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Gender Issues in Counseling and Guidance in Post-Primary Education

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Gender Issues in Counseling and Guidance in Post-Primary Education
A cknowledgements

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The need for counseling and guidance as a practice for promoting adolescent health has been documented worldwide. However, the specific ways by which counseling and guidance can be practiced, the optimal settings where counseling and guidance can work in the education context, and how successful such programmes are in ensuring gender equity and equality remain largely undiscussed in the Asia-Pacific region. This brief highlights that (a) establishing counseling and guidance programmes in schools and (b) incorporating gender responsiveness in the context of counseling and guidance programmes in post-primary education are vital to the achievement of larger key education objectives. This is especially so for the EFA goals of increased access, gender equity and equality in education.

Defining ‘Counseling and Guidance’

Adolescents in cultures around the world have historically benefited from the presence of “informal” counselors and mentors, both within the school system as well as within the community/society as a whole. These were typically teachers, administrative staff, parent volunteers, older peers within the school system and, in some cases, religious/spiritual leaders in the community/society. However, as time went on, socio-political and economic conditions changed. Migration and urbanization presented new challenges by resulting in a sense of isolation among youth who lost traditional familial-social networks. These challenges required communities to define vocational trajectories and systematize career pathways in the form of “guidance” for their youth. Over time, the need for professional, unbiased, confidential and private counseling in addition to such guidance strategies was recognized by many schools around the world (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001).

The term “school counseling” broadly refers to the process of meeting the needs of students in several areas of development, such as academic, career, and personal. Experts agree that professional school counseling programmes should be “comprehensive in scope, preventative in design and developmental in nature.”1 The term “guidance” refers to a more specific trajectory within the field of counseling, a pathway to helping students choose a vocational or career path. “Guidance is the process of helping people make important choices that affect their lives, such as choosing a preferred life-style. One distinction between guidance and counseling is that while guidance focuses on helping individuals choose what they value most, counseling focuses on helping them make changes.”2

Several changes have taken place in the evolution of counseling and guidance programmes in schools around the world (see Annex, Table 1): Counseling and guidance appear to have “moved from a single vocational counselor in schools to an organized programme that focuses on (a) content (core competencies that all students can acquire) (b) organizational framework (structural components and programme components) and resources (human and political)” (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000).


As such, counseling and guidance experts are increasingly emphasizing the need for programme planning and evaluation in improving the effectiveness of programmes and accountability of counselors. In establishing carefully planned counseling and guidance programmes in post-primary education, the idea of gender responsiveness is critical.

In this document, the term “gender responsiveness” refers to the practice of active and engaged strategies and responses to issues relating to gender in educational planning and policies. Gender-responsive programming promotes greater equity by (1) ensuring that the overall needs and interests of both boys and girls in post-primary schools are met, (2) effectively incorporating life skills-based strategies for preparing the next generation to make “life-career” decisions, (3) closing potential achievement gaps between the sexes and (4) ensuring access to programmes for upper-level education/college/university-readiness.

Importance of Counseling and Guidance Programmes in Post-Primary Education

The post-primary education years of schooling in most countries represent periods of academic, social, personal, emotional and intellectual growth for most adolescents. There are wide variations in the exact definition of the term “adolescence” among countries and scholars. Some researchers argue that adolescence should span the pre-pubertal and the pubertal period, ranging from the ages of 10-21. Others believe that it spans 13-19 years of age.

As per the United Nations definition, adolescence is the period from 10-19 years of age. In most societies, adolescence appears to represent a period of transition from childhood to adulthood. In some countries, the transition is marked by a ritual or a ceremony; in others, it is a gradual period of increased responsibilities towards more independence. Adolescence is also a period in a child’s development where biological changes are accompanied by increasing cultural and social expectations for gender-appropriate behaviours. In addition, adolescents in this stage of their education in most countries are frequently looking for guidance and both emotional and psychological support in not only career choices, but also the psycho-emotional dynamics surrounding their career choices. School systems in the region must be ready, willing and able to deal with challenges that adolescents face in going through the transition.

Strategically integrating gender responsiveness into counseling and guidance practices/programmes in schools - particularly in post-primary education - can contribute to institutionalizing gender mainstreaming in the education system as a whole, and also to achieving/promoting further gender equality in the process of learning/teaching and in education outcomes, either academic or vocational.

School-based Counseling and Guidance in the Asia-Pacific Region

In the Asia-Pacific region, school counseling is a relatively young, but evolving discipline. Othman and Awang (1993) describe how most countries in this region have attempted to adapt counseling from prevailing Western theoretical models. Several other researchers have also pointed to the idea that despite such adaptations and modifications, there are fundamental differences between the West and the Asia-Pacific region, as well as among the countries themselves.

The scientific literature from many countries in the region documents counseling and guidance initiatives from diverse perspectives, emphasizing various aspects of the dynamics underlying the practice of school counseling and guidance in South-East and East Asia. This literature provides information about specific school-based programmes, reviews existing programmes and efforts to initiate advocacy and policy, and examines how these programmes and reviews can then serve to develop national frameworks or recommendations for framing policies to advance the cause of counseling and guidance in post-primary educational settings.

Impetus from Economic Needs

Economic and labour systems within a country may have a huge impact on counseling and guidance programmes. In China, for example, Zhang, Hu & Pope, (2002), point to the impact of current economic and market trends on the development of career counseling pathways. Following several changes to the country’s economic and labour systems, which have altered perceptions of what constitutes a career for adults, there has been a shift away from state-guaranteed jobs to market-oriented employment.

In this situation, as the need for guiding the nation’s youth became salient, career counseling and guidance took front and center stage in educational policy. Currently, there are several counseling programmes, models and resources in many cities across the country, but the field of career counseling and guidance still remains in its “beginning stages” (Zhang, Hu & Pope, 2002, p. 226).

Similarly, in Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Labour Department has, in recent years, organized pre-career training programmes for youth, but community-level initiatives are sometimes missing.

According to Tatsuno (2002), in Japan, with rising rates of unemployment and the disappearance of traditional, “seniority-based” employment models, career counseling is increasingly being viewed as critical to the healthy development of secondary school students. However, Tatsuno, argues that career counseling in Japan is still a “department-store” model where teachers provide guidance and counseling through classroom management, in a one-stop-shop process, rather than through professional processes where trained counselors who are equipped to deal with developmental changes in children’s lives provide warm and empathetic advice. Researchers in Japan continue to call for increasingly sophisticated, trained counselors to provide these services.
In South Korea, there is a call for policy development and implementation of technical and vocational education. Using the Internet as a tool to provide “cyber counseling” and guidance pathways to secondary students is gaining ground. While the pros and cons are still being evaluated, this non-traditional mode of delivery of guidance services is particularly useful for the country.

In Indonesia, even though progress is being made towards increased gender parity in education, it does not necessarily translate into job opportunities for women as they go through the transition from school to work. Women in Indonesia find it especially difficult to enter the formal labour market. When they do, they tend to receive low-paying and low skilled occupations (ADB, 2006).

In Thailand, in the context of promoting technical and vocational education within a “dual system” model of matching the needs of the industrial sector to potential employees, there has been a call to provide counseling and guidance.

In Cambodia, there has been limited initiatives to provide national policy or advocacy efforts related to counseling and guidance. Researchers and policy makers continue to emphasize the need for providing national structures and frameworks in order to steer career counseling programmes (within the context of recommendations from UNESCO and the ILO) for promoting technical and vocational education.

In Viet Nam, while the country is close to achieving gender parity in secondary education, female enrolment continues to be low at the tertiary education level. There is also an acknowledgment of the need to promote technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and ensure a good fit with changing labour market needs. However, there appears to be limited investment in, and initiatives for, counseling and guidance at the school level. Research recommendations include greater investment in developing national frameworks, giving attention to secondary education as a context for providing counseling, and ensuring gender equity and equality in the delivery of such services.

Establishing counseling and guidance programmes in secondary schools that can advocate for meaningful personal and career choices can serve to bridge the gap between the academic curriculum in post-primary education and labour market needs. When gender responsiveness is built into such counseling and guidance programmes, these can also help to bridge the gap between gender parity and gender equality through advocacy of choice and independence for both sexes, as well as through hands-on initiatives that can focus on attitudinal and behavioral changes in communities.

## Impetus from Educational and Cultural Systems

In addition to the economic trends in a country, specific needs from within educational and cultural systems can also influence counseling and principles of psychology, but from the school system (Pope, Musa, Singaravelu, Bringaze & Russell, 2002). Religious/philosophical values are documented to be an integral part of career-related decisions. Career assessments for career counseling and the range of non-traditional occupations have increased for all students (Singaravelu, 1998). In 1963, the Malaysian Ministry of Education had so accepted the fact of counseling in its schools that it prepared a policy statement “which stipulated
that schools, especially secondary schools, should have their own guidance teachers” (Amir & Latiff, 1984, p. 3). In 1998, Act 580 of the Malaysian Government (the Counsellors Act), established counseling as a profession. However, leading proponents continue to call for increased standards and certification procedures, enhancing quality of counselor training to reflect labor market needs and cultural issues, and expanding the role of counselors as agents of transformation and advocacy. In addition, it is also noted that gender inequalities continue to persist, and girls continue to be disadvantaged within the school context (Hutchings, 1998; Mahathir, 1997). There is a call to pay attention to such inequalities within the context of counseling and guidance (Quek, 2001).

The strong cultural emphasis on academic achievement has also fueled the need for structured counseling and guidance programmes in the region. In Singapore, the model for career counseling again stems from a larger familial and cultural emphasis on academic achievement. Secondary schools were therefore effective as contexts to communicate the concept of guidance. In a “whole school approach,” career education is viewed as the essence of the Affective and Career Education (ACE) programme that should be provided to all the students (Ministry of Education, 1997). The ACE evolved from the Pastoral Care and Career Guidance programme that was introduced in the 1980s. The ACE covers five key areas for developing life skill competencies: personal effectiveness, interpersonal effectiveness, effective learning, transition to work, and fostering a caring community. All secondary schools are encouraged to set aside at least 35 minutes, or one period, of curriculum time per week for life skills development through a series of group guidance activities. (Tan, 2002, p. 260). However, some of the region’s other concerns are present in Singapore, as well, with researchers calling for more indigenization of materials, better teacher training, greater gender responsiveness, and an equitable bridging of the gap between school and work for both sexes.

**Impetus from Psychological/Social Research**

The field of psychology has also played a key role in the emergence of counseling and guidance in the Asia-Pacific region. However, in doing so, counseling and guidance programmes have attempted to respond to specific and unique cultural issues within the countries. For example, according to Salazar-Clemena (2002), the growth of the guidance movement in the Philippines resembles that in the United States: closely interwoven with the development of psychology as a discipline, it continues to evolve as a fledgling field. However, it is unique in its emphasis on family ties and the goal of upward economic mobility. The landmark 1970 Presidential Commission to Survey Philippine Education report highlighted specific needs in the area of counseling for careers that would represent a balance between student aspirations and national needs. Based on this report, the Government introduced several steps, including hourly guidance sessions every week for all elementary and secondary schools, a national entrance examination for professional colleges, and several programmes for vocational guidance and training. A notable feature of the Philippines initiative is intersectoral collaboration between the private sector, the public sector and service organizations in developing assessment materials and other programmes. However, despite such efforts, researchers call for either greater “indigenization” of western models or development of new and family-centred models that encourage career counseling to factor into the powerful influence that families continue to exert on the individual.
From an examination of the literature on counseling and guidance in most Asia-Pacific countries, it appears that counseling and guidance are understood and practiced in these countries primarily as “career and vocational guidance” to youth. Evidence points to the need for a more integrated and comprehensive approach to the concept of counseling. In addition to career and vocational guidance, post-primary educational contexts should provide inclusive and gender-responsive support in all aspects of adolescents’ development, including the biological, social and psychological aspects of their lives.

**Incorporating Gender Responsiveness into Counseling and Guidance Policies**

An overview of developing trends and issues in some Asian countries points to common issues that almost all countries in the region face as they promote strategies for counseling and guidance. One, there appears to be a pressing need for establishing quality counseling and guidance programmes that are integrated and provide a broad range of services; and two, there is an emphasis on the need for a “gender-perspective” that addresses equity and equality for both sexes in the context of delivering these quality counseling and guidance services.

Romano, Goh & Wahl (2005) summarize four major issues faced in promoting counseling and guidance. To address these issues, this brief proposes the following specific recommendations for incorporating gender responsiveness into counseling and guidance programmes:

1. **Understanding the importance of the cultural context in which school guidance programmes operate:** A careful examination and analysis of the suitability and modifiability of the model for the cultural context of the country is critical. Gender-responsiveness in this scenario would require:
   - **analysis** of role expectations for boys and girls in these communities;
   - **examination of gender parity** indices in school enrolment; and
   - **qualitative research** on student perceptions of success, parental and teacher beliefs about gender and gender-based practices that can support or hinder the achievement of goals for boys and girls.

2. **Situating school counseling and guidance programmes within the larger socio-political umbrella:** This includes acknowledgment of the school counselor’s role in “nation-building,” advocacy and dissemination of scientific information about counseling to lawmakers and the general public.

   Gender-responsive advocacy initiatives by counselors would particularly focus on:
   - messages that challenge stereotypical content in language; counselors should also be trained for gender-responsive advocacy for curriculum changes;
   - including techniques such as role playing and psycho-drama, which can explicitly focus on gender issues;
   - providing adjunct classroom support to teachers for mixed-gender discussion groups,
Questions to Ponder

How is “guidance” or “counseling” defined for boys and girls in your country?
What are the dominant attitudes towards counseling boys and girls?
Does your country guide secondary students into career paths based on their sex?
Who are the principal “guides” and “counselors” in your country (schools/community/society)? Are these different for boys and girls? Why or why not?
What does the term “career choice” mean to male and female students in your country?
What are some “burning” issues in career choice for boys in your country?
What are some of these issues for girls in your country?
What are some of the policies already in place in your country for career choices for students of both sexes?
How are “masculinity” and “femininity” conceptualized in your country?
How can policy influence teachers and counselors (and other agents of socialization) in your country so that they can communicate career choices in a manner that is gender-responsive?

- leading classroom activities that highlight specific issues faced by boys and girls within their communities.

- navigating tensions between students’ and societal beliefs about career paths and vocational trajectories, e.g. career guidance programmes which can successfully mediate between a student’s interests and the country’s larger labour needs. Counselors trained in gender responsiveness may be particularly skilled in conflict-resolution and empowerment for both sexes. For example, in paternalistic cultures, this may include either raising awareness of the risks associated with thrusting children into professions that they are unwilling to work in or, alternatively, introducing children to innovative but interesting career paths that address their interests within the context of familial and/or labour market expectations (e.g. working in web/graphic design units within family businesses, training to be peer counselors or assisting in national health initiatives etc.).

(3) Defining the role of a school counselor and clarifying how this meets the larger needs of the country: A national policy of school counseling and guidance that emphasizes gender-responsiveness will not only encourage non-stereotypical beliefs and behaviors in schools, but will actively provide specific strategies to do so. One example is to encourage and support the employment of counselors who are available on fixed days in school premises. These counselors will be specifically trained in gender-responsive counseling.

(4) Working with existing ecological aspects and customs of care: In some countries, informal networks such as parents, community/religious leaders, teachers, and heads of education department etc are frequently given training in counseling and guidance. The on-going mobilization, retention and education of such “informal counselors” can benefit considerably from investment in gender-sensitivity training, since many of the messages that they will then promote will ensure greater gender equality among the sexes.
In post-primary education contexts in the Asia-Pacific region, these recommendations can be specifically useful if translated into three areas:

**Developing a Gender-Responsive Guidance Curriculum**

Gender responsiveness is critical to counseling and guidance programmes in promoting equity and gender equality. By making a guidance curriculum an integral part of the academic curriculum, counselors can play an active role in engaging students in meaningful dialogue and as partners in advocacy for a rights-based approach to careers. For example, in Indonesia, a report from the ILO (Sziraczki, G. and A. Reerink, 2004) highlights the fact that many students drop out of secondary schools because they do not perceive their curriculum as useful in matching the needs of the labour market. Other research overviews also indicate that in addition to career counseling, a gender-responsive counseling and guidance that is integrated into academic curricula can:

1. serve as delivery points for information concerning sexual health, drugs, HIV/AIDS;
2. increase advocacy for effective transitions from school-to-work;
3. provide a platform for engagement in life skills-based educational activities; and
4. provide insight into the special needs of disadvantaged populations and adolescents through classroom activities and engaged discussions.

**Training Counselors as Agents of Advocacy and a Rights-based Approach to Change**

Counselors trained in gender-responsive guidance can serve as active agents who provide insight into the specific needs of girls and boys, and also of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. They can monitor school climate and gender stereotyping. With training, they can promote positive and respectful attitudes towards the opposite sex. As Gysbers and Jensen (1999) note: “More than fifteen years of empirical research has documented that, when school counselors have time, resources, and the structure of a comprehensive programme to work in, good things happen: Guidance and counseling interventions improve academic achievement, students take more demanding courses, develop and use career plans and schools have more positive climates.”

**Training Counselors to be Promoters of Gender Equality**

Even in countries where rapid progress is made towards gender parity, well-trained counselors can actively promote gender equality. For example, a recent UNGEI report on the Gender Dimension of the school to work transition (Devan, 2008) points out that in the East Asia region, “with the exception of China and Viet Nam, females generally constitute a smaller share of the enrolment in technical and vocational programmes than males.” In situations such as these, counselors can provide not only qualitative evidence about the reasons and potential dynamics underlying these phenomena, but can also actively offer opportunities for awareness and training, especially for vulnerable and disadvantaged populations. The presence of counseling departments/spaces in school campuses may serve to encourage exploration of multiple, non-stereotypical career trajectories and pathways, in addition to providing “safe spaces” for adolescents to engage in confidential discussions with trusted adults regarding perceived psychological and social barriers in the attainment of their life goals.
Factors Affecting Guidance and Counseling in the School Context

Career choice for adolescents is influenced by multiple factors that affect their daily lives within school and beyond:

Teachers
The kind of career choice an adolescent makes is strongly influenced by teacher beliefs and perceptions, classroom practices and sometimes through time allocations to various classroom activities. It has been widely documented that teachers can play a significant role in guiding children towards certain career paths and trajectories. In addition, these career paths can be influenced by teachers’ own beliefs about gender. To begin with, if teachers serve as counselors, then it is imperative that teachers themselves receive at least basic training in gender responsiveness. Recent recommendations have focused on using large classrooms (traditionally considered a negative correlate of quality) as a resource for training adolescents for greater gender responsiveness. For example, one recommendation involves training teachers to use group activities where the roles of leader and follower are rotated among boys and girls. Providing training to boys to work with female leaders and vice-versa is also important. However, teacher training alone has shown to be ineffective if it is not accompanied by a major commitment to parent and family partnerships.

Families
Cultural understandings of masculinity and femininity play a huge role in career choices for children. It is therefore equally important for policy makers to invest in addressing and modifying notions of masculinity just as much as they address how to understand the notion of femininity in their countries. Such efforts will not only help with more non-gender stereotypical career choices, but will also ensure the rights and safety of children of both sexes.

Peers
In the stage of identity vs. identity-diffusion, adolescents in most cultures define their identities in relation to their peers as principal reference groups. Peers represent great resources for counseling both in serving as co-members of focus groups and as mentors and peer-counselors. Policy makers could benefit greatly from using peer-centered approaches in (a) re-conceptualizing their counseling programmes in order to help with conflict-resolutions in vocational, academic and social aspects of development for both sexes and (b) advancing the idea of gender responsiveness in schools. A significant point is that even with limited resources, advocacy efforts can focus on the formation of focus groups that emphasize gender equality in social interactions. In this context, peer groups comprised of both sexes can be structured to provide support for other students, even when the schools have limited resources.

Media
The recent burgeoning of interest in electronic media across most countries in the region may afford great opportunities for policy makers to use this outlet as a platform for counseling and guidance. Countries with high levels of resources have used electronic games, cyber-counseling and social networking groups to provide a safe space for adolescents to explore
their identities and career choices. In remote areas, and relatively “disadvantaged” contexts, these efforts could take the form of ICT-based educational outreach in order to promote gender equality, radio programming for reaching remote areas to communicate health risks to girls and boys, or embedding advocacy messages into popular reading materials and television programming for boys and girls.

**Cultural Context**

Recent years are also witnessing the slow replacement of “industrial” models of counseling (where traditionally, men had to be trained to take their place in the business world, and women had to learn skills to be nurturing homemakers) to increasing participation in the world through ICT-based instruction. As changes in the world lead to more occupations now open to the world of “brain, not brawn,” future training programmes need to prepare both girls and boys for technologically-related occupations. So it is imperative that countries focus on providing counseling and guidance programmes that accommodate these new realities, and which assist both male and female students in making independent career choices that are relevant to their own cultural contexts. It is also imperative that counselors are trained in recognizing their own cultural biases when providing services.

**Recommendations for Developing and Implementing Gender-Responsive Counseling and Guidance**

Offering specific recommendations to incorporate gender perspectives into counseling and guidance programmes leads to the larger question of how perspectives can be further developed and incorporated into national policies and large-scale programmes.

Some steps to achieve this include:

**Step 1: Identification of Counseling and Guidance Programmes**

This step involves identifying local needs and resources for counseling and guidance. A baseline analysis of what counseling initiatives already exist, and their potential reach, is a first critical step in the formulation of national advocacy efforts for counseling and guidance. The need for gender responsiveness right from this stage cannot be over-emphasized. When baseline surveys are operationalized and conducted, issues pertaining to the common and specific needs of boys and girls should be considered. For example, secondary school systems should ensure equal access to resources including those related to:

- career paths
- social-emotional concerns and
- physical needs of both boys and girls

**Step 2: Preparation and Appraisal**

When formulating initiatives for counseling and guidance, care should be taken to ensure that the proposed plans serve the needs of both boys and girls in secondary schools effectively. Special attention should be paid to:

- Existence of plans for availability of safe spaces and physical settings for the programmes: Access to quiet and private spaces for counseling sessions for both boys and girls
• **Investment of equal resources for both sexes:** Ensuring that there are trained “same-sex” counselors available for both boys and girls

• **Equal access to information:** Ascertain that both boys and girls have access to all training materials, pamphlets, brochures, etc.

**Step 3: Implementation/Supervision**

In an on-going counseling and guidance programme, several gender-related issues can emerge. Broadly, care should be taken to ensure:

• **Provision of close supervision to the process of programme implementation:** Ensuring that both girls and boys participate equally (in quantity and quality) in all training programmes

• **Provision of opportunities for feedback from both sexes:** Ensuring that this takes place throughout the programme implementation stages

**Step 4: Monitoring and Evaluation of Counseling and Guidance Programmes**

An important part of the programme cycle is the continued monitoring and evaluation of counseling effectiveness and usefulness of guidance initiatives. Gender-responsive strategies in this step can improve overall quality and effectiveness through:

• Collection of data from both sexes using systematic methods such as proportional representation

• Follow up observations are done on both sexes

• Post-intervention focus groups composed of both sexes

• Empowerment of students as important stakeholders in the monitoring and evaluation process (training both boys and girls to provide participant perspectives on programmes)

**Step 5: Completion and Lesson-learning**

The final step of actively completing a particular programme cycle, sharing knowledge and bridging across to the next generation of counselors, can particularly benefit from gender training. Strategies include:

• Training a small group of participants and peer counselors of both sexes to monitor the continuation of programmes: A completed training of peer counselors can signify the end of one programme cycle, but it can also bridge on to subsequent cycles of programme management. In this scenario, ensuring that peer counselors are adequately trained in gender responsiveness can increase overall participation of both sexes in counseling initiatives, and can increase active engagement in career choice decisions.

• Ensuring transparency in the “lesson-learning process”: Sharing outcomes of the programme in a generalized, simple-to-understand format with all participants can ensure that both disadvantaged members of the community and stakeholders of both sexes feel valued as members of the team and feel reassured that their voices have been heard.

• Sharing results of programmes, particularly gender-related challenges and strategies with other “players” in the region (governments, NGOs, international organizations, etc.). This can increase the knowledge-base and add to examples of good practice within the region.
Incorporating gender responsiveness into counseling and guidance can contribute to:

- Increased access and equity in education
- Increased quality of education
- Availability and diversity of career choices
- An enhanced school-to-work transition
- Controlling dropout rates: Gender parity in secondary education and the reverse disadvantage issue
- Life skills-based training
- Better health/prevention of drug use, etc.

**Figure 1: Gender Responsiveness in Counseling and Guidance Programmes Cycles**

- **Preparation and Appraisal:**
  - Ensuring availability of safe spaces in counseling for both sexes
  - Providing equal access to counseling-related information
  - Collecting baseline data on counseling needs from both sexes
  - Ensuring availability of same-sex counselors.

- **Completion and Lesson Learning:**
  - Training peer counselors of both sexes to bridge to next generation of counselors
  - Sharing outcomes of counseling-related programmes (e.g., anti-bullying, sexual harassment etc.) with participants of both sexes.
  - Sharing gender-related challenges in counseling with other players in the region.

- **Implementation and Supervision:**
  - Ensuring that both sexes participate equally in all counseling-related programmes.
  - Ensuring that both sexes receive similar feedback and training in guidance-related programmes.

- **Monitoring and Evaluation:**
  - Collecting data on counseling from both sexes
  - Including both boys and girls in follow-up and post-intervention focus groups
  - Providing empowerment training for both sexes in obtaining feedback regarding programmes.
Conclusion

An integrated view of counseling and guidance as being more than mere career and vocational guidance is critical to the achievement of key objectives, such as academic and professional success, motivation for achievement, and gender equality in post-primary education. Supporting adolescents in all aspects of their development – academic, biological, social, psychological and emotional - is critical to their success. In addition, such support and initiatives for overall success in schools could benefit greatly from ensuring gender-responsiveness in counseling and guidance.

Efforts towards effective policy-making for counseling and guidance should, thus, ensure that:

1. Post-primary education contexts formally introduce and structure counseling and guidance programmes, moving from framing counseling as “helping-responding” to a more active advocacy of and engagement with holistic development of the child.
2. Counselors are trained in child development, and adopt a comprehensive view of counseling as an integrated service, rather than as a narrow “vocational and career guidance” concept.
3. Gender responsiveness is ensured in all aspects of policy-making: Care should be taken to ensure that counselors are trained in gender issues, and provide a fair and supportive context for adolescents of both sexes.
4. Inclusiveness of all sections of society is emphasized, and access to quality counseling services is available to all segments of youth in all countries of the region.
### Table 1: Key Theoretical Ideas in Counseling and Guidance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical Perspective</th>
<th>Key Ideas about Adolescent Development</th>
<th>Rationale for and Role of Counseling and Guidance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biological</td>
<td>Biological changes relating to puberty may impose gender-related restrictions on education.</td>
<td>Counseling programmes can ensure that the school context is sensitive and responsive to cultural expectations, and work with students in their stressful phases of development.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sociological-Vocational</td>
<td>Evidence indicates a rise in substance abuse, violence in schools, risky sexual behaviors, lack of communication between the sexes, among students and with teachers and pressures relating to future admissions in “professional career streams” (such as Engineering, Information Technology and Medicine).</td>
<td>Students in this stage of their education are frequently looking for guidance and emotional and psychological support in not only career choices, but also in the psycho-emotional dynamics surrounding their career choices. Again, school systems in the region must be equipped to deal with these challenges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental-Psychological</td>
<td>This is a phase marked by “identity vs. identity-role confusion/identity confusion”. A principal idea is that the adolescent has to successfully negotiate this conflict and develop “fidelity” or develop a strong sense of self as a desirable competence, usually manifesting in a vocational choice, career goal or an occupational competency. This model is being viewed as being very “male-centered.” For girls, development is always about another crisis: intimacy vs. isolation. Sense of self is usually not encouraged, and relationships are. For girls in their pubertal period, the emphasis is traditionally not on developing an identity, but on intimacy and “other-centeredness” throughout the developmental process. In either case, cultural expectations about gender can shape how the adolescent views his or her identity and, therefore, could have an impact on the adolescent’s personal, academic and social development.</td>
<td>Counseling and guidance can serve the unique needs of adolescents in each community. Not all societies and communities follow the same developmental stages, nor do adolescents in these communities acquire these core competencies at the same time. Therefore, counseling and guidance programmes can raise awareness of these issues and serve as tools for advocacy for adolescents’ rights and independent choices.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contextual / Lifespan</td>
<td>In one of the most cited ecological models, four major sub-systems influence human behaviour and development across the life span: microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, and macrosystems. More recently, multi-dimensional approaches to development emphasize a life-span approach of “childhood-career” or “life-career” development. In this approach, career is not equated with vocational choice alone, but is rather a process of on-going decision-making regarding life choices.</td>
<td>Counseling and guidance programmes have used several components of this model to ensure consistency of messages and guidance across all contexts of development: e.g., Successful school-based programmes in several countries have utilized ecological contexts, parent involvement and community related resources for enhancing students’ sense of well being and psychological adjustment. It is important to provide guidance and counseling to adolescents as they tend to “narrow” their career options and choices based on perceived internal and external barriers pertaining to their gender role expectations.</td>
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References


Author

Chemba Raghavan has several years of teaching experience in the Psychology of Gender, Child Development, Family Studies and Research Methods. She received her Ph.D. in Human Development and Family Studies from Pennsylvania State University in 1994, has authored numerous papers and presentations based on her research about immigrant gender role identities in the United States, and is the editor of a book entitled Benefiting by Design: Women of Color in Feminist Psychological Research.

Currently residing in Bangkok, she serves as a consultant for the Asia-Pacific regional offices of UNESCO and UNICEF, assisting in advocacy and policy initiatives in the fields of gender and early childhood care and education. She also coordinates the research task force for the Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC).

Also available are the following advocacy/policy briefs:
1. Single-Sex Schools for Girls and Gender Equality in Education
2. Strong Foundations for Gender Equality in Early Childhood Care and Education
3. Education in Emergencies: The Gender Implications
4. Getting Girls Out of Work and Into School
5. Impact of Women Teachers on Girls’ Education
6. Mother Tongue-based Teaching and Education for Girls
7. Providing Education to Girls from Remote and Rural Areas
8. Impact of Incentives to Increase Girls’ Access to and Retention in Basic Education
9. Role of Men and Boys in Promoting Gender Equality
10. A Scorecard on Gender Equality and Girls’ Education Asia in 1990-2000
11. Girls, Educational Equity and Mother Tongue-Based Teaching
12. Gender-Responsive Life Skills-Based Education

For more information, please visit UNESCO Bangkok’s Gender in Education website at www.unesco.org/bangkok or write to gender@unesco.org/bkk.org