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A Preliminary Cross-cultural Study of Student Guidance System: The Involvement of Class Teachers in Student Guidance and Counseling System in Primary Schools

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Abstract

This preliminary cross-cultural study examines the extent of student guidance system in primary schools, its challenges and opportunities. The cross-cultural study compares and highlights the student guidance systems in the United States, Japan, and Hong Kong. Of particular interest to this study is to compare the western model of student guidance, the United States, and a culturally adopted American model of student guidance in Hong Kong, and an Asian model of student guidance that is integrated into the educational system in Japan. The focus of the study is on the Hong Kong student guidance system involving class teachers in student guidance in the primary schools, as the system combines both a western and Asian approach to student guidance and a unique whole school approach. The study shows that the classroom teachers in the primary schools of

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Hong Kong and Japan are encumbered with multiple tasks outside of teaching and seek quick solutions to difficult problems. The study further indicates that student guidance or the student guidance system may not be well understood by the teachers. The study provides recommendations for student guidance and its transition within the framework of the total school community.

Introduction and Background

In the United States and Japan, there are many aspects in the student guidance system involving class teachers in primary schools that are similar and different than the ones in Hong Kong. The United States views student guidance from a western perspective and is an outgrowth its educational system. Student counseling and guidance has a long history in the United States. In contrast, the Japan view of student guidance is particular to an eastern perspective and as an outgrowth of its educational system. It has a long history of student guidance, but a short history of school counseling.

In the United States, the school counselor and the classroom teacher work together. Succinctly stated, the school counselor is an educational specialist in the school who counsels students and gives support to teachers. The educational approach is a team approach to problem solving; hence teamwork. The school counselor is the coordinator of a teamwork approach to problem solving issues. In the primary school in particular, the school counselor and teachers work hand and hand for student guidance. The school counselor implements a guidance curriculum with the teachers in the classroom. The teacher does guidance lessons under the supervision of the school counselor. The focus of student guidance is child centered with the involvement of teachers.

In Japan, there is a school counselor who is a licensed clinical psychologist. The school counselor works part-time eight hours a week. Due to time limitations, the school counselor counsels students at-risk and consults with teachers in the schools. The teacher in the teacher's entire encompassing role provides student guidance. Without a guidance curriculum, the teacher in the primary school does student guidance for students' educational and personal/social development (Yagi, D., 2008). Historically and traditionally, the involvement of class teachers in student guidance and counseling has been integrated into and central to the educational system.

In Hong Kong, the Whole School Approach of the 1990s focused on the entire school, its teachers and staff, for student guidance (Yuen, 2006). The Whole School Approach requires a "teamwork" approach by its very concept. With the paradigm shift to students' positive holistic growth, the Whole School Approach incorporates a teamwork approach involving the entire school staff. In comparison to the United States, the concept is similar as demonstrated in the saying, "It takes a whole village (school) to raise a child." The student guidance teacher of the primary school in Hong Kong is like the school counselor in the United States in many of its functions, such as, counseling, consultation,

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curriculum design, educator in the classroom, and program coordination. In Japan, the classroom teacher tends to work alone for student guidance in the classroom in the primary school, but receives the support of administration and teachers and from study group guidance. From this perspective, the teachers work together for the support of students. On the secondary level; however, the homeroom teacher does educational, career, and personal/social guidance and is supported by different assigned teachers who are in charge of the school's educational guidance committee, career guidance committee, and personal/social guidance committee.

A Preliminary Study and Overview: Cross-cultural comparisons of student guidance systems

In Hong Kong, there are a number of school guidance personnel, primarily at the secondary school level. For example, there are guidance masters, career masters, life education coordinators, and school social workers in the schools. In the United States, there are school counselors, career counselors, school social workers, and school psychologists in the schools. In Japan, there are part time school counselors (beginning in 1995), part time school social workers (in 2008), and part time school career counselors and advisors in Osaka (in 2007). These part time student support personnel all come from outside of the school to work in the school setting. In Hong Kong, it is the teacher who assumes these guidance roles and functions with the exception of the school social worker, who is a social worker. In the United States, on the other hand, the school guidance personnel are all trained professionals (educational specialist) in the school. In contrast, Japan has school counselors who are trained to work in hospitals and clinical settings. The teacher performs many student guidance functions.

In Hong Kong and Japan and in other Asian countries, the teacher in a guidance model has been integrated into the educational system (Yagi, 2008). Teachers do classroom guidance. In the United States, the school counselor is a full time educator who develops and implements the student counseling and guidance program. Teachers provide guidance through student advisement. In Hong Kong, there is a comprehensive student guidance system that is patterned after the United States developmental and comprehensive counseling program. Many of the components are inclusive in both systems/programs. In Japan, there is no student guidance system or program, as compared to and referenced in the United States and Hong Kong. In the near future, as mounting student problems accelerate at an exponential rate and teachers are being asked to do more in and outside of the classroom, there is a need for an educational specialist, like a fulltime school counselor, to support teachers in the schools of Asia.

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An Exploratory Study and Overview on the United States Guidance System: A Focus on the School-wide Approach to Guidance

School counseling and guidance is the engine that drives the overall guidance system in the United States. The school counselor is behind the wheel and coordinates the school counseling and guidance plan and program. The national model for school counseling and guidance is the blueprint for the guidance system. Ideally, there is a school counselor in every primary school or a school counselor who is assigned to a number of primary schools. In the school counseling and guidance program, there is a delivery system, which includes the guidance curriculum, individual planning with students, responsive services, and other system support. There is a management system and an assessment system. The school counselor and the teacher work together to implement the school counseling and guidance plan and program in the schools. Generally, 50% of the school counselor's time is devoted to the guidance curriculum, especially social skills training.

Whether there is a school counselor or there is no school counselor in the primary school, the classroom teachers along with administrator focus on a school-wide approach to guidance. Teachers provide guidance through advisement and caring student support. Teachers support all students. The goal in the school-wide approach to guidance is to create a safe and caring school climate, which is integral to the mission of the school.

An Exploratory Study and Overview on Japan's Guidance System: A Focus on the Guidance of Students within the School

School counseling is a recent phenomenon in the schools (Yagi, 1997). Even more recent, school counseling is included in some primary schools. School counseling is what the school counselor does. The school counselor is a licensed clinical psychologist who does individual therapy by training. The school counselor comes to the school once a week to do individual counseling and provide consultation. The role of the school counselor is limited and directed towards at-risk students.

School guidance is integrated within the school system. Each teacher does classroom guidance, which is incorporated in the curriculum (i.e., moral education) and included in the schools' activities. In the primary schools, there are teachers in charge of specific guidance areas to support the classroom teachers. As part of their adjunct role, there is a teacher who is assigned to support the classroom teachers with the children's discipline and educational life; a teacher who is selected to aid the classroom teachers with the children who may encounter personal/social problems; and a teacher appointed to help the classroom teachers with grade level children who may face problems. Classroom teachers consult with these teachers who are in charge of the overall student guidance in the primary school.

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An Exploratory Study and Overview on the Hong Kong Student Guidance System: A Focus on the Whole School Approach to Guidance in Hong Kong

In 1992, the Whole School Approach to Guidance was implemented in the schools of Hong Kong. The purpose of this approach was to bring all school personnel together and work together to create a positive learning environment for student growth. The Bureau of Manpower and Education published the Guidelines on the Whole School Approach to Guidance, Part 1 (1993) and Part 2 (1995). These guidelines provided the opportunity to employ student guidance officers and student guidance teachers who would plan guidance programs collaboratively with school personnel for the prevention and intervention of student problems and for developmental transitions and adjustments. In 2002, the Comprehensive Student Guidance Service was initiated. The Comprehensive Student Guidance Service is composed of four main areas: policy and organization, supportive service, personal growth education, and responsive services. The framework for this comprehensive student guidance service sets a clear vision for whole person development of students in alignment with the Whole School Approach.

In the United States, there is the fulltime school counselor who uses an educational model. In Japan, there is a part-time school counselor who uses a clinical model. In Hong Kong, there is the guidance teacher, who is part of the teaching personnel. In the primary schools, class teachers play a significant role in student guidance as part of the educational system in the United States, Japan, and Hong Kong.

Discussion and Recommendations

What is challenging for the classroom teacher is how to do more, but with less (time and resources). With current global education and school reform efforts impeding upon and competing with the teachers' time, what kind of framework would be inclusive, yet not intrusive and one that includes accountability is a key question. One suggestion is to use a multi-disciplinary approach from outside of the school to alleviate some of the responsibilities of the teacher and guidance teacher components of the guidance system similar to the ones in the United States. For example, there are many community organizations, civic associations, and educational institutions that can provide auxiliary program and services. Another suggestion is to develop a matrix as a basis for a framework. The matrix would align the components of education reform and curriculum reform, including any special projects, with the components of the student guidance system. The matrix would account for how the reforms/projects are being met by the student guidance system. The student guidance system components can be matched to support standards based education. A matrix can describe who is meeting the components of the student guidance system and how it is being met.

Teachers are taught to work with students in their classrooms. They are not taught to work together as a team. They see themselves as parts of a whole, but not necessarily

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integrated into the whole. Teacher training and staff development in teamwork are essential for a teamwork approach within the Whole School Approach concept. An assumption to teamwork approach is that teachers would work together as a team without any basic teamwork skills training. Teachers like their students need supportive service.

In Hong Kong, there is supportive service through training by the School of Professional and Continuing Education of the University of Hong Kong, which provides a 120-hours Certificate Course on Student Guidance for Teachers of Primary Schools in 2006-2007 via the Education Bureau. Previously, in 2002-03, the Education and Manpower Bureau (Education Bureau in 2008) commissioned the School of Professional and Continuing Education of the University of Hong Kong to provide a one year part-time Certificate Course on Student Guidance for Teachers of Primary Schools to train teachers to implement the Comprehensive Student Guidance Service. The 120-hours course consisted of five modules: counseling skills and practice, comprehensive student guidance service, personal growth education in a primary school context, catering for student diversity, and group dynamics and skills in the classroom context. The outcome of the course suggested that, while beneficial, the overall mindset of the teachers was not so much on developmental student guidance, but on how to solve student problems readily. The teacher preference was for ready-made solutions to difficult problems.

In Japan, there is no specific training for class teachers in student guidance in the primary schools. In the pre-service teacher-training program, teachers acquire little knowledge in student guidance. Teachers study student cases or student problems together and learn ways to counsel in the primary schools. In a research study; however, it was concluded that many teachers lack basic counseling skills (Kogawa and Yagi, 2004). Teachers can learn counseling and guidance through in-service training and by attending conferences and workshops. Teachers also prefer to have a student guidance manual to solve difficult student problems.

Conclusions

Each country's development of student guidance is a reflection of its time and history, its cultural and educational perspectives, and its response to meet individual student needs in the context of the school community. In an ever-expanding role of the classroom teacher in primary schools to meet the diversity of student needs, collaboration and teamwork are key components of any student guidance system. A well-defined student guidance system that is understood by all the educational stakeholders creates a healthy and safe relationship to facilitate student and teacher development. Ongoing and continuous staff development to build effective counseling and guidance skills offer opportunities for meeting student guidance competencies and for personal and professional growth. This preliminary cross-cultural study of student guidance systems involving class teachers in student guidance and counseling in primary schools suggests further research to assess

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the major themes and key ideas in building a strong student guidance systems for classroom teachers in primary schools across cultures.

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