

Is there a systematic school counseling service in Sri Lanka?

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School is the place where a child gains a formal education and develops knowledge, skills and attitudes. It is the largest socialization unit a child faces after the family. According to human rights, education is a right of every child and it must be provided. However, in the complex and fast-paced social system in the present world the student is subjected to various difficulties and problems. They face various social, personal, psychological, and educational problems such as family problems, stress, anxiety (exam anxiety), problems related to memory, attention, cognition, problem solving, career and certain mental disorders. This is a serious situation and students sometimes tend to commit suicide when they fail to cope with these difficulties and problems.

According to educationist, psychologist and other scholars, there should be a systematic, well-developed counseling service within the school. The main goal of a school counseling service is to help students to have a good educational environment resolving their social/personal, educational and career problems. Additionally, personality development of students, listening to students' psychological problems, educational improvement, identifying special needs students and helping them, assessing students' personality development and growth, cognitive abilities and skills etc. are expected from a school counseling service. Therefore school counseling service is necessary in every school.

This study investigated whether there is a systematic school counseling service in Sri Lanka. Research was done analyzing the data collected from three schools in the Kandy district, covering schools of urban, semi urban and rural areas. Data was collected from students, school

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counselors and principals using a questionnaire for each group. Observation was also used. Data was analyzed using the thematic analysis method.

The study revealed that although there is a school counseling service, in most of schools there is no systematic, well-developed counseling service which can fulfill students' counseling needs and this is a limitation. In national schools of urban areas, there is more systematic and developed counseling service than in the schools of rural areas. But, one school counselor is not adequate for about four thousand (4000) students in a national school of urban area. The study suggests recruitment of well-qualified counselors, providing a counseling training, knowledge and skills for present school counselors, awareness programmes for students, teachers and parents on the effectiveness of school counseling service, more publications on school counseling and guidance etc. for a better school counseling service in Sri Lanka.

Key words: school, school counseling, systematic, Sri Lankan schools