



An Evaluation of Different Aspects of Counselling Functions by the Counsellors in India's State of Haryana

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ABSTRACT

Over the last few decades, counselling has emerged as a specialized field throughout the world and have generated a great amount of attention from parents, teachers, social workers and other stakeholders who have devoted time to explore its utility for the general population, particularly school going children. The period when the child is in school is most crucial and critical for the development of all his/her potentialities and capacities. It is during this period that abilities and skills are developing, habits, interests and attitudes are being formed and emotional and social adjustments are taking place. As the child grows, the environment in which he/she is living throws variety of problems of personal-social nature, which, if unsolved, may result in psychological disturbances of various types. This will hinder his/her natural growth. Counselling which is both adjustment and curative in nature is necessary to meet the developmental and adjustment needs of children. Descriptive survey method was used as a research design for the study. The target population of the study were the counsellors overlooking different public schools of Haryana state in India. A sample of 28 counsellors were randomly selected out of 22 districts of Haryana. This research paper highlights the need for counselling and the various aspects associated with it.

Keywords: Counselling Services, Referrals, Information Taking, Self-reliance, Records.

INTRODUCTION

Counsellors are substantially instrumental for the progress of the schools

Respondents of the present study included 28 counsellors of the purposefully selected 28 public schools located in Haryana (India). The study focused on identifying the various aspects as understood by the counsellors themselves. It was assumed that exposure and association with the programmes organized by the counsellors could lead to the students developing some kind of perceptions and attitudes towards these programmes. Counselling is a continuous process (Gybsers & Henderson, 2000). It is given to develop the skill of self-help. The most important and effective period for such help is at the time when habits, ideals and attitude are being formed and techniques developed. Counselling given at this time will greatly reduce the need for help later and will increase the ability to choose occupational, civic and social activities wisely in adult life (Ali, M., 2013)

It is expected from schools to provide opportunities to students just not to complete a course successfully but to empower them to be successful in their life to come (Dash, B.N. & Dash, N. 2014). The whole question of being successful depends upon the help from expertise that nurtures them from the beginning. In present age, counselling services in the schools are taken carelessly that impacts the students in many ways (Johnson, W.H. 1987). The student's unrest, indiscipline, strikes, disobeying of the parents and elders, indulging in unsocial activities may be accepted as a result of lack of proper help to the students (Joneja, G.K., 1992). School counselling services for school students are designed to address the physical, emotional, social, and academic difficulties in adolescents. These services foster positive attitude towards school learning and work and hence improve academic achievement. School counselling plays a vital role in removing the educational, personal, social, and other similar problems of students Mussen, T. (1990). The objectives of school counselling services is to assist the student in fulfilling their basic physiological needs, understanding themselves and acceptance of others. Counselling services also helps in developing association with peers, balancing between permissiveness and controls in the educational setting and realizing pragmatic achievements (Arbuckle, D. S., 1998). Counselling related work can be designed to alleviate the problems of the students or to help in the prevention of these problems from occurring. The former functions are therapeutic in nature. This paper focuses on this important aspect of counselling. The problems of the students are dealt by the counsellors both in the context of family and school. Counselling process entails individual and group sessions with the students, meeting the teachers and parents to discuss specific problems of the students, taking help of other professionals, if

required. It also includes working out systems within the school to take referrals and case histories, conducting tests wherever required and providing suitable interventions. The counsellors can use different approaches and skills in the counselling sessions they take (Mcmanama, O., Brian, C. & Clifford, D. 2011).

Services range from providing temporary support, crises intervention, long and short term therapy, to preparation of the client for referral to outside resources (Bengali, A. 1991). The actual counselling process in schools has been looked into by finding out the different aspects counselling programme within the facilities available to the functionaries. This has been done by determining the type of referrals, assessment made by the functionaries, counselling procedures followed and interventions given. Along with this the duration and place of meeting have been examined to see whether the procedure is actually conducive for providing effective counselling to students or not. Record-keeping is an important aspect of the whole exercise which has also been included in this paper.

1. Referrals

The dictionary meaning of "referral" is *to arrange to see the consultant* (Oxford Dictionary). As mentioned earlier, any interaction with the counsellor where the student communicate with him/her seeking guidance for a problem which the student, principal, his/her teachers or parents feel that an expert's intervention is required, is a "referral". Sometimes the counsellor herself/himself may identify a student needing counselling. The most common pattern is for the administrators to refer pupils for counselling and for the counselling functionaries to respond separately to each individual pupil. Cases are referred to the counselling functionary by the principals, teachers, and parents. Sometime, the students come to the functionaries on their own also, which is quite an insight. The counsellors were asked as to who commonly referred cases to them. Their responses are tabulated in Table 1.

Table 1: Referrals made to the Counsellors (Multiple responses were received)

S. No.	Referred by	Total N = 28
1	Teachers	21
2	Students themselves	19
3	Principal	10
4	Own Observation	10
5	Parents	7

Q. Who refers the cases of students to you, most frequently?

All functionaries reported that there is more than one source of referral to them. Most referrals made to the counsellors are either by the teachers or are self-

referrals by the students. Referrals made by the principals and those identified by the counsellors themselves are equally common. The counselling functionaries usually identify students in need of counselling while interacting with them or observing them whenever they get the opportunity. Parents refer cases to the counselling functionaries most infrequently which is alarming since parents are supposed to be in maximum touch with their wards.

The counsellors further reported that principals usually refer problems that are serious in nature, affecting the child emotionally and behaviorally or related to school discipline. Among teachers, mostly it is the class-teachers, who refer the cases to the counsellors; although in some cases the subject teachers also identify students with problems and refer them to the functionaries. Usually teachers refer cases of academic problems. Few parents come forth with problems of their children. The usual practice followed by parents is to first discuss the problems with the class teacher. Even when they come to meet the counselling functionaries, it is usually on the advice of teachers. Self-referrals are commonly from those students who are either in regular contact with the counselling functionary who know them as teachers or supervisors of community service. These are mostly for career related or personal problems.

Although individual cases were not analyzed in this study, an effort was made to get a general idea about the type of referrals. This was done by asking the functionaries to broadly classify the total number of cases counseled by them into short-term and long-term cases and also whether they were related to academic, career related or personal problem. A combination of both these gave a fairly good idea about the counselling work undertaken.

Categorization into short term and long term cases did not elicit enough learning for want of proper records. The counsellors mentioned about duration of cases handled by them by recalling which was not found sufficiently authentic by the researcher to subject it to further analysis. This exercise, however, gave some idea about the nature of cases handled by them. The number of referrals made to counsellors varied vastly from 10-200 per year. The number of referrals included both short term and long term cases. For getting a better understanding of short-term and long-term cases, the former were defined as those in which the counsellors meets the student for less than three times and long-term cases were those where they had met more than thrice. The short-term meetings with the counsellors

could just be for information sharing or the students may feel the need to just discuss some matter, which may be bothering them only temporarily. The counsellors were asked to broadly categorize these referrals according to the number of time they had met the students. On the whole it was found that the counsellors are dealing with more cases requiring short-term intervention than long term counselling. The counsellors were then asked to categories the cases according to the nature of different problems that is academic, vocational, and personal problems. These answers have been tabulated in Table 2.

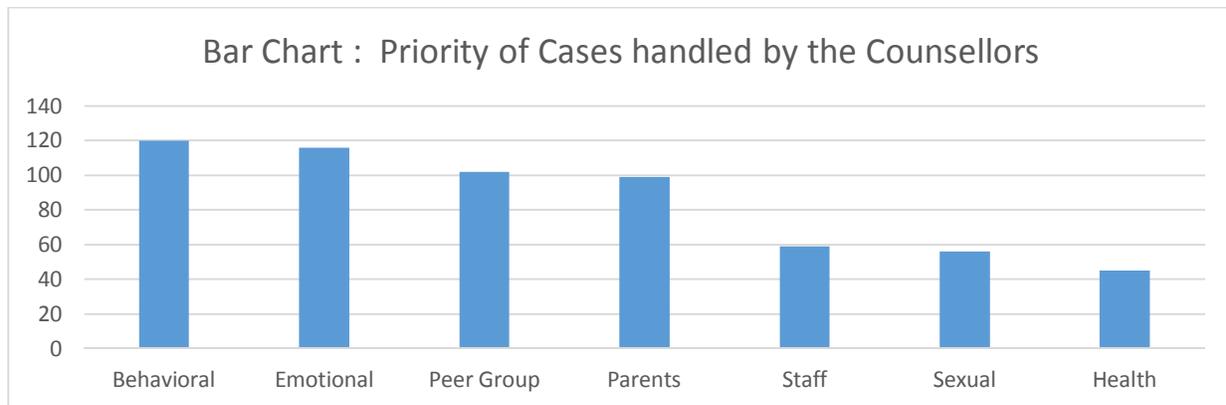
Table 2: Nature of Referrals to the Counsellors (In Percentages)

S. No.	Type of Referrals	Total N=28
1	Vocational Problems	12 (42.85 %)
2	Academic Problems	10 (35.71 %)
3	Personal Problems	6 (21.42 %)

Q. How many cases have been referred to you in the last academic session, in (i) students needing vocational/career guidance (ii) problems related to academics, and (iii) problems related to self, peer, family or school ?

Further analysis reflects that the most frequent referrals made to the functionaries are vocation/career related. Majority of these cases were self-referrals by students than referrals by principals, teachers or parents. Followed by this category were problems related to academic performance of students. There seems to be a general rise in referrals for scholastic problems. Among the three categories of problems, personal problems (only 21.42%, Table 2) were least frequently referred to the counsellors.

There are studies that suggest that mental health problems are on the rise, the counsellors are being referred more cases with academic or career related problems. Although fewer cases were referred for personal problems, it was considered important to gain an insight into the nature of personal problems of students also. The counsellors were asked to list in order of priority the nature of personal problems handled by them. Their responses were then compiled to get the frequency for each of the categories.



Q. Please mention in order of priority the frequency of dealing with counselling cases? Behavioral, emotional, adjustment with peer/parent/staff member, sex/health related problem.

more prominence and certain areas like sex and health related problems get side-lined. It would perhaps be better to deal with these areas at the preventive level, which is not the focus of this research paper.

Among the personal problems referred to the counsellors, the most common ones were behavioural and emotional problems of the school going students. Behavioural problems including discipline problems were overtly manifested. Emotional problems were those where the problem did not necessarily manifest into overt symptoms. These problems are usually undermined in an effort to make the child perform better academically. It is an area where the counsellors can make a significant contribution by working with students, staff and parents. On many occasions, the identification of a problem may require a specialist's opinion. These may range from psychological problems, learning disabilities and speech problems etc.

It was seen that 16 out of 28 counsellors took the help of other professionals especially those of special educators and clinical psychologists. Others referred such cases to psychiatrists. Students do face problems related to their peer group, parents and staff members. But such cases were not referred very frequently. Peer related problems were mostly related to the opposite sex. The least commonly referred problems were sex and health related. It is difficult to distinguish between interpersonal problems with opposite sex and sex related problems from this analysis. It requires more detailed information. As far as health related problems are concerned, some functionaries consulted ENT (Ear, Nose and Throat) specialists to detect auditory problems. But there is no intervention by these specialists on a regular basis. Their assistance is sought whenever found necessary.

Thus it was seen that it is the teachers who are the most common sources for referrals to the counsellors followed by the students themselves. Regarding the nature of referrals, there is a predominance of problems related to career and academic problems. This appears to be the reason for most counselling sessions being short term. Among the personal problems, behavioural and emotional find

2. Information Taking and Assessment

After the case has been referred, before the counsellors provides intervention, it is necessary to first gather all relevant information and make an assessment of the problem (Pandey 2007). The procedure followed for collecting information and making assessment about the child was also explored. In schools, most of the referrals are made by personally speaking to the counsellors or by filling up a Performa designed for the purpose. This Performa has some basic information about the child. The preliminary information collected was basically from the student and the counsellors own observation. Supporting information from teachers and parents was useful, but it was not collected in a structured manner. The most common procedure is that the cases are referred by school teachers by discussing them with the counsellors. If the students come on their own, the counsellor meets the class teacher for more information. In three schools under study, referrals were centralized wherein the cases are routed through the principal.

In one school, the principal refers all cases to the functionary, whosoever the principal feels requires counselling. In three other schools, a record of all students with problems is maintained in the office and those with discipline problems are referred to the counsellors. When asked for the reason for this system, the counsellor told the researcher that since there are no prescribed systems for referral; each principal devises their own. The counsellors plan their interventions based on this available information. If they need a specialist's assessment, they would then refer cases to child psychologists.

The psychologists or other functionaries dealing with the problems of children often use psychometric tests as aids in assessment. These are scientific tools, which are meant to give credibility to assessment made

(Srivastava, K.K., 2007). Psychological tests have been devised and are used primarily for the determination and analysis of individual differences in general intelligence, specific aptitudes, educational achievement, vocational fitness and non-intellectual personality traits. These have also long been used for a variety of psychological, educational, cultural, and sociological and employment studies of groups rather than for the study, of a particular individual. Their usages by the counsellors were also examined by the researcher as these psychological tests are developed and standardized by renowned educationists and psychologists. The researcher was also interested in knowing the active linkages of various theories that she had been teaching at the university, with some of the standardized tests which were used by the counsellors.

Table 3: Type of Tests Used by the Counsellors (Multiple answers were received)

S. No.	Tests Used	Total N=28
1	Aptitude Tests	18
2	I. Q. Test	14
3	Personality Tests	13
4	None	06

Q. Which tests have you made use of personally in the school? Aptitude / I. Q / Personality tests? Specify the test(s) used.

Most of the school counsellors were found to be using tests. They usually use aptitude and I.Q. tests. Some counsellors used Personality Tests for educational assessment of the child. Examples of tests used by the counsellors are Raven's Progressive matrices test, Jalota's General Mental Ability Test, Bhatia's Battery of Performance Test, Thematic Apperception Test, Children's Apperception Test, and Differential Aptitude Test Battery etc. They also use interest inventories with students. The private schools purchase these tests as per the suggestions of the school counsellors (or the principals as was found in three schools).

In one school the counsellors had to learn to conduct a test when she was asked to give an interest inventory to class X students by the school principal. In another school, the demand for using tests had come from the parents. The parent body remarked in the parent teacher meeting that "*it is surprising that a good school like this one does not even test the aptitude of students to help them choose correct subjects*". This made the counsellors learn to conduct some tests.

On the whole, it was observed that there is not much reliance on the use of psychometric tests. An interesting fact was observed. Counsellors were of the view that psychometric tests when used indiscriminately are not very useful, which is why they refrain from using

them. Researcher went through the inventory of tests available with the NCERT (National Council for Educational Research & Training) & SCERT (State Council for Educational Research & Training) and found that most of the tests available had been developed abroad although Indian adaptations were also available. The issue of the use of tests, their reliability, and usefulness for the students has not been discussed further as it was beyond the scope of this study.

Another source of collecting information is through home-visits. Making home-visits can provide an understanding of the child in the, context of his/her environment, both home and the community where he/she resides. It gives a more holistic insight about the problem of the child (Sharma, N.R. 1990). Despite these obvious advantages, it was seen that this method of information collection was not being used by majority of the counsellors. Very few counsellors had ever gone for a home-visit. The most common reasons cited for this was lack of time and lack of transportation facility on part of the school principal and school management.

It may be inferred that the system of making assessments was quite adhoc in schools. Reliance for collecting information was mostly verbal. Even if information was taken through structures performas, it was not found to be very detailed one. Although counsellors were making use of psychometric tests, often it was at the behest of others - the principals and the parents.

3. Interventions by the Counsellors

The basic knowledge of the dynamics of human behaviour, the extent and the type of counselling training the counsellors have undergone, as well as their personality structure, determine the approach used in counselling. Counsellors in schools are engaged in crises counselling, facilitative, preventive and developmental counselling from time to time. The functionaries were asked about the nature of interventions they provided to the students. The nature of individual and group sessions undertaken with the students by the counsellors were explored. Their role in including parents in the counselling process was also explored.

As discussed earlier, the counsellors need to follow different approaches depending on the problem for which the student is referred to them. The counselling functionaries were asked about the frequently used approaches - directive counselling, non-directive counselling, family counselling, group counselling, case-work and career counselling. Their responses showed that the most commonly used approaches by the functionaries are career counselling, family counselling while case work is used by majority of the counsellors. Although the functionaries mentioned this, there is no way by which this can be confirmed. They had been asked to cite examples of cases where they had used the approaches. Many of them were not able to give examples. Of those counsellors who gave examples, a look at these cases gives the impression that the

responses given by them may not be very authentic. The following examples reflect this.

Case work - In this approach, usually some service is given to the client in addition to counselling. When the functionary was asked to cite a case the following example was given: *Anxiety problem of a child during examination was sorted out using this approach.* The Counsellor had not met the parents or provided any other service, yet the counsellor mentioned that case-work approach had been used. Therefore, nothing conclusive may be inferred from their responses.

Another important intervention is taking initiatives to involve parents in the counselling process. Family/parent and school partnerships are a major key in achieving educational success. A child's problematic behaviour is frequently an indication that the family may be experiencing a difficult period. If parents are themselves worried about some problem of their own, they would be unable to help their children. Through close interactions in an environment that is less formidable, there can be some useful learning on either side. There is no other better way to understand problems of the family rather than by paying a visit to the home of the child (Agrawal, R. (2007). In addition to helping in assessment of a problem, home-visits can also be very useful for the counselling intervention. The practice of home visits is based on the belief that parents are usually the most caring and consistent persons in the lives of children. Sometimes, these parents have less access to parenting role models. This can be taught to them through interactions so that their child's development can be monitored and enhanced. Besides parents, the teachers of children facing problems also benefit from the information provided through home visits. Home-visits provides them with useful inputs about the special needs of the children. There are other issues involved with home visits. Among others, mutual consent regarding the visit and the expertise of the professional making the visit are most important (Mussen, T. 1990). If any of these factors are overlooked, home visits can prove counterproductive as may be seen in the following example cited by a counsellor.

A counsellor was sent for a home-visit to collect information about a child who had been referred for counselling. The very next day, the mother of the child came to the school with a complaint that this person from the school had caused embarrassment for their family. She went around in the colony asking for their address and telling them that she had come from the school of the child. Later on many neighbours came to ask her why a lady from school had visited their house since it is not a common practice for the school staff to visit the students. Instead of helping the child, this home visit enhanced the problem.

Therefore a visit is useful if it is mutually agreeable and the purpose of the visit is clarified. Despite the advantages, home-visits are not made by the counsellors very often as discussed earlier. However, whenever they want to make these visits, they

get little support from school. They either use the school transport for making these visits or visit by their personal vehicles. In both the cases, the counsellors had shown their displeasure.

The counselling process is not limited to having sessions with the student only (Hussain, S., 2015). It also includes interventions with the teachers, parents and the peer group. With the students too, it may take different forms. Researcher focused briefly on the intervention by the counsellors other than holding individual counselling sessions. Although all these are related to the counselling process - both therapeutic and preventive - these have been discussed separately also. Individual counselling sessions are held for both dealing with personal problems and giving information. A few examples of the nature of help given to students have been cited. These are illustrations and not case studies, and hence should be treated as particular example only.

Example 1

In one of the private school, the counsellor after realizing that the students required help in getting details about different courses invited an NGO to hold an exhibition in school where information regarding different careers was given to the students. After the students appeared for the exams of class XII, some of them came back to school requesting for assistance in getting forms for certain courses. After doing some legwork she was able to get the forms for the students which were very helpful for them since due to ignorance nobody in their family was forthcoming in helping the children.

Example 2

This case is about a student, who was referred for destructive behaviour in class. This child belonged to a broken home. His father had left the house with another woman after cheating a few people monetarily. This child had developed immense hatred for his father and felt that he must have enough power to handle the problems of his family. Ostensibly a 'tough nut to crack' he broke down while talking to the counsellor. With the help of teachers and the principal, the counsellor could help the student in attending counselling sessions and was able to overcome his aggression.

4. Time for Counselling

With the involvement of the counsellors in a myriad of activities, how much time are they actually able to spend on counselling? Counselling work involves several tasks related to diagnostic, curative, and preventive aspects. These are – assessment, meeting the students, teachers and parents to discuss the problems, maintaining case records and organizing preventive programmes. All these aspects were kept in mind while ascertaining the time they spend on counselling students.

Before doing so, it was considered useful to understand as how much time is required to take up

individual session. Review of literature did not help much in benchmarking the time required for counselling individual cases. In the absence of data, recommending the average time required for counselling a child, researcher explored the existing data in other agencies engaged in counselling work. Two agencies were contacted for this purpose. They were NIPCCD (National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development) and a Faridabad based NGO, "Samvad" for Personal and Family Counselling.

A study had been conducted by the Child Guidance Centre (CGC) at NIPCCD in the year 2012 in which a detailed review of counselling work was done of cases from year 2001 to 2010 from 12 CGCs all over the

country. According to the survey, the average amount of time spent on a counselling case was three hours and 22 minutes in a month. Therefore, on an average, if a counsellor is handling five cases in a week (one a day), approximately 15 hours of counselling would be required. Similarly, the researcher visited a counsellor from Samvad (Communication), an NGO in Faridabad district of Haryana. According to her, they take about 3 hours for a short-term case, 7-8 hours for a moderate case and about 15 hours of counselling for a long-term case. Keeping these two sources as the focal point, the actual numbers of hours spent by the counsellors on counselling work were assessed. Results are very revealing as can be seen in table 4.

Table 4: Time Devoted to Counselling by the Counsellors

S. No.	Proportion of Time Devoted to Counselling	Total N=28	Percentage
1	Less than Half	12	42.85
2	More than Half	7	25.0
3	Insignificant	6	21.42
4	Half	3	10.71

Q. Generally what proportion of your time do you spend on counselling children in school? More than half/half/less than half/ insignificant

Most counsellors (42.85%) were spending less than half of their working hours on counselling work. A large number of functionaries (21.42%) were spending

insignificant time on counselling work. This may appear to be exaggerated. A total of 35.71 % functionaries spend half or more than half of their time in counselling work. They were asked specifically about the number of hours spent on the activities listed by them. The amount spent on counselling work was then compiled.

Table 5: Hours Spent on Counselling by Counsellors per Week

S. No.	Hours Spent On Counselling Per Week	Total N=28
1	Less than 6 hours	10 (35.71 %)
2	6-10 hours	10 (35.71 %)
3	11-15 hours	6 (21.72 %)
4	More than 15 hours	2 (7.14 %)

Q. Out of the—working spent per week, how much time are you able to devote to the activities (listed by you) in school?

Normally the school hours extend to about 30-35 hours a week or 120-140 hours per month depending on the number of working days in the week. Within these hours, the functionaries are required to take up all the other activities also. In terms of number of hours, significant number of counsellors spends less than 6 hours in a week on counselling work (Table 5). With this much time available for counselling, they would be unable to counsel more than 6-7 students in a month or 60-70 children in a year (taking about 10 months as working

period in schools excluding the vacation time). The average number of children in a school is about 2500. Even by a conservative estimate of five percent children requiring the intervention of a professional is taken, the number of referrals to the counsellors would be about 125. As seen this number varied from 6-200. This reflects the inadequacy of time spent on counselling.

In addition to taking counselling sessions, other supportive activities need to be undertaken like history taking, maintaining records, review of cases from time to time and planning strategies for preventive work (Narayan Rao, S. 2010). Taking up these aspects would further reduce the time spent by the functionaries on counselling. This raises a serious question about the

capacity of the counsellors to reach out to all students needing help. Even if they are able to reach out to all of them, the efficacy of counselling sessions for the children would be questionable.

It was further noted that there is no specific time allocated for counselling in the school time-table. All counsellors call the students in non-teaching periods like Physical Education, Library, Music or when some subject teachers are absent. Most of the time the students do not like to miss these periods and are reluctant to come as these are the only periods that students think provide them some leisure time in the school. Although 24 out of 28 functionaries told that they get support from the teachers when a student was called during a teaching period, they are themselves hesitant to call the child especially when the child is having academic problems also. So they usually call student in non-teaching periods.

Very few counsellors had called the students before or after school hours. This happens only in case where the child is able to commute independently or if the parent is willing to organize it. Many-a-times students are eager to discuss their problems but the counsellor is not available as illustrated in the following examples cited during the *Focused Group Discussion* (FGD):

One student from a school met the researcher after the group discussion to talk about her personal problem which she could not express before others. When asked as to why she did not discuss it with the counsellor, the researcher was told that she went to her room quite a few times but she was not available, so she kept quiet about it. This was concerning interpersonal relations with a member of the opposite sex.

In another discussion, the students pointed out that it is very embarrassing for them when someone comes in a teaching period and announces in the class 'so and so' the counsellor wants to meet you. As soon as this is announced, there are smiles on many faces. They were of the opinion that students who wish to meet the counsellor should go on their own and not to be summoned in this manner during teaching periods. Sometimes when a student has not done some work in the class, the teachers take students to the counsellor with a request 'please counsel him/her'. This can only cause more humiliation to the child. The time should be mutually decided by the counsellor and the counselee and not imposed on them.

This implies that the students would not be able to meet the counsellor when they desire and may be forced to meet him/her even when they don't want to. Students were not happy with the idea of having to give up their non-teaching periods for counselling work. The counselling sessions may also get disturbed in between or end abruptly with the ring of the bell. A lot of time is also wasted in getting permissions from the subject teachers for meeting the counsellor, since they need to be informed. The schools work out different systems. One of the counsellors has got permission slips printed and only when the students show that slip to the teacher, they are allowed to meet the counsellor. Thus, simply

meeting the Counsellors is a difficult task for the students. Besides, the manner in which the child meets the counsellor is not always comfortable to the child. If the child comes to the counsellor feeling uncomfortable in the first place, it indeed is not a very good beginning.

5. Space for Counselling

The counsellors need a suitable environment where the skills can be practiced. In the context of the school also, availability of space is of vital importance. It is here that the counsellors meet with the students, parents and teachers, individually or in a group. The place where counselling is carried out should have a few basic requisites. The counsellor should have a room available, spacious enough but not too large. It should have minimum furniture where the counsellor can sit with the clients preferably without a table in between them so as to make the best use of body language also (Yamano, N. 2011). There should not be too many distractions (posters, pictures etc.) around so that the concentration is not lost during discussions. The room should be bright and functional with filing cabinets around so that information required by the counsellors is handy. Since the clients come to discuss problems, there should be enough room for privacy. The place should also not be too noisy so that discussions can take place without disruptions. Ideally, this is what the counselling functionaries should have as a minimum infrastructural support from the school (Chaube, S.B., 2010).

It was observed that 17 out of 28 counsellors had a room exclusively for them for counselling. In some schools, the rooms given to the counsellors were quite large with enough scope to conduct activities with the younger students also. In some others, although they had an exclusive room for themselves, it was too small; for example a small covered area under the staircase. Being so small, it was stacked with notebooks, files and other school records thus making it appear even more congested and cramped up. However, this was better than having a make shift room or no room at all.

Some counsellors had a functional cabin either a partitioned (wooden or glass) veranda, laboratory or even staff rooms. In one school, a room had been partitioned into two but the partition did not extend till the ceiling. This meant that the conversation in one room could be easily heard in the other one. Although the rooms were spacious enough, they lacked privacy which is very crucial for counselling sessions. This certainly did not make a good setting for counselling work especially in the school, where the student had to cross the staff room to be able to reach to the counsellor's portion. It was an equally uncomfortable setting where students work in the laboratory and those who wish to meet the counsellor has to enter the room in full view of others.

It was still worse for the remaining three counsellors who had no room for counselling and are constantly searching for empty classrooms where they can sit and talk to students. When not counselling, they sit in staff rooms where the students might hesitate to go

and meet the functionary on their own, if they wish to. One school principal had got the counsellor's room converted into a second staff room because the first staff room was falling short of accommodating all the staff members. Having a separate room, where students have the access, without too many eyes prying upon them, can have only advantages as illustrated in the following example cited by one the counsellor under study:

The boys of class XI (Commerce) wanted to know about AIDS and initially they used to hesitate talking to the counsellor about it. Later on when the counsellor put up some posters in her room, they felt free and less inhibited about it and even discussed sex related matters.

Therefore it was seen that not all the counsellor were given suitable space for counselling in the schools. This is the minimum support that can be given by the schools to carry out counselling sessions. Even this is not available to all of them. This speaks a lot about the importance accorded to these services. It shows the lack of sensitivity on the part of school authorities towards counselling services.

6. Records

The need to maintain records and literature for visibility of work is too obvious. The lack of visibility is said to represent counsellor's failure to let others know what they are doing. If counsellors fail to document their contribution to the educational process, the service is unlikely to grow. In schools, the administrative department maintains different kinds of records. Apart from those, the teachers are required to maintain the following records although it varies from school to school.

- ✓ Personal Record of students: Name, address, record of parent's occupation. It is mandatory for class teachers to keep this updated as a ready reference.
- ✓ A teacher's diary which is maintained regularly by them and shown to the principal or the supervisor from time to time.
- ✓ Record of marks obtained in different subjects every term.
- ✓ Cumulative Annual Academic record of the students.

The counsellor, on the other hand, is not expected to maintain records in all the schools. Some schools expect them to maintain diaries like the teachers, which are seen by the principals now and then. In others, cumulative records are maintained for each student for different classes. It is a very useful record to understand the progress of students over a period of time. However, this is not a standard practice in all the schools. Apart from this, the counsellors need to maintain the following records - although it is not mandatory for them to do so.

- ✓ Details of all the students referred to the counsellor- Names, class, address, telephone number (if any), who referred.
- ✓ Referral Performas which is to be filled up by those who refer the cases.
- ✓ Case history, giving some details of the client and individual action plan.
- ✓ Assessment sheets of tests conducted, if any.
- ✓ Details of sessions taken with the client.
- ✓ Assessment sheets, if professional help outside the school is to be taken.

Ideally, these records should be maintained by all the counsellors. However, it was found that most counsellors working in schools under study are not maintaining these. The most common reason cited for this was lack of time.

In schools where the counsellor are allotted regular periods to go to classes, maintain a diary, which is shown and submitted to the principal regularly. This gives an account of the activities undertaken up by them. It is important to keep individual case records to monitor the progress made in each case. Although half of the counsellors interviewed mentioned that they did keep records, in most cases it was found that these records were mere jottings in a diary. While four schools had a formal system of writing the case records, it was being properly maintained only by one of them.

There was no system of sharing information in writing with the teachers. The counsellors felt that they would not like to give details of the students' problems to other teacher in order to maintain the all-important clause of confidentiality. Most of the work done by them is communicated verbally and selectively to the principals and the teachers. As will be discussed later, many teachers feel that the feedback is irregular and unsystematic. Being in the same school, it may give an impression to the teachers that the functionaries have less workload since no records are expected of them. Their work becomes less visible and transparent. The other disadvantage is that in case there is a change of counsellor in school, the new one will have no clue about the old cases and continuity will be lost. Lastly, even for their own information, it is always better to refer to some notes to assess the progress made. For want of adequate written information, this aspect gets neglected and hence the whole process receives a setback. On the whole this aspect of counselling was found to be very inadequate by the researcher and definitely needs improvements.

An overview of the responses given by the counsellors regarding various aspects of counselling functions brought out significant finding. Ostensibly, more cases are referred to the functionaries for career related and academic problems. It is true that many problems of the students are related to academics—the manner in which they are taught, importance given to students according to their ability to perform in studies, both by the teachers and the parents and their struggle to perform well. It is hoped that this research based

paper will add to the existing knowledge in the field of different dimensions of counselling programmes and help policy makers to frame strategies for their betterment.

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