and fostering wholesome school-home attitudes.

The Role of the Counselor

The major goals of counseling are to promote personal growth and to prepare students to become motivated workers and responsible citizens. Educators recognize that in addition to intellectual challenges, students encounter personal/social, educational, and career challenges. School guidance and counseling programs need to address these challenges and to promote educational success.

The guidance and counseling program is an integral part of a school's total educational program; it is developmental by design, focusing on needs, interests, and issues related to various stages of student growth. The scope of the developmental guidance and counseling program in today's school include the following components (Cooley, 2010; Coy, 2004):

- Personal/social - In addition to providing guidance services for all students, counselors are expected to do personal and crisis counseling. Problems such as dropping out, substance abuse, suicide, irresponsible sexual behavior, eating disorders, and pregnancy must be addressed.

- Educational - Students must develop skills that will assist them as they learn. The counselor, through classroom guidance activities and individual and group counseling, can assist students in applying effective study skills, setting goals, learning effectively, and gaining test-taking skills. Counselors also may focus on note taking, time management, memory techniques, relaxation techniques, overcoming test anxiety, and developing listening skills.

- Career - Planning for the future, combating career stereotyping, and analyzing skills and interests are some of the goals students must develop in school. Career information must be available to students, and representatives from business and industry must work closely with the school and the counselor in preparing students for the world of work.

Major Guidance and Counseling Services

The primary mission of a school's guidance and counseling program is to provide a broad spectrum of personnel services to the students. These services include student

assessment, the information service, placement and follow-up, and counseling assistance. These four areas should constitute the core of any guidance program and should be organized to facilitate the growth and development of all students from kindergarten through post high school experiences (Erford, 2010; Erford, 2011; Neukrug, 2011).

Assessment

The *assessment* service is designed to collect, analyze, and use a variety of objective and subjective personal, psychological, and social data about each pupil. Its purpose is to help the individual to better understand herself. Conferences with pupils and parents, standardized test scores, academic records, anecdotal records, personal data forms, case studies, and portfolios are included. The school counselor interprets this information to pupils, parents, teachers, administrators, and other professionals. Pupils with special needs and abilities are thus identified.

Information

The *information* service is designed to provide accurate and current information in order that the students may make an intelligent choice of an educational program, an occupation, or a social activity. Essentially, the aim is that with such information students will make better choices and will engage in better planning in and out of the school setting. Students must not only be exposed to such information but must also have an opportunity to react to it in a meaningful way with others.

Placement and Follow-up

The school assists the student in selecting and utilizing opportunities within the school and in the outside labor market. Counselors assist students in making appropriate choices of courses of study and in making transitions from one school level to another, one school to another, and from school to employment. *Placement* thereby involves pupil assessment, informational services, and counseling assistance appropriate to the pupil's choices of school subjects, co-curricular activities, and employment. *Follow-up* is concerned with the development of a systematic plan for maintaining contact with former students. The data obtained from the follow-up studies aid the school in evaluating the school's curricular and guidance programs.

Counseling

The *counseling* service is designed to facilitate self-understanding and development through dyadic or small-group relationships. The aim of such relationships tends to be on personal development and decision making that is based on self-understanding and knowledge of the environment. The counselor assists the student to understand and accept himself thereby clarifying his ideas, perceptions, attitudes, and goals; furnishes personal and environmental information to the pupil, as required, regarding his plans, choices, or problems; and seeks to develop in the student the ability

to cope with/and solve problems and increased competence in making decisions and plans for the future. Counseling is generally accepted as the heart of the guidance service.

Methods of Counseling

Counseling students is one of the basic functions of the school guidance program. Counseling skills are needed by school principals, teachers, teacher-advisors, athletic coaches, and club sponsors as well as by professional counselors. Although counseling of serious emotional problems is best handled by professional counselors, teachers and other faculty personnel find themselves in situations daily where counseling is necessary (Coleman, 2009). Acquaintance with counseling methods and points of view is useful to them.

Counseling methods and points of view have developed from research and theories about how individuals grow and develop, change their behavior, and interact with their environment. These counseling methods are generally classified into three broad types or schools of thought: directive, nondirective, and eclectic (Neukrug, 2011; Parsons, 2009a; Parsons, 2009b; Parsons, 2009c). One of the most fundamental philosophical and theoretical questions that confronts the counselor in the course of her training and professional practice is which method to select in counseling students.

The directive counselor is said to be more interested in the problem than he is in the counselee. This belief is an exaggeration. The student and her problem cannot be separated. All service professions are, by their very nature, concerned with the person to be helped. All teaching, for example, is pupil centered even when a teacher has thirty students in a class. The directive counselor, however, focuses attention on identifying and analyzing the problem and finding an appropriate solution to it. He tends to make use of test data, school records, and reports, and to be more disposed to giving advice and information based on such data. *Directive counseling* is the method most commonly used by counselors in school settings (Coleman, 2009).

Directive counseling seems to be most successful when the counselee is relatively well adjusted, the problem is in an intellectual area, a lack of information constituted the problem, the counselee has little insight into the problem, inner conflict is absent, and the client suffers from anxiety, insecurity, or impatience (Coleman, 2009; Parsons, 2009a).

The nondirective approach is more effective in the treatment of many types of emotional problems. However, many students who come to the counselor have few if any such emotional problems. Many cases merely call for information or some other routine assistance.

Although there are many proponents of nondirective counseling, Carl Rogers is best known, because he started the movement and has given it leadership for more than six decades (Rogers, 1942). The aim of *nondirective counseling* is, according to Rogers, to help the student "to become a better organized person, oriented around healthy goals which [he] has clearly seen and definitely chosen" (p. 227). It aims to provide the student with a united purpose, the courage to meet life and the obstacles that it presents. Consequently, the client takes from his counseling contacts, not necessarily a neat solution for each of his problems, but the ability to meet his problems in a constructive way. Rogers defines effective counseling as a definitely structured, permissive

relationship that allows the client to gain an understanding of himself to a degree that enables him to take positive steps in the light of his new orientation. This hypothesis has a natural corollary, that all the techniques used should aim toward developing this free and permissive relationship, this understanding of self in the counseling and other relationships, and this tendency toward positive, self-initiated action (Fall, 2011; Parsons, 2009b; Rogers, 1942).

Possibly the greatest contribution of the nondirective technique has been its influence in personalizing counseling. Nevertheless, even though this approach may be more effective in certain counseling situations, it is unlikely that this approach will be used in most schools because of the extreme training essential to its application in the counseling process (Coleman, 2009).

Eclectic counseling is the result of selecting concepts from both directive and nondirective approaches. Thus, the eclectic counselor uses whatever approach seems best suited to the situation. Real help given to most students in schools would be located between the highly directive and the eclectic views rather than client centered (Coleman, 2009; Parsons, 2009c).

The effectiveness of the counselor will depend more on the relationship existing between the student and his counselors than on the method she chooses and how well she performs within the method she employs.

Evaluation of Guidance and Counseling Programs

Evaluation consists of making systematic judgments of the relative effectiveness with which goals are attained in relation to specified standards. In evaluating a function like guidance and counseling services, we attempt to determine to what extent the objectives of the service have been attained. The major objectives of guidance are to assist individuals to develop the ability to understand themselves, to solve their own problems, and to make appropriate adjustments to their environment as the situation dictates (Gibson, 2008). Evaluation is the means by which school personnel can better judge the extent to which these objectives are being met (Popham, 2010). The ten characteristics cited following provide criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of a school's guidance and counseling services (Cobia, 2007; Dimmitt, Carey, & Hatch, 2007; Gysbers, 2006).

Pupil Needs

Effective guidance programs are based on pupil needs. Some needs are typical among pupils of a given age; others are specific to certain individuals in particular regions or schools. In effective guidance programs, teachers, counselors, and administrators listen carefully to what pupils say, because they know they are expressing either personal or situational inadequacies.

Cooperation

The staff of effective guidance programs works cooperatively. Cooperation is exhibited in the degree of active interest, mutual help, and collaboration among teachers, counselors, and administrators.

Process and Product

Effective guidance programs are concerned with both process and product. The questions "How well is the program operating?" and "What are the outcomes?" guide the focus in effective guidance programs. The most important outcome of a guidance program is desirable change in the behavior of students, such as improved school attendance, better study habits, better scholastic achievement, fewer scholastic failures, lower dropout rate, better educational planning, and better home-school relations.

Balance

Effective guidance programs balance corrective, preventive, and developmental functions. Personnel in such programs know when to extricate pupils from potentially harmful situations, when to anticipate pupil difficulties, and when to provide assistance necessary to a pupil's maximum development.

Stability

The ability to adjust to loss of personnel without loss of effectiveness is associated with program quality. Stability requires that the system is able to fill vacant positions quickly and satisfactorily.

Flexibility

Effective guidance programs manifest flexibility. Flexibility enables the program to expand or contract as the situation demands without significant loss of effectiveness.

Qualified Counselors

Counselors hold a graduate degree in counseling and are fully certified by the state in which they practice.

Adequate Counselor-Student Ratio

Most accrediting agencies (Southern Association, North Central Association, for example) require a counselor-student ratio of one full-time counselor for 250 to 300 students. A caseload of this magnitude is satisfactory if counselors are to have adequate time to counsel students individually and in small groups, as well as consult with faculty, administrators, and parents.

Physical Facilities

Are the facilities for guidance work sufficient for an effective program? Physical facilities that are well planned and provide for adequate space, privacy, accessibility, and the like are characteristic of quality guidance programs.

Records

Appropriate records are maintained on each student including achievement test scores, information supplied by teachers, administrators, parents, employers, and other professional personnel.

Although many of the aforementioned ten characteristics are useful, they should not be accepted unquestioningly. To some extent each guidance program is unique to its particular setting and consequently would either add other characteristics to the list or stress those cited previously in varying degrees.

Conclusion

Guidance and counseling services play an integral part in the overall student services department of any elementary or secondary school. The aims of guidance and counseling programs in schools are to assist individuals to develop the ability to understand themselves, to solve their own problems, and to make appropriate adjustments to their environment. Major guidance services include student appraisal, information giving, placement and follow-up, and counseling. Broadly conceived, two methods of counseling include directive and nondirective approaches. On the one hand, directive counseling focuses attention on identifying and analyzing the problem and finding an appropriate solution to it using all available data. Nondirective counseling, on the other hand, provides the counselee not with a neat solution, but instead with the ability to meet her problem in a constructive way. Ten criteria are used in evaluating guidance and counseling programs: student needs, cooperation, process and product, balance, stability, flexibility, quality counselors, adequate counselor-student ratio, adequate physical facilities, and appropriate record keeping.

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