

Meeting Counselor Challenges as Consultant in a School-Community Partnership Program

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The paper discusses some of the challenges that counselors face in the next century as their clientele becomes increasingly culturally diverse. In this light, the training and characteristics required of future counselors are then discussed, with particular emphasis on the development of managerial and consultant skills for working with diverse groups of people.

I see some potentially profound changes on the horizon by the 21st century in the year 2000. The changes I see by that time are increased immigration and more refugees knocking loudly at our doors. Those refugees (more than 12 million worldwide) and immigrants will probably continue to come mainly from Asia and Latin America and other countries where there is much strife and political turmoil. In a decade, the population institute estimated that the world population will increase by one billion people. By the year 2000, the world population could reach 6.2 billion. Birth rates have fallen in the more industrial and wealthier countries with rapid population growth in the economically poorer countries. By the year 2000, we will even become more technologically oriented. It will be more difficult to turn away immigrants as the economic

pressures mount, in particular, the refugees/immigrants in the US and Canada. What are the implications of this state of affairs for counselors in the year 2000?

To be a competent intercultural counselor in the year 2000 will require a specific set of skills and strategies when dealing with different members of immigrant groups. The culturally encapsulated counselor is inappropriate for meeting the needs of our minority students. This kind of counselor, like the dinosaur, will become obsolete and a dying breed by the year 2000. In fact, the issue of whether or not it is lawful for culturally encapsulated counselors to counsel our minority students may become a hotly debated issue.

Certainly, if guidance counselors of today take a global outlook and adopt a futuristic approach, then the chances are that they will be better prepared to meet the challenges in the year 2000. Both the counselors and the immigrants are in the same boat. The children of these immigrants and refugees have no choice of country or classroom they would be educated in. It was the decision of their parents. Counselors see the face of their classroom and client population changing overnight. This was a decision made by the government through its immigration policies, and yet the government provides little warning for the things to come as well as little or no funds for counselor training. That is why the counselor must take on a futuristic vision of what their classroom will be like in the year 2000 and prepare themselves to cope with the increasingly global composition of their classroom. They must view these minority students in a positive light. If they feel inadequate because of lack of training, then they must demand time for more training opportunities.

The question is: Are there enough training opportunities to meet the needs of the guidance counselors?

One of the best training grounds for learning is in the school and from the students themselves. The multicultural and multiracial students and their families can provide important information about their educational systems, culture, and nonverbal behaviors that are

reinforcing or negative. In a way, these students and their families/clients can be like teachers and be a valuable resource.

The guidance counselors for the year 2000 must develop certain fluencies to meet the needs of their immigrants and refugee students. These fluencies and competencies go beyond verbal fluency. The other fluencies of equal or even more importance on the effective dimensions are the development of nonverbal, cultural, and universal fluencies. It is expected that these counselors are not only fluent in their native language but also fluent in their own culture.

It is important to be culturally and nonverbally fluent because these are important resources of misunderstanding and miscommunication in the total communication process. Both culture and nonverbal communication often operate at the unconscious level and are implicit and unstated.

The guidance counselors must become aware of the cultural and nonverbal fluencies that operate in the classroom and counseling offices and attempt to become more fluent in these areas. It is important to understand that verbal behavior is intertwined with nonverbal behavior and culture mediates the two.

Oftentimes, counselors complain that they can't possibly learn about all the cultures because they are so many.

Fortunately, there are universals like facial expressions which express the basic emotions. Of course there are display rules for these emotions that determine when and to whom these emotions can be displayed to. But people of all cultures display and recognize these fundamental emotions such as happiness, sadness, anger. There is also evidence at the biological nonverbal and cultural levels that there is a universal drive to be in synchrony, harmony, and congruence with our environment and with significant others. The universal disposition can be brought out in condition where synchrony and harmony are encouraged, where counselors and client positively value each other.

In embarking in the 21st century, we need a new kind of guidance counselor. One that is culturally, nonverbally, linguistically, and universally fluent with a high fluency potential. If this is achieved, then psychological conflicts will be manageable and academic progress will improve.

What then are the elements of education of guidance counselors as professional people? The common elements of education of professional people are managerial skills that are connected with the organization of his work, articulateness, familiarity with the history and social context of one's specialized field, a knowledge of two major languages, and readiness to continue to study one's own.

Today, the importance of team work is growing even among scholars in academe. We all work for organizations and are members of communities. The training of specialists such as guidance counselors is well summed up by Antonio Gramsci.

The form of existence of the new intellectual can no longer consist of rhetoric, the outside and momentary stimulation of sentiments and passions, but of active participation in practical life as a creative and planning person—a permanent persuader. He is not merely an orator standing above the abstract, mathematical spirit he proceeds from the technique of work to the technique of scholarship and to the humanistic approach without which a person remains a mere specialist and does not become a leader.

Counselors, as consultants of the future, are expected to perform multiple roles. These roles are almost parallel to the ones counselors used to play in the counseling process.

Basically, the consulting process is similar to the counseling process where any form of providing help on the content, process, or structure of a task or series of tasks is extended to the client but where the consultant is not actually responsible for doing the task itself but merely helps those who are responsible.

What are these multiple roles both in a directive and nondirective continuum? They are as follows:

- 1. reflector;**
- 2. process specialist;**
- 3. fact-finder;**
- 4. alternative identifier;**
- 5. collaborator in problem solving;**
- 6. trainor/educator;**
- 7. technical expert; and**
- 8. advocate.**

Process wise, we can see the relevance of the different counseling approaches and strategies used in helping a client in the abovementioned consultant's multiple roles. In the process, the consultant exhibits professional integrity at work, uses assertive persuasion, develops common vision, uses participation and trust, as well as rewards and punishment.

Ethically, the consultant makes his competence fully available to the client and his objective is to find the best possible solution in the client's interest. Confidentiality is a generally accepted principle of all work done.

The phases of the consulting process parallel those of the counseling process. This is demonstrated below.

Consulting	Counseling
1. entry	- rapport building and problem identification
2. diagnosis	- fact-finding and problem exploration
3. action-planning alternatives	- developing and evaluating solution

- 4. implementation - assisting/adjusting/acting
- 5. termination - evaluation plans to follow up
withdrawal setting commitments

Counselors can readily shift from counseling to consulting. The basic training needed is common to both. The focus varies slightly. Counseling is to an individual person while consulting is to an organization.

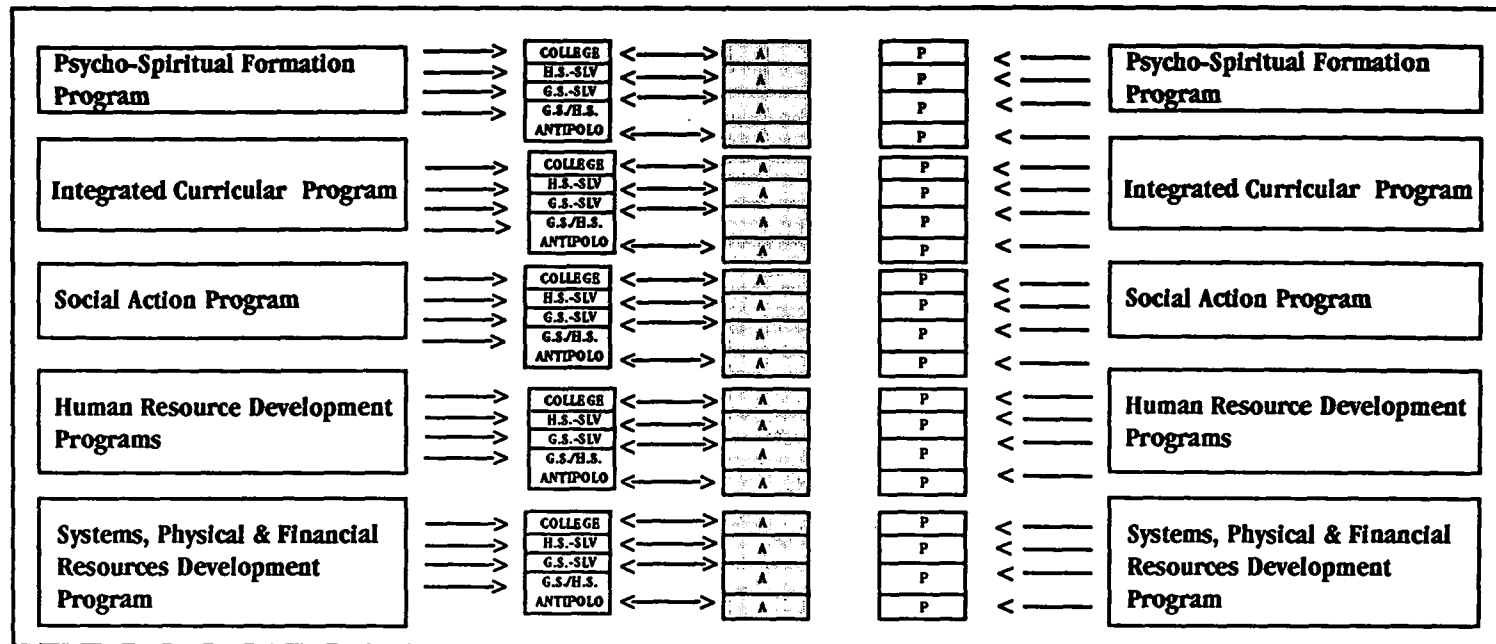
In our present situation, guidance counselors have gone a long way. Many have been assigned to positions of leadership and greater responsibilities in school and non-school settings. We indeed have a new breed of counselors. To them, I pose the challenge and direct their flight.

To illustrate the role of the counselor as consultant, let me share the 1993 Assumption College Institutional Model of School External Community Partnership Program as well as the 1995 Assumption Institutional Guidance Plan model which is anchored and monitored by the counselors (Figures 1 and 2).

School external community partnership

Towards the integral formation of persons and communities, Assumption College shall design and develop programs for the psycho-spiritual formation, Christian value education, and community building; enrich the curricular programs through a research-based integration of new knowledge, social concern, global perspectives, and the ideals of Mere Marie Eugenie; design and develop social concern programs geared toward the cultivation of a sensitive and active response towards the needs of others, of the country, of administrators, faculty, staff and auxillary personnel; and establish and evaluate school systems and policies with the widest latitude of sectoral involvement to ensure and promote an ambience conducive to wholistic and integral growth.

Figure 1. School-External community Partnership Scheme



Legend: Alumnae Parents

Figure 2. The Institutional Guidance Plan

