

# Training of school guidance and counselling workers in Japan: Concerns and challenges for future development

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In Japan, school guidance and counselling has shifted from problem-solving remedial services to a more developmental, preventive approach. With this approach, the aim of school guidance and counselling is regarded as establishing a system that helps students develop a positive identity through successful, rewarding learning experiences in a school that provides support and care. Toward this end, a holistic approach has been adopted, which involves the collaboration of different psychological specialists and education professionals with different training and qualifications. This paper examines current practices and the training systems of different school guidance and counselling workers in Japan. With reference to the framework suggested by Gysbers (2000), four components of an effective school guidance and counselling delivery system—guidance curriculum, individual student planning, responsive services, and system support—are adopted as the framework for analysis. Based on a training model developed by Kurihara (2010a; 2010b), the expected roles of different school guidance and counselling workers are reported. This paper also proposes recommendations for pre-service training, induction, and in-service professional development for school guidance and counselling workers.

**Key words:** School guidance and counselling worker, teacher training, induction, professional development, Japan

## Preamble

Traditionally in Japan, “Student guidance and counselling” refers to the management and correction of problematic student behaviour and academic and career guidance (Ito, 2014) but it has already shifted to a more developmental or preventive approach, in which it is no longer just limited to problem-solving “remedial” services; rather, it is focused more on proactive “student development” approach. The National Institute for Education Policy Research has defined school guidance and counselling as “direction and assistance provided for the purpose of enhancing each student’s social skills and initiative, while respecting personal qualities and fostering individuality” (The National Institute for Education Policy Research, n.d.). With reference to this board definition, the aim of school guidance and counselling in Japan has been accepted as a system in school facilitating students to develop their positive identity through successful and rewarding learning

experiences by establishing a school with support and care. Specifically, a research report titled “Schools in future” stated clearly that the future schools in Japan should be “a comfortable place where students can learn with no worries”, “teaching students how to express their feelings effectively”, “promote learning from a group of diverse members”, and “unitize diverse personnel at school” (Bunze, 2012). All these recommendations are talking about learners’ non-academic achievements under the effort of the whole school team in creating a supportive learning atmosphere.

In the past few years, a number of surveys and studies have been conducted from 2012-2014 by the Guidance and Counselling Research Center of the National Institute for Education Policy Research to inform administrative planning in student guidance and career guidance, and provides expert assistance and advice to boards of education, schools, and other bodies (National Institute for Education Policy Research, n.d.). Other than providing materials for

schools in planning and developing their own school-based school guidance and counselling system, a series of reference materials has published, aiming at helping schools to formulate their school-based guidance and counselling plans targeted at students with difficult developmental problems, such as bullying and school refusal (National Institute for Educational Policy Research, 2012a; 2012b; 2012c; 2014a; 2014b; 2014c; 2014d).

Currently a whole school approach has been adopted in which different psychological specialists and education professionals with different training and qualifications are working together. It is time for a comprehensive review of the whole training system in order to provide important recommendations for policy makers for planning ahead.

### **Defining “School guidance and counselling workers”**

“Guidance” and “counselling” are two terms with both similarities and differences. Both terms are involved in helping students in making choices that might confront and confuse them. Specifically, “guidance” is generally defined as “the act of guiding, giving leadership, supervision, direction or professional guidance for future actions”, which facilitates a person to “discover and develop his psychological, vocational and educational potential in order to be happier and more useful in society”, whilst “counselling” is more to help an individual to “choose the best solution to a problem, through the process of listening and questioning”. A counsellor’s basic concern should go beyond treating dysfunction or pathology. It should deal with a client’s self-awareness which should help him towards personal growth and wellness (Emelda, 2011).

Amongst different communities in different parts of the world, there are different titles of professional workers supporting school guidance and counselling work, including school psychologists, school counsellors, school counselling psychologists, school discipline masters, school guidance masters, guidance counsellors, school clinical psychologists, school social workers, educational psychologists, school nurses, school guidance teachers, school career masters, and student advisors. Teachers usually

take up a crucial role in school guidance work and therefore always considered as providing guidance and counselling services.

As mentioned, “guidance” and “counselling” are two terms with different focuses. However, with reference to a holistic approach to support students’ personal, social and career development, “guidance” and “counselling” are two domains frequently mutually supportive and complementary, and therefore it is difficult to distinguish “guidance” and “counselling” work clearly (Yuen, Chan, & Lee, 2014). In this regards, the term “school guidance and counselling workers” will be used in this paper to describe all guidance and counselling related workers who involved in school guidance and counselling. With reference to the system in Japan, “school guidance and counselling workers” include school leaders, school counsellors, school nurse, school social workers, middle leaders focusing on school guidance and counselling work, and ordinary school teachers.

### **The question: Are school guidance and counselling workers sufficiently prepared?**

We now come to the very fundamental question of how to prepare school leaders, guidance and counselling specialists, and middle leaders in school guidance and counselling, as well as front-line teachers to work together as a team in achieving this goal – creating a school with support and care. Are they all sufficiently prepared to take up the task to serve as facilitators for whole-person development? What kind of training and development opportunities should be provided for them? Under the current situation in which a great variety of psychologists and educational professionals work together as a team, are there any clear job descriptions to define their professional boundaries and relationships?

In the next section, current practices and the training systems of different school guidance and counselling workers in Japan are discussed. According to Gysbers (2000), there are four major components of an effective school guidance and counselling delivery system: guidance curriculum, individual student planning, responsive services, and

system support. With reference to the framework suggested by Gysbers, these four components are adopted as the framework for analysis. Based on a training model developed by Kurihara (Kurihara, 2010a; 2010b), expected roles of different school guidance and counselling workers are proposed.

## School guidance and counselling workers: Training, current practices, and concerns

### The school leader

In most Japanese schools, the school guidance and counselling policy, goals, as well as implementation strategy are determined by the administration (Zaffuto, 2004), in which the school principal plays a very significant role. Other than leadership skills and management skills, a school leader should also take a leading position in establishing a collaborative working atmosphere for all guidance and counselling workers in creating a caring and supportive environment in order to help

students to maximize their potential in the learning process. In general, a school leader has different roles in the guidance curriculum, individual student planning, responsive services, and system support services (Table 1).

According to the Japanese tradition, other than examining an individual's performance, teachers are promoted essentially on the basis of seniority, as in all public sector and most major private corporation employment. This seniority concept is strongly entrenched in Japan (Tripod, n.d.). Based on this tradition, the leader of a school, the school principal, has very substantial and solid working experience in school management and decision making, but training and working experience in school guidance and counselling are not compulsory. A study in 2004 found that support from administration is one key concern of different stakeholders (Zaffuto, 2004) for successful implementation of a holistic team approach in school guidance work. This finding, to a certain extent, reflects teachers' concern about the

Table 1. Expected role of school leaders in school guidance and counselling service

	Expected roles
Guidance curriculum	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Serve as a leader in developing the school's vision and mission in school guidance and counselling work ;</li> <li>(2) Serve as an administrative leader in facilitating a management team to establish a school-based policy and system for school guidance and counselling services;</li> <li>(3) Serve as an administrative leader in facilitating a curriculum team to plan a holistic school-based school guidance and counselling curriculum;</li> <li>(4) Serve as an administrative leader in setting up a policy for appointing good team members.</li> </ol>
Individual student planning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Serve as an administrative leader in establishing a school-based policy and system for students' individual planning, especially for those with special learning needs.</li> </ol>
Responsive services	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Support a professional team to develop clear job descriptions for all guidance and counselling workers;</li> <li>(2) Support a professional team to establish a system in handling students' crisis and other students' problems;</li> <li>(3) Support teachers and professionals to exercise their own autonomy in handling different counselling cases;</li> <li>(4) Serve as an administrative leader in protecting all professional workers in conducting quality school guidance and counselling work;</li> <li>(5) Serve as an administrative supporter by providing supervision;</li> <li>(6) Serve as an administrative leader in monitoring whether developmental, preventive and remedial services are covered in the system.</li> </ol>
System support services	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Serve as an administrative leader in establishing an evaluation system for the effectiveness of the school guidance and counselling work</li> <li>(2) Serve as an administrative leader in establishing a cooperative working environment</li> <li>(3) Serve as a resource provider and ensure that human, physical, and policy resources are allocated for school guidance and counselling service in an appropriate manner</li> <li>(4) Serve as a supervisor to provide administrative guidance and support to teachers and other professionals</li> </ol>

leader's training in taking up a leadership role in school guidance and counselling.

Currently, under the direction of the Ministry of Education and prefectural and municipal boards of education, training opportunities are provided for principals, vice-principals, and curriculum consultants at a national training centre, but it is not the compulsory requirement.

Moreover, in Japanese education policy, it should be noted that school principals, vice-principals, and teachers are normally needed to transfer to another "new school" every three to five years (Zaffuto, 2004), although there are exceptions due to each respective school's location and nature, whereby the period of school-rotation can be extended to five to seven years. This policy affects the stability of administrative and teaching staff working in the same school, making it difficult for a school to continue its guidance and counselling system and policy (Zaffuto, 2004).

### **The school counsellor**

Currently "school counsellor" is the most widely appointed job title used to describe a counselling professional in different school settings. The introduction of school counsellor system began in 1995 (Ito, 2014; Yagi, 2008). In the first year of its implementation, 134 out of 154 school counsellors were licensed clinical psychologists (SCPs) certified by the Foundation of the Japanese Certification Board for Clinical Psychologists (Yagi, 2008). The remaining counsellors were psychiatrists and university professors from the designated fields of psychiatry and higher education (Kawai, Otsuka, & Murayama, 1998).

According to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), other than clinical psychologists (SCPs), those persons who fulfil at least one of the following criteria can also be employed as school counsellors:

1. Psychiatric medical doctors (Psychiatrists);
2. Faculty members or former faculty members associated with universities or colleges from backgrounds related to clinical psychology;
3. Persons with a master's degree and one year or more experience counselling children

and adolescents or another form of clinical psychology practice;

4. Persons with a bachelor's degree and 5 years or more experience counselling children and adolescents or another form of clinical psychology practice; and
5. Medical doctors with year or more experience counselling children and adolescents or another form of clinical psychology practice (MEXT, 2013, cited from Ito, 2014)

Other than qualifications mentioned above, prefectural and designated city education boards can employ equivalent school counsellors as substitutes for school counsellors if proven necessary, such as being in a situation where they are unable to find a suitable person.

Since there is no national licensure for counsellors and psychologists, various types of equivalent school counsellor licenses exist (Grabosky, Ishii, & Mase, 2012; Ito, 2014). By rough estimation, currently there are more than 40 counselling - and psychology-related certificates in Japan (Grabosky, et. al., 2012). Amongst different training systems, "clinical psychologist" (SCPs) is still the most widely employed to serve as a school counsellor (Ito, 2014). There were four "board" definitions of school counsellor provided in the first year of implementation in 1995. Four roles of school counsellor were (Ito, 2014):

1. Provision of counselling for students
2. Advising parents and teachers
3. Collection and provision of information about student counselling resources, and
4. Other roles related to student counselling as authorized by each school

As a team approach in school guidance and counselling was emphasized (MEXT, 2009), the change brought new challenges to school counsellors to collaborate with diverse specialists and other licensed specialists, school leaders, and teachers. There is no standard job description for school counsellor at present, since many new roles and responsibilities have recently arisen (Zaffuto, 2004).

Under Gysbers' framework, school counsellors are expected to play a very important role in developmental guidance and counselling services,

Table 2. Expected role of school counsellors in school guidance and counselling service

	Expected role
Guidance curriculum	(1) Serve as a consultant or an advisor in planning the whole school guidance policy and system by providing professional suggestions and advice; (2) Serve as a consultant or an advisor for the establishment of consultation systems for school decision makers
Individual student planning	(1) Serve as a consultant or an advisor in planning school individual planning systems, specifically for those students with special learning needs, or those who need remedial professional services.
Responsive services	(1) Serve as an advisor or a consultant in supporting other specialists / teaching professionals for developmental, preventive, and remedial individual / group guidance and counselling services; (2) Serve as a clinical supervisor in helping teachers to work with students with special learning needs (e.g., give suggestions to teachers and other specialists); (3) In some special cases, serve as a counsellor by providing direct service to students, teachers, and parents; (4) Serve as a leader regarding students' serious problematic behaviour, or in students in crisis situations.
System support services	(1) Serve as an advisor or a consultant in establishing a school-based system in assessing students' self, interpersonal, academic, and career development; (2) Serve as a facilitator in enhancing teachers' general counselling skills; (3) Serve as a consultant in providing constructive advice to the system and other counselling professionals to draw attention to ethical concerns in school guidance and counselling work.

guidance curriculum planning, and individual planning (Table 2).

Similar to the training of clinical psychologist, different trainings of "school counsellor" are more or less focused on assessment and other remedial work such as to take care of those with observable problems in behaviour, attitude, or students with special learning needs. They do not necessarily have specialist training in school guidance skills and other basic knowledge, such as principles of education, school administration, and education policy (Ito, 2014). Therefore, it would be a challenge for school counsellors to take up consultation and supervision roles as a professional advisor for these roles without proper training and knowledge.

### The School Nurse

School nurses play a very crucial role in the provision of school health services. The school nurse system was first introduced to Japan in 1947 (Ito, 2014). In 2007, 96% of public primary and 95.3% of public middle schools employed school nurses (Kawaijuku, 2008). The school nurse is responsible for all school health services being delivered in the overall context of the child, the family, and the child's overall health plan (Committee of School

Health, American Academy of Pediatrics, 2001).

To become a school nurse needs both teacher training and nurse training. Some universities provide both trainings in one single undergraduate programme. If a person with nurse training only, he/she is required to obtain a license to teach, by completing a minimum six-month teacher training programme (or some may choose to take a full year) designated by the Minister of Education through a specified teacher training institution. After fulfilling all licensure requirements, potential school nurses are required to pass education recruitment tests arranged by their prefectures (Recruit Marketing Partner, n.d.). Currently, Japan does not require nurses to renew their nursing qualification or to pursue continuing education after obtaining their license to practice (Japanese Nursing Association, n.d.).

In general, all school nurses are qualified school teachers able to provide teaching to students. However, with the same training as ordinary teachers, it is questionable whether school nurses have adequate training and knowledge in school guidance and counselling work with higher role expectations.

Other than the provision of school health care, school nurses are also expected to play a role in different levels of school guidance and counselling

work. Many students may feel ashamed to discuss sensitive issues with teachers or counsellors (Ito, 2014), but they are more willing to talk to the school nurse and be with their friends in the health room, a place with a different atmosphere to that of the classroom (Yagi, 2008). In this regard, school nurses become important assets taking up the responsibility for identifying at-risk students and providing referrals to the school counsellor (Fukuda, 2008). They also serve as the key persons to provide “psychological first aid” to at-risk students and schools (Yagi, 2008), detect abuse and bullying cases (Kawaijuku, 2008), and provide counselling to students suffering from stress (Recruit Marketing Partner, n.d.). Currently some schools are starting to appoint school nurses as special education coordinators focusing on students with special learning needs (Ito, 2014). It is notable that the job description of school nurses is expanding to cover a wider spectrum of work other than health services (Table 4).

Some authors have reviewed current issues concerning the role of school nurse. The quality of school nurses’ involvement in mental health care varies according to the individual practitioner. Some school nurses may view providing mental health

support as “an added responsibility” (Ito, 2014). It is also a concern whether school nurses have adequate training and continuing professional development opportunities to meet all these new working tasks and challenges.

### The school social worker

The school social worker system was first introduced in 2008 to serve as an external support to students who facing different life challenges, such as family problems, abuse, or psychological problems (Ito, 2014). Compared with other professional workers in school guidance and counselling, the work of school social workers is more focused. They are expected to focus more on responsive services by providing comprehensive support to complicated cases, which may involve families and/or legal issues that cannot be solved within the school context. Additionally, the school social worker is expected to serve as a resource person to identify students’ diverse needs and follow up by utilizing multiple resources. They are also expected to serve as team members in the school guidance and counselling planning team by providing views and opinions for a better school-based curriculum (Table 3).

Table 4. Expected role of school nurse in school guidance and counselling service

	Expected role
Guidance curriculum	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Serve as a team member in planning the whole school guidance policy and programme to cover students’ physical and emotional development concerns, especially for the planning of sex education, and to identify students’ physical and psychological changes and possible problems and stress at different developmental stages.</li> <li>(2) Serve as a resource person to help develop school-based teaching and learning materials in health education and topics related to students’ physical and psychological changes, and possible problems and stressors at different developmental stages</li> </ol>
Individual student planning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Serve as a team member in the individual planning system, specifically for those students with special learning needs, or those who need remedial professional services;</li> <li>(2) Serve as a team leader in special education, focusing on students with special learning needs</li> </ol>
Responsive services	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Serve as the key person to provide psychological first aid to students at risk, consult with other professionals (e.g., school counsellors) and arrange referrals if necessary</li> <li>(2) Serve as a professional to detect abuse and bullying cases, and arrange referrals if necessary</li> <li>(3) Serve as a professional to provide initial counselling service to students suffering from stress and arrange referrals if necessary</li> <li>(4) Serve as a team partner with other teaching or psychological professionals and provide suggestions for cases related to students’ psychological stress and health problems.</li> </ol>
System support services	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Serve as a team member in establishing a school-based system in assessing students’ self, interpersonal, academic and career development;</li> <li>(2) Serve as a key person to invite external health experts to teachers and students by providing learning activities such as talks, seminars, or workshops.</li> </ol>

Table 3. Expected role of school social workers in school guidance and counselling service

	Expected role
Guidance curriculum	(1) Serve as a team member in planning the whole school guidance policy and system, especially for the establishment of remedial support network for students; (2) Serve as a resource person to provide and develop school-based teaching and learning materials
Individual student planning	(1) Serve as a team member in planning students' individual planning system, specifically for those students with special learning needs, or those who need remedial professional services
Responsive services	(1) Serve as a key person in providing comprehensive support to complicated cases (e.g., family problems, legal issues, or other students facing crises) that cannot be solved within the school context. (2) Serve as a resource person to identify students' diverse needs and follow up by providing support not just limited to the school level.
System support services	(1) Serve as a team member in establishing a school-based system in assessing students' self, interpersonal, academic, and career development; (2) Serve as a key person to explore possibilities for inviting external social and community support; for example, explore different partnership opportunities between the school and the community through student voluntary services.

However, similar to other school professional specialists, school social workers do not necessarily have compulsory courses or specialist subjects within the school system, such as principles of education, school administration, and education policy in their training. School social workers also face similar problems, such as working relationships and role conflicts with other professional specialists.

**Middle-leader in school guidance and counselling work (Student guidance head teachers, academic and career guidance head teachers, or teachers in the seito-shido guidance committee)**

Normally in most Japanese schools, a “seito-shido guidance committee”, or similar committee is established to take charge of all the work related to the school guidance and counselling service. In general, “seito-shido guidance committee” is considered as the “brain” of school guidance and guidance work at schools. The school principal selects the team leaders and team members. There are no special qualification requirements or specialist training required for promoting a teacher to this position.

The leader of this team is in a senior position (or middle leader) at the school, where the school's a curriculum master or school guidance master is usually appointed by the school principal taking up this post. As a key person leading role of school guidance and counselling work, he/she must have

strong leadership skills with deep knowledge in school guidance and counselling services, especially for the policy planning, curriculum implementation, manpower management, resource allocation, and a clear vision on the school mission so that he/she can facilitate all professionals to work together to achieve common goals. (Table 5)

Currently there are no national standards or compulsory requirements for the training of the middle leader. In practice, after being appointed as the leader of the team, centralized training will be provided. Under the direction of the Ministry of Education and prefectural and municipal boards of education, a two-year training programme is given to a few hundred teachers annually at three nationally funded institutions established since 1978 for the purpose of providing graduate professional education for experienced teachers. These teachers are selected from all over the country (Tripod, n.d.).

The boards of education from different prefectures or cities have their own systems in providing necessary in-service training and professional development opportunities to school middle leaders in school guidance and counselling work. Taking Sajo City at Okayama Prefecture as an example, with the support of the city's Board of Education and the University's teacher training unit, a site-based “learning group” was established to facilitate related middle leaders from

Table 5. Expected role of school middle leader in school guidance and counselling service

	Expected role
Guidance curriculum	(1) Serve as a team leader/core member in developing a holistic school-based school guidance and counselling curriculum; (2) Serve as a team leader/core member in establishing a school-based policy and system for school guidance and counselling
Individual student planning	(1) Serve as a team leader/core member in establishing a school-based policy and system in planning for the needs of all students, including those with special learning needs
Responsive services	(1) Serve as a team member team to develop a clear job descriptions for all guidance and counselling workers; (2) Serve as a team member to establish a system in handling students' crises and other problems (3) Serve as a supporter for teachers and professionals to exercise their own autonomy in handling different counselling cases; (4) Serve as a supporter to school teachers in conducting quality school guidance and counselling work; (5) Serve as an advisor to teachers by providing advice in conducting developmental and preventive guidance and counselling work to students (6) Serve as an observer in monitoring whether developmental, preventive and remedial services are covered in the system
System support services	(1) Serve as a team member in establishing an evaluation system for the effectiveness of the school guidance and counselling work; (2) Serve as an supporter in establishing a cooperative working environment; (3) Serve as a team member in establishing a good resource management system; (4) Serve as a supporter to provide suggestions for teachers' professional development; (5) Supporting teachers to establishing a good relationship with parents

different schools to share their work amongst group members on a regular basis. Activities such as case presentations, sharing of professional practices, lectures, and workshops conducted by professors and senior leaders, as well as other learning activities, such as school visits and observations are organized.

#### Front-line teacher (homeroom teacher)

As influenced by the unique traditional Japanese culture, all teachers are expected to be involved in many aspects of students' social lives, including attendance, problem behaviour, academic and career counselling, and emotional and social adaptation to the classroom environment (Ito, 2014). They are not only present to assure the children's right to receive education, but they also need to take up the role of "lifestyle guide" for the students by supporting their emotional, social, physical and psychological development (Vogler, 2006). In this regard, other than standard academic related teaching duties, teachers should take up a variety of work in facilitating students' growth into mature people. In reality, teachers are also responsible for their students' behaviour outside school, and their inappropriate behaviour after school is also being

monitored by school teachers. In case of disregarding these rules, the teacher is obliged to inform the parents or even to make home visits (Vogler, 2006). As can be seen, the tasks of Japanese teachers go far beyond the classroom. These responsibilities are equal in importance to the academic roles of developing student motivation and helping students meet the high academic standards required for success in secondary school and university entrance examinations (Tripod, n.d.).

The guidance role of teachers is further elaborated by MEXT (2010) which states clearly that teachers need to give students the experience of joy and of understanding themselves and others through classroom activities designed for learning autonomy, developing practical and healthy attitudes, and enhancing the skills of career decision-making, problem solving and academic learning.

Under the concept of the Whole School Approach, teachers are expected to take up a crucial role in supporting school guidance work, which covers guidance curriculum, individual student planning, responsive services, and system support (Table 6).



Table 6. Expected role of school teachers in school guidance and counselling service

	Expected role
Guidance curriculum	(1) Serve as a supporter in helping the school to implement a holistic school-based school guidance and counselling curriculum; (2) Serve as a supporter by following the school-based policy and system for school guidance and counselling
Individual student planning	(1) Serve as a supporter in conducting students' individual planning work; (2) Serve as a supporter in conducting needs assessment, and to review and make recommendations with regard to students' performance.
Responsive services	(1) Serve as a key person in providing a supportive learning environment in the classroom, and conduct quality school guidance and counselling work as a teacher / homeroom teacher; (2) Serve as a supporter to the school guidance and counselling service by implementing guidance and counselling programme as designed; (3) Understand the teacher's role and conduct appropriate school guidance and work to students; (4) Understand the code of conduct of school teachers in conducting school guidance and counselling work; (5) Serve as a supporter able to make referrals as appropriate
System support services	(1) Serve as an supporter in establishing a cooperative working environment; (2) Serve as a learner able to seek opportunities for professional development in school guidance and counselling

Normally a prospective teacher needs to fulfil all necessary national teacher certification requirements through a postsecondary teacher training course provided by different institutions (Tripod, n.d.) that generally takes four years to complete. Amongst different professional education subjects, basic guidance knowledge and basic counselling knowledge are two necessary subjects in the initial training programme.

After being successfully employed as teacher, there are different forms of professional development opportunities for teachers, including in-school training provided by the respective school and informal in-service training carried out by the teachers themselves in district-wide study groups (Tripod, n.d.). After April 2008, it became mandatory for prefectural boards of education and others with the authority to employ teachers to provide extra training to any teachers whose teaching was found to be inadequate (MEXT, n.d.). An example in Soja City in Okayama Prefecture, new teachers are now required to receive a one-year intensive in-service professional training programme (Kurihara, 2010b).

Although teachers have basic training in school guidance and counselling in their initial teacher training programme, some teachers feel confused about their roles since there is no clear role definition in school guidance and counselling work

(Ito, 2014). In addition, some teachers may find it difficult to obtain support from colleagues when facing problems and challenges with students with special needs. Some teachers lack self-confidence in conducting developmental or educational guidance work without consultation and supervision.

## Issues, concerns and recommendations

With reference to the above discussion, there are three major issues concerning the preparation of school guidance and counselling workers.

### 1. Pre-service training

There is a lack of formal and well-structured pre-service qualification or training requirements for all school guidance and counselling workers.

School leaders and middle leaders in school guidance and counselling are expected to take up the leading role in planning and developing a school's guidance and counselling system. However, proper pre-service training is currently inadequate.

Professional workers such as school counsellors, school nurses and school social workers are supposed to take up "different" professional roles but work in a collaborative manner. However, there are no compulsory pre-service training requirements for them to understand their unique responsibilities

and roles, especially about their involvement in school guidance and counselling work. They do not necessarily have compulsory training directed towards school counselling skills and other basic knowledge needed in a school setting such as principles of education, school administration, and education policy; therefore it is not a surprise that they find it difficult to work collaboratively in a school. All these inadequacies in the training system lead to role ambiguity and eventually affect collaboration and the working relationship.

Front-line workers are also facing similar challenges. Due to the inadequacy of the pre-training system, they are not fully aware of their role and responsibilities as homeroom teachers, especially in handling remedial cases with problematic students in their own class. Teachers may not understand their supportive role in this working relationship, and therefore sometimes they may find it difficult to maintain a good working relationship with different professionals.

## 2. Induction and in-service professional development

Induction and in-service professional development opportunities are provided in some prefectures by adopting different approaches or models. The system at present relies on the prefectures' board of education to develop the prefecture's own policy or system. Based on the unique natures of different prefectures and their students' guidance needs, it is a good policy to allow different prefectures' boards of education to develop their own training professional development system. However, there are two concerns here.

- a. Compulsory requirement: Should workers' induction and professional development be compulsory?

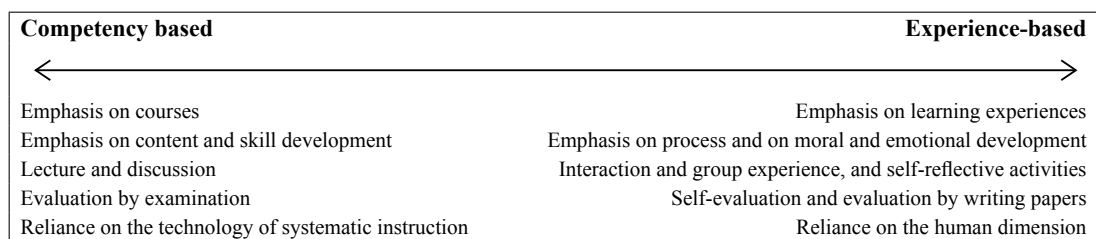
In preparing all workers for the future needs of society and of the school, new skills and attitudes for more active collaboration in schools, including collaborative leadership and advocacy are necessary. Therefore, updating workers' attitudes, skills and knowledge should be included in the induction or professional development system. Currently, a national induction or professional development policy is established. However, in most prefectures, "school guidance and counselling" is not necessarily included as a compulsory core component in the induction and/or professional development process.

- b. Appropriateness of training content and design: competency-based or experience-based approach?

Currently different prefectures enjoy autonomy in designing their own induction and in-service professional development system. However, some teachers found the induction or professional development activities "not useful" for application. As school guidance and counselling becomes more school-based, teachers and professional workers are not satisfied with content focusing only on general knowledge, theories, or concepts. They would prefer their training to be more practical, with greater focus on implementation and application of theories into practices.

In line with this ideology, basic philosophy in the training of school guidance and counselling workers should be proposed for prefectures in designing their induction and professional development framework. There are two polarities in counselling training: competency-based training on one side, and experience-based on the other (Hazler & Kottler, 1994). Figure 1 shows the differences between the two training approaches:

Figure 1. Two polarity in counselling training: competency based and experience-based



Based on the nature of school guidance and counselling work in Japan, an experience-based model is proposed. By adopting the experience-based approach, a variety of self-reflective learning activities, such as class observations, discussions, group works, role-plays, and demonstrations are developed. School-based learning groups and inter-school learning groups are formed in order to establish a platform for peer support learning activities with mutual support among learners.

### 3. Other Recommendations

In addition to training of school guidance and counselling workers, there are other recommendations for future improvement and consolidation of the school guidance and counselling services.

- a. In order to eliminate conflicts of role and function amongst different school guidance and counselling workers (Yagi, 2004, Ito, 2014), a national job description of all school guidance and counselling positions should be established. Roles of different guidance and counselling workers can be identified clearly amongst psychological and educational specialists.
- b. The policy of school principals, vice-principals, and teachers being transferred every three to five years to new schools should be reviewed. This policy may negatively affect the stability of administrative and teaching staff, hindering the continuation of schools' guidance and counselling systems and policies.
- c. A national framework for a school guidance and counselling system should be provided with guidelines helping every school to develop their school-based aims and objectives, administrative system, resource management, assessment and evaluation, professional conduct, as well as outlining the roles and responsibilities of school guidance and counselling workers. Schools can develop their own school-based guidance and counselling systems with reference to the framework provided.
- d. The current licensing policy for all allied professionals involved in school guidance and counselling work needs reviewing.

A counsellor's development into mature competency is a process that takes at least 10 years and entails many stages of learning (Dryden & Feltham, 1994). Although it may take even longer to develop the whole training system, still it is worth reviewing the current system in order to explore possibilities for future development and to identify the best way to move forward. The recommendations addressed in the paper are aimed at stimulating more discussions for future planning.

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