

## DELIVERY OF COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES IN A FACULTY OF EDUCATION\*

A.P. THOMPSON, R.A. YOUNG, A. KEFFER, and R. WIGMORE  
*The University of Western Ontario*

### Abstract

Professional faculties within the university community are ideal settings for preventative, outreach counselling. Efforts by a university counselling center to provide psychological services to a faculty of education are described. This account deals with issues such as role definition, in-service training, publicity and mode of delivery (individual, group, psychological education). The difficulties of programme evaluation and psychological consultation are also discussed.

### Résumé

Les facultés professionnelles universitaires offrent un cadre idéal pour la consultation préventive ayant une vaste sphère d'application. On décrit les efforts d'un centre de consultation universitaire pour offrir des services psychologiques à une faculté de pédagogie. Cette description touche des sujets tels que la définition des rôles, le recyclage, la publicité et le genre d'intervention: consultation individuelle ou en groupe, et l'éducation psychologique. On discute aussi les difficultés inhérentes à l'évaluation d'un tel programme et de la consultation psychologique.

Guidance counsellors at all levels are facing varied pressures to demonstrate the validity of their contribution to the educational experience. This is particularly true at the university level. Niblack (1973) has warned that if Canadian student services personnel do not move, they may wake up one day to find their positions out of existence or modified so drastically that professional training will be irrelevant. But, in what direction should counsellors move? For some time now the plea for counsellors to move away from direct counselling service, towards indirect counselling service (Ivey, 1973; Miller, 1969; Mosher & Sprinthall, 1971; Oetting, 1967; Snow & Newton, 1976; Warnath, 1971, 1973) has been made.

The essence of indirect counselling is for counsellors to take services to students rather than waiting for students to find their way to the counselling centre. The merits of such a proactive model are that it is preventative (i.e., attempts to

deal with student problems and concerns before they become crises) and highly visible.

If university counsellors adopt the indirect model in principle, how can they practically implement it? We feel that counsellors can begin by getting out of their offices and taking their services to professional faculties. Professional faculties are ideal populations for several reasons. First, professional faculties are highly competitive and place many academic pressures on their students. For this reason, the problem of coping is of concern to most students. Secondly, professional faculties are not only in the business of educating students, but of promoting the adoption of professional roles and identities. Consequently, students experience all of the difficulties inherent in the process of blending personal and vocational styles. Thirdly, students in professional faculties may be the least likely to seek counselling services offered via the direct model because of the stigma associated with seeking help. Fourthly, students graduating from professional activities will, over the course of their careers, occupy positions of considerable social influence. Counsellors contributing to the personal development of these students are likely to find their efforts passed on to a much larger population. This kind of payoff offers a golden opportunity to provide truly preventative counselling service. Finally, professional faculties are highly visible, and hence the activities of counsellors in these faculties will also be highly

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1. Indirect Service is most clearly defined by what it is not — any service activity other than direct patient or client care. It is a generic term that includes a variety of more specific labels such as "educative", "developmental", "preventative", "proactive", and "outreach". This leaves the equally generic term "direct service" to cover direct clinical care activities and include such labels as "therapeutic" or "curative", "reactive" and "traditional".

visible. This kind of profile can help counsellors in their accountability with administration.

With the above philosophy in mind, the student counselling centre at the University of Western Ontario has initiated indirect counselling programs in some of its professional faculties. One of the faculties most cooperative in accepting this move was the Faculty of Education. The Faculty of Education is composed of approximately 100 faculty persons and is responsible for providing primary and secondary teacher training to approximately 1,000 students each year. As an indication of their commitment to the idea of indirect service, the administration of the Faculty of Education provided some funding to support the program. This funding allowed for the hiring of two, part-time counselling interns from the Masters of Education in Guidance program within the Faculty. These interns were under the supervision of a director from the University Counselling Centre who was responsible for the program. In addition to this staff complement, a faculty member from Education provided consultative services. The following is an account of some of the difficulties encountered in providing indirect counselling services to a Faculty of Education, and our preliminary attempts at meeting these difficulties.

#### ROLE DEFINITION

As university counselling services develop models which extend their programs to professional faculties, some unique problems are raised. One of these problems revolves around the relationship of the new program to previously provided services. In Faculties of Education, for example, faculty members see themselves as more than teachers. They serve a socializing function which assists the pre-service teacher adapt to the teaching profession. This function is accomplished by establishing personal contact with pre-service teachers; helping them in their practice teaching, job location, interviews for employment, and in providing information about teachers' unions, and career advancement in the education profession through upgrading and certification programs.

Faced with the perception that such a valued function may be usurped by the extension of counselling services into a professional faculty, the faculty members may react in a somewhat less than welcoming fashion. This point is made with the realization that most faculty members recognize the real limitations of their time and ability to effectively intervene in the actual needs of students.

It is important, then, as counselling services are extended in unique ways to professional faculties such as a Faculty of Education that counsellors identify those areas of proposed programs which

overlap with previously existing services, even though such services may not be explicitly stated nor publicized. While counsellors in outreach services may seek to complement rather than replace existing services from other personnel, that attitude and message is profitably conveyed in the early development of programs.

In the case of the particular counselling service which is being described in this article, its role was proposed as extending and offering a greater professional dimension to existing services. It was not the purpose of these counselling services to act as socialization agents for pre-service teachers.

Included among the ways in which we attempted to define our role within the Faculty of Education as a complementary one to the professional faculty was through meetings with Faculty of Education personnel who had provided student services. In addition, the counselling staff approached the whole project with the dimension of needs assessment of the students. Several informal needs assessment with faculty and students were conducted.

#### IN-SERVICE TRAINING

Although the skills that counsellors have are relevant to various settings; once counsellors decide to serve a specific setting, they cannot ignore the context of that setting. In order to meet the specific needs of Faculty of Education students, it was necessary for the counsellors to acquire an experience base pertinent to the faculty. This involved in-service professional development in the following areas: assessment of student needs through in-class discussion, understanding of Faculty of Education requirements and Ministry of Education certification procedures, identifying and acquiring standardized psychological assessment instruments appropriate for this population, acquiring expertise in relevant counselling skills (e.g., study skills and time management), and planning appropriate group procedures.

#### PUBLICITY

One of the largest problems facing the offering of counselling services in a new context is that of becoming visible. This was especially crucial in a Faculty of Education which is entirely composed of students in a one-year consecutive program, that is, a one-year program taken after the first undergraduate degree. Moreover, the academic phase of the program, which is 20-weeks in college, is very condensed leaving only limited amounts of student time available for other activities. It is essential that students find out early in the academic year that counselling services are available. In addition, efforts to remind students of counselling programs need to continue through the year.

A concerted effort in public relations was made during the initial phase of the project. One innovative approach to the issue of publicity was to meet with groups of students and faculty to inform them about the service, but also to conduct informal needs assessment and to involve faculty and students in "grass-roots" input into the program. For example, a discussion with key personnel who were likely to be student contact points, e.g., associate deans, registrars, practice teaching department personnel, resulted in subsequent referrals from these areas. More importantly, the many personal contacts resulted in a mood of acceptance and openness toward the counselling staff. Both of these results were crucial to the success of our program.

### INDIVIDUAL COUNSELLING

A commitment to offer counselling services in a professional faculty, even though an outreach model, raises the expectation among the population served that individual counselling will be available. Such an expectation is not unwarranted. The usual concerns which are brought to individual counselling by a young adult population would be represented in this population. In addition, for some students, personal and professional issues particular to their status as pre-service teachers were considered serious enough to warrant individual counselling. The following examples typify some unique concerns dealt with in individual counselling:

A male student experiencing insomnia and nausea as a result of his anxious anticipation of an upcoming practice teaching session. The concern revolved around self-concept.

A female student presenting study difficulties, especially with the preparation workload during practice teaching. The difficulty was compounded by childcare responsibilities and an ensuing divorce.

One difficulty which was experienced by the counselling staff was the number of clients who used individual counselling for seeking information about entry into the Faculty of Education or securing a teaching job. Both of these issues are serious ones for students when, in the instance of this Faculty of Education, approximately 33% of applicants are admitted and approximately 50% of graduates are expected to obtain teaching positions. A great many students presented themselves for individual counselling seeking information about either or both of these issues. While the counselling staff recognized the importance of these issues to the students involved, they felt that in many cases more effective procedures for conveying information on these topics would have been suitable.

### GROUP COUNSELLING

Group counselling is a useful model for the delivery of counselling services within a

professional faculty because of its time efficiency as well as providing and responding to the common experience base of the clients. In addition, the content of group counselling can be tailored to meet the specific needs of the population being served.

The limited time commitment which could be made by students and the continual change from in-college to practice teaching phases of the program constrained the kinds of group interventions which could be made. After experimenting with various numbers of sessions and schedules, the counselling staff concluded in favour of short-term limited interventions, for example, a 3 session, 2 hour group offered over a period of ten days.

It was possible to offer group counselling topics which were particularly relevant to the needs of the students. The following titles typify the content of various workshops which were offered: "Me: A Teacher?", "Make Your Time Your Own: A Time-Scheduling Workshop", "Study Skills Workshop", "Study Skills Workshop: Learn How To Help Your Students Study", "Communication Skills Workshop" and "Disciplines In The Classroom".

### PSYCHOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Probably the most effective single way in which a counselling program can operate within a professional faculty, particularly a Faculty of Education, is through what can be broadly termed psychological education. In order to promote growth in pre-service teachers, the counselling staff found it necessary to offer direct interventions in the teacher education program. The reasons for such a decision were twofold: firstly, the time constraints which have been discussed earlier did not permit the use of alternate programs; secondly, and more importantly, the counselling staff could make relevant contributions to the teacher education curriculum which were not being otherwise offered. The efforts of the counselling staff in this direction were tentative at first. The plan involved informally assessing student needs, brainstorming to determine what services might meet the needs, sharing preparation workload among the staff to increase efficiency, and implementing the programs. Some examples of direct intervention in the teacher curriculum were: programs on feedback and evaluation related to practice teaching; issues pertaining to classroom discipline and control; strength bombardment on how one appeared to others; the functioning of counselling in schools; communication skills with early childhood educators.

Some of the other programs which were implemented, included a workshop on writing resumes and letters of application, and the

production and distribution of videotapes on role-played job interviews.

### EVALUATION

Counsellors providing psychological services to professional faculties will have to place a higher priority on evaluation than is customarily assigned to this activity within the direct clinical care model. In other words, no longer can counsellors hide behind the respectability of their case loads. Moreover, evaluative efforts will have to be readily interpretable to administration, particularly if there is any financial commitment on the part of professional faculties to the counselling programs. Another reason for evaluation is to assess the needs of students in professional faculties. The needs of these unique student populations are likely to be different from the concerns that counsellors are accustomed to dealing with in the general student body. Consequently, such feedback is essential when planning outreach services.

In the Faculty of Education at the University of Western Ontario one of our attempts at evaluation was to develop a brief survey-type questionnaire which was administered to 190 students within the faculty. The objectives of the questionnaire were:

- (a) to determine the visibility of the counselling staff (i.e., were students aware that counselling and psychological services were available).
- (b) to get some idea of the communication channels among students (i.e., how did students become aware of services).
- (c) to assess the strength of factors which might inhibit students from making use of counselling services.
- (d) to assess student needs (i.e., what services and programs would students like to see offered).

The value of such a survey is exemplified by responses to a question which asked students to rate factors which would deter them from making use of counselling services. Fifty percent of the responses indicated that students felt they had enough other resources to help them, or felt they had too much work to find time for counselling services. This result suggests to us that students can manage to get by on their own and that they do not place a high priority on personal development. The implication for providing service seems to be that brief, time-limited interventions which fit into student routines will be the most successful. We plan, for example, to act as substitute teachers, whenever faculty are absent, and provide brief instructional modules in personal development.

### CONCLUSION

Through efforts, such as those described above, counselling services have been provided to the Faculty of Education at the University of Western Ontario via an indirect service model. Our final report, which provides a detailed account of activities during the eight month academic year, indicates that 81% of the one thousand students enrolled in the Faculty were aware of the availability of counselling and psychological services. Moreover, approximately one-third of these students and another 150 potential future students had some direct contact with our counsellors (e.g., individual counselling, group counselling, psychological education). These experiences have convinced us of the viability of taking counselling services to professional faculties. However, we have also become acutely aware that to succeed in these endeavours counsellors will have to develop a much wider competency base than the rather narrow set of skills which go along with traditional, direct, one-to-one counselling. Essentially, counsellors will have to develop their skills as psychological consultants if they are to have any success with the indirect service model.

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