SCHOOL COUNSELLING IN CANADA AND JAPAN

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ABSTRACT

This paper compares the Japanese and Canadian education systems and their school guidance and counselling programs. The author first provides a Canadian example of a comprehensive school counselling program. Contextual and historical issues from the Japanese counselling and educational system are then examined. Finally, implications for both the Canadian and Japanese counselling systems are examined. How cultural differences are addressed and what is most needed in the Japanese school counselling system are considered. At the same time, the inclusion of some of the Japanese educational components in Canada's school counselling program is examined.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Approval ii

Abstract iii

Acknowledgements iv

Table of Contents v

Introduction 1

Personal Background 1
Striking Differences in the Canadian and Japanese Education Systems 6
Outline of the Project 6

Chapter 1: Comprehensive Guidance and Counselling Program – A Canadian Perspective 8

Program Structure 8
Program Aims 8
Background 9
The Importance of School Counselling 10
Comprehensive Program Domains 11
Comprehensive Program Characteristics 13
Comprehensive Program Design 17
The Various Roles within Guidance and Counselling Programs 21
Resources 23
Summary 23

Chapter 2: Education in Japan 25

Historical Background 25
The Aims of Education 27
Structure of Japanese Education 28
Curriculum 28
Moral Education 31
The Period for Integrated Study 31
Student Guidance 33
Career Guidance 33
Students with Special Needs 34
Rules and Regulations 35
Juku 36
Inadequacies of Curriculum for the Non-college-bound 37
Self-discipline 38
School Events 39
Summary 40

Chapter 3: Comparison between the Canadian Approach to School Counselling and the Japanese Education System **41**

Application of the Canadian School Counselling Program to the Japanese Education System 41

Japanese Culture and Collaborative Work 41

School Counselling Staffing Patterns 47

Family Ties 49

Proactive and Preventive Approach 50

Career Development 53

The Coordination of Consultation or Workshops 54

Crisis Intervention 55

Application of the Japanese Education System to the Canadian School Counselling Program 55

Summary 58

References **60**

INTRODUCTION

My learning experiences in both the Japanese and the Canadian education systems led to my interests in multicultural counselling. Studying multicultural counselling has given me some transferable ideas from Canadian school counselling programs to the Japanese education system and vice versa. Because of the ever-increasing number of immigrants that have settled in Canada, the counselling system in Canada has worked with people of diverse cultural backgrounds and has adjusted its system to the needs of those people. This project identifies the advantages and disadvantages of both Canadian and Japanese approaches to school counselling by taking account of multiculturalism in Canada and through examining both Canadian school counselling programs and the Japanese Education system. Possible enhancements of each system are also discussed.

Personal Background

My cultural background is Japanese, and I am a product of the Japanese educational system. These personal experiences play an important part in shaping the way I have come to understand the subject under discussion. As such, a brief background statement seems like a useful place to begin.

My elementary and lower secondary schools were organizationally attached to the school of education at a national university. Unlike most elementary and lower secondary schools in Japan, where students were automatically assigned to the one in their residential area, my school selected students based on exam scores and previous

academic attainment. This school was also known as a school that stressed academic achievement.

During my elementary school period (1984-1990), various activities were carried out within the school. Once a year, the Athletic and Cultural Festivals were held. The whole student body performed track and field events in the Athletic Festival and performed in stage plays or sang in choirs in the Cultural Festival. Through these activities, my class increased solidarity and cooperative spirit. As experiential learning, field trips to industry buildings, farmhouses, and historic heritage places were quite often organized. These activities helped me to understand my neighbourhood and the structure of society, and to broaden my knowledge about Japanese culture.

My daily school schedule in elementary school started with a morning class meeting that served as a warm-up for the rest of the day. After the warm-up meeting, class periods followed, and lunch started around noon. In Japanese education, we had a mandatory lunch program that supplied lunch for the students. Students served themselves and set lunch on the table on their own. There was a noon recess after lunch; however, my classroom teachers usually made us reflect on our conduct at lunch if we could not finish our lunch on time, so we had to stay and be quiet in a classroom during the noon recess. In the afternoon, after the class periods, another class meeting was held for 10 to 15 minutes. After the meeting, the entire student body cleaned the classrooms, hallways, and school facilities. At 3:30 pm my club activity started.

My academic performance during elementary school was good. Exams to evaluate student achievement were quite often administered in each subject. Although there were exams supplied by the commercial publishers, my teacher frequently made

extra quizzes on his own. He also encouraged us to do our best and increased our motivation by giving us rewards such as stickers which we could exchange for prizes. During spring, summer, and winter vacation, lots of homework was given. We were assigned reading, book reports, reports on various other subjects, and diaries.

Japanese lower secondary school is roughly equivalent to Canadian grades seven to nine. My lower secondary school period (1990-1993) was quite busy with study as well as club activities. Practise for volleyball club ran for an hour before the morning class meeting, and for about two and a half hours after class. We also practised on weekends and long vacations. The sports club provided opportunities for socialization and friendship development within the school setting. Club members also supported me through my insecure friendships in my class. One of my group members in class was very selfish and tried to ostracize other group members. Depending on this person's feeling, the target was often changed. One time, the target became me, and my ostracism was maintained for quite a long time. During my ostracism, club members were the only people on whom I could count and to whom I could talk. My second and third year in lower secondary school were crucial transition years since my position in the club moved from junior status to senior status, which meant taking on a leadership role. Senior members directed practises and participated in competitions.

In Japan, unless students pass the high school entrance exam, they are shut out of the upper secondary school system. Moreover, since all schools are hierarchically ranked for academic excellence, attaining a high level of achievement in lower secondary school is really important for getting in to the best high schools. In my hometown, only a few upper secondary schools feed into good universities. In the third year of lower secondary

school, many of us focused very much on studying in order to enter the best school in my city. Trial examinations were administered many times, and students were ranked by their records. This ranking gave us a clue as to which students could attempt and pass the exam.

In my hometown, which is located in the countryside, parents' excessive eagerness to obtain high quality education for their children was not as common as it was in big cities such as Tokyo. However, some parents believed that getting a high quality education would insure successful futures for their children by helping them obtain high status, high salary jobs. Moreover, there were not many job opportunities in the countryside. Therefore, some well-educated parents who wanted their children to obtain a high quality education sent their children to bigger cities where they were more likely to get into high-ranked universities and obtain social prestige. Thus, many children had to go through the ordeal of the entrance examinations for upper secondary school and university. Because my parents supported me by getting a tutor and arranging for correspondence courses, I successfully passed these entrance examinations.

My upper secondary school life (1993-1996) was similar to that of lower secondary school. My school was known to be the best for leading to entrance into good universities. Although good upper secondary schools usually emphasized only students' academic performance, my school emphasized studies, club activities, and school festivals. During summer vacations, there were supplemental classes with mandatory attendance for entrance exam preparation. As with lower secondary school, there were lots of mock exams from first year though third year of upper secondary school, and we

were ranked by our grades. The university we would attend and the subjects we would study were determined by this ranking.

In my school life, from elementary through upper secondary school, the words "school counsellor" or "school counselling" were never heard. The concept of school counselling was not integrated into the school system at all. It was not until my teaching placement at an upper secondary school during my fourth year of university that I came to hear of school counselling for the first time. This came about because this school had a problem finding a professional who could deal with students with psychological problems.

My early academic experiences shaped my choices in later academic pursuits. Since the university I attended and the major I studied in university were determined without considering my interests or aptitudes, and there was no help for assessing these in my upper secondary school, I questioned my academic choice during my university period. My situation left me with an unsatisfied feeling. Therefore, I became interested in investigating the actual conditions of the upper secondary school students with respect to career guidance.

The focus of my undergraduate research in Japan was vocational decision-making and examining the relationship between self-understanding and the choices high school students make. Many students did not take their interests much into consideration when choosing university programs or careers. They simply did what they were told according to their grade point average rather than doing what they wanted to do. Moreover, many students did not even know what they really wanted to do. Although most students wanted someone to help them with career choices, the Japanese educational system was

not set up to do that and, in fact, did little to give psychology and counselling their due. Because of my undergraduate research experience, my academic interests became focused on school counselling, including career counselling.

Striking Differences in the Canadian and Japanese Education Systems

As a learner in both the Canadian and Japanese education systems, my experiences have given me some sense of cultural differences. There are major cultural differences in both the teachers' and the learners' attitudes. In Japan, whether in the elementary system or the university one, teachers are authoritative. We are not allowed to call our teachers by their first names and must always show respect for them. We do not usually call someone who is older than us by his/her first name. Therefore, it is not very common for students to have casual conversation with their teachers, and they must use polite language in addressing them. Furthermore, students do not make comments or give critical opinions about what the teacher is saying; therefore, learning tends to be passive.

In contrast, in Canada the relationship between teachers and students is more friendly and equal. I was very surprised that students freely speak up in classes. They are encouraged to ask any questions and state any opinions, and teachers respect these comments from students; as a result, there are always lively discussions in classes. Thus, learning tends to be more active for Canadian students.

Outline of the Project

Chapter 1 describes a comprehensive Canadian school counselling program. I will focus mainly on the comprehensive school guidance and counselling program

developed by Alberta Education's Special Education Branch in 1995. The aim of school counselling and strategies to provide effective and efficient services are examined. Chapter 2 presents an overview of the Japanese education system and discusses the main characteristics of Japanese education. Chapter 3 reflects my thoughts on how the Japanese education and school counselling system might be modeled after Canada's and the implications of this for the future of school counselling in Japan. Finally, the implications of Japanese educational ideas for the future of a Canadian education system are considered.

Throughout this project, I have identified strategies, guidelines, and resources that may be useful in improving the school counselling program in Japan. Not all of these are applicable to every school in Japan because of cultural and education system differences in both countries. I hope that my reflective thoughts will contribute to the future enhancement of Japanese school counselling by identifying and respecting cultural differences, while at the same time recommending improvements that recognize and transcend these differences.

CHAPTER 1: COMPREHENSIVE GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING PROGRAM – A CANADIAN PERSPECTIVE

In Canada, school counselling within the context of a comprehensive program includes many services, such as preventive services, developmental activities, and remedial or crisis interventions for students, parents, and school staff (Schmidt, 2004). In British Columbia (Special Education Branch, 1995), the clearly stated goal of school counselling is "to support the intellectual development, human and social development, and career development of each student so that he or she can become a responsible, productive citizen" (p. D5).

In order to enhance students' intellectual and social development, an effective guidance and counselling program is a vital component of the school system. In this chapter, a comprehensive school guidance and counselling program, developed by Alberta Education, Special Education Branch, 1995, is closely analyzed. This approach has been chosen as a good example of the counselling programs that have become widely adopted in all regions of Canada.

Program Structure

Program Aims

A comprehensive guidance and counselling program provides a structure to help the school system meet the guidance and counselling needs of all students through the

collaborative effort of educators, parents, administrators, and other professionals who work with students. This program is designed to help students plan educational goals and develop educational skills, as well as to explore personal career paths. Moreover, this program is aimed at enhancing students' awareness of themselves and at helping them build effective relationships with others. Through consultation and coordination of services, this program also enhances collaborative work with educators, parents, and others involved in education.

Background

Comprehensive developmental guidance and counselling programs have been developed to address criticism of earlier models. Namely, that these programs were crisis-oriented, narrowly focused, and developed with no opportunity for stakeholder consultation (Alberta Education, Special Education Branch, 1997; Nova Scotia, Department of Education, 2002). Beginning in the early 1960s, the program gradually shifted from a traditional approach to a comprehensive approach (Cobia & Henderson, 2003). After World War II, increasing economic productivity resulted in a change from the traditional valuing of hard work to valuing self-fulfillment in North America (Cobia & Henderson, 2003; van Hesteren & Zingle, 1977). People started seeing the importance of leisure and personal development as well as the importance of working.

The present comprehensive approach is aimed at all students and is the joint responsibility of many professionals within the school (Alberta Education, Special Education Branch, 1997). This means that all counsellors, teachers, administrators, school boards, and school councils share the responsibility of satisfying students' developmental needs, such as career planning and development, personal/social issues,

and educational planning. Therefore, this is a holistic approach to the development of students. The program shifted from being a traditional, reactive approach to being proactive, preventive and well structured (Alberta Education, Special Education Branch, 1997).

The Importance of School Counselling

As mentioned above, beginning in the 1960s, the education system started to focus on students' total development. For instance, the Vancouver School Board (2003) clearly described their mission: "To enable students to reach their intellectual, social, aesthetic and physical potential in challenging and stimulating settings which reflect the worth of each individual and promote mutual respect, cooperation, and social responsibility" (p. 1). The British Columbia Ministry of Education, Governance, and Legislation Unit (2004) also indicated their primary goal for education as intellectual development, which includes critical thinking, acquisition of learning skills and knowledge, and appreciation of lifelong learning. Human and social development as well as career development are further goals of education. The former includes awareness of self, respect for others, an appreciation of arts, cultures, and physical health. The focus on career development is intended to facilitate students' preparation for the world of paid work.

Thus, education does not simply focus on students' academic growth. Current education focuses on psychological education as well. There is much need for psycho-educational curricula and programs in education. According to van Hesteren and Zingle (1977), school counsellors play a central role in psychological education. School counselling is recognized as a distinct profession. School counsellors need to have

information about and skills in the areas of human development, learning and motivation, behaviour, consultation, group counselling, career counselling, school counselling, individual counselling, assessment, curriculum of human development and relationships, students with special needs, and ethical and legal issues related to school counselling (Cobia & Henderson, 2003; Nova Scotia, Department of Education, 2002). Their knowledge and skills allow them to produce and implement psycho-educational curricula and programs; to consult with teachers, parents, and other school staff; and to take leadership roles in school counselling programs.

Comprehensive Program Domains

This comprehensive program (Alberta Education, Special Education Branch, 1995) was designed to provide students with assistance in obtaining knowledge, attitudes, strategies, and skills in the following three program domains: (1) Educational growth and development; (2) Personal/social growth and development; and (3) Career growth and development. In the domain of educational growth and development, students are expected to acquire the skills, attitudes, and knowledge necessary for effective learning throughout the lifespan and "to develop appropriate educational plans" (Nova Scotia, Department of Education, 2002, p.3). According to Nova Scotia's Department of Education, outcomes of educational growth and development include students having the ability to demonstrate knowledge of the educational options available to them for their lifelong learning; being able to make decisions about educational options based on their strengths, interests, personal values, and personal goals; making educational plans based on changes in economy and society; transitioning successfully from one stage to the next;

being able to access support service resources in order to accomplish their tasks; and acquiring appropriate study skills and effective time-management skills.

In the personal/social growth and development domain, students are expected to acquire the skills, attitudes, and knowledge necessary to understand and respect themselves and others, and to relate effectively to others. Students are helped to understand their strengths, values, and interests, and to know their potential. They are taught to be aware of and accept the emotions they experience towards themselves and others. Students are encouraged to demonstrate physical and emotional well-being throughout their development. Students are expected to demonstrate interpersonal skills and communication skills, and to function effectively in groups. They are also encouraged to demonstrate sensitivity to people from different cultures, races, ethnicities, educational and social class backgrounds, abilities, customs, beliefs, and lifestyles (Nova Scotia, Department of Education, 2002).

In the career growth and development domain, students are expected to acquire the skills, attitudes, and knowledge necessary to make a successful career plan. To put it concretely, students explore their interests, values, and personal characteristics. Students are encouraged to understand the occupations in the local and global community and their interdependence. Students are assisted in understanding the influence their experiences have on their future career plans. Students are also educated about the influences of economic and social conditions on their career plans, and are taught how to access and use resources for exploring career options (Nova Scotia, Department of Education, 2002).

Comprehensive Program Characteristics

The comprehensive program is designed for students from primary school through grade 12 and is intended to facilitate the school's mission, goals, and objectives. It provides an integral program of developmental guidance instruction, professional services (counselling, consultation, and coordination), individual planning, and services and support systems. Each of these components is discussed in further detail below. Although the program is coordinated by a school counsellor, joint responsibility lies with the entire school staff. The program outlines roles for the school community that includes students, parents, and school staff, but it also reaches beyond the school by including businesses and community agencies. Furthermore, it gives the guideline for needs-assessments undertaken with students, parents, and school staff, and enhances the development of specific program management and support systems. Although this program includes crisis intervention for students with serious problems, the main focus is on providing developmental/preventive activities to benefit all students (Alberta Education, Special Education Branch, 1995; Nova Scotia, Department of Education, 2002).

Developmental guidance instruction. Developmental guidance instruction is generally called guidance curriculum. Along with support for students' academic success, strong emphasis is placed on students' educational, personal/social, and career development in the program. Therefore, guidance curriculum ideally involves appropriate developmental activities within the classroom as well as across the whole school so that all students benefit from this curriculum in their daily instruction. To accomplish integration of this curriculum, teacher-counsellor cooperation is important (Schmidt, 2004). Everyday life situations are embedded into teaching subjects such as

math, science, and language arts so that students acquire the skills needed to deal with life. Thus, it is important to help teachers understand the relevance of not only teaching subjects, but also providing students with guidance activities in daily instruction and promoting cooperation between teachers and counsellors to enhance the integration of teaching and guidance (Schmidt, 2004).

In order to integrate teaching and guidance, for instance, school counsellors might assist teachers in incorporating developmental guidance instruction into the curriculum. School counsellors also provide direct services for students, teachers, and parents, and coordinate the program and guidance activities (Schmidt, 2004). To put it concretely, according to Schmidt, school counsellors assist teachers in planning guidance instruction such as the instruction of study skills, communication skills, and decision-making skills, and they provide guidance resources and materials that teachers can easily access and use in the classroom. For instance, in language arts class in elementary school, the classroom teacher may choose to teach conflict resolution skills though discussion in small group, presentation, and role-play. School counsellors might also choose to be co-presenters in classroom guidance activities. Moreover, school counsellors provide direct services for teachers by seeking input from other school counsellors and specialists with the help of school administration and other school personnel. Lastly, school counsellors coordinate school-wide guidance programs, such as career days, peer helper programs, personal development and relationships, and anger management with school administration and other school personnel.

What is important here is that developmental guidance instruction cannot be implemented by school counsellors alone. Although school counsellors have

responsibility for coordinating and implementing curriculum (Cobia & Henderson, 2003), every person involved in the school; such as teachers, school administrators, and school personnel, has a responsibility for carrying out developmental guidance instruction; therefore, the cooperation of school staff becomes key in implementing developmental guidance instruction. This cooperation results in the whole school emphasizing the maximal development of all students (Schmidt, 2004).

Professional services. Professional services include counselling, consultation, and coordination offered by school counsellors. School counsellors' primary service is individual counselling and small group counselling. Counselling focuses on students' immediate educational and personal concerns, and school counsellors support students in exploring their concerns, creating action plans, and carrying out their plans (Alberta Education, Special Education Branch, 1995; Schmidt, 2004). This purposeful interaction between school counsellors and students facilitates student changes in attitudes, behaviour, knowledge, skills such as communications and interpersonal relationships, and/or awareness (Nova Scotia, Department of Education, 2002; Schmidt, 2004). Moreover, group counselling provides students with a place where they are able to share opinions about specific issues such as peer relationships, stress management, and career planning. School counsellors coordinate groups such as loss support groups, children of alcoholics support groups, and so forth. This results in enhancing students' ability to resolve their own concerns (Schmidt, 2004).

School counsellors also consult with teachers, parents, and other professionals to facilitate the planning of effective services for all students. In consultations, the needs of students are identified, and strategies for support of their needs are discussed (Alberta

Education, Special Education Branch, 1995; Nova Scotia, Department of Education, 2002; Schmidt, 2004). Consultation includes case conferences and/or individual interviews with teachers, parents, and other professionals (Nova Scotia, Department of Education, 2002). In consultation, relationship-building, which is ongoing engagement of all partners involved in the educational process, is important (Nova Scotia, Department of Education, 2002).

School counsellors have a responsibility for the coordination of the program in schools and the community. For instance, the school counsellor plays a central role in coordinating guidance-related activities such as career day activities, orientation to the school system, and post-secondary visits. Coordination also ensures liaison among school, home, community, and other sectors such as the business world. The arrangement of case conferences between the school and community in order to develop appropriate treatment or strategies for students' needs is also important (Alberta Education, Special Education Branch, 1995; Nova Scotia, Department of Education, 2002).

Professional services are not only for students in crisis or those who need immediate intervention, but for all students; therefore, these services must be proactive. That is, consultation mostly focuses on prevention in order to circumvent the occurrence of problems, identify problems in their early stages, and assist students in preventing further serious consequences (Alberta Education, Special Education Branch, 1995; Nova Scotia, Department of Education, 2002). Through prevention, students' healthy development is enhanced.

Individual planning. Individual planning is used to assist students to plan, monitor, and manage their personal and career development. Under the assistance of school counsellors, students are helped to develop educational and occupational plans, information gathering skills, self-assessment skills, goal setting skills, decision-making skills, self-motivation skills, personal portfolios, and career change management skills (Nova Scotia, Department of Education, 2002; Schmidt, 2004; Schmidt, 2004). Moreover, acquisition of educational skills, appropriate course selection, knowledge of lifelong learning, knowledge of career opportunities, and vocational and technical training are discussed (Cobia & Henderson, 2003). Career planning is especially useful in helping students to recognize current and future vocational demands and circumstances (Nova Scotia, Department of Education, 2002).

Services and support system. Services and support system are activities that develop and maintain programs, various activities, and the school system. Suggested activities are overseeing program management and implementation; providing related professional development and community resources for school counsellors, teachers, and other school staff; establishing relationships with community stakeholders and agencies; establishing effective public relations between school and community; and program promotion (Nova Scotia, Department of Education, 2002). Although school counsellors take leading roles in these activities, it is important to recognize that the entire school community has to be involved if they are to be successful.

Comprehensive Program Design

The needs of students and of the school community are constantly changing. Therefore, developing a program that is dynamic and responsive to changing needs and

that is subject to ongoing evaluation is necessary. This ensures that the program is always appropriate and effective (Alberta Education, Special Education Branch, 1995; Nova Scotia, Department of Education, 2002). The process for program design is as follows:

- Establishing a Committee
- Assessing Needs
- Determining Resources
- Identifying Expected Student Competencies
- Designing Program Activities and Strategies
- Implementing Program Activities and Strategies
- Evaluating the Program

Establishing a committee is the first step of program design. Alberta Education, Special Education Branch (1995) suggested establishing the committee on the school council because it helps committee members broaden their perspectives and increase their knowledge. The committee includes counsellors, teachers, school administrators, parents, students, school board staff, and community members. The committee has a responsibility for assisting further processes of the program design, but at first, the committee identifies the guiding principles that will aid in carrying out the purpose of the program. These guiding principles are to be consistent with the missions, values, and principles of the school (Alberta Education, Special Education Branch, 1995; Schmidt, 2004).

Assessing needs becomes the foundation of the program. Since the needs assessment determines the direction of a program, it is very important for the committee

to interview and discuss needs with students, parents, school staff, and community, and to obtain and analyze data from surveys. Moreover, the evaluation of the current program is useful in identifying the priorities for future program goals (Alberta Education, Special Education Branch, 1995; Nova Scotia, Department of Education, 2002; Schmidt, 2004). It is also important to assess the particular needs of students with special needs, English Language Learners (ELL), and First Nations students.

Determining resources is necessary in planning the most effective strategies for carrying out the program and to meet the needs of the program. Human resources (e.g., staff, contact people, community members such as social workers, police, nurses, and volunteers), material resources (e.g., curriculum, programs, audiovisuals, literature, and computer hardware and software), financial resources (e.g., budget and funding), time availability (e.g., for planning, material preparation, program delivery, and evaluation), community resources (e.g., availability of community programs and services, and accessibility of interagency groups), and availability of school facilities (e.g., availability of classrooms for teaching, meetings, and counselling activities) are identified (Alberta Education, Special Education Branch, 1995; Nova Scotia, Department of Education, 2002).

Identifying expected student competencies refers to clearly stating the expected student competencies to be developed as a result of implementing the program. This also includes needs assessments and an evaluation of resource availability. Ideally, expected competencies are realistic and achievable, and cover all three domains of growth and development (educational, personal/social, and career). In a well-designed program, student competencies/program outcomes are determined during the planning stages,

based on the results of the needs assessments, and are supportable by the resources available. To be most effective, it is recommended that the acquired competencies be described in terms of observable and/or measurable changes in students' skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours (Alberta Education, Special Education Branch, 1995; Nova Scotia, Department of Education, 2002). Designing program activities and strategies involves determining how activities are to be delivered to students: establishing how, when, and how long activities are to be delivered, and who will provide which activities and services. Roles of school counsellors, teachers, and school staff in the counselling program are defined by allocating specific responsibilities to each member (Alberta Education, Special Education Branch, 1995; Nova Scotia, Department of Education, 2002; Schmidt, 2004). In this stage, the concrete program that Alberta Education, Special Education Branch calls the Counselling Program Plan (CPP) is finalized. Through designing activities and strategies, the CPP becomes accountable for and enhances awareness and understanding of the counsellor's role in the school community. Furthermore, communication with supporting members of the school community is very important in enhancing the visibility of the program (Alberta Education, Special Education Branch, 1995).

Implementing program activities and strategies is the action phase of the program. All planned activities and services such as counselling, consultation, and activities are addressed in this phase (Schmidt, 2004).

Evaluating the program involves assessing whether the program activities and services are appropriate and effective, and whether the program has met the identified student needs. This part of the process allows for changing and revising the guidance and

counselling programs to further student development (Nova Scotia, Department of Education, 2002).

These processes help school counsellors and other members who are involved in the development of the comprehensive guidance and counselling program to carefully prepare the program plan. They also give members guidelines for the ongoing needs assessment and evaluation of the program, both of which are key in order to maintain or enhance program effectiveness and efficiency. Although school counsellors play a central role in the program, the development of a program requires the collaboration of many members of the school community.

Finally, to effectively provide services to students, it is important to determine who has responsibility for what, as activities are performed by many different people involved in the school (Schmidt, 2004). For instance, teachers could be assigned to carry out activities such as workshops on exam taking or career planning with school counsellors. Thus, the comprehensive guidance and counselling program is not counsellor-dominated or constructed of one-on-one activities. It is a balanced program and covers both proactive and reactive services.

The Various Roles within Guidance and Counselling Programs

I have emphasized previously the importance of collaboration between school counsellors and other school staff. In Nova Scotia (Department of Education, 2002), various roles of school staff are described. The Ministry of Education plays a role in providing schools with guidelines for comprehensive guidance and counselling programs and in facilitating the use of such programs in schools. It also provides regional activities, professional development for teachers and school counsellors, and resources that assist

program implementation. In addition, the school board has the responsibility of allocating the school counsellors to schools, and of facilitating the establishment and maintenance of communication among community and government agencies and schools in order to assess the needs of students and their families. It also provides resources and professional development in order to support programs. The school board needs to ensure that the comprehensive guidance and counselling programs reflect the students' heritages and backgrounds in order to satisfy their needs.

A school council consists of the school principal, teachers, support staff, students, parents, and community members. Their role is to provide advice to enhance and ensure the education opportunities for all students. In the comprehensive program, the school council enhances the involvement of stakeholders in a school and community in order to facilitate communication of the aim and desired outcomes of a program. It also seeks out and provides resources for the implementation of program activities. The role of the school council is to ensure that the program reflects the students' needs in the areas of academic, personal/social, and career development. A program committee is then established on the school council to perform the needs assessment and the evaluation of the program. School administration takes part in the selection of school counsellors. Allocation of school resources and facilities for implementing the program is a responsibility of the school administration as well. School counsellors take leadership in the program. Schoolteachers and other staff participate in the program as mentors of students and providers of the program, and also participate in needs assessment and evaluation of the program.

Parents and students participate in needs assessments and the evaluation of the program as well. The parents' role is to support their children in taking part in the program. The students' role is to give feedback and suggestions to improve the program. Both of these groups are involved in the program committee.

Resources

In order to deliver the program effectively, identifying and organizing resources is very important. Resources include human, material, financial, and community resources. Many material resources are available online. For instance, the Ministry of Education in British Columbia has created a website that is accessible at http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/, to provide material resources. There are guidelines for programs in the areas of bullying and violence prevention, critical incidents, intellectual disabilities, and so forth. Also, the government of British Columbia provides a website, http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/careers/planning/, which contains links to sites with information about career planning and occupations. Teachers, school counsellors, students, and parents would be able to use these resources. Furthermore, in order to provide easy access to resources, a list of human resources and community agencies could be developed. For teachers, students, and parents, a list of guidance and counselling resources is also needed.

Summary

The well-functioning comprehensive guidance and counselling program gives direction to the school council, the school board, and the school itself regarding planning, implementing, and evaluating guidance and counselling programs and services. Teachers,

school counsellors, and other professionals collaboratively develop the curriculum and classroom instruction. An effective program also emphasizes counselling, coordination, consultation, community liaison, and referral. As a result, students are assisted in developing decision-making skills, personal and career planning skills, interpersonal relationship skills, anger management skills, and other skills as well.

In elementary school, the guidance and counselling program focuses on the students' self-awareness. Through interaction with others, students also develop awareness of personal and social issues and learn to deal with those issues. In secondary school, students' understanding of their interests, abilities, and attitudes is fostered. They also develop decision-making skills, problem-solving skills, and study skills. This is in hopes that by the time they graduate from secondary school, students are prepared for the transition to post-secondary education or employment. At this point, according to Alberta Education, Special Education Branch (1997), the program helps students answer the following questions: "Who am I? How can I fulfill my life?"

CHAPTER 2:
EDUCATION IN JAPAN

Historical Background

For hundreds of years, Japanese education has been strongly influenced by Chinese philosophy and literature. In the sixth century A.D., Chinese culture began its infusion into Japanese culture, and Chinese writing was adopted into the Japanese language (OERI Japan Study Team, 1987). People studied Chinese literature and then produced their own Japanese literature. Moreover, along with Buddhism, Confucianism influenced Japanese society greatly. It taught the Japanese "respectful and benevolent hierarchical relationships, harmonious social relationships, and morality" (OERI Japan Study Team, 1987, p.1). Therefore, Japanese education has been based on the moral teaching of Confucianism.

Around the 16th century, Japan had contact with some European countries such as Portugal and the Netherlands and imported Western weapons. Jesuit missionaries also came into Japan. However, in the 17th century, Japan was closed to the outside world and entered a feudal period of isolation that lasted 200 years. During this time, a military ruler governed Japan, and the warrior samurai had the highest rank in society. At the beginning of this isolation period, education was focused on the warrior samurai who learned Confucianism and martial arts. Gradually, in the latter years of this period of isolation, general education for other people was provided in temple schools that taught basic writing, reading, and arithmetic (OERI Japan Study Team, 1987).

In the middle of the 19th century, the United States forcefully requested Japan to have diplomatic and trade relations with them, and Japan's feudal period of isolation ended. At that time, the Emperor started governing Japan. Thus, Japan was increasingly influenced by Western society, and the field of education was no exception to this. The Japanese government started placing public schools throughout the nation. The government created an education system based on the education systems of France, Germany, England, and the United States. Therefore, Western educational theories such as individualism, natural rights, and utilitarianism, were introduced (Hood, 2001). The purpose of education in this period was modernization and Westernization. However, this changed in 1890 when the Imperial Prescript on Education was officially announced. The Imperial Prescript was strongly supported by Confucianism, ultranationalism, services to the state, and this ideology prevailed until the end of World War II (Hood, 2001; OERI Japan Study Team, 1987). It included moral education and encouraged the Japanese to be unified under the Emperor and to pledge their fidelity to him. As a result, during World War II, the Japanese military used education as a method of thought control, brainwashing, and increased authoritarianism (OERI Japan Study Team, 1987). This led the Japanese to be highly nationalistic and is thought to have contributed to the start of the Pacific War that began with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor during World War II.

The basis for today's Japanese education system was created during the post-war United States Occupation period (1945-1952). During this time, the United States controlled Japanese general education, excluded moral education, and reformed the education system so it became democratized, decentralized, and demilitarized. The

schools adopted a 6-3-3-4 grade system, which is explained in more detail below, and the curriculum and textbooks were completely revised.

The United States Occupation of Japan ended in 1952. This led to the reintroduction of a moral education course in 1958, which the Occupation had viewed as Japanese brainwashing. After World War II, criminality among Japan's youth increased markedly; therefore, the Ministry of Education decided to once again provide moral education in order to foster respect for human life and dignity among children (Yajima, Kamiyasu, Arai, & Kobayashi, 1991). The characteristics of this moral education were different from moral education in the prewar period. The focus was now on an understanding of humanity and traditional Japanese values. The Ministry of Education tried to bring together the new education system and traditional Japanese values (Hood, 2001). Thus, along with rapid economic growth, the education system began to emphasize the creativity of each individual, lifelong learning, and higher education. Today's system consists of a fusion of foreign ideas and traditional Japanese values.

The Aims of Education

The aims of education in Japan today are to cultivate in students a zest for living, to enable students to study and think for themselves, to encourage the development of young people who are rich in heart and well equipped to contribute to society, and to provide young people with an increased awareness of themselves as members of an international community (Monbukagakusyo, 1997). According to Monbukagakusyo, to accomplish these aims the Ministry of Education has made various adjustments to the curriculum, such as a reduction in class hours and an expansion of elective courses and periods for integrated study.

Structure of Japanese Education

The formal education system in Japan is a 6-3-3-4 grade system. This structure indicates six-year elementary schools, three-year lower secondary schools, three-year upper secondary schools, and four-year universities. Elementary and lower secondary school are compulsory; therefore, all children in Japan aged six to 15 are required to enroll in elementary and lower secondary school. Kindergartens were funded by Municipalities and private sources, but, during the compulsory period, national, prefectural, and local governments share almost equal amounts of the education costs in grades one through nine. After the compulsory school period, one is asked to pass an entrance examination for admittance to any school, and students and their families become responsible for the cost. Though beyond the compulsory education period children are able to choose to work or to proceed with higher education, the majority of children choose to proceed with higher education. The typical Japanese school administrators are a principal, a vice-principal, and a head teacher.

Curriculum

Curriculum standards for elementary and lower secondary school are provided by the Ministry of Education, Science, Sports, and Culture (1999), which adheres to the following guidelines in the construction of curriculum standards:

(1) To encourage the development of young people who are rich in heart and well equipped to contribute to society, as well as young people with an increased awareness of themselves as members of an international community.

(2) To enhance children's ability to think and learn for themselves.

(3) To develop a comfortable educational environment which successfully equips students with essential knowledge and kills as well as develops students' individual personalities.

(4) To encourage each school to seek out its own special characteristics and redefine itself as a unique site of distinctive education. (p. 27)

On the basis of these curriculum standards, each school creates its own curriculum, taking into account the characteristics of the school itself, its own school community, and the development of its students.

The curriculum consists of four areas: subjects, moral education, special activities, and a period for integrated study. In the curriculum for elementary school, compulsory subject areas include Japanese language, social studies, arithmetic, science, music, art and handicrafts, homemaking, and physical education. Of these subjects, the areas of greatest emphasis are Japanese language, arithmetic, and physical education. The special activities area includes classroom activities, student council, school events, school excursions, and volunteer activities. In the curriculum for upper secondary school, compulsory subjects are Japanese language, English language, social studies, mathematics, science, music, fine arts, health and physical education, industrial arts, and homemaking. Moral education, special activities, and elective subjects are also included.

Recently, a period for integrated study was added to the curriculum standards for elementary, lower secondary, and upper secondary school in order to provide interdisciplinary and comprehensive courses. The goals of this period are the enhancement of international understanding, foreign language conversation, information study, environmental education, and welfare education. In order to facilitate hands-on

and problem-solving activities, sports, cultural activities, hobbies, recreation, volunteer activities, and creative activities are highly encouraged. In upper secondary school, personal and career development is strongly emphasized as well (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology, 1998).

After the compulsory school period, most youths enter upper secondary school (Monbukagakusyo, 2004). The Ministry of Education also provides curricula for upper secondary schools. The curriculum standards are basically the same as those in elementary and lower secondary school, but the number of subjects is increased. However, moral education is not included in upper secondary school. Upper secondary school is divided into three types of courses: general, specialized, and integrated courses.

General courses are for students who want to continue into higher education after upper secondary school and those who want to work after graduation but who have not chosen a specific vocational area. Specialized courses are for students who have chosen the specific vocational areas they would like to pursue. These courses provide students with education in the areas of agriculture, industry, commerce, fishery, home economics, nursing, science-mathematics, physical education, music, art, and English language. The integrated courses are for students who want to choose subjects according to individual preference. Students in these courses choose from a wide range of subjects, from either the general subjects or the specialized subjects, in order to achieve future personal and career success. The objectives of this program are to train students to be able to design their own curricula by taking their own futures into consideration, to be able to plan their own goals and to take the necessary steps to achieve them, and to be able to motivate

themselves for lifelong learning (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2000).

Moral Education

During the compulsory education period, moral education courses are offered. In these courses, basic values such as honesty, thoughtfulness, compassion, manners, duty, hard work, diligence, justice, community consciousness, responsibility, appreciation of nature, respect, sensitivity, cooperation, and value for human dignity are taught (OERI Japan Study Team, 1987; Wray, 1999). Moral education facilitates the development of attitudes and behaviours that are consistent with Japanese values.

Through moral education, students internalize a sense of morality and deepen their understanding of human relationships and interdependencies (Fereshteh, 1992). Since interdependent relationships are the core of Japanese philosophy, students learn to listen to others, to respect others, to reflect on their own words and behaviour, and to admit their faults frankly in order to maintain harmony in human relationships and open-hearted cooperation. In moral education, students are provided with stories that relate to social dilemmas, family conflicts, and temptations toward socially unacceptable behaviour, and they analyze the problems and create solutions on their own. This process is also believed to be an enhancement of a sense of cooperation, agreement, and harmony (Fereshteh, 1992).

The Period for Integrated Study

In the past, Japan's education system was characterized by passive and rote-mastery learning by the students. That is, students simply waited for their teachers to

teach subjects. There was no focus on cultivating the imagination, human nature, and minds of students. Since the 1980s, The Ministry of Education has tried to reform Japanese education. The Ministry of Education started considering the promotion of active learning and added the period for integrated study into the curriculum in 1998 (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 1998). The period for integrated study expands student s' learning opportunities. Through involvement in community services and other activities, students broaden their views and develop open attitudes. There is also a focus on problem-solving and task-oriented learning in order to enhance students' active learning. According to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (1998), one of the objectives of this integrated study is the development of student creativity and internationality. Since education contributes to the foundation of all social systems, raising a person who is able to demonstrate his or her creativity and challenging sprit in order to adjust to the rapid social change in Japan is of the utmost importance.

In addition, the principles of Japan's recent education system emphasize giving a high level of respect to each student's individuality and to respecting one's dreams and goals. The introduction of the period for integrated study was the way to follow this principle. In addition, through moral education and the period for integrated education, educators are expected to promote students' sincere respect for life and other people. Overall, education in Japan is geared towards encouragement of the full demonstration of students' abilities throughout their lives.

Student Guidance

Traditional student guidance focused on giving guidance only to students who had behavioural problems (Wakai, 1990). Today, the objective of student guidance in Japan is to promote and maximize the development of personality and self-actualization in all students. Teachers take a central role in the development of the student, and a classroom teacher has the responsibility of providing guidance to students in his/her class. Classroom teachers make guidance plans for an entire class as well as for each student, taking into account each student's characteristics, abilities, interests, and academic and career orientation. At the beginning of the year, teachers perform home visits in order to grasp each student's family environment. This home visiting also reinforces communication between parents and teachers.

In terms of an increased ratio of students who display problematic behaviour in recent years, violent behaviour, bullying, and school refusal have been identified as the major behavioural problems in Japan's school system. To respond to these identified problem areas, the Ministry of Education has tried to promote using school counsellors, placing advisors in the classroom, establishing community units against bullying, visiting from volunteer students and educational counsellors, and enhancing crisis lines (Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture, 1999). However, appointed counsellors work only eight hours per week, and this level of counselling services is inadequate for consulting teachers and parents (Wray, 1999).

Career Guidance

The aim of career guidance is to support students in making decisions about their futures and careers, and developing the ability to adapt in their future lives. Career

guidance is provided by teachers, who use intelligence tests, personality tests, and examination records as guidelines. However, in secondary school level, students' career options are automatically determined by their grades. Japanese upper secondary schools and universities are hierarchically ranked. High grades and high scores in mock examinations administered by commercial companies provide students with the opportunity to enter the high-ranked upper secondary schools and universities, and graduation from high-ranked prestigious universities enables students to obtain jobs in prestigious companies (Wray, 1999). In contrast, students with low grades and low scores in the mock examinations are placed in the low-ranked schools and universities, and their future employment opportunities are less promising. Moreover, students who are placed in vocational school because of their low grades also have difficulties with their future career possibilities since their schools are not well acknowledged (Goya, 1993; Wray, 1999). As a result, students' autonomy, interests and aptitudes tend to be ignored (Hood, 2001). Therefore, career guidance in Japanese education does not always facilitate the student's independence.

Students with Special Needs

Blind students, deaf students, and students with major disabilities are enrolled in special schools; students with minor disabilities enroll in regular schools that have special classes. However, in the Japanese school system, specialists in reading, writing, and mathematics are not available, and there are not enough counsellors to perform these services. Therefore, in regular schools, gifted, slow, and troubled students easily fall behind. Fortner (1989) explains that the Japanese system is based on uniform education that is meant to provide equal education for all students. Therefore, teachers pay least

attention to gifted students and students with special needs. Moreover, Fortner stated that the Japanese education system considers students to be equal in their potential; thus, emphasis is placed on effort rather than innate ability.

Promotion to the next grade is automatic, and is not based on each student's academic ability because of this philosophy of equality. Thus, there are many cases in which students who need special attention are not identified (OERI Japan Study Team, 1987). According to Wray (1999), students who have fallen behind become frustrated by this deficiency in the school system because these students must deal with the increasing burden of academic demands that they are ill-equipped to handle.

Rules and Regulations

During the elementary school period, Japanese teachers are quite permissive; however, starting in lower secondary school teachers become more authoritarian as they start forcing many rules and regulations upon students. Up to lower secondary school, a characteristic of classroom life is an emphasis on harmony and group effort. Teachers are not authoritarian, and they try to motivate students to work with others in classes and to rely on other students as a source of information (OERI Japan Study Team, 1987). According to Hoffman (2000), teachers in elementary school emphasize the emotional bonding among students and respect students' self-directed learning. However, from lower secondary school on, students experience a rote mastery teaching style that is far less comforting than the one they knew in elementary school (Wray, 1999). The reasons for this change are varied. First, because students must take an entrance exam for high schools after grade nine, they have to acquire enormous amounts of knowledge. Second, in lower secondary schools, regulation of students' behaviour becomes stricter than in

elementary schools and thus sometimes becomes harsh and authoritarian. Third, peer pressure becomes very strong; therefore, students try not to be different from others and try not to be conspicuous in class (Wray, 1999).

According to Wray (1999), because the philosophy of Japanese education emphasizes uniformity, lower secondary and secondary schools impose many rules and regulations. Most public schools have a uniform for students, and schools regulate students' appearance, such as hairstyle and dress. Moreover, in order to maintain order, each school has its own school regulations. Because these regulations refer not only to students' behaviour in school but also to students' behaviour after school, teachers sometimes superintend students after school hours. For instance, some schools prohibit students to enter certain places, and teachers patrol the school area to find students who are not following school regulations.

Wray (1999) explains that self-sacrificing and self-restrained behaviour for good class management are seen as virtues in Japanese education. In a class, teachers teach subjects that include enormous amounts of material; therefore, they prefer students to listen to what they are teaching rather than engaging in discussion. Students themselves do not like peers who disturb classes or who try to speak up in class and make classes progress more slowly. Wray commented that these regulations suppress or deny students' human dignity and individuality. Thus, as one might expect, many students become passive, insecure, and act in conformity with others.

Juku

Juku is the Japanese term that represents private, profit-making, after-school schools and cram schools, and it serves a remedial role in helping students who have

fallen behind in school. Moreover, because students in grades 9 and 12 must pass an entrance exam for upper secondary schools and college or university, juku also serves as special assistance in preparing for these exams. Entering the best high schools leads to entering the best universities because those high schools are specially focused on preparations for entrance exams. In order to enter the best high schools and universities, students must obtain high entrance examination scores, and many parents and students think that school education alone is not enough to obtain high scores. Therefore, juku becomes one way of improving scores. Moreover, the fact that the prestige level of an educational institution influences future employment spurs parents to enroll their children in juku and encourages students to study long hours. Students often stay at juku late into the afternoon and evening.

In summary, performance on university entrance examinations has a large impact on, and, in fact, almost entirely determines the futures of most Japanese high school students. Parents consider juku as a compensatory school to get their children ahead of others because general school emphasizes equal education (Goya, 1993). About half of the grade nine population attends juku, and has done so for years (Monbukagakusyo, 2004).

Inadequacies of Curriculum for the Non-college-bound

According to Wray (1999), the school curriculum of 90 percent of upper secondary schools is oriented to the 39 percent of Japanese students who intend to attend post-secondary schools. The curriculum emphasizes reading, writing, and numeracy; however, non-college-bound graduates do not benefit as much from this curriculum. Upon graduation, they become unemployed, because industries do not hire people

without any special skills. These students end up working in small industries and service industries where few skills are required. Wray explains that "students avoid attending low-prestige vocational (specialized) schools because they do not want to mortgage their future social and economic life" (p. 85). Moreover, 70 percent of upper secondary school students cannot achieve the goals that the curriculum sets out, and the bottom 60 percent of students fall behind. As a result, those students are encouraged to take elementary level writing, reading, and math (Wray, 1999).

Self-discipline

In Japanese education, students discipline themselves in the classroom. For instance, every student takes turns being class monitor, and the class monitor is responsible for cleaning the blackboard and organizing the class to be quiet and in order. Moreover, students clean school buildings such as the classrooms, hallways, and washrooms everyday, and sometimes they clean around the outside of their schools as well.

Each class has a classroom council and this class council is responsible for organizing and completing class activities. Each student is also assigned some kind of role in completing the class activities. This system, where the classroom is run by students, achieves classroom management efficiency and emphasizes cooperation and division of responsibility among students.

Japanese teachers also emphasize self-examination or reflection. If students disturb school or class order, teachers make students contemplate how to improve their behaviour and future actions. Self-reflection promotes students' ability to refine and enhance the self.

School Events

In Japanese education, many special events are organized. For instance, there are school trips to cultural monuments, industries, and local communities, or even overnight field trips to the mountains or the sea. The aim of these special events is to broaden students' knowledge about and their attitudes towards nature, Japanese culture, and the world around them and to teach students appropriate public behaviour.

Japanese education also emphasizes students' physical activity. Many students belong to an after-school sports club or arts club. Since schools especially encourage students to do sports, sports clubs are popular among students, and they practise every day after classes. Japanese education believes that a healthy body reflects a healthy mind. There is an annual school sports day, and schools hold athletic festivals. All students of a given grade level compete in marathons, races, and other track and field events and demonstrate choreographed cheers. Parents and the neighbourhood are all invited to watch these demonstrations.

The Culture Festival in the fall is another highly organized event. On this occasion, each classroom performs skits, sings songs, and exhibits learning achievement by poster presentations. Students who belong to arts clubs demonstrate or display examples of their activities.

At the beginning of April, a formal entrance ceremony or beginning of year ceremony is held. Japanese education functions on a trimester system, and there are Spring, Summer, and Winter vacations for about three weeks each. In March, a formal graduation or end of year ceremony is also held.

Summary

Although today's Japanese education system was greatly influenced by the United States Occupation, it still maintains Japanese cultural values. Leaders in Japanese education assume that integration of Western innovations and their own cultural values will lead to a method of raising children who could contribute to an international society. However, highly competitive entrance examinations are a major problem in Japanese education. The Ministry of Education has tried to reform Japanese education, and the period for integrated study has been introduced into the curriculum. Today, active learning, through which students acquire their knowledge by hands-on experiences, is becoming a focus of the Japanese education system.

CHAPTER 3:
COMPARISON BETWEEN THE CANADIAN APPROACH TO SCHOOL COUNSELLING AND THE JAPANESE EDUCATION SYSTEM

In this chapter, a comparison of the Canadian approach to school counselling and the Japanese education system is made. The school counselling program in Japan delivers services to specific populations. An advantage of this approach, which responds to existing problems, is that school counsellors are able to deal with students' immediate requests for help, but a disadvantage of this approach is that school counsellors are not able to prevent students who are vulnerable or at risk from developing problems. This chapter discusses some ways of overcoming this disadvantage. The Canadian school counselling program purports to be a complete program, however introducing some ideas from the Japanese education system may also refine this program.

Application of the Canadian School Counselling Program to the Japanese Education System

Japanese Culture and Collaborative Work

The defining characteristic of the Canadian school counselling program is that it involves collaboration among school counsellors, teachers, other school staff, and community members. In Japan, the concept of a school counselling program was first introduced into the school system in 1995 (Okamoto, 2002). Because the history of school counselling is very short, there is both confusion about its implementation and anticipation of its potential benefits among school counsellors, educators, and

administrators. The school counsellor is a newcomer to the school system; therefore, when the adaptation of the Canadian school counselling program to the Japanese education system is considered, the difficulty in collaboration between school counsellors and educators would be marked. The major reasons for this are that school counsellors are not welcomed by schoolteachers, and there are no specific guidelines for the school counsellor's role. Many traditionalists greet the prospect of change with trepidation. On the contrary, in Canada school counsellors have become an accepted part of the educational landscape.

Before 1995, the school system in Japan used to be a place where only schoolteachers had a right to play many roles. Outsiders such as counsellors, psychologists, and social workers, did not go into school systems and interact with the teachers or students at all. Therefore, teachers used to teach subjects as well as to give guidance to students about how to behave properly. However, students' behavioural problems, such as school refusal, school phobia, bullying, and suicide, have been increased rapidly since the 1980s (Monbukagakusyo, 2004). Educators, parents, and other adults appear to be at a loss as to how to explain why children and youths display these problematic behaviours (Okamoto, 2002). Nowadays, even ordinary students within the Japanese school system tend to show problematic behaviours. For instance, students do not stop talking when a teacher starts talking, rather they ignore him/her, or students try to bully teachers. As a result, schoolteachers have an increased level of stress and suffer from increased mental illness (Okamoto, 2002).

Based on these increasing behavioural problems in children and youth, the Ministry of Education decided to introduce school counsellors into school systems

(Okamoto, 2002). In the past, schoolteachers were only responsible for teaching students specific subjects and how to behave in appropriate ways; there was no focus on enriching students' mental abilities (Kawai, 1995). Therefore, schoolteachers did not pay much attention to how their students think and feel. The Ministry of Education started recognizing that only teachers providing guidance is not enough for students to be listened to and their worries and troubles dealt with. Therefore, in 1995, the Ministry of Education asked for help from clinical psychologists and sent them as school counsellors into the school system (Murayama, 2000).

Before any additional reform to the system is attempted, advocates of that reform would be well advised to understand the fact that different cultures have their own values and beliefs. A country's way of introducing new ideas needs to be in line with its cultural orientation. It is considered that Western cultures value individualism, cognition, free will, and materialism; on the other hand, Eastern cultures value collectivism, emotionalism, determinism, and spiritualism (Laungani, 1999). Japanese culture is no exception. In the Japanese culture people are very group-oriented; therefore, it seems that collaborative work between schools and school counsellors would be very easy. However, in reality this group-oriented tendency has some characteristics that may hinder this process.

Kawai (1995) described Japanese group-oriented characteristics. According to him, members of a group are required to retain the balance or equilibrium of that group. Thus, every member is perfectly balanced by others and enhances the sense of unity within the group. If someone starts doing something completely different or being creative, this might break down the balance or equilibrium of the group. In order to avoid

this destruction, the members are taught to be silent and continue with the same tasks as others who have come before. If a person who is new or free from any affiliation comes to a certain group, that group will try to gather together and the newcomer is expected not to say anything that is different from or that goes against the group policy. Kawai claimed that very capable people have to wait for others to catch up to them, and people who are quite creative have to know how to hide their creativity.

This tendency to be group-oriented is evidenced in Japan's school system as well (Kawai, 1992). The Japanese school system considers each child to be the same and to have equal abilities, although even among students who could be considered equal it is usually obvious that there are individual differences among them. Some students may be particularly gifted, while others may be slower learners in particular areas of study. However, Japan's group-oriented tendencies imply that schools consider all students as one large group, not taking into account these individual differences. During the compulsory school period, students move forward from one grade to the next regardless of the level of achievement of each individual student. Therefore, even students who are intellectually talented or who are not ready for moving to the next grade must follow this system. Students never fail or skip grades.

Japan's school system is caught in this group-oriented thinking. For instance, a classroom teacher creates an emotional unity between the teacher and his/her students. By not only teaching subjects but also performing personal and career guidance for each student of his/her class, the solidarity between the teacher and students become strong. Each class creates its own sense of unity. Under these conditions, the introduction of school counsellors is not welcomed by classroom teachers as school counsellors might

destroy this sense of class unity (Kawai, 1995). According to Kawai, creating relationships between school counsellors and students becomes a menace to the unity of the class and the relationships between teachers and students. Furthermore, some teachers are not comfortable with the introduction of school counsellors because they feel that the introduction of such professionals reflects badly on the teachers' own ability to guide students (Saito, 1993).

Even the school itself might be reluctant to introduce school counsellors into the school system. Before school counsellors started stepping into the school system, there were no outsiders in the school except a school nurse, a doctor, and a nutritionist for school lunch. The staff are not very involved in creating curriculum, so the school system was under the reign of teachers (Kawai, 1995). Teachers have managed the Japanese school system for a long time. The purpose of introducing school counsellors is to promote different coping strategies for dealing with problematic students. As I mentioned before, a person who promotes things that are out of the ordinary or who is creative is not welcome in a group-oriented system. Therefore, it seems that there may be resistance from teachers to introducing personal counselling in Japanese schools.

In group-oriented cultures, people have a tendency to work on the assumption that everyone is equal; however, there is a need to rank people hierarchically in order to manage an entire group (Kawai, 1995). Since in Japan everyone is considered to be the same, group members cannot be ranked according to their abilities. Therefore, the younger gives precedence to the elder, and the eldest person has the authority to speak for the entire group. In addition, according to Kawai, in a group that has a group-oriented tendency, the leader's role is to coordinate the group and to tune up each member.

Harmony is the greatest virtue in a group, and the leader of any group is to take care of that harmony and try not to allow disharmony among its members. Group consensus is very important, and all group members share the responsibility of coming to such a consensus.

In contrast, Kawai (1995) describes the characteristics of groups in Western cultures. Simply put, the group sees individuality as being important, and respects the development of such individuality. Individual differences are expected and considered a matter of course. People are ranked according to their abilities and their degree of function. A group leader has the right to make decisions for the group. Moreover, each member takes responsibility for his or her own work.

Taking account of the characteristics of groups in Western cultures, the introduction of comprehensive guidance and counselling programs in Western countries appears easier than it would be in Japan, since as professionals school counsellors take on leadership roles. They advocate for students and families, collaborate with other related individuals and community agencies, and take leadership roles in promoting the academic, personal, social, and career development of students (Baker & Gerler, 2004). The introduction of school counsellors into the Japanese school system is difficult because school counsellors introduce new and different concepts, which may cause distress in teachers. Moreover, taking a leadership role as a school counsellor in the Japanese school system might interfere with the group of schoolteachers as a unit. The best way of incorporating these very new and different ideas would need to be considered if the Japanese school system wants to adopt a more Western-style school counselling model.

The introduction of a school counselling program would need to be undertaken with great care because Japanese culture makes the introduction of a counselling program into the Japanese school system quite threatening. Therefore, it would not be effective for school counsellors to take a leadership role in the process of this introduction. Maki and Kitano (2002) explained that the Japanese value modesty, humility, and hesitation in behaviour and expectations, even when they strongly desire something. In North America, self-assertiveness is valued, but in Japan, self-restraint is highly valued. Thus, it might be best if counsellors waited for teachers' acknowledgement of school counsellors' role in the school system. Next, teachers' acknowledgement of school counsellors' role is discussed in line with the different school counselling staffing patterns in Japan.

School Counselling Staffing Patterns

In the Japanese education system, school nurses, homeroom teachers, the vice-principal, and retired teachers take on major roles in school counselling (Okamoto, 2002; Picklesimer & Williams, 1999). School nurses, homeroom teachers, and psychiatrists perform individual and small group counselling. Homeroom teachers, school nurses, and the vice-principal organize consultations. Homeroom teachers and school nurses coordinate programs and referrals (Picklesimer & Williams, 1999). Since 1995, school counsellors have become increasingly common nationwide. School counsellors mainly perform individual counselling with students. School counsellors also give advice and support to parents and teachers on how to approach their children and students, as well as organizing workshops and lectures to teach parents and teachers counselling skills and knowledge about children and youths. However, Kurosawa (2000) reported that school

counsellors in Japan mainly focus on individual counselling with students. In reality, workshops for parents and teachers are supplementary, and it seems that not many school counsellors organize workshops.

In short, individual counselling is the only consistently identifiable role of a school counsellor in both the Japanese and Canadian systems. It strikes me that if Japanese school counsellors want to try to promote consultation with and workshops for teachers and parents, it would make their job easier if the school counsellors' role was first well-defined and acknowledged among schoolteachers. I believe it is possible to obtain this acknowledgement from current schoolteachers, but only if the introduction of new roles and changes to existing ones are approached from within the Japanese cultural background in a way that is respectful and shows appreciation for the past system's accomplishments.

Japanese culture is highly contextual, which means important meanings are implicitly embedded within a context that includes background, situational cues, and nonverbal behaviour when communicating with another person (Hall, 1976). According to Hall, high-context people take a long time to cultivate and develop personal relationships, and once established, relationships become long term. They favour indirect verbal communication, give ambiguous messages that may be understood by people in the same group, show internalized understanding in communication, and have strong group sense, identity, and norms. A high-context group may be difficult to enter for a stranger or an outsider because the outsider does not carry the group's context information. In order to create close relationships within the high-context group, the outsider needs to understand its high-context demands or high-context characteristics.

In short, schoolteachers may not be as comfortable with school counsellors since they are outsiders, so in order to prevent school counsellors from being intruders in the Japanese education system, the Canadian school counsellor role cannot directly transfer to the Japanese education system. First, school counsellors might try to strengthen the recognition of their existence among school staff. Making an effort to understand the characteristics of teachers' groups through maintaining a regular communication with teachers is also required. For instance, school counsellors could suggest how teachers and school administrators utilize the services of school counselling and ask them what kinds of services are a comfortable fit in each school. Also, school counsellors and school staff might discuss how school counsellors could involve themselves in the school system. This allows the school staff to decide how they want to make good use of school counsellors, and how the Japanese counsellor role could be identified in the Japanese education system. After determining how school staff and school counsellors are to collaborate and how school counsellors might become accepted members of the school staff, the new and different ideas offered by school counsellors would likely easily be introduced.

Family Ties

In performing counselling services, there are certain things that counsellors might want to consider. For instance, the family ties are traditionally very strong in Japanese families, and the family does not like someone who is an outsider intervening in family matters. A family's secrets are kept within the family in order to save face. Negative aspects of the family, such as mental illness and suicide, mean family shame if they become known to others (Tamura, 2003). Tamura claimed that these family ties make

interventions from counsellors difficult because the family often refuses them. Even when schoolteachers suspect that a student needs help from professionals, sometimes parents refuse to refer their children to school counsellors. There is some resistance among parents to individual or small group counselling.

Another family value that might affect counsellors is that the family benefits are more important than individual gains in Asian families; therefore, interventions with students would probably be more effective by acknowledging and working with family dynamics (Sandhu, Leung, & Tang, 2003). Moreover, the strong parent-child bond in Japanese families strengthens a dependency within the family and an obligation to the family (Tamura, 2003). In contrast, in the West the meeting of individual needs is a family value, and autonomy and independence are emphasized (Sandhu, et al., 2003). Since the cultural values in the West and Japan are totally different, methods of counselling that stress personal gains may not fit in the context of the Japanese education system. In Japan, parents always try to be highly involved in their child's education; therefore, to keep students' confidentiality might be very difficult. Students themselves may not want to go any farther without parents' opinions or agreement in counselling. Family plays a very important role in proceeding with school counselling in Japan.

Proactive and Preventive Approach

Perhaps the major difference between Canadian school counselling and Japanese school counselling is whether the system is proactive or reactive. In Canada, school counselling aspires to be proactive. School counsellors in Canada usually work with all students, including those considered to be at risk and those with special needs. School counsellors are trained to assist students in exploring and evaluating their abilities,

interests, attitudes, talents, and personality characteristics in order to develop realistic and lifelong academic and career goals. In contrast, school counselling in Japan tends to be more reactive. It seems that prevention is implemented by schoolteachers through student guidance; however, the major contribution of student guidance is to promote the development of basic life style and appropriate behaviour in society. Moreover, school counsellors mainly offer intervention only to those with personal or behavioural problems.

In developing a school counselling program, it strikes me that there ought to be as much focus on prevention as there is on intervention. As previously stated, Japan's counselling is set up to decrease the incidence of school refusal, school violence, and bullying. The Ministry of Education indicates that the goal of school counselling is to alleviate students' psychological problems and to manage students' special needs (Nakano, 2003). With the current system, school counsellors simply wait for someone who desperately needs help to be referred to them, or to ask for help. Then, once that individual comes in for help, the counsellor starts rescuing him/her. Thus, students who are vulnerable or at risk for developing behavioural problems are overlooked. This type of reactive system appears to produce large numbers of people who desperately need help but do not receive it. In order to decrease the number of these students, the preventive approach might be more effective. Following this reasoning, since the goal of introducing school counsellors in the Japanese system is to decrease students' behavioural problems, adopting a preventive approach and promoting its benefits might be accepted by that system.

There is an area that is ideal for the promotion of prevention programs in the Japanese school system - the period for integrated study. As I mentioned in chapter two,

from elementary through upper secondary high school there is a period for integrated study. In this period, the acquisition of problem-solving skills and decision-making skills is promoted in hopes of helping students learn to actively lead their own lives. The school counsellors might be able to recommend various activities to classroom teachers in order to support guidance instructions. For instance, activities for interpersonal relationships, adolescent development, and career exploration could be undertaken in classes.

Hayes and Kameguchi (2001) studied the curriculum development of psycho-education in a Japanese upper secondary school. According to these authors, sense of community is well developed among Japanese students, but self-assertion and interpersonal skills are not promoted because Japanese cultural heritage stresses the importance of self-restraint and harmony. However, there is a criticism that this lack of self-assertiveness contributes to increasing student violence. Thus, the Japanese educator is challenged to promote these skills in students while at the same time honouring the Japanese cultural heritage. As classroom guidance, students were taught various topics for their development, such as life tasks, self-assertiveness, decision-making, relaxation training, family dynamics, and peer relationships, through collaborative group work. The authors explained that the small group work helps to promote a sense of community. The finding was that this approach is very effective in alleviating students' nervousness and anxiety. In short, classroom guidance might be one effective way of changing the Japanese education system from a reactive to a proactive approach.

Career Development

According to Monbukagakusyo (2004), the employment rate among upper secondary school and university graduates has been decreasing for the past decade in Japan. In order to deal with this issue, the Ministry of Education promoted career counselling, the introduction of career advisers from communities, the assessment of students' interests and aptitudes, and increasing students' job experience (Monbukagakusyo, 1999). In reality, counselling and psychological profiling are not given their due. Until recently, vocational education was rarely, if ever, offered in Japanese education (Saito, 1993). Therefore, career guidance and counselling and students' career development programs in the Canadian school counselling program would give the Japanese education system useful ideas and methods for vocational education since the concept of vocational education in Canada is very similar to that of today's Japanese education. However, there is a possibility that students and their parents may resist this adaptation of Canadian vocational education.

In Japan, the primary focus of the educational system is academic achievement because the accepted wisdom is that if your grades are not first-class you will not be successful in life. Teachers' advice to students is based on grades and not on personality or interests. In addition, students' and their parents' interests are related solely to grades. As described in chapter two, many students in lower secondary and upper secondary high school go to juku to complement their studies in school and to improve their grades. Their goal of achieving high grades is to enter the high-ranking schools or universities that have good reputations. Thus, many students and their parents are eager to have career guidance based on their records. Therefore, the career guidance that is based on students' interests would likely not be appreciated by them.

However, focusing solely on students' grades brings significant stress to students at all levels who may be perfectly suited for a certain career opportunity despite having only average grades. Regrettably, they have no one to turn to in such a system. The result is all too often a missed window of opportunity for those students to be helped and to succeed. Thus, career guidance that is based on student interests is strongly desired. How the Canadian program could be transferred to the Japanese education system would be the main issue. The concept of vocational counselling in Canada may be useful for supporting the Japanese non-college-bound students.

The Coordination of Consultation or Workshops

My experience of a teaching placement in upper secondary school explains how much teacher and parent preparations are needed. There was a very troubled young girl in my school who was quite withdrawn, socially phobic, anorexic, and had suicidal tendencies that were present for a year before they were noticed by anyone. Some of the teaching staff tried to help but they lacked the skills needed to properly assess the girl in order to pursue a proper course of action. She ended up in the care of a psychiatrist and on drug therapy, which she may not have needed had the proper resources been available to her earlier in the course of her difficulties. Unfortunately, this is all too common in Japan, as psychology and counselling are not really recognized in the education system. In order to prevent this from happening, schoolteachers and parents would benefit from having knowledge of students' behavioural problems and their treatment.

A component of the Canadian program that might easily be transferable to the Japanese education system is the coordination of consultation or workshops for parents and school staff. Sometimes parents and school staff are confused about how to

communicate with or approach their children. Therefore, through workshops and discussion among school staff and parents, they might more easily share their concerns and acquire strategies and skills for dealing with their children. This consultation/workshop process also facilitates the understanding of the school counsellor's role among parents and school staff and the use of counselling by students.

Crisis Intervention

Another component that would be beneficial if included in the Japanese school counselling program is the construction of a system for crisis intervention. Kurosawa (2000) expresses the need for this type of system. According to Kurosawa, efforts need to be made to create networks between the school and community. Furthermore, the program would need to clearly indicate the allocation of roles for people who are involved in crisis intervention in order to ensure immediate action.

Application of the Japanese Education System to the Canadian School Counselling Program

In the previous section the transferability of certain components of the Canadian school counselling program into the Japanese education system was discussed. In this section, some of the characteristics of the Japanese education system that might be transferred into the Canadian school counselling program are discussed in order to improve the quality of the Canadian program. In particular, some points that are concerned with the proactive and preventive characteristics of the program are discussed. First, the Canadian school counselling program stresses students' individual benefits and personal development, such as awareness of themselves, whereas developing a sense of community and incorporation into society is stressed in the Japanese education system.

In Japanese education, students learn respect for others, responsibilities towards society, and cooperation with others through moral education and daily school life. Although teaching ethics and morals may sound like indoctrination or brainwashing, moral education focuses on basic values in society and values for human dignity. This education is done through open discussion by students, and students come up with their own moral or ethical decisions on various issues.

Some researchers suggest the introduction of moral or ethics courses, or teaching cooperation in North American education, might be beneficial (Hayes & Kameguchi, 2001; Wray, 1999). In North America, prejudice toward minority groups is still a major issue, as it is in many other places in the world (Moghaddam, 1998). In daily life, people put their feet up on chairs as if this was acceptable, and students stick their gum under their desks. Vandalism is a major school problem. It is very important for educators to emphasize the ethical and moral foundations of society and attitudes of respect, responsibility, and sensitivity. Through moral education, students foster respect for school and public property and the dignity of human beings. As a result, they develop abilities to deal with social problems they will encounter in the future.

However, if moral courses are introduced, educators will be required to make social values clear and to reach consensus among communities, schools and parents (Wray, 1999). Social values would need to be based on North American culture, taking into consideration the diversity of cultures that are represented. Thus, basic values could be taught in moral education. However, as Japanese social values and Canadian social values are different, Japanese moral education could not simply be transferred to the

Canadian education system. First, Canadian education would need concrete social values upon which everyone agreed.

Second, in the Japanese education system schoolteachers usually make home visits at least once a year in order to discuss students' academic achievement and their behaviours at school and in the family, and to observe the condition of their family and home. Schoolteachers are required to visit every single home and try to communicate with every student's parents. If students develop behavioural problems, schoolteachers also visits these students' home to see how students are doing at home and to discuss the situation with their parents. Sometimes school counsellors join in this home visit. This home visit system offers several benefits for the Canadian school counselling program.

In the Canadian school counselling program, cooperation between school and parents is emphasized. Because home visits familiarize teachers and parents with one another, it might be a useful way of enhancing collaboration between parents and the school. Furthermore, school counsellors would be able to enhance their understanding of the diverse cultures to which their students belong and increase their cultural awareness. Sciarra (2001) suggested that, for school counsellors, being vitally connected to the neighbourhoods where their schools are located gives them a sense of their students' world. Home visitation is one way of obtaining multicultural counselling competencies. Home visits not only foster an increase in schoolteachers' multicultural competencies but also help schoolteachers to have various perspectives on their intervention with their students. In this sense, the home visit system also has implications for counsellor training.

Holcomb-McCoy and Myers (1999) stated that many counsellors are less conversant with clients' cultures and most conversant with their own cultural worldview.

The authors claimed that cross-cultural experiences and post degree training with clients from various cultural backgrounds result in enhancing counsellors' multicultural competencies. They suggested that counselling educators might provide counselling trainees with in vivo learning experiences. Home visits could be one type of effective in vivo training experiences.

Lastly, a large emphasis is put on extracurricular activities in Japanese education. Many students belong to school clubs, and they run clubs on their own. Through club activities, students obtain a sense of responsibility and mutual support. Furthermore, club activities prevent many students from developing behavioural problems (Wray, 1999). If students are engaged in and enthusiastic about club activities during after-school hours, they might be less inclined to hang around the city or town with no purpose. Thus, it might be worth consideration by the Canadian education system to establish extracurricular activities that students run on their own after school.

Summary

In order to implement a school counselling system in Japan, it is helpful to examine the principles behind a comprehensive school guidance and counselling program developed in North America. However, one must carefully consider cultural differences in bringing forward these new ideas. It is important to consider how adjustments might be made while honouring Japanese values, and how the resistance of students, parents, and schoolteachers might be taken into account and respected. It is clear that the school counselling system in Japan absolutely needs a prevention program. In order to reduce students' emotional and behavioural problems, school counselling needs balanced prevention and intervention systems. School counsellors in Japan are in an excellent

position to demonstrate this balanced approach in the school system. In addition, the Canadian education system may also be enhanced by accepting certain concepts from the Japanese education system. Moral education may be introduced into the curriculum in order to facilitate students' social development, and home visits might be performed by teachers and school counsellors in order to enhance their multicultural competencies. Missing from the North American perspective may be the concept of excellence among global citizenry, interdependence, and ongoing educational reform. Thus, although different cultures resulted in different education systems, both education systems could provide useful insights for one another.

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