

SCHOOL BASED COUNSELLOR TRAINING: AN EVOLVING MODEL

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Abstract

The development of a counsellor training centre based in a junior secondary school and operated jointly by the University of British Columbia and the Richmond School Board is described. An evaluation of the centre's operation is made in terms of issues in school counselling, issues related to counsellor education, and the training experiences offered.

Résumé

Cet article traite de l'opération d'un centre de formation universitaire dans un milieu scolaire sous la direction conjointe du département de la formation des conseillers d'une université et d'un district scolaire. Les activités du centre depuis deux ans sont décrites du point de vue (a) des questions courantes touchant le rôle du conseiller en orientation scolaire, et (b) des défis contemporains envisagés par ceux responsables de la formation des conseillers. Le centre est reconnu comme étant une ressource précieuse permettant aux conseillers étudiants d'avoir des expériences pratiques en orientation, en consultation et en coordination par le truchement de clients ayant des besoins correctifs et en développement. Le centre facilite aussi le développement et l'implantation de programmes d'éducation en psychologie dans un milieu scolaire. La vaste gamme de moyens que présentent le centre est une importante contribution au programme de la formation des conseillers.

Two important challenges currently facing counsellor educators involve: (a) the need to keep abreast of the changing demands placed on the people we train, and (b) the ongoing attempt to assist students to translate sound academic and professional educational experiences into effective job performance. The task implied by the first challenge involves creating a mechanism which can monitor the changes and allow for faculty to engage in "renewal experiences" (Sweeney, 1979, p. 184) to facilitate updating competencies related to training students. The task implied by the second challenge involves the development of a delivery system to effect a smooth transition from the acquisition of basic academic knowledge and clinical skills to their creative application in a variety of settings. An attempt to address both of the challenges resulted in the development of a counsellor training centre based in a junior secondary school (Grades 8 to 10) and operated jointly by the University of British Columbia and the Richmond, B.C. School Board. It is the purpose of this article to describe the operation of the centre and to reflect upon ways it can be used in addressing the updating and transition issues facing counsellor education departments.

The Centre

The centre developed as a result of an agreement between the University of British Co-

lumbia and the Richmond School Board. The agreement involved a commitment on the part of the school board to provide a physical facility and a secretary, and on the part of the university to provide through their training activities a counselling and guidance service to the schools and community of Richmond. The creation of the centre facilitated the development of a school based training program for the University and created a potential resource to existing counselling services for the school district.

Physical Facility

The centre was constructed from three classrooms. It contains three counselling rooms, a large group room, and a resource room. All of the counselling rooms and the group room allow one way supervision from observation rooms. The supervision may be direct or through the use of videotapes. The resource room contains a growing library of counselling and guidance related books, pamphlets, and periodicals, as well as video and audio tapes which are available to University students and faculty and to district counsellors and teachers.

The centre also contains three offices which house the counsellors for the school in which the centre is located. The centre receptionist receives appointments and phone calls for both University and school counsellors.

The Staff

The centre is coordinated by a U.B.C. faculty member whose activities include acquainting relevant Richmond school and community members with the existence and capabilities of the centre. The coordinator also acts as a liaison between faculty supervisors and people referring clients. Counselling in the centre is conducted by student counsellors enrolled in diploma, masters, and doctoral programs in the Department of Counselling Psychology at The University of British Columbia. Students, in groups of five, spend one day per week from September to April in the centre under the supervision of a faculty member.

Operation of the Centre

The existence of the centre has created the possibility of (a) involving student counsellors in activities directly related to the demands of positions that they may ultimately occupy, and (b) creating experiences which have integrity with respect to the body of knowledge inherent in a training program in counselling psychology. In evaluating the effectiveness of the centre from both of these perspectives, it would seem important to view its activities in the light of current role issues in school counselling and the concomitant challenges facing counsellor educators.

Issues in School Counselling

The 1970's have been characterized as the decade of accountability (Sweeney, 1979). The concept of accountability of service in school counselling has undoubtedly played a part in activities focused on what counsellors do and how well they do it. In British Columbia these concerns have evidenced themselves in several ways, two of which are briefs developed by the B.C. School Counsellors' Association related to counsellor role (Borgen, Klassen, Meachin, Moore, Penneff, & Willingdon, 1978) and training (Atwell, Edwards, Forshaw, Gilchrist, Guest, Manduca, & Saunders, 1978). As well, a Ministry of Education Task Force has been created to investigate the role of counsellors in the implementation of pupil personnel services. What seems to be emerging from these and other efforts (Allan, 1976, Amundson, 1978) related to counsellor function centres on counsellors involving themselves in assisting students in dealing with educational, career, and personal issues on remedial, preventive, and developmental levels. The variety of skills implied by this range of services include facility in (a) one-to-one and group counselling, (b) consulting with parents, teachers, administrators, and community agencies, and (c) developing and teaching psychological education programs. There seems to be a growing awareness on the part of practicing counsellors that these skills combined with the range of

information which their execution would imply pose an awesome ongoing challenge.

Issues Related to Counsellor Education

Counsellor educators find themselves in the position of combining content areas in counselling psychology, educational learning theory, and developmental psychology and then applying these basic orientations in an integrated fashion to the functions of a counsellor within a school setting. The basic challenge thus becomes one of staying abreast of changes in both academic and professional areas so that technologies taught may continue to match the broad realm of current and anticipated job requirements.

It is in the area of keeping in touch with current and changing role issues for counsellors that the centre has made one of its most significant contributions. The weekly encounter with counsellors, teachers, and administrators who refer students and the consulting needed to implement a broad range of psychological education programs often make extremely obvious the variety of skills needed as well as the distance which must be covered by student counsellors in achieving those skills. The centre facilitates the opportunity and the challenge for faculty to help students integrate their academic and clinical skills and apply them to a variety of "on line" demands in realistic professional contexts.

Training Experiences Offered

Between September, 1977, and June, 1979, the centre received referrals regarding clients 7 to 50 years of age presenting a variety of concerns and issues (see Table 1). Although the main thrust of activities has centred on clients at the Junior High School level, ages 12 to 16, student counsellors within each team have been able to put concerns of this age group in perspective by either counselling or viewing tapes of classmates counselling older and younger clients.

Student counsellor involvement with individual clients varied from one-to-one self referral counselling to approaches characterized by "flexible identification of the client" involving counselling the person referred and consulting/counselling with referral sources and significant others. Further, the counselling involved challenges ranging from those represented by clients presenting crisis concerns to those characterized by clients who came with broad career/lifestyle decision concerns.

Group/Classroom Involvements

Much of the training has focused on addressing developmental concerns of clients and has involved either (a) working with groups formed out of in-

Table 1
Clients at the Counselling Centre 1977-79

	Grade			Presenting Issues			
	1 - 7	8 - 10	11 - 12	Adult	Career	Educational	Personal
Percentage	5	67	6	22	62	16	22

interest in an area, or (b) teaching whole classes. Interest group discussions have involved such topics as: developing communication skills, finding a job, career exploration, career/lifestyle decision-making, and family interrelationship issues. These have been offered at junior and secondary schools in the Richmond School District. As well, parenting groups have been offered to parents of elementary school age and adolescent children.

Most classroom programs which have been developed and implemented have occurred at the junior secondary level. These have included: (a) a transition to the junior high school program involving Grade 8 students' parents, elementary and secondary school teachers, school counsellors, and school administrators. The classroom involvement portion of the program involved two 5-hour modular psychological education programs, the first focusing on self-concept and the second involving the development of decision-making skills; (b) a 16-hour Grade 10 vocational program which was implemented in four modules of four hours each; (c) programs related to career education, self-concept issues, and communication skill development offered to classes of junior secondary students with identified academic and/or emotional difficulties.

The development of these classroom programs required the U.B.C. student counsellors to integrate and apply the knowledge provided by other courses in the program to specific issues for specific age levels of students. The implementation phase involved student counsellors and faculty in communicating and negotiating with teachers regarding times when it would be convenient for the programs to be implemented in classrooms. In addition, it provided the opportunity to explain to the teachers involved the goals of the program and the ways that the content related to those goals. At the conclusion of most psychological education programs information exchange sessions were held with the teachers in an attempt to evaluate program effectiveness. In the course of these discussions the student counsellors and supervisors often assumed the role of consultant/teachers with the teachers involved. These occasions seemed to result in mutual learning — the teacher sharing knowledge regarding the program as a learning package and the U.B.C. personnel providing input

regarding the importance of the content with respect to various developmental issues of adolescents.

Inservice Involvement

Faculty have been involved in professional day presentations in individual schools in the district and in contributing to district wide professional development activities for counsellors and teachers. Some of these have involved U.B.C. student counsellors in the planning and implementation of the workshops. The goal in promoting this involvement is that it hopefully models the role of a counsellor as sharing special knowledge with other staff members in formal ways as well as through on-going consultation.

Evaluation of Progress

The development of the counselling centre has created the potential for supervising students in counselling, consulting, and coordinating activities (Dinkmeyer & Carlson, 1975) on remedial, preventive, and developmental levels. An examination of the activities actually carried out from 1977 to 1979 suggests that attempts have been made to utilize the resource represented by the centre in (a) counselling individuals and groups, and (b) developing and implementing developmental psychological education programs. These activities have created the opportunity for student counsellors to learn the process of working with identified clients as well as providing experience in working with the school environment to effect change or facilitate program implementation. The overall result to date is that the training experiences which student counsellors receive reflect several facets of the demands faced by school counsellors functioning in secondary schools.

A variety of challenges remain in making creative use of the resources offered by the centre. The experiences developed to this point have challenged both student counsellors and faculty with the reality of the need to develop traditional counselling skills along with the need to develop strategies to have the application of these skills accepted within a school context. Another group of skills, which could be characterized as "impacting a school environment" require more attention. It is

the development of these approaches which will probably represent one of the most valuable training and service components of the centre — the training of counsellors in the area of assisting their schools in developing favourable learning environments for students.

Conclusion

At this point in its development the centre would seem to make a valuable contribution in two broad areas: (a) It is based in a school system, and as such, changing demands placed upon it reflect changes in foci of school counsellors on the job. (b) It allows faculty to train students in process and implementation skills on remedial, preventive, and development of levels in a realistic context. In addition, it facilitates input from school personnel regarding the nature of experiences in which student counsellors become involved as well as feedback regarding the effectiveness of services provided. The dialogue which ensues reflected a third broad benefit of the school based centre. It can facilitate cooperative relationships between existing professional counsellors and a counsellor education

department in the promotion of more effective counsellor education. The advantages represented by the three areas recommend the use of a field based centre as a viable component within counsellor education programs.

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