

[Special Topic: School Counselling and the Comprehensive Guidance System]

Editor's Introduction

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The Special Topic of this issue of the *Journal* is "School Counselling and the Comprehensive Guidance System." Counselling in school is an important aspect of the development of counselling in Hong Kong (Leung, 1999). Since 1992, schools in Hong Kong has adopted a framework called the "Whole School Approach," blending together developmental, preventive, and remedial interventions in assisting students to cope with developmental and personal issues (e.g., Hong Kong Education Department, 1993). So far, the Whole School Approach has received mixed review, and many teachers and counselling professionals in schools are unclear on the goals and strategies inherent to this framework (e.g., Hui, 2000).

Given the increasing psychosocial needs of students in secondary and primary schools in Hong Kong, we feel that there is a need to evaluate and improve our approach to counselling and guidance service for students. There are at least two reasons on why the time is ripe for more deliberations related to counselling in schools. First, Hong Kong is at the middle of another wave of educational reform (e.g., Education Commission, 2000), and from what is already known about the various reform initiatives, there is very little, if any, coverage on the role of counselling and guidance services. As counselling professionals, we believe that counselling and guidance activities

in schools are important and they contribute positively to learning outcomes and student development. We want policy makers and the public to know that counselling and guidance professionals are vital links in the process of educational reform, and that counselling and guidance service should not be put on the fringe of our educational system. Second, the Hong Kong Education Department has adopted the Whole School Approach for close to ten years and it is really the time to evaluate this system more rigorously both in terms of its effects and efficiency. The nature and scope of problems experienced by students in Hong Kong suggested that there is a strong need for remedial interventions as well as interventions that are developmental and preventive in nature. School counselling professionals, including counselling teachers and school social workers, need more directions on how to implement and evaluate these different types of interventions. In addition, we believe that for any counselling system or framework to work effectively in schools, there has to be sufficient training for staff, as well as adequate support and resources devoted to service provision and delivery.

The *Asian Journal of Counselling* would like to play an active role in dialogues and initiatives related to counselling in schools. The Special Topic for this issue is devoted exactly to this emphasis. Norman C. Gysbers, a pioneer in school counselling and guidance services in the United States, has contributed an article related to the comprehensive guidance program that he has developed. The comprehensive guidance system (e.g., Gysbers & Henderson, 2000) has been adopted by a number of states in the United States, and encouraging and positive outcomes have been found. During the past two years, Professor Gysbers has visited and lectured in Hong Kong and has developed some familiarity with the local education system. Consequently, he is able to address specifically the system of counselling and guidance used in our local schools. As an adjunct to Gysbers' article, Yuen, Lau, and Chan contributed an interview article so that Gysbers' proposed framework and professionalism could be further examined and discussed. We have also asked two counselling professionals (E. Hui and J.

Chan) to write brief reaction papers on their thoughts about Gysbers' proposal.

It is my hope that this Special Topic would stimulate counselling and educational professionals to engage in more constructive and substantive discussions about counselling and guidance in schools. I hope that the *Journal* could continue to publish quality conceptual and empirical articles related to counselling in schools.

References

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