



QUESTION #3

A Textbook Discussion

The Four Major Areas of Service: Time, Communication & Leadership

Martin Sarkar

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“... today’s school counselors have moved from an emphasis on one-to-one services toward programs that advocate group processes in conjunction with individual counseling. This combination of related services enables school counselors to serve a wider audience of students. Furthermore, responsive services of a comprehensive program include activities and processes that extend beyond traditional counseling services.”

Schmidt, John J., (2008) . “Responsive Services of a Comprehensive Program”, [Counseling in Schools: Comprehensive Programs of Responsive Services for All Students, Fifth Edition](#), Boston: Pearson Education, p.103.

QUESTION #2

Chapter #5: List the factors that influence how much time school counselors choose to spend in a particular service area:

- ✓ Which three factors are the most influential?
- ✓ Which, if any, of these factors can be controlled by the counselor?
- ✓ Discuss what your findings mean to the role of a school counselor.
- ✓ Primary influences:
 - time
 - communication and integration
 - leadership

Services include:

- ✓ individual & group counseling
- ✓ parent & teacher counseling
- ✓ career opportunities
- ✓ educational opportunities
- ✓ financial assistance service
- ✓ classroom guidance lessons
- ✓ parent education and in service support to teachers
- ✓ conferences (parent-teacher, admin)
- ✓ planning with teachers for guidance
- ✓ individual student planning
- ✓ data collection & sharing
- ✓ test results, students' records, referrals and working with community agencies, private practitioners
- ✓ student recognition
- ✓ career awareness
- ✓ teacher-advisory & peer-helping program
- ✓ assessment of school climate

Responding to the needs of a diverse community.



AREAS OF SERVICE:

Counseling

Consulting

Coordinating

Appraising

CHOICES SCHOOL COUNSELORS MAKE IMPACTS THE TYPE OF SERVICE PROVIDED WITHIN A SCHOOL.

Clearly, the responsibilities of a school counselor are voluminous. With each of the four major areas of service demanding a variable proportion of time commitment, a counselor is called to integrate these responsive services effectively into a comprehensive program (Schmidt, p. 103). Personally, I know only a handful of counselors who have positions will allow themselves and their programs full time attention. Yet, in most cases, schools find themselves with counselors who serve in a .5 (or less!) role, which makes the task of launching, maintaining and supporting quality programs even more challenging.

COUNSELING AND THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE IT.

In my experience, I have only been aware of counseling with students on a group level. Individual counseling, where the guidance counselor meets with a student to problem solve or to address a specific area of need, has sometimes been assigned to a Behavioural Teaching Assistant or itinerant teacher. Perhaps the reason for this is related to the **time** available for this type of counseling to occur. As Schmidt notes, counseling sessions can last from 20 minutes to an hour. With a large student body found in the urban schools in Ontario, and with the growing number of students who require it, the time available to provide other responsive services would be affected. This is where the counselor, having to make decisions to address the array of issues facing students, staff and parents must be organized, strategic and proactive. Counselors would determine whether to create groups based on similar needs, mutual concerns (i.e., some students would benefit from groups while others require more individualized support). While Schmidt would agree that timetabling such group sessions would be difficult, to simply not offer a particular type of counseling service because of scheduling conflicts is unacceptable and not supportive of the comprehensive guidance model. Teachers are protective of their own instructional time, therefore counselors must work with teachers to cause minimal disruptions and to ensure the needs of the students remain at the forefront (e.g., create workable timetables, meet during division team meetings, e-mails). Schmidt's question on p. 206: "Are other aspects of the counseling program being neglected due to time being devoted to this relationship?" could be applied to the overall quality of the program in that I would urge counselors to maintain a healthy balance between both type of counseling services. Lastly, because school counseling programs have such a broad focus and have to address a variety of student needs, counseling relationships have to be brief and the counseling network has to go beyond the school to include professional agencies and even private practitioners. This is important for any counselor struggling with managing time commitments in a school.

“Every school counselor at some time is approached by a parent or teacher with a request for services. Generally, counselors listen fully to the request, decide what short-term assistance they can provide, and list available community services from which the person can choose to address his or her concerns.” Schmidt, p. 106

Similarly, when counselors are required to provide consultation and coordinations services, it is imperative that they clearly **communicate** goals and plans to implement programs including responsibilities of those involved (hopefully, the entire staff). Schmidt states that effective listening, facilitating and decision making skills are required by counselors in order to identify purposes and to implement strategies (Schmidt, p. 108), yet I would argue that part of the decision making process would involve how these strategies are articulated and, I would add, demonstrated to a school staff. In doing so, it not only validates the role, responsibilities and tasks of a counselor in a school, but can serve to build networks with those who can see themselves directly supporting a program initiative. The counselor can then serve as a resource for information needed by the school community as they locate and share information as needed - or as determined by the counselor.

The consultation services that befall a counselor include providing career services to students. If this is communicated to staff early in the year, teachers can be a better position to think of ways to **integrate** their program to include critical information about the world of work.

For instance, for a grade 8 student studying within the strand of Economic Systems in Geography would know that her research could serve to support a career fair run by her teachers and the counseling team. The counselor assists the teacher in planning this integration of geography and career guidance. Also, the counselor could collaborate with the teacher-librarian to pull media and other related resources to support careers to ensure that the information presented is accurate, valid and available to all students and teachers. Counselors are trained in career theory and teachers are trained in curriculum: a perfect partnership to ensure students meet with success and see the connections between what they do with teachers and with counselors.

As noted frequently throughout the text, counselors are **leaders** and must assume a proactive stance to ensure program goals are met. However, sometimes schools are challenged by threats posed by students, parents, teachers and sometimes even the rules and routines of a school are in question. What can a counselor do? In effective schools, Schmidt may agree that setting up a conference, where the counselor can readily apply their consulting and problem solving skills, helps to channel the right

personnel to help in dealing with conflicts. Often, the admin team remains the first line of defense and is the team that attempts to negotiate reasonable solutions (there are conditions outline in the OSCA document (p. 14, Section B) that stipulate when and how a counselor needs to advise administration of conflict issues, matters of security and privacy). As we have learned in this course, the guidance counselor role as a leader ranges from leading conferences to serving as a facilitator. School principals, when seeking information about problems they are having with students, consult with counselors to pursue an appropriate, informed course of action. This not only tests the leadership capabilities of counselors, but their professional relationship with parents and teachers (Schmidt, p.114). It would also reveal how well a counselor can disseminate information, give instructions and know when to serve as a facilitator during conferences.

Counselors take account and show prudential regard for the social codes and moral expectations of the communities within which they work and the ethno-cultural communities represented within that community. (OSCA, p.14)

The Most Influential Factor

I believe that of all the factors noted above, it is **leadership** that counselor can have considerable control. For instance, coordinating activities of a school counseling program (e.g, character assemblies, career days, mentoring programs) requires implementation and evaluation planning. As Schmidt notes, counselors take an active role in coordinating these events with staff

and other school support personnel. An advisory committee is often set up with the counselor serving as the head. The degree of which a counselor contributes, facilitates and participates in program coordination is highly determinate unless the role of the counselor and responsibilities therein are explicitly laid out by their admin team. Even so, how the program is organized and the goals developed often are in the responsibility of the counselor.

