
GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING:

The Helping Relationship

Paul Peter Sultana

The words 'helping relationship' are often used by teachers, counsellors, welfare and social workers, psychotherapists and doctors to characterize their services.

No doubt the words are meaningful to their users but are they to others? The phrase a 'helping relationship' is deceptively straight-forward; most of us understand that 'helping' means aiding while 'relationship' means some sort of 'bond'.

Counsellors and the helping professions (psychiatry, psychology etc), are interested in the behaviour of people — living, feeling, knowing, understanding people — and in their attitudes, motives, ideas, responses and needs. The helping persons think of individuals as people seeking to discover the substance of life in this world, seeking to feel comfortable about themselves and other people and to meet life's demands productively.

Most of us realise that a dozen different revolutions are taking place in industry, education, medicine, and science. They are profoundly affecting every field of human activity: transportation, communication, merchandizing, marketing, health, weather control, the substance and structure of work and home life. We live in a time known for its application of scientific knowledge and advanced technology. Indeed

"The visible world is no longer a reality and the unseen world is no longer a dream" (W.B. Yeats.)

The focus, nowadays, is upon the use of automated equipment in communication, industry and education — some label our era the "computerized age". In the process man as a social animal is being forgotten; he is carried with the flow of the tide.

Society does not seem to realise the fantastic and frightening paradox it confronts. We are able to control and improve everything except the one element that may spell the doom of the human race. Huge sums of money are spent to enable people to live better and longer, to enjoy leisure and to take full advantage of brilliant technology. But whether people survive and improve depends upon the resolution of man's differences with himself and his fellow man. It is to be hoped that while man's attention is directed to the machine, changes will occur which will fundamentally enrich his relationships with his fellows.

Despite technological progress, man's essential and perennial problems remain: Who am I? How did I become the way I am? Am I normal? What is good? What is reality? Of what value is life? How can I be more productive? More sensible? Happier? Guidance and Counselling try to answer these, and other, questions.

They try to make one aware of oneself and of one's environment and so become more effective and happier in life. This service is available in many Government Schools.

What do we mean by Guidance and Counselling? Guidance is the process of helping individuals to understand themselves and their world. It is a process because guidance is not a single event but involves a series of actions or steps progressing towards a goal. By it students come to know who they are as individuals; become aware of their personal identity; perceive clearly the nature of their person, experience their world, the aggregate of surroundings and the people with whom they interact, more deeply and completely.

The purpose of guidance is to give greater self awareness to individuals who thus become more effective more productive and happier human beings.

A Guidance programme offers these services:

1. An *appraisal* service which is designed to collect, analyse and use a variety of objective and subjective personal, psychological and social data about each student for the purpose of better understanding students as well as assisting them to understand themselves.

2. An *informational* service which is designed to provide students with a greater knowledge of educational, vocational and personal-social opportunities so that they may make better informed choices and decisions in an increasingly complex society.

3. A *counselling* service which is designed to facilitate self-understanding and self-development through dyadic or small group relationships. The major focus of such relationships tends to be upon personal development and decision making that is based on self-understanding and knowledge of the environment.

4. A *planning, placement, and follow-up* service, which is designed to enhance the development of students by helping them select and utilize opportunities within the school and in the outside labour market.

Counselling is very much akin to Guidance — sometimes the meanings of the two words overlap. 'Counselling' is a word used by many to describe what they do; dictionary definitions stress advice and mental exchange of ideas. H.B. and A.C. English in a *Comprehensive Dictionary of Psychological and Psychoanalytical Terms* define counselling as "a relationship in which one person endeavours to help another to understand and to solve his adjustment problems" — whether educational, vocational or personal. There are, however, different definitions of counselling which reflect some of the subtle differences that have been emphasized or have evolved over the years.

The author prefers this definition of Counselling: "Counselling is an interaction process which facilitates meaningful understanding of self and environment and results in the establishment and/or clarification of goals and values for future behaviour".

The central purpose of School Counselling is to assist students to explore and understand themselves so that they can become self-directing individuals. In the security of the counselling relationship, the clients are able to explore the dynamics and interrelationships among their feelings, their values, their perceptions of others, their interpersonal relationships, their fears, and their life choices. From this exploration comes insight, self-understanding, role-clarification, planning and changes in behaviour. Many School Counsellors would agree that the desired outcome of counselling is self-realization and self-direction on the part of the student-client.

A word on confidentiality would not be amiss. School Counsellors know full well that 'confidentiality' — or professional secret — is sacred

for a sound and reliable Guidance-Counselling relationship between the helper and the helped. Nothing, whatsoever, that is entrusted in full confidence is divulged by a School Counsellor.

The Guidance and Counselling Services are meant to help students in understanding the variety, depth and breadth of personal experiences, the opportunities available, and the choices open to them by helping them recognize, interpret and act upon personal strengths and resources. Their major purpose is to facilitate the personal development of students — they form the 'helping relationship' par excellence!

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