

PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL  
CONSULTATION PROCEDURES

by

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ABSTRACT

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The ever-changing role of the school counselor has created a need for school counselors to acquire various skills to adapt to a changing school environment. For decades, the counselor position has been a dumping ground for new program and administrative responsibilities. The affective interaction within the school environment is crucial to the success or failure of the organization as a whole. Therefore, the effectiveness of the counselor's role as consultant is an integral component of being a school counselor. Developmental guidance counselor models and

consultation strategies and techniques are explored to help define the role and expectations of the school counselor.

The enactment of legislation and standards increasingly helps shape the role and responsibilities of the school counselor. Recommendations have been made to school counselors, counselor preparation programs, and school districts to improve consultation procedures and to better meet the increasing needs of students. Counselor preparation programs, which have been under scrutiny for the past several decades, have made strides to improve consultation skills in counselor trainees as new issues face counselors each day. Further recommendations have been made to increase the quality of new graduates as school counseling programs throughout Wisconsin are investigated in the area of school consultation training.

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## CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction

The affective interaction within the school environment is crucial in the success or failure of the organization as a whole. Within this organization, members find themselves taking on various roles and responsibilities, none more important than the function of the consultant. The term consultant means many things to different people. Consultation is a triadic relationship between consultant (school counselor), a consultee (teacher, administrator or parent) and a third party, which would be the client being served. Bergan and Kratchwill (1990) define consultation as an indirect form of a service delivery system that involves the problem solving efforts between consultant and the consultee who is responsible for some education or behavior change.

School based consultation is a critical component of ensuring students receive the best education possible based on their individual needs. Aubrey (1982) stressed the significance of changing practices of consultation as a result of Public Law 94-142 which would mean the need for school counselors to act as consultants would dramatically increase. The responsibility lies in the hands of the entire school organization to find an effective way to work with special needs students. The importance of consultant facilitative skills is vital to the success of the consultation process.

Additionally important are the strategies and methods used by the consultant. An article by Hall and Lin (1994) examined the current models and strategies of consultation procedures. They identified some of the limitations surrounding current practices for various models. Hall and Lin identified three main limitations. The first limitation is that the concept of consultation is not clearly defined within the organization. The second limitation is consultation models are scattered across a variety of approaches. Finally there is a lack of formal training of counselors in consultation. The authors proposed an integrative framework that provides a theory-based, systematic, and eclectic approach to consultation.

Weisenberger, Fine and Piggio (1982) conducted a study to investigate the relationship between five variables: perceived consultant facilitativeness; life position; teacher dogmatism; years of experience; and, the number of consultations per year. Questionnaires were distributed to 149 experienced classroom teachers enrolled in graduate level courses at the University of Kansas. Results of the study indicated a significant relationship between consultant facilitative characteristics and teacher-reported satisfaction, strength, and problem resolution after a typical consultation experience. The teacher view of the consultant as warm, empathic and understanding was a major reason for the perceived success.

Counselor training in the area of school based consultation has undergone certain scrutiny in research articles. With the increased demand on the counselor to take on this role within the school environment, there is a seemingly growing gap between the training of the counselors and the increased demand for this skill. Brown, Spano and Schulte (1988) raised concerns that students are graduating without proper preparation due to the small amount of time devoted to consultation in their programs. Counselors are finding added stresses in their jobs as a result of increasing and often contradictory demands from staff for their services combined with a lack of proper training.

Numerous studies have investigated the effectiveness of consultation procedures and techniques most commonly used by consultants in educational settings. Attempts have been made by researchers to formulate consultation theories and models to improve the consultation process. The hope is that the result of this study may help counselors identify a consultation strategy that works for them and to employ a systematic methodology to improve their effectiveness as a counselor, as well as to identify current comprehensive school counselor training programs in Wisconsin.

Kruger (1997) identified Teacher Assistance Teams (TAT) as another important form of a collaborative school relationship. The success of the TAT was strongly related to the effectiveness of the consultant and the support of the organization to facilitate innovations (Kruger, 1997). The system theory approach of consultation places more emphasis on the role of the organization rather than the individual consultant, whereas the team approach requires only a few members of a selected team, usually parties directly related to the situation, to participate in the consultation. In a team approach, staff dissatisfied with the situation are less likely to work collaboratively than in system theory approach where a more global response is taken within the organization (Ostroff, 1992). If members are dissatisfied with the relationship within the group, the group will not function effectively. Also important to recognize from the research by Kruger is the feeling of alienation TAT members incurred when social support within the organization was not present in the consultation procedures.

Another related study on Teacher Assistance Teams examined the social supports around the collaborative projects. Guidance, reliable alliance, and reassurance of worth were support areas in comparing TAT participant self-efficacy with respect to overall problem solving skills and planning and evaluating interventions for students with behavior problems (Kruger, 1997). The researcher felt it was important to examine the relationship between problem solving and self-efficacy. Results of a regression analysis indicate social support had a significant relationship to self-efficacy in problem solving indicating the importance of understanding the interpersonal elements of the consultation (Kruger, 1997). “Collaborative problem solving efforts among school personnel is an important element in the reform of public schools and a potential antidote to the isolation that many teachers experience” (Fullan, 1991).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Current roles and functions of the school counselor are ever changing. School counselors are finding themselves in a newly defined role as consultants within the school environment. The concern therein lies with current trends in counselor preparation programs. Training school counselors as consultants throughout Wisconsin to effectively function in newly defined roles is integral to counselor preparation programs.

### **The Purpose of this Study**

The purpose of this study is twofold. The first is to examine the changing role of the school counselor as consultant. The second is to examine current Wisconsin counselor preparation programs specifically in the area of school consultation. A comprehensive review and analysis of the literature will provide a foundation to formulate recommendations for future school counselors.

### **Limitations**

The major limitation of this study is the limited generalizations that can be made as a result of this study. Part of the research the study is based on is regionalized to Wisconsin universities and colleges that currently have a school counseling program. This will in effect limit the generalizations of the study to other parts of the nation.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Behavior Consultation** - An indirect form of service delivery that involves the problem solving efforts between mental health specialists and one or more persons who are responsible for providing psychological or educational assistance to a third party.

**Consultee** - Refers to the person utilizing the consultation service to assist in working more effectively with a third party.

**Consultation Facilitativeness** - Refers to the level of regard, empathic understanding, congruence and unconditionality of the consultant.

**School Consultation** - Refers to the consultation procedures based in the organizational structure of the school.

**School Consultant** - Refers to the counselor or other professional acting as the consultant within the school organization.

**Teacher Assistance Teams** - A group of individuals in a school focusing their problem solving efforts on changing behaviors of difficult to work with students.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Literature Review

#### **Introduction**

School based consultation has presented itself in the forefront of the educational environment. The success or failure of the organization rests on the ability of the school to

effectively meet the needs of the students, parents, and staff. Roles and job responsibilities have constantly been shifting as a result of new social and emotional needs of students, educational concerns and legislative measures to ensure a quality and equal education for all. The outcome is the increased need for effective school based consultation. These issues magnify the need for consultation within the school and this responsibility often rests on the shoulders of the school counselor. Over time, many of the newly developed programs and responsibilities such as testing coordinator for standardized testing and high stakes graduation tests, 504 coordination, curriculum development, comprehensive school health programs, crisis teams and other similar school programs have been dropped on school counselors. To determine counselor effectiveness and the efficiency of counseling strategies and models, we must first examine the changing roles of the school counselor.

### **Changing Roles**

School based consultation is a critical component of ensuring that students receive the best education possible based on their individual needs. Aubrey (1982) stressed the significance of the changing practices of school based consultation as a result of legislative safeguards to prevent discrimination in educational services within the school environment. The enactment of Public Law 94-142 made major changes in the educational process as federal mandates put the responsibility of educating all school aged children to the school systems. PL 94-142 is better known as the Individual with Disabilities Education Act and is a major legislative work making it illegal to deny an education to a person with a disability. Schools developed special needs programs to assist persons with disabilities in the education environment.

Societal events have continually changed the role of the counselor over past years. The School-to-Work Opportunities Act of the 1990's created an increase of career curriculum and delivery, once again changing the expectations of the guidance departments in schools (Von Villas, 1995). Career counseling and life-long learning is now an expected component of developmental guidance programs in schools at all grade levels. Newly developed national and state standards and organizations involved in transforming the role of school counselors began to materialize, altering again the role of the school counselor (Campbell and Dahir, 1997). It seems as though everyone involved with schools has their own interpretation of what it is the school counselor is to do. Many administrations and principals still view the counselor as the person they had experiences with back when they were in school, not realizing in many instances that the role and training has changed dramatically over the years (Coy, 1999). Even school counselors vary from one to the next on what it is they are to be doing. With long-standing debate over the role and function of the school counselor it is clear that role definition, interpretation and implementation continues to be a cloudy subject. Two school counselor models developed in the 1990's will be outlined later in this paper. Both models have been identified as leading models for school counselors and will bring some direction and clarification of the role and function of school counselors.

In addition to School-to-Work programming, legislative and governmental actions and other programmatic implementations, students bring a multitude of challenges to schools today, and counselors address three core areas of student needs; personal/social, educational, and career (Paisley and Hubbard, 1994). Student needs must be addressed before students will be able to learn effectively. "Violence, gangs, suicide, child abuse, pregnancy, peer pressure, self-esteem, date rape, poverty, homelessness, dropping out, lack of skills, hunger, decision-making,

and decisions about post-secondary are concerns that can interfere with the learning process (Carlson and Lewis, 1998).” Students are arriving to schools with an array of issues pressing in their lives, understanding the quadratic formula and putting it into practice often is the farthest thing from their mind. Rather they are wondering if when they get home dad will get drunk again, push mom around and possibly get hit. Imagine trying to sit through a class and concentrate after a night like that in your house. School, classes and teachers tend to look a little different through tinted glasses such as these. These students require immediate and swift intervention and this puts additional demands on the counselor.

During the past several decades special education and pupil service programs flourished within schools. Teachers were trained on the strategies and techniques that had been developed over time to meet the unique learning needs of students who qualified for special educational services through IDEA laws. IDEA is a federally funded service, which means that with it comes a significant check and balance system to ensure the money allotted is being spent appropriately. Schools responded to the regulations with positions like pupil service coordinators and special educational teachers to monitor programs and students. In addition, regular education teachers are subsequently effected by having to provide unique services within the classroom to meet various student needs. Teachers who desire more information than typical pre-placement evaluations provided are requesting consultant services to ensure they are better equipped to meet the needs of the students which consequently increases the demands on the school counselor (Thurlow and Ysseldke, 1982).

Increased federal involvement over the past three decades has added to the changing educational environment. Such legislative acts as Family Education and Privacy Rights, PI-11 and pupil protection laws, and Section 504 have created many new responsibilities within the

school environment. What had transpired was this delicate ecosystem within the schools, where philosophical differences, legal adhesions and the needs of each student were attempting to blend into uniformity. In this fragile environment, it is crucial that there be an effective facilitation or orchestration of meeting the needs of the school. Although not all of the responsibilities fall on the shoulders of the school counselor, it does create the need for increased collaborative efforts between the numerous teams within the school environment. Pupil service and special education teams, comprehensive school health teams, curriculum development teams, regular education teams, M teams, school nurse, principal and administration, parents, and of course students, are just a few parts of the current education process. School counselors need to continually work in cooperation to ensure each student has the opportunity to an equal education. The need for effective collaboration and consultation within this ecosystem is the lifeline for the school. Counselors and psychologists are in many instances thrust into this role within the educational process.

Research has supported this latest trend dating back to the early years of the legislative movements. Kurpius (1978) indicated that school counselors have been assured that consultant's role would alleviate much of the role conflict and stress caused by the new demands on parents, administration, and staff. Counselors at various levels will experience stress as a result of the increase in demand for their service (Kurpius, 1978). Added to the increased needs of students is the need for teachers to feel connected to their school environment. Kruger and Struzziero (1995) investigated the relationship between organizational support and satisfaction with teacher assistance teams.

### **School Counselor Models**

School counselors have suffered to no end as a result of poorly defined, mis-interpreted role definition. School boards, administrators and counselors alike find themselves confused about the role and functions of the school counselor. Burnham and Jackson (2000) wrote an article published in ASCA Professional School Counseling Journal comparing two school counselor models widely accepted in the field, Myrick's 1993 Model and Gysbers and Henderson's 1994 Model. Both models are relatively new and provide a comprehensive overview of the expectations and functions of the school counselor.

Myrick's model of the developmental guidance program includes six interventions separated into two categories, direct and indirect services. The first is individual counseling. According to Myrick's model, 5-15% of counselor function should be in the area of individual counseling, that equates to 2-6 hours of individual counseling on a caseload basis. The second is small group counseling. Myrick highly recommends one to two weekly meetings with groups of 6-10 students for ongoing groups. This equates to 10-25% of weekly counselor functions. The next two interventions are in the area of classroom and large group guidance. There is no size limit for number of participants although it is recommended for 25-30 as a convenient size. Also recommended is that no more than 7-8% of a counselor's time is spent in this area. An assumption of Myrick's model is that delivery of the guidance curriculum will be provided through integration of regular instruction of classroom teachers.

The fifth intervention is consultation. Myrick defines this consultation as working with parents, teachers, administrators and other specialists within and outside of the school setting. Seven percent of counselor time is to be spent doing this activity. It has been reported that some counselors spend up to 50% of their time doing this, assuming that sometimes duties are better assigned to others. Coordination and consultation are often blended job duties when

counselors often report what they are doing, and not knowing how to separate the two. The final intervention counselors are involved with is peer facilitation, or training students to help other students. Myrick recommends 1-5 hours per week for the training and facilitation of programs. Myrick's model outlines, rather specifically, a weekly dissection of time spent doing the six various interventions of the school counselor. These are only recommendations but may serve as a viable tool to help counselors monitor their day to day operations (Burham & Jackson, 2000).

The second model is by Gysbers and Henderson. Unlike Myrick's model, Gysbers and Henderson's model breaks down the functions of the counselor into major components rather than interventions. Gysbers and Henderson identify four major components of guidance activities and one area of non-guidance activities. The first component is Guidance and Curriculum, which according to Gysbers and Henderson includes structured groups, consultation, and implementation of the guidance curriculum. Counselor time varies for this one from 15% for high school level and up to 50% for elementary counselors. The second major component is individual planning. Individual planning includes advisement, assessment, placement, planning and follow up. Five to thirty-five percent of time is allotted for this and the amount of time increases as the student moves toward the upper grade levels.

The next component is responsive services addressing immediate concerns of students, both prevention and intervention. This includes personal and individual counseling, small group counseling, crisis counseling, referrals and consultation as needed. Again time allocated varies from 15-40% dependent on grade level, 15% for high school and 40% for the primary level. The fourth and final component for counselor functions is the system support which includes tasks to operate, evaluate, and research program outcomes, manage tasks, coordinate

activities, and provide professional development and supervision of students. These tasks should take up 10-25% of counselor time according to the authors. The other category of Gysbers and Henderson's model is that of Non-guidance activities. These tasks do not fit under the four major components and so no time is allocated to perform these tasks. Gysber and Henderson do recommend a 80/20 split; 80% of time doing guidance activities and 20% doing non-guidance activities. In addition to the split, Gysbers recommended the non-guidance activities be reassigned entirely. (Burham & Jackson, 2000).

Having defined the role and function of the school counselor a little more specifically helps to identify the time demands on counselors. Both models identified consultation as a component of the counselors function and have allocated a sizable amount of time. These models also recognize the changing trends of the school counselor.

### **Public Law 94-142**

The enactment of Public Law 94-142 created numerous changes in the detail to which the educational process had to follow. Federal mandates placed the responsibility of educating all school aged children on the administration and staff of school districts. An overview of the legislative brush stroke will provide an understanding of the increased demands of school personnel. Public Law 94-142 or IDEA has a few key elements to the legislation. First, that it is an education act for all handicapped children, and the label of special education has to be specific to the criteria outlined by the law. Second, that PL94-142 states that education and related services for those who qualify are provided at no cost to the family and are the responsibility of the school to fund through federally allotted dollars. And third, and often

most controversial, education is provided on a need basis in the least restrictive environment specific to that child.

With the enactment of Public Law 94-142, numerous procedural safeguards were put in place to make sure rights were not violated, money was being proportioned efficiently and the school districts began taking affirmative steps to identify, evaluate and service students. Under IDEA, identification of any of the following disabilities entitles a student aged 3-22 years to a free appropriate education and related services in the least restrictive environment: mental retardation, deafness, hearing impairment, speech or language impairment, visual impairment, serious emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, blindness, specific learning disability, autism, traumatic brain injury, or multiple disabilities (Educational Advocacy for Youth with Disabilities, 2001). Any student meeting one of the stated disabilities is legally entitled to receive services, school districts must coordinate such services through outside agencies, personnel decision, training and certification and any other necessary means to provide the services for students.

Once identified, an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for each student is developed and monitored to ensure the school is meeting student needs. The collaboration of many people make this come about, the school counselor being one of them. Also involved are parents, regular and special education teachers, often times a pupil services coordinator, possibly a parent and student advocate, school nurse, and any other person that comes in contact with the student on a day to day basis. The IEP is reviewed annually and consists of specific social or emotional and educational objectives written into long and short term goals. Some of the services that may be outlined as a basis of the IEP may be tutoring, counseling, or

any other educational service needed to meet objectives of the IEP. It is a violation of the rights of the student when this does not take place, or the services are not followed through.

Thousands of court battles over the past two decades have increased awareness and heightened the sense of responsibility schools have to meet the needs of students. Wanting to avoid lawsuits at all costs, school districts have become hypersensitive to making sure student rights are not violated by finding people within their organizations to take on various responsibilities to make sure PL94-142 and other laws and procedural safeguards are being followed. Thus, the increased demand on the staff and changing roles of school personnel as a whole. With the increase in demands on the school counselor and psychologists, it is critical that they develop efficient consultation skills. The success and failure of the organization rests on the shoulders of the school consultants.

### **Consultation Strategies**

With the increased demand, research has been conducted to investigate the consultation facilitativeness of school consultation. Numerous studies have examined various consultation methods and strategies and compared them to facilitator effectiveness. In essence, researchers were attempting to see if counselors were effective as school consultants as they thought they were. In addition to consultation facilitativeness, the studies compared various consultation strategies for their effectiveness as well.

In a 1982 study, the relationship between teacher satisfaction, strength and problem resolution by the teacher and the effectiveness of the consultation was investigated (Fine, Poggio and Weissenberger, 1982). Questionnaires were distributed to 149 classroom teachers who were informed the purpose was to examine factors related to consultative outcomes in the school

setting. The questionnaire contained self-investigative measures to measure participant attitude, number of years teaching and number of consultation experiences.

Key outcomes were adopted as a result of the research. One of the desired outcomes of the consultation process is teacher satisfaction based on their confidence level to apply learned knowledge and handle future problems. The second key variable is that teachers believe a resolution to the problem is in progress.

Also identified in this study are some variables that effect the desired outcomes of the consultation process. The first is years of teaching experience, the second is teacher dogmatism, and the third is teacher existential life position. All of these seem common sense that satisfaction is difficult to attain when someone has a negative view of their job, the students or life in general. Years of experience was negatively related to perceived teacher strength as a result of the consultation, meaning the more years of teaching experience, the less likely they were to feel strengthened by the consultation process. Fine, Poggio and Weissenberger (1982) made the recommendations after their study to incorporate the human relationship and communication skills as components of teacher and consultant preparation programs. The success of the consultation process and consultant facilitativeness is a result of incorporating these factors.

Hall and Lin made similar remarks as a result of a 1994 study. They identified that communication skills are needed if consultation is to be effective, as interpersonal communication is the key ingredient in problem solving between consultant and consultee (Hall and Lin, 1994) . “Consultation is one of the primary responsibilities of the school counselor. The term consultation refers to the interactions between school counselors and significant adults in children’s lives, with the purpose of assisting them to function more effectively” (Thompson

and Rudolph, 1988). The importance of consultation in the school setting is more important today than ever. With the already identified role and responsibility changes and the increased needs of students, the use of effective school consultation models and strategies is vital. Even the most skilled consultant may have difficulty if they are not using an effective consultation framework. Theoretical frameworks and models have been developed over time, but some researchers argue that the concept of school consultation still lacks a clear definition.

Hall and Lin suggest, in their 1994 study, several limitations that impeded the success of earlier school based consultation models. The first is that the concept of consultation is not clearly defined. The second is that consultation models are used in combination with a variety of approaches. The third is a lack of formal training for counselors as consultants. Their 1994 study introduced an integrative approach to school based consultation. The theory behind this is that through the use of the integrative consultation framework, previous limitations would be avoided. The foundation for the integrative consultation theory to school based consultation is the importance of the consultation process being a systematic, theoretically based eclectic approach. A step by step framework with specifically identified roles and responsibilities for the consultant will eliminate the absence of a defined consultation concept. Additionally, according to Hall and Lin, this model can serve as a training apparatus for counselor and teacher preparation programs.

Another consultation model and strategy that has been researched is Ecological Consultation. Ehrhardt, Stollar and Reifin (1990) investigated the concern that consultants were not following carefully constructed treatment plans as a result of their consultation and therefore interventions never reached the children. Ehrhardt, Stollar and Reifin also wanted to examine both treatment integrity and the acceptability of the interventions by the consultee.

Although this study investigated consultations in the private sector, it applies the process as it pertains to school based consultation.

The innovative approach to consultation is obtained through the use of detailed scripts carefully diagrammed that build on ongoing interaction and routines of the clients and should only introduce radical changes for problem behaviors if the situations clearly require them (Ehrhardt, Stallar & Reifin, 1990). The intention of the scripts is to gain acceptability among teachers, parents, and students to use as a self monitoring tool during the treatment process. The use of scripts also allows consultants to observe clients and provide a foundation for constructive feedback to consultees. The entire study was conducted to develop a functional model for delivering services to preschool aged children with learning and behavior problems. Through the use of scripts, consultants were able to achieve acceptable, non-intrusive techniques to improve treatment intervention and acceptability from consultees. According to Ehrhardt, Stallar and Reifin, these case studies serve as evidence that the use of the ecological approach of using scripts created significant treatment results with a relatively quick changes in behavior for clients.

Probably the most researched approach to school based consultation is behavioral consultation. Noell and Witt performed a critical re-evaluation of five fundamental assumptions of behavioral consultation in 1996. An overview of the fundamentals will provide a foundation for understanding the behavioral consultation model. The first assumption is consultation is a superior use of resources when compared to direct intervention. What is meant is the consultative delivery service saves time and is more efficient than direct intervention, and secondly will be more effective because it will allow the consultee to implement interventions in the environment of the client. A final consideration is that it is the

only alternative due to the increased demands of competing responsibilities for school professionals.

The second assumption is consultation is most effective when done collaboratively. The importance here is on the relationship between the consultant and the consultee. The focus is on the co-equal status of the relationship felt by the consultee during the process of consultation. Erchul (1987) indicated contradictory reports that teachers exposed to direct consultation processes preferred the more direct approach, indications still lead back to the consultants interpersonal skills within the consultation. Other behaviorally oriented consultants are having success with a more prescriptive rather than collaborative perspective. In this style, it is not necessarily the consultant or consultee input, but rather the habilitative effects of the treatment that ultimately determines what is used (Noel & Witt, 1996). The consultee learns intervention techniques in this process and applies them to the environment of the client, making the consultee feel empowered and supported in the process.

The third assumption is that talking to teachers is sufficient to cause them to change their behaviors. Essentially, the assumption is that teachers will implement interventions as a result of the consultation processes. Although there is little empirical research to support this assumption, the consultee will implement intervention strategies based on the interactions of the consultation. Conversely, this is a weak foundation to base a behavioral change delivery system (Noell & Witt, 1996).

The fourth assumption of behavioral consultation is that teachers will generalize problem-solving skills learned as a result of consultation to new problem situations and other students. Supporting data indicates the success of behavior consultation can be measured in the decrease rate of psychoeducational evaluations for referred students by a consultee following

implementation of consultation recommendations (Gutkin, Henning-Stout & Piersel, 1988).

Although there are several limitations to the research conducted, such as the delivery model of the consultation was not controlled and there was no experimental control, only limited generalizations can be made to the accuracy of this assumption.

The fifth and final assumption is that direct contact between client and consultant is not necessary. This does not imply that the consultant has absolutely no type of contact with the client. In fact, many times teacher and consultant will each collect baseline data on a client through observations or review of records. It is empirical that consultants have an understanding into the identified problem behavior, situation, successes and failures of techniques attempted, and the environmental cues surrounding the situation. As a result, consultant and consultee must work together to establish a baseline of information on the client, but not necessarily through a one on one meeting with the student.

In summary, the five fundamental behavioral consultation assumptions examined have been around for 19 years, and over that time there is relatively limited research supporting the triadic model. Understanding the assumptions and their limitations may help to jump-start a revolution of sorts in the arena of school based behavioral consultation.

Behavioral consultation assessment through interview is a commonly used technique by school consultants. This method of behavioral consultation refers to the use of a designed set of questions during the initial interview of the consultee. Many consultants view this initial interview as the most important and challenging element of the consultation process (Witt & Elliot, 1983). The purpose of the initial interview is to operationalize problem behaviors to allow them to be observed, measured and eventually changed. The initial interview is comprised of several parts, problem identification, problem analysis, plan implementation and

problem evaluation (Bergan, 1977). The initial interview sets the tone for the entire relationship and is critical for the success of the consultation process. The authors feel the entire tone of the triadic relationship is going to be set during the initial interview and will ultimately effect the outcome of the behavioral consultation process.

The process of the initial interview attempts to complete four phases as identified earlier: problem identification, problem analysis, plan implementation and problem evaluation. It is important to examine each of the phases to develop an understanding of the initial interview approach in behavioral consultation. The first phase is problem identification. It is during this phase that the consultant and consultee gather as much information as possible on the problem situation. Client behaviors are the focus within the environment the problems occur. It is extremely important during this phase that the behaviors and antecedent descriptions are specific. After data has been collected the process moves into the problem analysis where the details of the problem situation are recorded. There is a need to establish target behaviors or identify what behavior is causing problems. It is then important to identify the frequency, duration and intensity of the behaviors, where and when they are taking place and what else is going on in the environment surrounding the incident.

Equally important during this phase is identifying client strengths from which to draw potential strategical interventions. Following the problem analysis stage there will be behavioral assessment procedures. In this stage it will be determined what will be recorded, who will record it and how, and when and where will the observations take place. As in nearly all the research examined, “a successful consultant must utilize a wide variety of interpersonal and professional skills to facilitate an open interchange of ideas that lead to problem definition and problem solution” (Witt & Elliot, 1977).

Continuing along the walkway of behavioral consultation, the request-centered approach of behavioral consultation is when the consultee seeks out the consultant for assistance. In a study by Erchul and Covington, the significant relational communication in client-centered behavioral consultation was examined. They examined initial interviews of twenty-six consultation transactions in an attempt to find relationships between relational communication and perception of the consultee.

Although sample conclusions were insignificant, they did recognize a negative relationship in the sub-sample of self-identified behavior consultants. The negative relationship was between the percentage of consultant dominant bids and consultee perception of consultant effectiveness (Erchul & Covington, 1995). “Given the importance of the coordinate, nonhierarchical relationship in the consultation generally, it is reasonable to conclude that a consultee may perceive a consultant as less effective to the extent the latter tells the former what to do” (Dunst, Trivette, & Deal, 1988, Witt & Martens, 1988). Essentially, what they found was that when the consultant followed a formatted list or script with the consultee, the perception of transaction was lower in instances where the consultants followed a more relational or interpersonal dialogue and approach to consultation. Consultees may feel put off by a dominant, directive consultant. The authors feel that greater emphasis may be better served in the area of interpersonal skills and sensitivity within behavioral consultations. Erchul and Chewning (1990) researched behavioral consultation and defined it as a cooperative rather than collaborative relationship. In this relationship when the consultee follows the lead of the consultant, it creates negative perceptions of the consultation. This follow up study examines the relationship further and leads to the same conclusions, that the consultative relationship must be an interpersonal give and take situation.

Additional perspectives of the findings led to the realization that there are various levels of interpersonal control. The success and failure of many different models and techniques is related to the amount of control over the study, making it very difficult to determine model effectiveness. Ultimately, a consultant's interpersonal ability will vary from one to the next. There is a need for increased research literature into school-based consultation on the issue of interpersonal communication processes that occurs in consultation (Gutkin, 1993).

### **Counselor Preparation Programs**

The need for effective collaboration and consultation within the ecosystem is the lifeline for the school. Counselors and psychologists are in many instances thrust into this role in the educational process. With this increased demand, and it being the lifeline of the success or failure of the school, it is important to investigate the counselor preparation programs for training in the area of school based consultation. As outlined in the research by Connolly and Reschly (1990), there are too few qualified professionals providing psychological services to students with exceptional educational needs. "These factors contribute to the growing trend toward an indirect model of service delivery in order to optimize productivity and efficiency" (Connolly and Reschly, 1990).

The need for qualified individuals specialized in the psychological care of students with exceptional needs is higher than ever. This paper will examine counselor preparation programs for comprehensive training in the area of school consultation. This researcher contacted all the public and private universities and colleges offering a Master's degree in School Counseling in the state of Wisconsin. Program requirements and course content were investigated on relevance to course work specifically on the topic of school based consultation. College and

university school counseling program departments were contacted via phone and/or email and were asked to provide information on their programs regarding course requirements related to school based consultation. All provided basic information on what their institution had to offer graduate students in school counseling programs.

Of the numerous college and university programs in the state of Wisconsin, only eight offer a master's degree program in school counseling. Of those eight, all but two do not currently require school counseling students to take a course based exclusively on consultation strategies and application. Of the six that do, two of the colleges just recently added the class to their school counseling program requirements. This possibly indicates the understanding and recognition of the shifting roles of the school counselor and the significant increase in the need for school based consultation training for counselors.

Course descriptions of the various required consultation classes throughout the programs are very similar. All focus on the skills needed to provide consultation in the schools, community agencies, families, small group, individual, and agency wide situations. Consultation models and theories are explored to provide students with an applicable approach to schools. The course increases awareness on cultural, socioeconomic and individual differences of student populations and the sensitivity needed to work and meet the unique needs of all students.

School counseling students also learn how to prepare and evaluate school based consultation programs as part of the course requirements. In less than half of the program descriptions that offer consultation courses there was emphasis on the practical application of consultation through scenarios and practice. All of them emphasize that the justification for the course requirements is a result of the increase needs and demands on school counselors.

Two of the school counselor preparation programs do not require students to take a course on consultation. One of the two programs does not offer the course to students, the other has it as an elective where students can choose to take the course or not. The number of graduates entering the school counseling field that do not have formal school based consultation training would be significant if 25% of the counselor preparation programs do not have consultation as a required part of the program. Costenbader and Swartz, (1992) reported from their study that two thirds of the questionnaire responders had no formal training in consultation and over half of those that reported having formal training considered the training they had “inadequate” or “less than adequate”. As identified some 25 years ago in an article by Aubrey (1978), one of the main issues facing school counselors is the lack of formal training in the area of consultation. With the increased demand on school counselors as a result of legislative strides, professional and ethical standards, educational standards, and the array of individual student needs, it is vital to develop the skills to consult.

The American School Counselors Association (ASCA) and the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) identify three core areas the role and function of the school counselor fall into: counseling, coordination and consultation (Muro and Kottman, 1995). The leading organizations for school counselors identifies this as an integral aspect of the responsibilities of the counselor, yet it appears as though the preparation programs for school counselors continue to fall short.

In a related article, Coy (1999) spoke of the importance of awareness of the training of school counselors and the preparation programs before defining the roles and functions of the school counselors. As counselor preparation program requirements vary from one program to the next, it is critical to establish benchmarks to ensure quality programs exist. The Council for

Accreditation of Counseling and Related Education Programs (CACREP) adheres to strict guidelines for students. CACREP standards states students must have 72 quarter hours or 48 semester hours to complete school counselor preparation degree programs. CACREP has also identified nine common core experiences graduates must have. The first is that they have an understanding of human growth and development and can recognize the needs of all individuals at all developmental levels. The second is that there be an understanding of the issues and trends in a multicultural society, which is called the social and cultural foundations. The third core is helping relationships. What this means is that there must be understanding of the consultation and counseling processes. The fourth is that there is an understanding of group work, group dynamics, counseling theories and approaches, methods, and skills. Next is career and lifestyle development. This refers to the skill of helping students with career development and life planning decisions.

Appraisal is another one of CACREP's core experiences. Appraisal refers to having an understanding of individual and group approaches to assessment and evaluation of students. Next is the research and program evaluation which is understanding types of research methods, statistical understanding and legal and ethical considerations. Professional orientation is another core experience that implies an understanding of all the functions such as history, roles, organizational structures, ethics, standards and credentialing. The final core experience CACREP uses as a bench mark for counselor preparation programs is supervised experience or practicum experience (CACREP, 1994).

In combination with the core experiences outlined, the study by Coy examined four additional skill areas that students must demonstrate an understanding and knowledge of in order to meet the credentials of the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related

Services. They are; foundations of school counseling, contextual dimensions of school counseling, knowledge and skills for the practice of school counseling, and clinical instruction. Foundations of school counseling is the history, philosophies and trends of school counseling as well as the roles and functions of school counselors and others within the school environment. An additional core experience is understanding ethical standards and guidelines of ASCA, policies, laws and legislation relevant to school counselors. The final additional skill is to develop an understanding of sociocultural, demographic and lifestyle diversity as it pertains to the school environment.

The second of the four additional experiences as defined by CACREP is contextual dimensions of school counseling, which is the understanding of coordinating guidance programs with curriculum, school philosophy and community needs. The third additional experience is knowledge and skills for the practice of school counseling. This means graduate students should be able to develop, implement and evaluate developmental guidance programs and coordinate and consult when necessary. The final additional experience is clinical instruction. Before graduates finish their programs, they must have completed 600 hours of service in internships and practicum experiences, including direct service, small groups, individual counseling and classroom instruction. Adhering to the guidelines outlined by accrediting organizations for school counseling preparation programs will increase the number of qualified professionals in the field working with students with exceptional needs.

### Summary

School based consultation continues to be in the forefront of the educational environment. The success or failure of the school environment rests on the ability of the school

to effectively meet the needs of the students, parents and staff. Counselor roles and functions have constantly been shifting as a result of new social and emotional needs of students, educational concerns and legislative measures ensuring a quality and equal education for all. The outcome is the increased need for effective school based consultation. These issues magnify the need for consultation within the school, and this responsibility often rests on the shoulders of school personnel. The need for effective collaboration and consultation within the ecosystem is the lifeline for the school. Counselors and psychologists are in many instances thrust into this role in the educational process.

In summary, research supports earlier findings regarding consultation in schools. One of the main concerns identified in early research by Hall and Lin (1994), and Aubrey(1982), is the role of school counselors is dramatically shifting with the introduction of new programs, legislative movements and societal needs of students. Counselors are continuing to find themselves in very demanding situations, meeting the needs of students, parents and families, human service agencies, teachers and administrators, often all with a different view of the counselors role and function within the school (Snyder and Daly, 1993). School counselor roles are frequently poorly defined, misinterpreted and are implemented inaccurately. Myrick's and Gysbers and Henderson's comprehensive developmentally based guidance models provide a applicable framework of the duties and functions of school counselors (Burman & Jackson, 2000).

With the increased demands and the constantly evolving role of the school counselor, counselor preparation programs have been under certain scrutiny. Research continues to support earlier claims by Connelly and Reschly (1990), that counselor preparation programs are falling short in producing qualified school based consultants to facilitate cooperative

collaborative interactions within the school environment. Strides to improve counselor preparation programs have been made due to organizations like the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). Benchmarks for counselor preparation programs have been established to help programs meet certain criteria to attain accreditation. General program objectives and curriculum evaluations are made for counselor programs to ensure quality graduates are entering the field (CACREP, 1996). Recognition of this problem has been identified by many of the counselor preparation programs in the state of Wisconsin as nearly all are providing consultation courses and other supplemental course work to bridge this gap (Trevisan, 1997).

Additionally important are the strategies and methods used by the consultant. Hall and Lin (1994) examined the current models and strategies of consultation procedures. They identified some of the limitations surrounding current practices for various models. Hall and Lin identified three main limitations. The first is that the concept of consultation is not clearly defined within the organization. The second is consultation models are scattered across a variety of approaches. Finally, there is a lack of formal training of counselors in consultation. The authors proposed an integrative framework that provides a theory-based, systematic, and eclectic approach to consultation. The research addressed each of these issues and begins to uncover some of the improvements made and the areas for growth yet to take place in the area of school counseling.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Conclusions and Recommendations

#### Conclusions

The affective interaction within the school environment is crucial to the success or failure of the organization as a whole. Within this organization, members find themselves taking on various roles and responsibilities, none more important than the function of the consultant. School based consultation is a critical component of ensuring that students receive the best education possible based on their individual needs. Research supports initial concerns and

trends as the counselor's role and function changes, deficiencies in counselor preparation programs, and need for clearly defined consultation strategies.

School based consultation continues to be in the forefront of the educational environment. The success or failure of the school environment rests on the ability of the school to effectively meet the needs of the students, parents, and staff. Counselor roles and functions have constantly been shifting as a result of new social and emotional needs of students, educational concerns and legislative measures to ensure a quality and equal education for all. The outcome is the increased need for effective school based consultation. These issues magnify the need for consultation within the school and this responsibility often rests on the shoulders of school personnel. The need for effective collaboration and consultation within the ecosystem is the lifeline of the school.

### Recommendations

This researcher has formulated recommendations for school counselors, graduate students and counselor preparation programs, and administrators within school districts.

1. It is recommended for current school counselors to develop and implement a developmentally based guidance program as defined by Myrick or Gysbers and Henderson. Although very different in form, they both provide a practical framework for a functioning school counselor. After reviewing the two models, the Gysper's and Henderson model seems to be more complete and operational. Not only does it examine roles and functions

and allocated time frames, but it also addresses the tendency of school counselors to take on more of the non-guidance activities. As an incoming school counselor, I would want to know how administrators and school districts define the role of the school counselor and determine if a model like this exists in the district or could be implemented. This can eliminate a great deal of uncertainty as to what the role and functions are of counselors in the district.

2. It is recommended that current school counselors supplement their knowledge and experience of consultation strategies and techniques by selecting and practicing a model that fits their style. The integrative consultation framework identified by Hall and Lin (1994) appears as a comprehensive model of consultation process. The systematic approach to the consultation process provides a simple yet thorough investigation into problem behaviors, antecedents, strengths, and strategies that have worked, and recommendations of strategies for working with students. The four stages; data collection, problem identification, goal setting and intervention strategies, allow the counselor to orchestrate the consultation process and work collaboratively with school personnel, parents, and students.
3. It is recommended that school districts have a person in place to provide consultation services within their organization. If this responsibility lies on the counselor, training through in-service or other means is necessary to ensure an adequate number of professionals trained in consultation are available in the school.
4. It is recommended that school counselor preparation programs seek out accreditation from organizations like the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational

Services (CACREP). If programs fall short of meeting this accreditation, they must evaluate and improve graduate requirements within their school counseling programs. The nine core standards outlined by CACREP require graduate students to obtain certain experiences that are deemed necessary in the preparation of school counselors. Additionally, current counselor preparation programs that do not offer a course in consultation need to supplement this in some fashion. This course should be required and not an elective, and should introduce consultation models and promote practice of current consultation strategies.

5. A final recommendation is for school district administrators. In addition to ensuring schools have a trained functioning school consultant in place, it is important to make sure that incoming counselors have this training ahead of time. There are many institutions that are producing school counselors, all of which vary drastically in program philosophy and focus. The affective interaction within the school environment is crucial in the success or failure of the organization as a whole. Within this organization, members find themselves taking on various roles and responsibilities, none more important than the function of the consultant. Knowing this, it is vital to not only select a candidate that matches the needs of the school, but also one who has formal training in the area of school consultation.

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