

GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING IN MALAYSIAN

SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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The educational system operative in West Malaysia provides for six years of free primary education available in the four media of Malay, English, Chinese, and Tamil. A further three years of education is available in Malay and English. These three years of education comprise the comprehensive stage of education; subsequently the pupils are streamed for general, vocational and technical education. Pupils who proceed for post-secondary education are selected on the basis of their academic performance. There is a great demand for education and a consequent need for guidance to help pupils make intelligent choices and adjustments so that in the long term they will benefit from the education provided, choose their own way of life and attain vocational and life goals satisfactory to the individual and of relevance to the country in its present state of development.

Before discussing the programming of the guidance system in secondary schools it is pertinent to view those areas in the life of the Malaysian adolescent which tend to pose problems with which they need help. Some of the problems posed are those common to adolescents the world over, others are peculiar to the youth of the Malaysian cultural milieu.

One major problem area may be termed adjustmental. The adolescent pupil has to adjust himself to being taught in a medium different from that he was used to during his primary stage of education. He has to adjust and integrate himself to the less personal secondary school. He becomes increasingly aware of cultural and social differences amongst his peers. He is posed with the problem of choosing his electives soon after his entrance into the secondary school. All these problems assail him, when he is on the brink of adolescence and when the individual is in a new environment, and in need of help to orient himself to the new roles expected of him.

Another major problem area may be described as developmental. The secondary school adolescent finds that he has to develop his traits in certain directions if he is to be regarded as developing positively in the eyes of critical adults. In West Malaysia, as elsewhere, a horde of influences impinge on the impressionable adolescent. He often perceives a sharp dichotomy between expression and implementation. There is also the generation gap in attitudes and values between the adolescent and his parents, and he finds difficulty in reconciling the preachings of adults to the situation in which he finds himself. Rapid changes in the social, economic and political conditions in the country aggravate this problem area.

As he approaches the end of his formal secondary school-life the problem of choice of career looms large. In an essentially agricultural country with a large youth population, where industrialization is relatively at its infancy, the world of work is highly competitive and selective. In a situation where potential labour is in excess of jobs available, the average adolescent pupil is in dire need of guidance and counselling. The realities of the harsh world of adults are realities which the adolescent has to under-

stand and adjust to in a relatively short time if he is to eke out a satisfactory livelihood.

In summary it might be said that the overall problem of the secondary pupil is this: that of developing from adolescence to adulthood and at the same time overcoming handicaps or adverse conditions simultaneously in a relatively short time.

It will be seen that there is a need for a guidance and counselling service in Malaysian secondary schools. This need has been recognised by the Ministry of Education, and through its direction, guidance is becoming an increasingly important facet of secondary education.

Admittedly guidance is a relatively new approach in secondary schools, but a fair amount of activity is being undertaken by schools in order to alleviate the problem areas in the life of adolescents.

The Ministry of Education has to date undertaken the task of planning and organising Guidance in schools. Some of the preliminary work in this connection has included the introduction and maintenance of cumulative record cards, the compilation of bulletins on guidance for the information and implementation of the guidance teacher, follow-up studies of guidance in schools, and the organisation of seminars and in-service courses for guidance teachers. Shortly, six officers are to be appointed as Regional Guidance Officers to ensure that effective guidance is available in schools. These various steps are all geared to provide guidance at schools with the boost it deserves.

In the secondary school itself guidance is provided in a variety of ways. The guidance teacher is responsible for the guidance programme in each school, but the guidance function is carried out by all teachers. In the bigger residential secondary schools the house system has been used not only for games participation but also for the development of the tutorial tradition where a teacher is a mentor and friend to a group of pupils who turn to him for guidance in matters of personal development, social relations, learning difficulties and allied problems of adolescents. In other schools the guidance teacher is especially allotted a timetable comprising in the main the teaching of Civics. Thus the teacher has that much more time, while teaching Civics, to undertake group guidance, discuss values and attitudes, teach occupations and prepare pupils for adult roles. In some other schools the time allotted for the teaching of Home Science is partly devoted to guiding pupils in matters of code of conduct, personal difficulties, and the establishment of satisfactory relationships with the other sex. The secondary school curriculum provides an excellent springboard for an indirect guidance role.

The guidance programme in a secondary school may be described as geared to the purposes of orientation, appraisal of the individual pupil, conveyance of job information, and helping pupils in personal-social relations. Undoubtedly the achievement of these objectives requires the co-operation of not only the teaching staff, but also the expertise and active support of other agencies, both governmental and private bodies.

Throughout the secondary school career of an individual pupil a personality profile of the individual emerges through the maintenance of the cumulative record card, anecdotal records of him, record of his test results, his activities membership, and the record of his interviews with the guidance teacher. On arrival at the first year of secondary schooling, he is

familiarised to his new environment, through an orientation programme. A pupil who is weak in certain subject might be given special attention. All pupils have access to the guidance teacher, and on occasion the guidance teacher might make home visits to gain the co-operation of parents in sorting out problems.

In the second and third years, while the guidance teacher organises the programme to place sufficient stress on the personal and educational development of pupils, the main stress is laid on helping pupils in their career development. For this purpose pupils are helped in their choice of electives, the teacher of Civics or English teaches pupils in areas related to the world of work, such as on how to apply for a job, the nature of job interviews, the particular careers open to pupils with various stages of secondary schooling, and he encourages pupils to think and articulate on themes related to their ambition or their self-concept. The pupils are helped to explore their interests and aptitudes by making available to them experiences which are job-oriented. Thus pupils are encouraged to think about the job implications of their participation in extra-mural activities. Organised visits to places of training and employment, the viewing of films on jobs, the provision of job experiences, and group project work in the detailed study of certain occupations are all primed to the broad vocational development of pupils and to the aim of helping them to specify in their own minds on a rational basis the career of their choice.

In the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh year the programme outlined above is continued with certain modifications brought about by the fact that the pupils are older, more mature, and the problem areas are those of a personal nature or those related to entry into the world of work or further studies. The persons concerned with guidance in schools have liaison with personnel or persons from the Ministries of Labour, Health and Social Welfare, philanthropic organisations such as Apex, Rotary and the Council of Child Welfare.

Much is being done in the area of guidance, but counselling proper is in the main absent. True the guidance teacher does help pupils through talking to them, interviewing them and suggesting courses of action they might take, but counselling by properly trained personnel exists only in a couple of secondary schools.

It is recognised that it would be desirable to have at least one full-time guidance teacher in each secondary school but at the moment this cannot be implemented in full because there are other priorities to be considered as well. However there is a growing number of advocates of guidance, and the crucial factor in this respect might well be the assessment of the effectiveness of guidance by the principals of the school. In the final analysis their testimony on guidance in the secondary schools might well give a new boost to the guidance course.