Professional Identity of School Counselors in India

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The deployment of counselors in schools remains as an elusive phenomenon in the country. An exploratory cross sectional study was conducted on the availability of school counselors, profile their expected and actual on-site work activities in a sample of national and international high schools located in Karnataka. Their official websites showed 19 out of 101 schools have counselors on their rolls. From another sample of 74 respondents, 1000 activities (Mean: 13.51) that described their job profile was elicited. Content analysis show that counselors want to focus on student problems and issues, while parents and teachers want them to undertake academic advising, student discipline, conflict resolution, crises intervention, career choice and guidance. The school administration and students expect them to liaise, handle admissions and conduct staff enrichment programs. They prefer counselors who give low priority for advocacy, equity and child rights or community issues, which is what counselors themselves want to do. In totality, the wide disparities between the ascribed, expected and actual roles of school counselors are at a risk if compared to their optimal job performance in Indian school settings.

Keywords: Expected Job Profile, School Psychologists, International School.

Following orders from the Supreme Court of India and the Ministry of Human Resources Development, Government of India (MHRD-GoI), a famous R K Raghavan Committee was constituted, which recommended, among other things, the deployment of counselors in secondary and senior secondary schools. It mandated arrangement for a specified number of regular and periodic psychological counseling sessions per year for every student till they exit school with involvement of parents and teachers during such exercises. While these recommendations have been translated into repeated 'circulars' from Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE, 2012), much has been practiced only in the context of preventing ragging in educational institutions. School counseling must address on 'building self-concept, self-image, acceptability, ability to withstand pressures, sense of enterprise, sportsmanship' within the larger learning process appears to have been relegated to the background (CURE, 2007).

Since, the early call given by Fletcher & Riddle (1962), the status of advocacy counseling (Kiselica & Robinson, 2001), clinical counseling (Carlson, Jain & Ramirez, 2009) and school counseling in India continues to remain a bud that has never blossomed (Soliman, 1991). Professionals in the field, if there are any, remain an assorted lot and continue their paper debates or explorations of the western models for counseling in the local context to no avail (Romano, Goh & Wahl, 2005). School counseling has great potential to help students achieve high standards in their academic, career, personal and social growth (House & Martin, 1998). With the advent of Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE, 2009), the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act (PWD, 1995), the United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2007) and such other national or international instruments, the directive for employment of resource teacher or special educator (an indigenous euphemism for school counselor) are laid down. Such personnel are held responsible for demonstrating their roles and responsibilities, along with justification for their existence in regular school systems

currently dominated by mainstream teachers and administrators (Adelman, 2002; Remley & Herlihy, 2001).

School counselors are often seen as a subsidiary to the mission of schools. They are not included as an integral part of the school system. School counselors and what they do are topics that are conspicuously missing in many instances. This omission is an enormous mistake especially for students who are different, disadvantaged, fast or slow, over achieving or underachieving, and those who are marginalized, or are in the minority. The seminal job and critical role of school counselor is to promote equity, opportunities, and protect the child rights (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Bemak, 2000). There is research documenting that students are more academically successful in schools if the school counselor's action is limited (Whiston & Sexton, 1998). Instead, there is evidence that students are negatively impacted as a result of counselor inaction (Schneider & Stevenson, 1999). The status-role of school counselors is ambiguous in many countries. It is bound to be more so in India (Kodad & Kazi, 2014; Arulmani, 2007; Kashyap, 2004; Unnithan, 1986).

The scenario of professional school counseling in India is pathetic. There are no known university level academic programs as yet available with exclusive focus on this professional pursuit. Usually, post graduates in allied fields, such as, psychology (educational, child, clinical or applied), social work, human development, sociology, or other humanities don the role of school counselors. A Post Graduate Diploma Course in Guidance and Counseling offered by National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), New Delhi, under MHRD-GoI, since 1958, is deemed as the closest to an official program authorized for the profession (Joneja, 2006). The objective of the course is to prepare counselors for providing guidance services for students at secondary and senior secondary levels. It is claimed that nearly over a 1200-1500 counselors were trained in this program through 39 batches till 2000. A report on program evaluation of this course found that only half of the candidates who completed the training were actually on jobs that was somewhat linked to students and counseling. Further, they were all reported to be available only in Delhi. Many of them carried out predominantly career guidance work and did not possess affiliation to professional body for certification, revalidation or job advancement (Joneja, 2006). In recent years, this course has been replaced by an International Diploma Course in Guidance and Counseling through Distance/Online Mode in their spirit to focus on needs of developing countries, providing opportunity for multi-cultural interactions, and exposure to prospective trainees for alternate strategies (NCERT, 2014).

For GoI, regular or mainstream schools are subsumed under MHRD (formerly known as Ministry of Education) and issues pertaining to children with special needs are addressed by the 'disability wing' under Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (formerly known as Ministry of Welfare). This bifurcation is disadvantageous for activists seeking interventions on matters such as collective identity of school counselors, their shared goals, resource training, and accreditation, which fall under the domains that require inter-ministerial coordination. Other available short term, long term courses and professional affiliation, although not directly linked to school counseling is available at few universities, private institutions and non-government organizations in the country such as the Indian Association of School Counselors (IISP), Banjara Academy (BA, Bangalore), Indian Institute of Counseling (IIC; Hyderabad), The Global Institutes (TGI, Kolkata), Association of Indian School Counselors & Allied Professionals (AISCAP, New Delhi), Counseling Association of India (CAI, Jaipur), Expressions India (EI, New Delhi), Association for Professional Counseling Psychologists (APCP, Tiruvalla) (Ramalingam, 2013; 2011; Kannan, 2009; Sinha, 2006; Paliwal, 1984). Against this background of a dire need, the general aim of this study is to survey the professional status of school counselors in India. The 3-fold specific objectives of the study are:

To undertake an internet based survey on the stated availability of school counselors in high schools affiliated to international and national level curriculum located in Karnataka;

To elicit the expected job tasks of school counselors as profiled by themselves as well

as key stakeholders such as parents, students, fellow teachers and administrators in high schools affiliated to international and national level curriculum located in Karnataka; and,

To enlist the actual, on-site or ground level subjective reports on the job tasks from school counselors themselves working in high schools affiliated to international and national level curriculum located in Karnataka.

Method

This exploratory study combines a cross sectional randomized survey design with free flowing questionnaires, open ended interview techniques, field observation, focus group discussions and workshop mode interactions. The key variables involved in this study are defined below.

Operational Definitions:

Expected Job Profile vs. Actual Job Performance:

An 'expected job profile' refers to a list of key tasks or work functions that are deemed as expected of an employee occupying a status-role position. It encompasses prescribed duties, qualifications, competencies, skill sets, roles and responsibilities for that job position. They are depicted in straight forward, actionable format of current goals, challenges, deliverables and expectations. In contrast, 'actual job performance', which refers to the tasks seemingly reported by the incumbent in the position as being carried out on-site. In short, the two terms depict the expected versus the actual.

School Counselor:

A specialty that combines application of psychology to education and working in schools to provide for academic achievement, career development, academic readiness and personal-social competencies in students at all grade levels through a systematic school counseling program. It is not to be confused with social workers, special educators, school psychologists, vocational or guidance mentors, school counselors form a vital part of the education team. There are several things that school counselors typically perform. It includes individual counseling and advise, consultation, student appraisal, parent appraisal, referral, individualized program planning, career development, work as change agents in school environment, provide crisis intervention, resolve inter-student conflicts, coordinate between staff-administration, indulge in advocacy, community liaison, screening and identification of students at risk or those who are vulnerable, marginalized and disadvantaged.

International School:

The term international is a privilege tag adopted by many schools in the state to identify themselves as institutions that provides world class education in an global environment either by adopting a curriculum like the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE), International Baccalaureate (IB), Edexcel or Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) or by following a national curriculum different from that of the school's country of residence. By default, they are expected to be members of the Council of International Schools, International School Services and/or European Council of International Schools. Transferability of the students' education across international schools is a distinct contrast from state or public schools, multinational or multilingual student body. An international curriculum, accreditation, non-selective pupil enrolment, ideal staff-student ratios and infrastructure are some of the mandated criteria for any institution to be truly tagged by the nomenclature. In this study, this term refers to a sample of institutions who have tagged the word 'international' to the primary title even though they follow national curriculum frameworks such as Council for the Indian School Certificate Examination (CISCE) and Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), New Delhi. These programs of study are different and distinct from those offered by various Boards of Education in India and/or National Institute of Open Schooling, which is excluded from the ambit of this study.

Sample:

There are two kinds of samples that are recruited in this study: institutions and individuals. The institutional sample targeted for this investigation is high schools named and/or affiliated to international and national

level curriculum, but located in Karnataka. They include: Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas (JNV) and Kendriya Vidyalayas (KV) run under the aegis of MHRD, Government of India. The objective of JNVs is to provide good quality modern education between classes VI-XII for talented children from rural areas without regard to their socio-economic status of their family. The objective of KVs is to pursue excellence, innovation and cater to educational needs of children of transferable Central Government employees by providing a common program of education. There are nearly 30 JNVs and 35 KVs in Karnataka. Both these types of schools are affiliated to CBSE. Apart from these two categories of schools, this study also targeted another random sample of 'International Schools' (N: 40) affiliated to CBSE, ICSE or IGCSE located in Karnataka. On the other hand, the individual sample of respondents covered in this study (N: 74) included administrative staff (N: 12), high school teachers (N: 18), parents (N: 17), students (N: 13) and school counselors (N: 14) themselves.

Tools:

The 'Internet Survey Schedule' comprised of a data elicitation sheet to collect details on the name of school, its address, affiliation, staff strength, designation of staff members (especially those titled as school counselor/s) and their related details of functions or emoluments (if any).

The 'Individual Survey Schedule' was an open-ended multi-pronged need based questionnaire given to respondents to elicit their knowledge, opinion, impressions and attitude on or about school counselors. Apart from seeking personal demographic details, the tool contained questions on whether they have ever seen, read, heard or experienced interactions with school counselors, and if so, what they thought or expected that such professionals do or ought to do, what could or would be their educational qualifications, job profile, duties, functions and responsibilities in the context of regular or mainstream schools. Also, questions on whether there was any need at all for such posts in school settings were included and how it was perceived by students, parents, fellow teachers, administrators or other stakeholders . Some items in the tool also sought to elicit their apprehensions, interest or inclination, if any, to receive training or take over such roles or responsibilities. The questionnaire was pilot tested on five respondents, viz., high school student, school counselor, parent, teacher and school administrator. Following this exercise some items were re-phrased, others were added, deleted or modified.

Procedure:

Apart from high school students and parents, the study sample was also drawn from three batches of 57 participants attending the 2-3 days orientation programs that is regularly carried out for in-service school counselors pursuing their International Post Graduate Diploma in Guidance and Counseling offered by Regional Institute of Education under National Council of Educational Research and Training, New Delhi, at Department of Clinical Psychology, All India Institute of Speech and Hearing, under Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India (MH&FW-GOI), located at Mysore, Karnataka, India, during the period between 2012-2013.

During the contact program, the participants are delivered didactic lectures, power point presentations, interact with clinical sample of parents or their children with academic problems, learning disabilities, emotional-conduct disturbances, sensory impairments, etc. The occasion and opportunity prior to the induction and pre-testing ceremonies associated with such programs was used to collect data from respondents included in this study. Wherever possible, a separate brain storming and focus group discussion, open ended interview techniques, field observation, and workshop interactions was also carried out between an anchor, parents, teachers, school counselors, administrators and other stakeholders on the topic for investigation in this study. Informed consent and assurance of confidentiality was ensured as mandated by the ethical practices followed in the Institute (Venkatesan, 2009).

The responses were recorded verbatim before compiling them into discrete and meaningful categories for data analysis and

Table 1. Distribution of Counselors and Special Educators across Schools in Karnataka

Type	Number	CBSE	ICSE	IGSCE	Special Educators	Counselors
JNV	28	28	-	-	-	-
KV	33	33	-	-	-	-
IS	40	7	28	5	7	19
TOTAL	101	68	28	5	7	19

[JNV: Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya; KV: Kendryia Vidyalaya; IS: International School]

statistical treatments. The content of transcripts were listed into objective observable-measurable terms as the expected vis-à-vis actual job tasks of school counselors as profiled by the various respondents. Another list was prepared for the actual or ground level on the job tasks, their impressions on the issues or challenges as reported by school counselors themselves. While such sorting was conducted, they were checked for agreement measures between two mutually blinded observers based on the glossary prepared for this purpose. The classified list combined expectations as well as the actual duties or functions as reported by the respondents.

Results and Discussion

The results are presented sequentially in distinction, but have inter-related sections: (i) Internet based survey on availability of school counselors; (ii) Job tasks as profiled by key stakeholders; and, (iii) Content analysis of respondent reports.

(a) Internet based survey on availability of school counselors:

Out of the 101 schools inspected on their official websites, it was seen that only 19 school counselors were listed on staff rolls of 40 'International Schools' (IS). There were no school counselors listed while surveying the 28 JNVs and 33 KVs. It is also interesting to note that out of the 40 IS that were surveyed, seven were affiliated to CBSE and 28 of them had ICSE pattern of curriculum. A mere five of the IS were truly linked to an international level curriculum (Table 1). Ideally, school counselors in IS (if they are true to their affiliation) must uniquely address student issues emerging across the country, cultural or linguistic transitions and migrations, which apparently does not seem to be so from the results of this study (Inman, Ngoubene-Atioky, Ledany & Mack, 2009; Fitch, Newby, Ballestero & Marshall, 2001). There are few studies on the prevalence of psychologists in schools (Jimerson et al. 2009).

(b) Job tasks as profiled by key stakeholders:

On the whole, the overall sample of 74 respondents in this study have listed 1000 (Mean: 13.51) job role expectations for school counselors. Among them, the school counselors have highest number of role behavior expectations about themselves (N: 14; Total: 236; Mean: 16.86). This is followed by greater number of job role behavior expectations by fellow teachers (N: 18; Total: 269; Mean: 14.94), parents (N: 17; Total: 225; Mean: 13.24), administrators (N: 12; Total: 153; Mean: 12.75) and least by the students (N: 13; Total: 117; Mean: 9.00) respectively (Table 2).

Table 2. Job Expectations from School Counselors

Focus	SNo	Response	Admin. (N:12)	Teachers (N:18)	Parents (N:17)	Students (N:13)	Self (N:14)	Total (N:74)	Rank
Student	1	Academic advising	7	12	15	3	7	**44**	**4**
	2	Career choice, training, counseling and guidance	5	13	14	7	10	**49**	**2**

	3	Communication and soft skill training	1	14	9	5	8	**37**	**7**
	4	Conducting aptitude, intelligence or other psycho-educational testing	2	7	2	2	4	**17**	
	5	Conflict resolution	6	13	13	3	8	**43**	**5**
	6	Crisis counseling and interventions	4	12	14	7	13	**50**	**1**
	7	Foster leadership qualities in students	7	8	4	4	7	**30**	**12**
	8	Help pupils adjust to classroom or school life	1	7	6	3	5	**22**	**19**
	9	Impart goal setting, study habits and time management skills in students	4	11	9	5	6	**35**	**8**
	10	Improve mental health and well being of pupils	-	3	3	1	5	**12**	
	11	Individual student issues, concerns and counseling	3	7	4	2	8	**24**	**16**
	12	Monitoring and mentoring	2	7	8	2	3	**22**	**19**
	13	Placement activities	-	4	2	4	6	**16**	
	14	Screening students for targeted problems or issues	3	8	4	2	7	24	16
	15	Tackle behavior problems and discipline issues of children at school	9	13	12	4	11	**49**	**2**
	16	Vocational guidance	1	4	5	2	6	18	
Manage-ment	1	Act as channel for flow of information among teachers, principal and management	10	3	2	1	3	**19**	
	2	Coordinate and ensure smooth functioning of day-to-day activity management	9	7	6	2	4	**28**	14
	3	Coordinating and promoting student clubs, groups, and cultural events	10	8	5	5	6	**34**	**10**
	4	Develop promotional and marketing activities to build brand name of school	8	2	2	1	2	**15**	
	5	Handling parents, student registrations and admission queries	11	2	3	-	-	**16**	

Category	#	Description							
	6	Liaison between management and teachers or staff	9	2	1	-	-	**12**	
	7	One to one or small group parent conferencing	7	6	7	2	7	**29**	13
	8	Psycho-education, enrichment or training programs for teachers and parents	5	9	12	2	11	**39**	6
	9	School administration	10	4	2	1	3	**20**	24
Teaching	1	Assist in classroom learning	3	6	2	1	1	**13**	
	2	Classroom presentations	1	5	2	3	2	**13**	
	3	Clinical or remedial teaching	1	9	12	4	9	**35**	8
	4	Consultations for or conduct of teacher training program	1	4	6	3	5	**19**	
	5	Examination, lunch room, hall or play ground supervision duties	5	12	7	2	2	**28**	14
	6	Substitute teaching	1	11	3	2	2	**19**	
	7	Transition planning and preparations	-	4	2	2	5	**13**	
Cause/ Commu- nity	1	Advocacy and community services	-	4	4	6	7	**21**	23
	2	Focus on at risk, CWSN, disadvantaged, marginalized, minority groups	-	9	4	8	11	**32**	11
	3	Highlight special issues like HIV/AIDS, drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, healthcare	-	3	4	4	5	**16**	
	4	Liaison with neighborhood schools	4	4	3	5	7	**23**	18
	5	Promotion of equity	-	3	4	3	8	**18**	
	6	Protection of child rights	-	4	3	2	8	**17**	
	7	Referrals	3	4	4	2	9	**22**	19
	8	Research	-	2	1	-	4	**7**	
		TOTAL	153	270	225	117	235	**1000**	
		MEAN	12.75	14.94	13.24	9.00	16.86	**13.51**	

Student Focus: 16; Community/Cause Focus: 8; Administrative/Management Focus: 9; Teaching Focus: 7

Table 3. Inter-correlations between respondents on Job Profiling for School Counselors

Respondent	Administrator (N: 12)	Teacher (N:18)	Parent (N: 17)	Student (N: 13)	Self (N: 14)	Total (N: 74)
Administrator	-					
Teacher	0.09	-				
Parent	0.15	0.79*	-			
Student	-0.22	0.52*	0.47*	-		
Self	-0.20	0.48*	0.62*	0.68*	-	
Total	0.31	0.86*	0.91*	0.62*	0.71*	-

*P<0.05

(c) Content Analysis of Respondent Reports:

Data on job role expectations listed by the five constituencies of respondents (students, administrators, fellow teachers, parents, and school counselors themselves) was analyzed against four focal activity dimensions reportedly targeted for the school counselors (student, management, teaching and cause/ community) in Table 3.

Counselor Self Perceptions:

It appears that school counselor's view their role allegiance is to focus on student activities, such as crises counseling and interventions, tackling their behavior problems and discipline issues, career choice, training and guidance. This is followed by their willingness to put a spotlight on problems or issues related to advocacy, community services, children at risk or special needs, promotion of equity and child rights. Their least preference, as also shown by Partin (1993) is for tasks involving clerical activities like handling parent/student registrations and admissions, liaison between management and teachers, developing promotional materials and marketing the brand name for the school, involving in substitute teaching, examination invigilation works, lunch room or play ground supervision duties (p<0.05).

Perception by Administration:

Contrasting the above, the school administration expects school counselors to undertake liaison activities between management and teaching staff, act as a channel for flow of information among teachers,

principal and management, handle parent/ student registrations and admission queries, or other matters related to general school running. The administration seems to be less concerned about matters related to societal causes, advocacy, child rights, equity for children with special needs and marginalized pupils being taken up by school counselors as part of their job (p>0.05). These findings are in contrast to futuristic role of counselors as perceived by school administrators in the west (Fitch, Newby, Ballestero & Marshall, 2001; Paisley & McMahon, 2001) where they are being expected to develop specialty in crisis intervention, assisting with transitions, and personal counseling.

Views of Parents & Fellow Teachers:

Parent and teacher respondents appear to share a view that the school counselor must essentially focus on student issues, such as, academic advising, career choice, training and guidance, crises counseling, conflict resolution, psycho-education, staff enrichment training, clinical or remedial teaching, tackling problem behaviors and ensuing student discipline. They prefer school counselors to give low priority for working on advocacy, child rights, social causes or other community based issues, problems related to school administration and perform management related activities (p <0.05). These findings match with related studies in the field (Ginter & Scalise, 1990; Wilgus & Shelley, 1988).

Student Notions:

It is interesting to note that high school students hold a radically different expectation of their counselors from what is reported in western studies (Remley & Albright, 1988). They anticipate school counselors would rather

focus on matters related to career choice, training and guidance, crises counseling and interventions, pay attention to children with special needs, disadvantaged or marginalized students, undertake advocacy or community services and so on. Students do not wish to see the school counselor as someone who carries out psychological tests, helps them to adjust to classroom or school life, improve their mental health, monitor or mentor them, act as channel or flow of information to teachers, management and parents, handle their problem behaviors and discipline issues. Further, they do not want school counselors to undertake substitute teaching, or assist in classroom learning ($p < 0.05$).

(d) Qualitative Impressions:

To cap it all, a perusal of the corpus of interview reports, group discussions, one-to-one or small group interactions with and between key respondents in this study highlighted the following impressions, which may admittedly require further empirical exploration in the Indian context.

1. There appears to be a generic impression among parents, teachers and students that school counselors work as 'spy', 'agents' to 'execute the hidden agenda' of school administration or management;

2. Call by whatever the name, it is believed that school counselors are basically the same as special educators, social workers, or school psychologists;

3. It is felt that most school counselors appear to wear a façade of 'all knowing' experts wanting to guide or monitor students as well as fellow teachers;

4. Students carry a notion that the school counselor is a 'shrink' to be better avoided to prevent the stigma or insults that come from teachers and fellow students after visits to their chamber;

5. There is a veiled threat all around that if one does not perform or behave well, they might be referred for a couple of sittings with the school counselor;

6. School counselors report that parents resist or delay referrals to experts or specialist institutions for fear or ignorance that their child may get branded as 'crazy', 'different' or 'alien';

7. School counselors believe that staff enrichment programs are viewed as 'unnecessary ritualistic burden' which takes away the teachers holiday time and imposes new constraints;

8. School counselors are seldom given a separate physical or work station, privileges, incentives and/or the pay parity that they deserve as allocated to trained graduate or post graduate teachers;

9. Management representatives believe that there are no formal university awarded educational qualifications, which may be taken as yardstick for employment of school counselors;

10. Even though university awarded graduate and post graduate programs in education carry a paper or two on educational psychology, there is really no hard core exposure for teacher trainees on topics related to counseling psychology, learning disabilities or on kids with different needs, etc

11. Even if recruited, there is little assurance that school counselors stay on the job for a long time. The employee turnover or attrition rate for school counselors is allegedly high;

12. Parents assume that counselors are used by teachers and the management as filter spots or ruse to rusticate problem kids out of school in due course of time;

If professional identity is taking pride in pursuing a given line of work (Remley and Herlihy, 2001), then it must be surmised that such a thing for school counseling is just beginning to appear in India (Gibson et al., 2012; Agresta, 2004). There is continued uncertainty and disagreement among school counselors themselves about their specific status-role functions in regular school settings (Cobia & Henderson, 2003; Burnham & Jackson, 2000). Since, the mainstream school is a junction for several stakeholders including administrators, fellow teachers, parents and children, there appears to be considerable

difference in the role perception about school counselors by every one of them. The teacher's role is didactic, curriculum or subject-based and evaluative. The administrator's role is evaluative, judgmental, managerial and also as disciplinarian (Sklare, 2005). A parent's role is consumptive, guardianship and recipient of education services for and on behalf of their wards-who is the ultimate beneficiary. This being so, the counselor's role must be viewed as facilitative, non-judgmental, confidential, goal-oriented, protective and change-focused social agent. If these terms and conditions are misunderstood, it is likely that other perceptions will convey their unwillingness to view school counselors as equally competent professionals or as agents for educational reform (Dahir, 2004; House & Hayes, 2002).

Consequently, others tend to view school counselors as substitute teachers, quasi-administrators or as necessary to be involved in non-counseling tasks like examination or invigilation duties, counting or collecting answer scripts, teaching special elective courses, time or attendance keepers, record assistants or paper filing clerks thereby severely hindering their main role (Perera-Diltz & Matson, 2008; Perusse et al. 2004). In the West, school counseling has advanced to mandatorily address on issues like student-counselor ratio, opportunity cost of non counseling or super-specialty areas like kindergarten counseling, promotion of equity and child rights, advocacy, students with multi-cultural issues, CWSN, disadvantaged and marginalized populations, teenage pregnancy, HIV, childhood suicide, sudden death, drug-alcohol abuse, physical-sexual abuse, school shootings, kidnaps, fire mishaps, building collapses, hurricanes and terrorist threats (Barrett, Lester & Durham, 2011; Stone & Dahir, 2006; Farber, 2005; Sears & Granello, 2002).

Despite all this, reports from advanced nations show that school counselors spent more than three fourths of their time on paper work, face threats to their jobs owing to budget cuts, skyrocketing caseloads, the creation of graduation 'mentors', 'coaches' or 'technicians', owing to use of outdated, inappropriate labels that misidentify school counselors and school counseling programs (as guidance or pupil personnel services), or owing to others questioning the purpose and value of such positions (DeKruyf, Augur, & Trice-Black, 2013; Baker, 2001; Brott & Myers, 1999). Contrasting this scenario in the West, wherein school counselors have an advanced and established professional identity, national/ regional level accreditation, licensure, job growth, defined roles, laid out responsibilities and job tasks and systematized graduate training programs, the Indian scenario is far laggard and dismal (Lieberman, 2004). Additionally, these trends forewarn the promises and possibilities in store for the profession even in our country. The scene in India requires such professionals even to tackle a simpler recommendatory list of equally important issues like study habits, academic achievement of students, drop outs, absenteeism and attendance rates, career planning, school safety, etc.

Conclusion

In sum, this investigation has shown that the availability of school counselors is meager or almost next to none in high schools affiliated to international and national level curriculum located in Karnataka. Even wherein available, their expected or actual on-site job tasks as profiled by themselves as well as between parents, fellow teachers, students and administrators is ad hoc, ambiguous, arbitrary and often other directed or at odds between one another. Such a predicament appears to allow the other stakeholders to infringe into the professional territory of school counselors and make out an agenda about what they ought to do or ought not to do.

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