

Importance of School Counseling To Sri Lankan Student in 21st Century

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Abstract: *School children in this era have various complicated problems for they are greatly influenced by the development of technology and the use of the internet for social media and synchronous gaming and so on. The need for counselling for students from elementary school to secondary and high school has become inevitable. Though counselling was established in Sri Lanka in the 1960s, it has not developed as it is supposed to have as anticipated. School counselling in 21st century is vital for all level of student around the world and this research pays particular attention to the importance to Sri Lankan students and the education system as well. School counsellors in Sri Lanka deal with various areas such as academic affairs of students, career guidance, dropout prevention, personal issues of the learners, family and the support to children towards learning and schooling, family distances and quality time for kids and importantly increased child abuse and use of dangerous drugs deep rooting among schooling kids. The government authorities, state and private organizations, community development societies, school administration and parents should pay added attention on the importance of school counselling and provide brimming support and cooperation to school counsellors.*

Keywords: school counselling, career guidance

Introduction:

Students of a country like us – Sri Lanka always have one or another obstruction that affects their nimble way of studying. Following are some of the adversities our students had to go through since recent decades, Tsunami hit and wrecked a lot of schools were located in and around the costal in 2004, three decade long armed conflict was brought to an end in 2009, number of social and political issues were blockading the decorous functioning of school activities, then came Covid 19 pandemic, these are a few to name them. Students are always vulnerable to various activities of such issues. Unlike China and other orientalist countries, Sri Lanka has always been open to western psychology. In this assignment, I am going to study the importance of *School counselling for 21st century* in Sri Lankan school's context. Senevirathna B (2018) quoted Baker. S. B. (2000), In the 21st century, school Guidance and counselling services are very important because students in schools are faced with complicated problems, those are personal, psychological, educational, and socioeconomic. Therefore, schools need good counselling programs. Uday Kumar (2015), defined "A school counselor is a counselor and an educator who works in elementary, middle, and high schools to provide academic, career, college access, and personal/social competencies to K-12 students. The interventions used include developmental school counseling curriculum lessons and annual planning for every student, and group and individual counseling". School counselling these days has established a better name among the community in Sri Lanka and parties concerned have grown interest in counselling activities.

Elementary school,

In elementary schools, counsellors provide academic, career, college access, personal and social skills for some students and their families to meet the developmental needs of young children K-6. Hence

Middle school

Counsellors provide school counseling curriculum lessons on academic, career, college access, and personal and social competencies, advising on academic/career/college access planning to all students. Provide individual academic planning and goal setting at the idea case load of 250 students per school counsellor. To facilitate the school counseling process, school counselors can best utilise theories and techniques including developmental, cognitive-behavioral, person centered listening and influencing skills, systemic, family, multicultural, narrative, and play therapy. Further counsellor ensures successful transitions to high school remains vital including career exploration and assessment with seventh and eighth grade students.

High school counselors

Counsellors provide academic, career, college access, and personal and social competencies with developmental classroom lessons and planning to all students, and individual and group counseling for some students and their families to meet the developmental needs of adolescents (Hatch & Bowers, 2003, 2005, 2012). Counseling programs help high school students plan their post-secondary options like higher education, potential work options (entrepreneurial or employment opportunities) to close achievement, opportunity, Counsellors should be able to offer short-term counselling service to students and refer to long-term

support. Despite the fact that collaboration with members concerned like family, teachers, administration, community-based organization and others for students' success is important, high school counsellors' need for collaboration is greater.

School Counselling in Sri Lanka

Buddhiprabha D.D.P (2017) Quoting Fox & Butler (2009); Lapan, Gysbers, & Kayson, (2007); Stone & Dahir, (2006), stated "Globally, school counselors have become an increasingly valued addition to education systems. Thus, school counsellors are considered to serve an important role in maximizing student success". Senevirathna B (2018) referring to Muthukumara (2009) stated that "School Counselling Services in Sri Lanka has not long history, it was established in 1960s". Referring to Even, Abepala, R. and Abepala. A, (2011) stated that School Counselling services were very limited or less developed in Sri Lanka until 2013 – "some secondary schools have organised and implemented effective and innovative Guidance and Counselling Services. But the development of these programs is one of the many complicated issues within the education system in Sri Lanka because of lack of qualified teachers, infrastructure facilities, some traditional cultural beliefs and the government policies etc". B.D. Pathirana (2016) quoting Wickramarathna, (1998) says "till eighties hiring services of professional counselors has been a concept alien to Sri Lanka's educational institutions". The earliest records of organised exertions to introduce guidance or counseling services in the school context are reported in circular issued by the Director of Education in 1957. Hence, in July 1983, Evaluation, Guidance and Research Unit was established by the Ministry of Education. He further reported quoting NIE (2014), "Guidance and Counselling Unit at National Institute of Education was established in 2006. Main objective of this unit was to meet the psychosocial needs in the education communities by improving curriculum, conducting assessment & evaluation procedures, training teachers with an ability to create learner friendly environments".

John J.S (2008) Counsellor as a profession has evolved more than hundred years ago. Colette & Matthew (2019), Knowing the reality of life in modern society is essential for school counselors to address nonacademic barriers to learning that manifest within the school. Education Perspective (2017), outlined the role of the school counsellor teacher should be provided with a license on coherent criteria making the completion of professional qualification compulsory and release those counsellor teachers for full time counselling activities. Education First (2013), stated that counselling sessions for children with problems have to be carried out by trained persons who are capable and aware of principles of child psychology. These counselling teachers should be able to understand the problem of students, build reliable relationships and guide, helping them make proper decisions. Similarly secondary school counsellors should be equipped with knowledge and trends in the labour market in order that they can help learners find their best way to get employed at the right age after formal education.

Activities and issues a counsellor deal with can vary from elementary school to middle and high schools for the nature of the problem students have differ according to the grade they study in. NEC (2014) quoting UNESCO (2010), says "A large number of learners will not be able to find their occupational pathways or higher learning or training opportunities due to lack of career guidance at schools".

Importance of School counselling in Sri Lanka

Importance of counselling in 21st century can be sighted from different angles such as the nature of school, namely elementary school, secondary school, high school and so on. And the relationship of counsellor teacher with students, parents, community, school administration and so on. NEC (2014), outlined, "Career Guidance assists people to reflect on their ambitions, interests, qualifications and abilities. It helps them to understand the employability and education systems, and to relate this to what they know about themselves". John J.S (2008), In 21st century school counselling profession marched ahead from vocational training and career to a wider vision encompassing a broad range of personal, educational, social, and career services for diverse student population.

I personally believe that students who have lost their kith and kin in three decades lasted armed conflict definitely have to be counselled to achieve the best of their ability and interest. So are kids victimised by Tsunami and the list continues on the consequences of Covid-19 pandemic and so on and so forth. School counselling must be interrelated among counsellor teachers, students, parents, guardians, school management, community development organisations or welfare organisations.

Academic and counselling

Counsellor teachers and students are the most important aspect. By building up proper, reliable and intimate relationship with students, a counsellor teacher can dig deeper into the learning potentialities of the students. For instance, a student would be more interested in language learning but he doesn't know how to set his goal in his language learning journey. So, the counsellor teacher guides the students into the right way of learning the language he wants while acquiring basic educational qualification like GCE O level or A level. NEC (2014), referred to academic counselling as "trained professionals counseling students on their

academic plans, for course-taking while in secondary school as well as for postsecondary education". ASCA, stated "School counselors design and deliver school counseling programs that improve student outcomes. They lead, advocate and collaborate to promote equity and access for all students by connecting their school counseling program to the school's academic mission and school improvement plan". Further school counsellors help students develop mindsets & behavioural patterns for students' academic success and their achievement, attendance and discipline. ASCA further mentioned "Through the school counseling program, school counselors ensure equitable academic, career and social/emotional development opportunities for all students".

Career and counselling:

NEC (2014), marks counsellor teachers help learners to make transitions to the working world. It's a bitter truth that many parents in countries like Sri Lanka and India want their kids to be a doctor, engineer or someone who is a white-collar worker. Parents and guardians should understand their role in selection of job. Nobody should load any pressure upon a kid to take a job which is beyond his ability nor of his interest. Likewise, the community should accept all profession, even if not egalitarian but with due respect. Most importantly, it is really sad that school administration praises only those who have achieved in academic or particular sports activities and so on. School administration should appreciate and support all learners with different capabilities to be successful in one or the other way in his life like a boy becomes a successful shoe maker who did not excel in his academic achievement turned to walk in golden shoes. The Ministry of Education of Sri Lanka has addressed some of these issues in the circular No.16/2006 and No. 6/2013 by establishing Career guidance centers in schools. Despite inadequate facilities there are many organisations such as schools, vocational training institutions, National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority, youth service centres, government ministries, and private sector institutions involved in the provision of career guidance.

Dropouts and counselling:

M.A.N.R Perera (2012), "in 2009, over 45,000 of students were dropped out from schooling". A good counsellor teacher can motivate students and prevent them from dropout by preparing him and building confidence of becoming suitable to the job market. Not every person is interested in becoming a medical practitioner or engineer but needs to realise the ability and set the goal to reach in a feasible and measurable manner. UNICEF stated that "One of the biggest issues that lead to low participation and high drop-outs is the perception that school learning does not prepare students for the job market".

In Sri Lanka, loss of family head and breadwinner compelled some school kids leave school and go to work in order that the family could be fed at least one time meal a day. Then came, Tsunami, upon which students and parents were affected in various ways. Psychological effects resulted in a considerable dropout from schools and Covid-19 pandemic while causing the loss of income resulted in another group of students dropout from schools.

Wickramasinghe (2015), "considerable groups of student ranges from school dropouts at various stages are affected by the lack of proper career guidance at all. So, the school career guidance can be formed an important part of the national strategy for youth to select the career on their skills in schools".

Personal issues and counselling

Colette & Matthew (2019), quoting (Dollarhide & Saginak, 2017). Mentioned, A comprehensive school counseling program is the vehicle by which school counselors can help students, families, teachers, and staff a holistic development.

School counsellors should listen to learners in order for a better understanding of his personal issues in relation to various aspects like parents, relatives, mates, school administration, social acceptance and so on and so forth. It is first and foremost important before actually starting the counselling. Student's view and understanding on education and career afterwards must be well understood by the counsellor for better guidance. Personal satisfaction makes the way of learning and achieving the goal easier to students hence the other way makes it harder. As a result of globalisation a child can easily be compared by himself with others and see how better or weaker he is than others. Chances for this personal dissatisfaction to happen at school level is high and the school counsellor is the best person to address this issue and to explain the kid that he is unique not same nor different. Building this confidence among kids feel weak is vital.

Family and counselling

Majority of the kids have single parent take chances either to drop out of active schooling or show less interest in academics. Hence an unhealthy relationship between parents of a kid also places him into mentally unwell in learning. Egalitarianism and impartial treatment of parents towards all kids is also important. Colette & Matthew (2019), "Discouragement from family members, parents, peers, and society can lower one's self-esteem and self-worth, causing feelings of inferiority". In countries like Sri Lanka and India, if the first born is a doctor the parents expect, rather force the second son to become a doctor. Where the second son finds medical studies completely alien to him but interested in playing football. Parents should realise the fact that he can still

outshine in his life by becoming a footballer and make them proud parents. In 21st century parents are easily vulnerable to this attitude and spoil their son's future. School counsellors in this century do definitely need to understand the talent, interest and potentialities of the kid and converse them to parents in a way they can put their trust in their son.

[Distance, Quality time and Counselling](#)

In 21st century, due to various reasons like excessive use of technology and social media relationship distance grows and quality time with kids falls. Catherine Jones (2017), with a heavy workload modern parents tend to spend less time with kids. On the flip side of the coin children also get busy with study and other technological entertainment. Especially, both parents and kids are enslaved by the internet and social media. Quality time makes children to be less likely to have behavioural issues, mental and emotional health issues, physical health issues but can show much interest in learning, setting future goals, and trying to accomplish it. School counsellors should take all possible opportunities to explain the vitality of family bond, quality time and being friendly to children. Parents should listen to children with proper eye contact, have a proper plan to take them outing and are few to name them.

[Dangerous drugs and child abuse counselling:](#)

NEC (2014), "parental conflict and domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, sexual harassment in the school and public places, economic and social deprivation, adolescence and the generation gap, and the trauma experienced by children in conflict affected areas".

Use of dangerous drugs among school kids and school kids becoming victims of abuse are rapidly growing up in the recent past. Despite all efforts of National Dangerous Drug Control Board (NDDCB) and the government, there are still drug supplies and consumption reached far deeper into children and youngsters. NDDCB reported in until June 2020 there are 97,000 people addicted to Heroin, the data show that close to 20,000 people are addicted to the narcotic substance ICE and around 400,000 are addicted to Cannabis. SLB (2021), The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which worked closely with the National Child Protection Authority (NCPA), said in a report that within 23 days, between mid-March 2020 and the first week of April 2020 the number of cases reported through the helpline 1929 spiked from 10% to 30 %. The total number of complaints received was 292, of which 121 complaints were about cruelty towards children. Both these paradigms are extremely serious and besides the effort of authorities School counsellors should take a vital role to educate parents, school children and the community to be aware of potential threat and self-defense techniques against perpetrators. Moreover, school counsellors should also edify parents and children about perpetrators of child abuse. A heard example worth sharing is that a girl was waiting outside her school to come and pick her up. A stranger noticed a girl waiting lone longer approached and offered a lift to bring her home and stated that he had come on her mother's instruction. The culprit dodged after the girl asked for password that her mother gave to pick her up. This a good example that every parent and children should have such intimate relationship to prevent the kids from either to drug habit or abuse kind of similar scenario.

[Government and authorities in School counselling](#)

Senevirathna B (2018), concludes that the government should recruit qualified teachers for Guidance and Counselling Services and they should frequently be trained and updated with modern issues and approaches and Buddhiprabha D.D.P (2017) added to this point that after evaluating the qualification and ability school counsellors should be licensed/certified. Both Buddhiprabha D.D.P (2017) and Senevirathna B (2018) have outlined number of recommendations in their studies that the government should take them into consideration. Establishing pertinent national level policies or standards, representatives from zonal education office level should be appointed to observe the ethical issues of school counsellors. Authorities should pay their urgent attention on developing and providing resource materials for school counselling and provide school counsellors a place which meets privacy standards, comprehensive and comfortable environment. School administration should take steps to invite counsellors apart from school counsellors to address certain or new issue that comes up in the community. Thus, the administration should help counsellors call parents and guardians to the school as and when it is necessary.

[Conclusion:](#)

On the whole, School counselling in 21st century begins from elementary school and travels through middle and high school. Though school counselling is new to Sri Lanka the authorities have clearly understood the position of school counselling in the country. Karunanayake et al (2020), in his research conducted in 2020 mentioned that out of ten students "only two participants talked about the importance of school counseling positively and all others negatively."

Counsellor teachers in this era plays a significant role in students' academic affairs consequently help students set a feasible career goal and achieve it. They further prevent students from dropping out of schools. Personal issues of various aspects are taken into

counsellor's consideration and given guidance to students, parents and relevant parties. Influence of family members into a student's decision and growth a fact every student counsellor should work on for building a better future to the student. Family matters like distance and lack of quality time spent with children shall also be addressed by school counsellor.

Counsellor teachers should be highly emotionally intelligent abler to build effective rapport with student, hence him in a comfortable zone, realised the fact that the counsellor teachers have high chances for student to take counsellor teachers as students moral model and thus rest-assure the maintenance of utmost honesty, truthfulness and humaneness.

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