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CONSULTING — A POTPOURRI?

ABSTRACT: This paper explores the role of consulting in elementary school counseling. Consulting is defined and its various applications in the elementary school are discussed. In particular, consulting with teachers and parents is reviewed, as well as the efficacy of consulting. A consulting model developed by Caplan in the field of mental health is presented as a comprehensive consulting model which may be of use to elementary school counselors.

A great deal of attention in elementary school counseling has recently been focused on the elementary school counselor as a consultant. Despite the fact that several articles have been written on the subject, the issues involved are still rather confusing. The purpose of this paper is to explain the nature and purpose of consulting and how it emerged as a significant entity in the field of elementary school counseling. An attempt will also be made to review briefly the research literature concerning the major issues in elementary school consulting, particularly with regard to the more recent concerns with its relevance and efficacy. Finally, in the absence of any consensus regarding these issues, an attempt will be made to present a consulting model developed by Caplan (1970) as a possible tool to assist the elementary school counselor in the practice of consulting.

DEFINITION AND NATURE OF CONSULTING

The term consulting is on occasion used synonymously with the word counseling. However, for the purpose of the paper counseling will refer to a direct relationship between a counselor and a client. Consulting will be used to refer to the procedure by which a consultee seeks help in dealing with a client from a third party, a consultant who is the expert.

According to Faust (1968a) and Kaczkowski (1967), elementary school counseling has three main functions, namely, consulting, counseling

and coordinating. Of these functions consulting is the least clear and causes the most confusion (Faust, 1968b). Considerable support for Faust's point of view is to be found in various articles in the *Elementary School Guidance and Counseling* journal where the role of the elementary school counselor as a consultant is frequently discussed. This journal, which was first published in 1967, is the outcome of a viable movement in American schools in the 1960's which established elementary school counseling as a distinct entity from secondary school counseling. Wrenn (Faust, 1968a) believes that while consulting is important in secondary school counseling, it is the major function of elementary school counseling. What, then, are some of the major issues to be resolved, and how significant is consultation in elementary school counseling?

MAJOR ISSUES

The concept of consultation is a major issue in the field of elementary school counseling probably because of its relative recency and changing orientation. A brief attempt will be made to discuss this issue under the following sub-headings: Why Consultation? The Goal of Elementary Counseling; The Importance of Consulting; Consulting with Teachers; Consulting with Parents; The Efficacy of Consulting.

Why Consultation?

One of the most widely used justifications for consultation in the elementary schools is one based on the logic that prevention is superior to treatment. Wrenn (Faust, 1968a) contends that it is far better to create a healthy environment by way of consulting than to give first aid treatment in the form of counseling to children after they have been injured psychologically.

Dinkmeyer (1968), in discussing those writers who state that only counseling has three main functions, namely, consulting, counseling, states that they do so on the basis of logic. Since there are so few counselors available in elementary schools they maintain that only a few children will ever be seen on a remedial basis. The solution which they suggest to this problem is to provide the help to children indirectly by way of consultation.

On the basis of pure logic it is difficult to contradict their position. However, despite the logic of their arguments, the issue is not as clear-cut and straightforward as one is led to believe. Before a school system launches itself into accepting consulting as the only or major role of its elementary school counselors it should study in great detail what consultation is and what possible benefits can accrue from it.

The Goal of Elementary School Counseling

If the emphasis in elementary school counseling has shifted from an essentially remedial, therapeutic approach to one which is primarily developmental and preventive in nature, it is due in part to the in-

fluence of the ACES-ASCA Report (1966) which took the view that the establishment of effective learning conditions for all children should be the primary focus of elementary school counseling. The aim of counseling should be to reach all students, not necessarily those who are deviant or experiencing problems. Since then, support for this point of view has come from Dimick and Huff (1970), Faust (1968b), and Hume (1970). This change in objective now makes it difficult to continue the practice of working directly with individual children with problems. On this basis it seems to me that consulting is far more suitable as a tool to achieve the new objective.

To the practicing elementary school counselor this change in objective means that more counselor time is spent in consultation and less time on individual counseling. Thus, as a consultant the counselor spends more time helping teachers than he does dealing with children directly (Faust, 1968b). Various approaches may be used in consultation in the elementary school but the immediate goal is to develop in teachers a better understanding of human behavior (Dinkmeyer, 1968). Once teachers have this improved understanding they will have more skills which will enable them to create an environment that is conducive to positive human development.

The Importance of Consulting

Although most authorities agree that consulting is an important function of elementary school counselors, there is disagreement as to the extent to which the elementary counselor should be involved in consulting as exemplified by the divergent views of Dinkmeyer (1968) and Faust (1968b). Dinkmeyer (1968) believes that consulting is important. However, to him it is no more important than is individual counseling. Both are important and operate in a symbiotic fashion. By counseling children a counselor understands children better and develops skills necessary for him to function more effectively as a consultant. Faust (1968a), however, takes a somewhat different view. He states very strongly that the major emphasis in elementary school counseling must be developmental in nature and that the elementary school counselor should no longer simply be dealing with children in crisis. Faust believes that until such time as we implement a developmental approach we will continue generation by generation to produce children who are emotionally and educationally crippled. He believes there is a place for dealing with children in crises but this is the responsibility of the community, not the school counselor. The main purpose of the developmental elementary school counselor according to Faust (1968b) is to meet the needs of normal children by helping to develop appropriate learning climates in which they can learn and mature. Consequently, it is anticipated that fewer children will develop emotional or educational problems.

Consulting with Teachers

Both Dinkmeyer and Faust believe that the teacher is the most crucial change agent in a child's life in school. According to Faust

this is because the teacher is in a position to create a climate which is conducive to the optimal development of the child. Dinkmeyer (1968) states that the teacher is important both as a person who creates a climate, and also as one who acts as a first-line counselor to children.

He believes that consulting can improve the competency of teachers as counselors. This, then, permits teachers to handle more cases in their own classrooms, thus cutting down on the number of referrals they make. In addition, by helping teachers gain a better understanding of the affective domain of teaching, they are able to create a classroom environment which is conducive to learning and emotional health. In order to achieve this he stresses the importance of consultation which is in fact collaborative between the teacher and the consultant. Failure to work in collaboration would probably result in the consultant telling the teacher what to do, but the teacher not doing it. Unless teachers are actively involved as equals in the consulting relationship it is unlikely that they will become committed to its objectives and little will be accomplished.

Consulting with Parents

Both Faust and Dinkmeyer give recognition to the great importance that a child's parents have upon his development. However, they differ in terms of the extent to which the parent should be involved in counseling and consulting. Faust (1968a) takes a most clear-cut stand on this issue. He seems very skeptical of the usefulness of consultation with parents. He believes that parent counseling is uneconomical in that few parents attend the scheduled sessions and that there is a limited number of counselor hours available for this kind of endeavor. Dinkmeyer (1968) is less assertive on this issue. He seems to believe that parent consultation has value, but questions the depth to which school personnel should explore family difficulties and the percentage of a counselor's time that should be spent working with parents.

Although Faust (1968a) takes a strong stand on the counselor focusing his attention on his role as a consultant in the school there is no universal acceptance of his view. Wrenn (Faust, 1968a) believes that placing parents in a secondary position is not necessarily valid and is open to debate. Similarly, Krackowski (1967) maintains that the counselor should consult with both teachers and parents in order to assist the child with his social and academic development.

The Efficacy of Consulting

Assertions about what should be done in terms of consulting by the elementary school counselor are fine. However, what evidence is there to suggest that consulting is superior to counseling as a method of behavioral change, or as a method of creating a proper environment for healthy personal development?

While many authors agree that the goal of elementary counseling is to cope more effectively with developmental tasks, there is little consensus on how this can best be accomplished. Wrenn (Faust, 1968a) believes that at present we do not have enough evidence available to

give us a clear answer as to whether elementary school counselors should spend their time consulting with teachers and parents or counseling individual children. Some authors believe that the important work of counseling should be done by counselors working directly with children (Nelson, 1967; Patterson, 1967). On the other hand, Faust (1968b) believes that by consulting with teachers counselors can be of most assistance in improving the classroom learning environment for all children. However, Dinkmeyer (1968) believes these distinctions are unrealistic since the functions of counseling and consulting supplement each other.

A review of articles dealing with the efficacy of consulting has failed to produce strong research evidence which lends support to either position. Hume (1970) found that the best way of helping children was by using a combined approach involving play therapy for children and in-service consultation with their teachers. Furthermore, he found that in-service consultation alone resulted in improvement in the children, but only for a short period of time. Hume concluded that consultation alone did not justify itself as an efficacious intervention technique. Lewis (1970) in a study with third grade pupils found that neither counseling nor consultation was effective in improving sociometric status or the social and personal adjustment of the pupils involved. Kranzler (1969) found no significant difference in the sociometric status of two groups of children, one that received counseling and the other whose teachers received consulting. Marchant (1972), in a study of children exhibiting behavior problems, found no significant difference between those who received counseling and those whose teachers received consultation. Lewis (1970) found no significant difference between teacher perceptions of two groups of elementary students, one that received consulting and the other that received counseling. Thus, from a research point of view, little evidence is present to support the superiority of consulting as compared to counseling as a method of behavior change.

Marchant (1972) and Kranzler (1969) suggest that since there is no significant difference between the efficacy of counseling as compared to consulting, consulting should be used rather than counseling as it is more efficient and can reach more people. As a result, Caplan's consulting model deserves special consideration because of its practical implications in dealing with this subject of consultation. A brief outline of this model is now presented.

CAPLAN'S CONSULTING MODEL

The discussion of consulting to this point has outlined some of the major issues surrounding its use in elementary school counseling. However, no comprehensive approach to consultation has been presented. The author believes that Caplan has developed a comprehensive and viable model for consulting. The model is presented here in brief for consideration as a tool to be used by consultants in elementary school counseling. Although this model was developed in the field of mental health consultation, the writer believes it has applicability to

elementary school consulting. Readers interested in exploring Caplan's model in greater detail should read Caplan's *The Theory and Practice of Mental Health Consultation* (1970).

Caplan believes that there is a real need for consultation in the area of mental health, as the capacity of our therapists to provide service is far less than the demand for their service in our society. He estimates that only ten to twenty percent of those who are in need of psychiatric assistance receive the care they need. In view of this situation Caplan believes that we must develop a new model of mental health therapy, one that is based on consultation and that is preventive or developmental in nature.

The experiences which Caplan had at the Lasker Mental Hygiene and Child Guidance Center of Hadasah in Jerusalem, Israel, had a great deal of influence on the consultation model which he developed. In Israel he worked with a group of psychologists to whom children were referred by school personnel. Their experience was similar to that of many pupil personnel services and guidance centers in Canada, in that the volume of referrals soon outstripped the capacity of the staff to deal with them. In order to cope with the large number of referrals Caplan and his co-workers discontinued diagnostic work and psychotherapy with the child who was referred. Instead they met with his teacher and suggested alternate management techniques. Soon they found that much of their consulting was not about crisis situations, but that they were working more and more in a preventive role. At all times during consultation the focus was on the child's problems and no mention was ever directly made of personal difficulties which the consultee, in this case the teacher, might have had. When Caplan left Israel the orientation of this program was changed and psychotherapy was given to those consultees who were disturbed. Shortly thereafter much hostility and antagonism developed between the consultees and the consultants. Relationships became so strained that it was necessary to discontinue the program. Caplan believes that this occurred because the consultees were placed in an inferior position to the consultants.

Unlike many authors on elementary counseling. Caplan uses a restricted definition of consultation. To him consultation refers to an interaction between two professional people, one of whom is an expert, the consultant, and the other who is seeking help, the consultee. Thus, like Faust, he sees the consultant as consulting not with parents, but only with professional personnel such as teachers.

The relationship between the consultant and the consultee is an equalitarian one with an atmosphere of mutual trust. The consultant can exercise no coercion over the consultee. The consultee is free to accept or reject the advice of the consultant. However, if the consultee rejects the advice of the consultant, the consultant cannot be held liable for the outcome.

In consultation the purpose is not simply to help the consultee with a specific problem of the moment. It is designed to provide the consultee with resources which will permit him to deal with other problems with other clients in the long run.

Consultation is not psychotherapy. The consultee is there to seek help for his client not for his own personal problems. The consultant is to deal with the presenting problem of the client and not to intrude in the personal life of the consultee. This does not deny that the consultee may not have personal difficulties, but that consultation is not the place to handle them. Nor does it deny that the consultant may not be aware of the consultee's problem. If a consultee has personal problems he should be referred to another psychotherapist. A consultant who offers psychotherapy to his consultee destroys the equalitarian relationship and, thus, consultation will not be able to progress. Consultants must maintain this role and actively discourage those consultees who attempt to place them in a therapist-client relationship. The goal of consulting is not to improve the consultee's sense of well-being, but rather to improve his job performance. The cornerstone of consultation, as Caplan sees it, is based on the coordinated independence of the two participants. Anything which interferes with the equality or collegiality of their relationship will destroy the effectiveness of the consultation.

As a consequence of several years of consultation experience Caplan found that there are generally four types of consultations:

1. Client-Centered Case Consultation

The problem here is that the consultee does not know how to deal with certain client problems. The consultant assists him by helping him diagnose the problems and by suggesting a way of resolving them.

2. Consultee-Centered Case Consultation

The problem here is also with a particular client. However, the focus is on helping the consultee to understand and overcome the difficulties he is experiencing with a particular case. In time this results in the consultee being educated in a series of definite areas of consultation.

3. Program-Centered Administrative Consultation

The consultation here aims at solving a specific administrative problem surrounding a new or existing program.

4. Consultee-Centered Administrative Consultation

The goal is to educate the consultee so that he can handle future organizational or program problems.

These categories are of value in that they help the consultant clarify his task. Clarification of the task in turn permits him to be more precise in measuring whether or not he has achieved his goals.

Various techniques have been used by Caplan and his associates aimed at improving the objectivity of the observations and conclusions at which the consultees arrive. Three of these techniques are: specific theme interference reduction, unlinking, and support reassurance. Since investigation of techniques is not the basic purpose of this paper, no detailed discussion of them will be made. However, of these three approaches, only specific theme interference seemed to significantly improve the objectivity of the consultee. Specific theme inter-

ference consists of discovering and correcting misconceptions and misperceptions by the consultee about the client.

In summary, Caplan views consulting as a technique by which a client improves as the result of interacting with a consultee who has received assistance from a consultant. This approach has two major advantages, one being that a maximum number of clients can be helped by a specialist and the other that the expertise developed by the consultee is spread out as grass roots level to form a network of preventive and developmental mental health workers.

CONCLUSION

Due to the confusion about consulting in elementary school counseling, certain issues need to be recognized before an individual counselor gets involved in consulting. He must, first of all, define what consulting is in operational terms. He must spell out the roles of the persons involved, that is, the consultant, the consultee, and the client. He must define his objectives and the specific methods of consulting which he will use to attain these objectives. Caplan's model seems to provide a comprehensive framework for achieving these goals. It seems to me that Caplan deals with consulting in a comprehensive manner, thus, providing those interested in consulting with a model which has considerable practical significance.

RESUME: Cet article traite du rôle de la consultation au niveau primaire. On définit la consultation et on discute de ses diverses applications à ce niveau. Plus particulièrement, on fait une revue de la consultation et de son efficacité auprès des instituteurs et des parents. Un modèle de consultation développé par Caplan dans le domaine de la santé mentale est présenté comme pouvant être d'une certaine utilité pour les conseillers scolaires au niveau primaire.

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