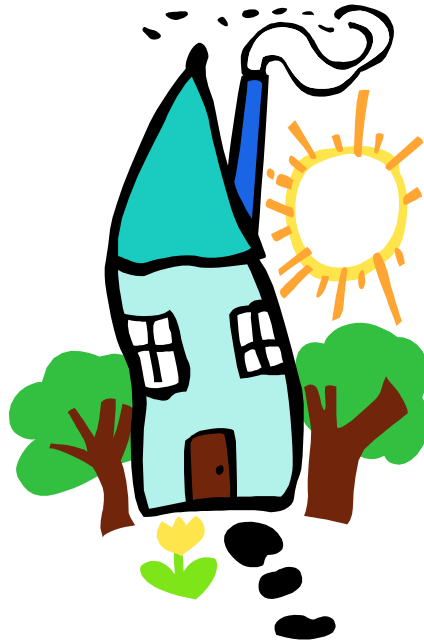


***Guidance Training Needs of the Teacher
Counsellor/ Support Teacher Pilot Scheme
in Primary Schools***



National Centre for Guidance in Education

Sarah Ryan
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INTRODUCTION

Guidance in Primary Level Schools

The National Centre for Guidance in Education, an agency of the Department of Education and Science, supports and develops guidance provision and practice in all areas of education, both formal and non-formal, and informs the policy of the Department in the field of guidance. The centre's client groups include guidance counsellors in second level schools, careers advisors in third level institutions, and those working in a guidance role with early school leavers and adults in education. It is also part of the remit of the National Centre for Guidance in Education to support and develop the provision of guidance in the Primary sector through the support of the teacher counsellors/ support teachers in primary schools.

In an Irish context, the term guidance is normally associated with post-primary schools. However the following working definition applies to guidance in all areas of education for which the National Centre for Guidance in Education has support and development roles. Guidance refers to a wide range of interventions and activities designed to assist people to make choices about their lives – personal and social, educational and career; and to learn behaviours that contribute to personal, social, educational and career competencies. In the context of primary schools, guidance encompasses a range of interventions:

- **Counselling:** Individual and small group counselling to help pupils make choices and decisions, solve problems and change behaviours.
- **Information:** Helping pupils to acquire information that will help them to make choices and decisions – personal, social, educational and career.
- **Assessment:** Administering, scoring and interpreting results of educational and profiling assessments, in order to learn more about the pupil. This information can then be used to help the pupil make choices, resolve problems and learn/ change behaviours.
- **Consultation:** Sharing expertise and advising other teachers, school principals and parents who are in a helping relationship with a pupil.
- **Personal and Social Development Programmes:** Designing materials, presenting information, and engaging in discussion to aid pupils in making personal, social, educational and career choices, and in learning new competencies in these areas.

The Teacher Counsellor Pilot Project

In 1995 the Department of Education launched a pilot scheme to address the problems of disruptive/ disturbed pupils in primary schools. The scheme was launched in 31 schools* where an extra teaching post was allocated for *'the purposes of supporting these schools in their efforts to manage the behaviour of pupils who are disruptive / disturbed, and to enable the schools to teach these pupils and their peers effectively'* (Department of Education, 1995, p.1, see appendix II). This pilot project was launched in response to submissions from a number of schools in disadvantaged areas of Dublin seeking assistance in the management of disruptive behaviour. The role of the teacher counsellor had two main functions: firstly, to co-ordinate a whole school approach to dealing with and preventing the occurrence of disruptive behaviour, and secondly to *'teach and counsel small groups and individuals who exhibit persistent behaviour difficulties in the classroom'* (Department of Education, 1995, p.1).

* There were 27 Teacher Counsellors in total as some worked part-time in more than one school.

As part of the job specification of the teacher counsellor, the Department of Education identified certain activities in which the Teacher Counsellors were to engage:

- I. Observation and recording of disruptive behaviours; advising class teachers on the prevention of disruptive behaviours.
- II. Behaviour checklists for class teachers, advice on intervention strategies and provision of progress reports.
- III. Assisting class teachers in mainstream classes in managing and teaching pupils who are generally disruptive.
- IV. Identification of small groups and individuals who are disruptive who can then be withdrawn from class for short periods of teaching that is 'appropriate to their level of need and attentive capacities'. The teacher counsellors were encouraged to use 'creative activities – art, craft, drama, play and personal and social skills as appropriate'.
- V. Withdrawal of individuals or small groups of pupils for counselling – focusing on raising the pupils self-esteem and modelling and teaching adaptive personal and social skills. 'The school psychological service, where available could assist in this area'.
- VI. Co-ordination of the development and implementation of a whole school policy on the management of behaviour and discipline in the school.
- VII. Informing outside agencies of pupil's special education and other needs.
- VIII. Maintenance of careful records on disruptive pupils, forms of disruptive behaviour, steps taken to address this behaviour and psychological, psychiatric and social reports.

(Department of Education, September 1995, p. 1-2, see appendix II for copy of original)

This list however was '*not to be considered as definitive or unalterable*', giving the new teacher counsellors some flexibility in their interpretation of the role (Department of Education, September 1995,p.2).

Training Support for Teacher Counsellors

After their initial selection and since the initial stages of the project the teacher counsellors have received about 40 days of inservice training. In early 1996, the West Dublin Teachers' Centre was requested by the Department of Education to organise the provision of inservice for teacher counsellors. A steering committee consisting of representatives of the Department of Education and Science, the School Psychological Service, the In-career Development Unit, and the teacher counsellors and principals of the schools involved was set up with a brief to provide training for the teacher counsellors during the period 1995-1998. The steering committee was responsible for the provision of inservice training and the Teachers' Centre for the practical organisation (INTO,1996). The training included a one week orientation course with Chris Conliffe (April 1995) and a four module Diploma in Curricular Studies (School and Society) run in conjunction with Trinity College Dublin spanning 1996 and 1997. Table 1 overleaf lists the four modules of the diploma along with the other inservice and orientation training provided for the teacher counsellors.

Table 1: List of the Main Training Courses received by Teacher Counsellors/ Support Teachers to Date

	Course/ Module	Date	Length
Diploma in Curricular Studies (School and Society)	Module 1: Child Abuse and Protection	May 1996 & December 1996	1 week
	Module 2: Human Resource Management, Bereavement, Bibliotherapy and Multiple Intelligence	May 1996 & February/March 1997	1 week
	Module 3: Addiction (School, Youth and Society)	September 1996	1 week
	Module 4: Case Study Project	Ongoing	-
Various Other Inservice Courses	Orientation Course	April 1995	1 week
	Circle Time	September 1996	1 day
	Group Facilitation Skills	October 1996	1 week
	Basic Week Reality Therapy	November/ December 1996	1 week
	Reintegration day / Learning Difficulties	February 1999	3 days

One of the teacher counsellors appointed at the start of the pilot scheme described this programme of inservice as '*excellent*' and of '*a very high quality*' (INTO, 1999ii, p.12). In addition to the above programme some of the teacher counsellors have attended training courses privately or grouped together to organise additional training e.g. one day course in the Rape Crisis Centre in June 1997. An evaluation of the inservice training given to the teacher counsellors was completed in 1998, yet has not yet been published. The steering committee did not have a final meeting in 1998 (at the end of the three-year pilot phase), and no other structure to deal with the inservice training of the teacher counsellors has been put in place to date.

INTO Report

In 1996, the Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) wrote a report entitled 'The Teacher Counsellor Service' and made recommendations for the development of the service based on the views of twenty one of the twenty seven teacher counsellors at that time (see appendix III for list of recommendations from the INTO report 'The Teacher Counsellor Service', concerning incareer development). In this report the INTO recognise the crucial element provided by the orientation programme in clarifying the role of the teacher counsellor, and provided by subsequent inservice in developing the skills of the teacher counsellors. Continuity of incareer development opportunities was stressed as '*vital to the success of the initiative*' in the report conclusions (INTO,1996, p.21). The need for '*therapeutic support*' and an outlet to discuss the '*problems and difficulties they encounter arising from the counselling aspect of their work*' was emphasised, in order to deal with children with social and emotional problems (INTO, 1996, p.21). It was suggested that such support could be provided by the appointment of an appropriately qualified supervisor.

Evaluation of the Pilot Project

In March 1998, a working party of four members of the Department of Education and Science Inspectorate and Psychological Service, together with divisional and district inspectors evaluated the effectiveness of the pilot project and completed a pro-forma report. The report was based on an analysis of the information provided by teacher counsellors, class teachers, principals, parents, chairpersons, inspectors and psychologists.

The evaluation report was very positive in its discussion of the role of teacher counsellor describing them as providing '*a very effective service*', enhancing the '*educational opportunities of the target group*' thereby enhancing '*the educational opportunities of all pupils in the schools*'. The teacher counsellors provide '*significant support*' for pupils who have emotional and behavioural difficulties, provide opportunities for all pupils to experience programmes such as self-esteem and social skills; they also

provide consultative support for class teachers and act as the member of staff who is available for pupils to turn to for help and one they can easily develop a one-to-one relationship with. The evaluation also concluded that parents, principals, teachers, chairpersons of Boards of Management and members of the Inspectorate and Psychological Service considered pupils who attended the teacher counsellor, and consequently all other pupils, benefit much more from their time in school as a result of the provision of this service (Department of Education and Science, 1998i,p.11).

From these positive conclusions, the working party went on to make some recommendations for the future of the pilot scheme. The ten recommendations of the evaluation were as follows (phrases in italics represent direct quotations):

- I. The teacher counsellor programme should continue as a pilot project in the present schools and also be extended to include other schools, subject to availability of resources.
- II. A co-ordinator of the teacher counsellors should be appointed. Such a role would include the *'professional supervision'* of the teacher counsellors, and the organisation of in career development on a whole school basis, and the organisation of *'ongoing professional development and practical training for teacher counsellors'*.
- III. The title of teacher counsellor should be changed to reflect the role more effectively. *'The role of the teacher counsellor does not involve professional counselling. Rather it includes supporting and mentoring pupils and the title should reflect this. It would be appropriate to consider the views of the teacher counsellors on this'*.
- IV. A clear statement of the role of the teacher counsellor should be included in the school plan, and the service should be incorporated into mainstream services and whole school planning.
- V. Parents of children attending the teacher counsellor should be kept fully informed as to the role of the teacher counsellor in their child's education and should be given the *'appropriate advice and development to enable them to support their children's learning'*.
- VI. The teacher counsellor service should be integrated with other services in the community, in particular the Home/School/Community Liaison Officer in working with parents.
- VII. The teacher counsellors should direct their support at a *'clearly defined and targeted group of the most needy children who are identified according to specific criteria'*.
- VIII. The work of the teacher counsellor in developing these pupils' school achievement by teaching adapted core areas of the curriculum to the targeted pupils and *'using creative activities in the development of the pupils' personal and social skills'* should complement the work of staff teachers.
- IX. Teacher counsellors should be provided with further in-career support to *'meet their needs in developing their understanding of the various aspects of their role and to develop the specific services which come within the remit and parameters of the project'*. Management and staff of schools should also receive assistance in their development of preventative and support strategies on a whole school basis.
- X. Teacher counsellors should receive equipment grants on an annual basis.

(Department of Education and Science, 1998i, p.12-13)

The status of the recommendations as of January 1999 was as follows according to the Department of Education and Science (1999i) (*roman numerals refer to the number of the evaluation report recommendation as above*):

- I. The project has continued into the 1998/ 1999 school year and had been extended to 10 other schools. In addition to these posts, 2 support teacher posts were allocated to schools in Co. Cork. However it was not clear whether they would be included in the ongoing support teacher project.
- II. There has been no co-ordinator appointed to the pilot project, though referred to as *'a matter of some urgency'* in the update.

- III. The role of teacher counsellor was renamed '*support teacher*' and a revised job specification was approved in December 1998. (Despite the recommendation in the evaluation report, the teacher counsellors themselves were not consulted on this matter.)
- V.& VI. The issue of increasing support and involvement of parents was to be addressed through '*integrated development for support teachers and Home/School/Community Liaison Co-ordinators*'.
- IX. An 'information/ development module' for principals, chairpersons and inspectors involved with the schools was planned for January 1999. For the existing and new teacher counsellor/ support teachers, induction modules were planned for Spring and Autumn 1999.
- X. A survey to assess the equipment needs of the teacher counsellors/ support teachers was proposed.

(Department of Education and Science, 1999, p.1)

There was no comment on the situation in regard to recommendations IV (inclusion of the role in the school plan and whole school planning), VI (targeting the teacher counsellors support at the most needy children) or VIII (work of teacher counsellor to compliment that of class teachers).

Job Specifications: Teacher Counsellor (1995) and Support Teacher (1998)

A revised job specification was issued by the Department of Education and Science in December 1998 (Department of Education and Science, 1998ii). This job specification for support teachers bears striking similarities to the original teacher counsellor job specification (see appendix II for copies of both original job specifications). Table 2 compares the role definitions of both the teacher counsellor and the support teacher. Changes and additions are shown in bold italic font.

Table 2: Job Specifications: Teacher Counsellors and Support Teachers – Roles

Teacher Counsellor Job Specification (1995)	Support Teacher Job Specification (1998ii)
(a) To co-ordinate a whole-school approach to devising and implementing good practice and strategies that will help to prevent the occurrence of disruptive behaviour.	(a) Advising on and participating in a whole-school strategy on devising, <i>identifying</i> , implementing and <i>reviewing</i> (i) good practice <i>in behavioural management</i> and (ii) strategies that will help to prevent the occurrence of disruptive behaviour <i>as well as supporting relevant personnel where disruption incidents occur.</i>
(b) To teach and <i>counsel</i> small groups and individuals who exhibit persistent behaviour difficulties in the classroom.	(b) Teaching and <i>supporting</i> small groups and individual pupils who exhibit persistent behaviour difficulties in the classroom.
	<i>(c) Developing an appropriately adapted curriculum to give pupils experience of success in core curricular areas and to develop behavioural management skills in pupils through that work and through therapeutic activities in the more aesthetic and creative aspects of the primary school curriculum.</i>
	<i>(d) Co-operating with classroom teachers in the delivery of appropriately adapted programmes and approaches.</i>

The main thrust of the role is again to co-ordinate a whole school approach to dealing with and preventing the occurrence of disruptive behaviour, but in addition the support teacher role is more

specifically defined in '*supporting relevant personnel where disruption incidents occur*'. The second element of the role has remained very similar to the original specification, though the word *counsel* has been replaced with the word *support*. In addition to the original two aspects of the work (a) and (b), the revised specification is more clearly defined and includes two more detailed elements of the role: (c) developing an adapted curriculum in the core subjects and increased use of creative and aesthetic primary school curriculum activities to develop behaviour management skills; and (d) the co-operation with class teachers in the delivery of such approaches.

In regard to (a), the description has become more detailed in 1998, and also includes the element of personnel support. The second part of the role has changed in description from '*counselling*' to '*supporting*'. The new elements of the definition of the role of support teacher (c) and (d), centre on adapting the curriculum and training other staff in the delivery of such an adapted curriculum and other special programmes.

Table 3 overleaf compares the sample activities listed both for the teacher counsellors in 1995 and for the support teachers in 1998.

Table 3: JOB SPECIFICATIONS Teacher Counsellor and Support Teacher: Sample Activities

Teacher Counsellor Job Specification 1995	Support Teacher Job Specification 1998
(i) Observe particular pupils who are disruptive/disturbed within their mainstream classes, record precisely what their disruptive behaviours are, their antecedents and consequences; advise class teachers on what is happening in the classroom and on how disruptive behaviour can be prevented.	(i) Observe particular pupils who are disruptive/disturbed within their mainstream classes, record precisely what the disruptive behaviours are and their antecedents and consequences of those behaviours; advise class teachers on what is happening in the classroom and on how disruptive behaviour can be prevented, <i>ameliorated and managed</i>
(ii) Provide behaviour checklists for class teachers to use in observing individual pupils who are disruptive, to enable them to record the inappropriate behaviours and their frequency <i>so that they can be changed subsequently</i> , advise an appropriate intervention strategies; provide suitable progress charts.	(ii) Provide behaviour checklists for class teachers to use in observing individual pupils who are disruptive <i>or withdrawn</i> , to enable them to record the inappropriate behaviours and their frequency; advise on appropriate intervention strategies and provide suitable progress charts.
(iii) Support class teachers within the mainstream classroom by assisting them in managing and teaching pupils who are generally disruptive.	(iii) Support class teachers within the mainstream classroom by assisting them in managing and teaching pupils who are generally disruptive <i>or withdrawn</i> .
(iv) Identify individuals or small groups of pupils who are disruptive, <i>withdraw them for short periods</i> , teach them core areas of the curriculum in a way that is appropriate to their level of need and attentive capacities; use creative activities - art, craft, drama, play and personal and social skills activities as appropriate. (v) <i>Withdraw individuals or small groups of pupils who are disruptive for counselling</i> . The School Psychological Service, where available, could assist in this area. The focus of this approach would be to raise the pupils' self-esteem and to model and teach adaptive personal and social skills.	(iv) Identify small groups and individual pupils who are disruptive/ <i>withdrawn</i> , teach them <i>suitably adapted</i> core areas of the curriculum in a way that is appropriate to their level of need and attentive capacities for short periods; use creative activities - art, craft, drama, play, etc., and develop the pupils personal and social skills. (The School Psychological Service, where available, should assist in this area.). The focus of this approach is <i>to afford pupils experience of success</i> , to raise their self-esteem and to model and teach adaptive personal and social skills.
(vi) <i>Co-ordinate</i> the efforts of the staff in devising and implementing a whole-school policy on the management of behaviour and discipline in the school.	(v) <i>Participate</i> in the efforts of the staff <i>under the principal's leadership</i> in devising and implementing a whole-school policy on the management of behaviour and discipline in the school.
(vii) Keep outside school agencies that are involved with the pupil informed of pupil's special education and other needs.	(vi) <i>Liase and collaborate</i> with <i>parents</i> and other non-school agencies that are involved in addressing the pupils' specific needs in school, at home and in the community.
(viii) Keep careful records to include the following <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identification data on pupils who are disruptive; ▪ the forms of disruptive behaviour and their frequency; ▪ the steps being taken to prevent or manage disruptive behaviour; ▪ Psychological, psychiatric, social reports. 	(vii) Keep careful records to include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ identification data on pupils who are disruptive/withdrawn; ▪ the forms of disruptive behaviour and their frequency; ▪ the steps being taken to prevent and/or manage disruptive behaviour; ▪ Psychological, psychiatric, social reports; ▪ <i>programmes designed to meet the educational, behavioural, personal and social needs of small groups and individual pupils.</i>

Again the differences are mainly those of language used or a more detailed description in the specification of the support teacher e.g. the addition of *withdrawn* pupils in (ii) and (iii), where the teacher counsellor '*co-ordinates*' the whole school approach in 1995 (vi), in 1998 the support teacher '*participates ... under the principals leadership*' (item v). Item (iv) of the support teachers' specification seems to be an amalgamation of items (iv) and (v) for the teacher counsellors omitting the references to withdrawing the pupils for short periods, and withdrawing them for counselling. Here it seems lies the main difference between the specifications – apart from the obvious change in title, there is no reference to one-to-one *counselling* or group *counselling* work with pupils who are disruptive or withdrawn, in the role of the support teacher. Instead the support teacher's role has moved towards adapting the curriculum as in (c) and (d) of Table 2 (Roles), and developing programmes and methods to work with small groups and individual pupils. These changes in job description reflect the recommendations of the evaluation concerning the title of the post and the fact that the role of the teacher counsellor '*does not involve professional counselling*' (recommendation III, Department of Education and Science, 1998, p.12). The change in the activities of the teacher counsellor/ support teacher i.e. adapting the curriculum and developing programmes and methods in liaison with class teachers reflects recommendation eight from the evaluation report (Department of Education and Science, 1998, p.13).

Allocation of Extra Posts

Teacher Counsellor posts were allocated to ten extra schools in the school year 1998/1999. All new participating schools were invited to attend an information day organised by the Department of Education. The newly appointed teacher counsellors were not offered any formal induction prior to starting in the post (INTO, 1999i). Concern was expressed at the Irish National Teachers' Organisation congress about the '*lack of adequate inservice being provided for teacher counsellors prior to assuming their duties and throughout the scheme*' (INTO, 1999ii, p.12).

Dáil Question

In May 1999, a series of parliamentary questions concerning the teacher counsellor scheme were put to the Dáil:

- why the teacher counsellors had been renamed;
- why they had also been discouraged from '*offering counselling support to students suffering the effects of bereavement or in need of serious anger management aid*' (Ceist Pharlaiminte, Uimhir 338, p.1);
- why the direction of the scheme had been changed despite the wishes of the teacher counsellors themselves and the very positive evaluation;
- why the project was extended to areas not designated as disadvantaged;
- how schools should meet the need for ongoing counselling for needy pupils;
- whether the minister would meet a group of concerned teachers from the scheme.

The questions were answered by the Minister for Education and Science Mr. Michael Martin, T.D. on Tuesday 18th May 1999:

- the title 'support teacher' was thought to reflect the qualifications and emphasis of the work in the revised specification more accurately than 'teacher counsellor', the main role being in 'supporting the holistic development of the targeted pupils'
- Children in need of counselling services will be referred to persons with appropriate professional qualifications
- Schools that are newly incorporated in the project were included due to '*the difficulties they were experiencing in coping with disruptive and disturbed pupils*'
- Meetings with the support teachers and representatives of the Department of Education and Science will take place within the context of further in-career development.

(Ceist Pharlaiminte, Uimhir 338, p.2)

Summary and Conclusions

The teacher counsellor/ support teacher scheme has clearly developed in its first four years. Through this development the role has been cemented as an integral element of the structure of participating schools. The inservice training provided to those who joined the scheme in the initial stages has been described as '*of a very high quality*' (INTO, 1999ii, p.12). After a very positive evaluation of the teacher counsellor service by representatives of the Department of Education and Science Inspectorate and Psychological Service, it was decided to change the title of the role and activities in the job specification. It was this situation of change that provides the background for the present research.

Present Research

Representatives of the teacher counsellors approached the National Centre for Guidance in Education in 1998. There had been no systematic survey of training needs of the teacher counsellors during the pilot phase of the scheme. It was therefore decided to carry out a training needs analysis of those in the role. The present research therefore, attempts to define the needs of the teacher counsellor/ support teacher scheme – both the needs guidance needs of the pupils and the training needs of the teacher counsellors/ support teachers. The questionnaire used was designed in conjunction with representatives of the teacher counsellors/ support teachers.

METHODOLOGY

A training needs analysis questionnaire was developed in consultation with representatives of the teacher counsellors. The seven-page questionnaire (see appendix I for copy of questionnaire) was sent to twenty-seven teacher counsellors/ support teachers in December 1998. Teacher counsellors/ support teachers who had not returned the questionnaire received a reminder phone call in early January 1999.

The questionnaire contained both quantitative and qualitative questions and was divided into five sections: the guidance needs of pupils worked with, the school's responses to these needs, the role of the teacher counsellor, the knowledge and skills needed to undertake the role of the teacher counsellor/ support teacher, and finally statistical and other relevant data.

Fifteen teacher counsellors/ support teachers completed and returned the questionnaire representing a response rate of 56% which would be considered good for a postal questionnaire where response rates can fall to as low as 15% in some circumstances (Harper, 1971). Quantitative data was analysed using a computerised statistical program, while a qualitative content analysis was completed on the responses to the open ended questions.

RESULTS

SECTION 1: Guidance Needs

Teacher counsellors/ support teachers were asked to describe the guidance needs of the pupils with whom they worked in their role under the following headings: personal and social, educational and other guidance needs. Table 4 below shows a summary of the guidance needs (personal and social, educational and other) of the pupils as expressed by the teacher counsellors/ support teachers.

Table 4: Guidance Needs of Pupils (As outlined by teacher counsellors/ support teachers)

No. of Respondents	GUIDANCE NEEDS OF PUPILS		
	Personal & Social	Educational	Other
15			
14			
13	Dysfunctional/unstable Family Background		
12	Poor Social Skills		
11		Literacy & Numeracy/ Remedial Teaching	
10	Management of Emotions especially Anger		
9			
8		Attendance Absenteeism and Drop-out	
7	Lack of Self Esteem	Poor attitude, motivation & concentration	
6			
5		Language & Communication skills	
4	Bereavement, loss and Abandonment Disruptive pupils		
3	Signs of Neglect		
2		Change in the curriculum	Development of outside interests
1	Miscellaneous	Miscellaneous	Miscellaneous

1.1 Personal and Social Guidance Needs

There is wide agreement among the respondents on the most common issues behind the problem behaviours that children present with. Thirteen out of the sample of fifteen (87%) mentioned dysfunctional family backgrounds of the pupils under the personal and social guidance needs heading. Issues such as alcohol and drug abuse in the home, violence, aggression, separation, abandonment, unemployment, crime, poverty and neglect (physical, emotional and mental) need to be addressed and dealt with by the pupils.

80% of the respondents (12 of the 15) mentioned pupils' lack of adequate social skills and their need for guidance in this area:

- *Lack of personal and social skills necessary to survive / grow in a wider social context.*
- *Need social skills training in how to relate to others and how to get on with others.*
- *Very poor social skills – talking to each other, asking for what they want, taking turns, sharing equipment, can't listen or follow simple requests.*

This lack of social and interpersonal skills was seen as a direct result of 'the lack of love and caring' in the pupils' lives.

Two-thirds of respondents (10 of the 15) mentioned the need for guidance in the management of emotions especially anger. The children are seen to have a *'limited repertoire of coping skills resulting in an over reaction even to the slightest conflict'*. They have difficulties expressing their feelings resulting in physical and verbal aggression- *'The children need a lot of help in the area of feelings: naming them, owning them and moving on'*.

Other personal and social guidance needs identified include pupils lack of self-esteem (mentioned by 7 of the 15 respondents), bereavement, loss and abandonment (4 of the 15), disruptive pupils (4 of the 15) and signs of neglect (3 of the 15).

Dysfunctional family background is among the many issues in the pupils' lives that need to be addressed through working with the teacher counsellor/ support teacher. The other themes that emerged from the responses to this question can then be seen as the results of the instability in family background e.g. lack of social skills, managing emotions, lack of self-esteem etc. The need for work with parents who are *'unable to cope'* and require support and better parenting skills also emerged. *'Children need a secure base in the home where they are nurtured, listened to and encouraged - a healthy family relationship'*. Where this is lacking, both the pupils and parents need guidance.

1.2 Educational Guidance Needs

As regards educational guidance needs, the modal response of the teacher counsellors/ support teachers was the need for literacy and numeracy/ remedial teaching for those who are falling behind and failing in core areas of the curriculum (11 of the 15 respondents – 73%). Attendance, absenteeism and dropout also emerged as a need related to educational guidance for just over half the sample of teacher counsellors/ support teachers (8 of the 15 respondents):

'Through no fault of their own many of the children I work with have a very poor attendance record. This causes severe problems with their academic progress. I pay particular attention to the vulnerable children in 6th class – children whom the school feels will drop out of the system at the end of primary or at the beginning of second level. Their older siblings may have already dropped out of the system..... Often they need someone to give them some special time and attention, someone to listen and encourage them'.

Again such a comment alludes back to the lack of stability within the family to provide the children with the support and encouragement needed to stay in school.

The need for guidance in attitude, concentration and motivation for children who have *'little interest in school as their expectations are so low and their parents are apathetic'* (7 of the 15 respondents) again reiterates the lack of support from family. Other educational guidance needs identified included the need for training in language and communication skills (which links back to the need for improved management and expression of feelings), the need for a change in the curriculum (2 respondents), disruptive pupils (1) and lack of pre-school capability of the pupils (1) (i.e. inability to hold a crayon, lack of knowledge of colours, some are not familiar with reading, or which direction to read a sentence in).

1.3 Other Guidance Needs

Finally in section 1, the teacher counsellors/ support teachers were asked to add any other guidance needs. Just under half the respondents added guidance needs here. These included the need for opportunities for the development of pupils' outside interests e.g. sport, opportunity to play (mentioned by 2 respondents). Other guidance needs mentioned include the need for access to health and other experts/ specialists, the need for special care and guidance for refugees, the need for more resources (money, teachers, training), the need for a voice for the pupils and the need for rules and boundaries (each mentioned once).

SECTION 2: School Response to Guidance Needs

Teacher counsellors/ support teachers were then asked how their school responded to the guidance needs of pupils as described in section 1. Table 5 summarises the present school responses to personal and social, educational and other guidance needs.

Table 5: School Responses to Guidance Needs of Pupils (as described by teacher counsellors/ support teachers)

No. of Respondents	SCHOOL RESPONSES TO GUIDANCE NEEDS		
	Responses to Need for Personal & Social Guidance	Responses to Need for Educational Guidance	Other Responses to Need for Guidance
15			
14			
13			
12			
11	Circle Time	Literacy & Numeracy/ Remedial Teaching	
10	Specific Programmes		
9		Remedial Maths and English	Home School Community Liaison Officer
8		Special Classes/ Special Teacher	
7			
6	Self Esteem groups		Working With Parents
5	Bereavement Groups	School Psychological Assessment Promoting Outside Interests	
4	School Wide Ethos	Involving Parents in Learning Homework Club Addressing Absenteeism/ Early School Leaving	Liaison with Other Agencies
3	One-to-one interventions Anti-bullying Strategy		
2	Anger Control		
1	Miscellaneous	Miscellaneous	Miscellaneous

2.1 School Response to Needs for Personal and Social Guidance

The most popular school response to the needs for personal and social guidance is the provision of 'circle time' by either the teacher counsellor/ support teacher or by class teachers. Circle time encompasses a range of class activities which foster gentle play, aid conflict resolution, promote turn taking, delay gratification, improve social skills and promote tolerance – *'It teaches listening, speaking and sharing skills'*. Circle Time therefore attempts to address many of the personal and social guidance needs expressed in Section 1. Eleven of the fifteen teacher counsellors/ support teachers reported circle time as a school response to personal and social guidance needs.

Almost as popular was the provision of specific programmes to address personal and social guidance needs – two-thirds of respondents indicating that this was part of the schools response (10 of the 15). Within this group of ten, the most cited programmes were drugs awareness programmes such as the Substance Misuse Prevention Programme – SMPP (8 respondents), the Stay Safe Programme (7 respondents), RSE – Relationship and Sexuality Education, and the 8-15's early school leavers initiative (4 respondents each). Again such programmes start to address issues that children see and deal with in the home on a daily basis such as substance abuse and relationships.

Self esteem groups or self-esteem programmes run with small groups were a response to guidance needs for six of the fifteen respondents; bereavement groups were a response to personal and social

guidance needs for five respondents. Just over one-quarter of respondents (4 of the 15) spoke of a school wide ethos in the provision of guidance/ pastoral care:

- *The ethos of the school is geared towards showing care and respect for children in vulnerable and difficult situations.*
- *The school works to create a caring ethos where children are valued and listened to.*
- *All the teachers in the school commit a lot of time to social and personal skills as they are important for the child in society.*

This school wide ethos attempts to redress the lack of care, respect and support shown for children who come from the dysfunctional family background evident from Section 1.

Other school responses include one-to-one interventions (3 respondents), anti-bullying strategies (3 respondents) and anger control (2 respondents).

2.2 School Response to Need for Educational Guidance

The modal school response to the need for educational guidance was the provision of remedial teaching in Maths and English for children who need the extra attention (9 of the 15). Closely linked to the provision of remedial Maths and English is the availability of special classes and special teachers mentioned by just over half the respondents (8 respondents). Such classes and teachers include those for special needs pupils, travellers, support classes, speech and language therapists and resource teachers.

One-third of the respondents use psychological assessment as a response and a screening tool for the need for educational guidance (5 respondents). However, as one respondent commented this service is less than adequate to meet demand: *'The waiting list for psychological assessment is long and many children pass through the system without the proper intervention they need'*.

Again one-third of respondents indicated the promotion of outside interests as a response to pupils' needs for educational guidance: encouraging physical activity, school trips, art and drama, extra equipment and toys, cookery and visits to the library are just some of the activities mentioned. Parents are included in learning in paired reading and Maths programmes in the schools of four of the fifteen respondents – this is referred to as the PAL programme (Parent Aided Learning). Other responses to the need for educational guidance include the provision of a homework club (4 respondents) and addressing absenteeism and early school leaving (4 respondents).

2.3 Other School Responses to Guidance Needs

Twelve of the fifteen teacher counsellors/ support teachers responded to the question on other school responses to guidance needs. The modal response was the provision of a Home School Community Liaison Officer – HSCLO (9 of the 15 respondents). The HSCLO is involved in setting up and running parenting programmes and assertiveness classes for parents, and also in making positive links with the pupils' homes by visiting families in the home and holding parent meetings.

The theme of working with parents emerged for 6 of the respondents through providing parenting programmes themselves, schools providing a crèche facility so that parents can attend courses, and the provision of a parents' room where parents can meet for tea and coffee. But unfortunately such initiatives often fail to reach those most vulnerable: *'Unfortunately the parents that we would most like to see come to the parents' room are the ones who don't come'*.

Liasing and networking with other agencies was a school response for four of the fifteen respondents. Organisations and agencies mentioned include the Lucena clinics, the Eastern Health Board, other teacher counsellors/ support teachers, education networks and community development projects.

SECTION 3: Role of the Teacher Counsellor/ Support Teacher in Meeting the Guidance Needs of Pupils

Responses to Section 2 and 3 may overlap to some degree as some respondents included their own personal response to pupils' need for guidance within the school response to meeting guidance needs. However, it is necessary to define the role of the individual teacher counsellor/ support teacher independently of the school response in order to get a picture of their day-to-day activities in meeting the guidance needs of their pupils. Table 6 below summarises the role of the teacher counsellor/ support teacher in addressing the personal, social, educational and other guidance needs of pupils.

**Table 6: Teacher Counsellors'/ Support Teachers' Role
in Addressing the Guidance Needs of Pupils**

No. of Respondents	TEACHER COUNSELLORS/ SUPPORT TEACHERS ROLE IN ADDRESSING NEEDS		
	Addressing the Need for Personal & Social Guidance	Addressing the Need for Educational Guidance	Addressing Other Guidance Needs
15			
14			
13			
12			
11			
10	Circle Time		
9	One-to-one work		Liaison with Parents
8	Self-esteem work Exploring Feelings and Behaviour management		
7	Provision of Specific Programmes Play Activities		
6			Liaison with Outside Agencies
5		One-to-one Academic Work	
4		Occasional Academic Support	
3	Bereavement Support	Language Development	Liaison with / Informing Staff
2		Motivation/ Encouragement Specific Reward System	Promote Outside Interests
1	Miscellaneous	Miscellaneous	Miscellaneous

3.1 Role of the Teacher Counsellor/ Support Teacher in Addressing the Personal and Social Guidance Needs of Pupils

Two thirds of the respondents (10) respond to the personal and social guidance needs of pupils using Jenny Mosley's circle time which '*encourages good behaviour*', '*develops listening time, self esteem and social skills*'. Almost two thirds (9 respondents) spend time individually with children in sessions of '*one to one listening in an accepting and non-judgemental way*' with '*distressed children who need personal attention*' and '*very difficult children*'. This work can involve the use of worksheets and games to improve self-belief and self-esteem and dealing with specific needs or problems.

As in the school response to guidance needs, over half the sample of teacher counsellors/ support teachers (8 respondents) are involved in self-esteem work including specific programmes and small self-esteem groups. Again eight of the respondents mentioned work exploring feelings and behaviour management as part of their role in addressing personal and social guidance needs:

- *One of the main aims of the teacher counsellor/ support teacher is to provide methods for children to express their thoughts and feelings in a safe and secure place and to help them to process their feelings in a healthy way and develop appropriate responses to their emotions.*
- *Review of the child's behaviour – focusing on the positive aspects to change for the better, developing a positive relationship with the child, so that s/he has a positive ally in the school.*

Just under half the sample of teacher counsellors/ support teachers (7 respondents) mentioned their involvement in the delivery of specific programmes such as those mentioned previously: social skills, substance misuse prevention, Relationship and Sexuality Education and Stay Safe. Again just under half (7 respondents) mentioned the importance of facilitating play activities in their role addressing the personal and social guidance needs of pupils. The use of art and craft, clay, sand, drama, cookery etc. can *'gain interest and spark enthusiasm of children who may be quite turned off about school'*. The use of play activities also links back to exploring feelings and anger management:

- *'Methods for children to express their thoughts and feelings in a safe and secure environment – I aim to help the children process their feelings in a healthy way through art, story telling, clay, play, role-play, listening'*
- *'Much informal play happens in my room- in the freedom and informality I believe that children learn a great deal about themselves and their imagination, while also developing language and social skills'*

For three respondents their role as teacher counsellor/ support teacher includes bereavement groups or individual work with bereaved/ traumatised children *'providing a safe haven for them as well as some work to understand situations'*.

3.2 Role of the Teacher Counsellor/ Support Teacher in Addressing the Educational Guidance Needs of Pupils

The responses to this question can be broken down into two broad categories: teacher counsellors/ support teachers who address educational guidance needs through one to one academic work with pupils who require it, and those who feel that the educational guidance of pupils is met by other staff members. However some of the latter group feel that they do address educational guidance needs indirectly through the provision of social and personal guidance.

One third of the sample of fifteen (5 respondents) respondents indicate that they address the educational guidance needs of pupils through one-to-one academic work with pupils who need it. This work includes literacy and numeracy, intensive Maths and English classes and paired reading on a regular basis. An additional three respondents are involved in this type of work occasionally *'if that is causing the child's behavioural difficulties'* or if *'a client expresses the need for help'*.

Three of the sample of fifteen gave no reply to this section of the questionnaire, and a further two indicated that other staff met the educational guidance needs of pupils. It may be said then that one third of the sample of teacher counsellor respondents feel they have little or no role in addressing the educational guidance needs of pupils – *'I work solely on meeting the personal and social needs of the children – their educational needs are taken care of by other teachers'*. However, this may reflect a narrow definition of educational needs as purely academically addressed. As one respondent put it *'I don't specifically target educational needs, although I am aware that a lot of time is spent discussing issues and therefore oral language must benefit. It is also the opinion of our staff that work which improves self esteem and social skills will help the child with classwork'*. Therefore, though some teacher counsellors/ support teachers claim no direct role in addressing educational guidance needs the responses provided show that personal and social guidance needs and educational guidance needs are not mutually exclusive categories and do indeed overlap. Activities therefore, designed to address social

and personal guidance needs may also contribute to addressing educational guidance needs by improving the child's attitude and motivation levels.

Language development is part of the role of the Teacher counsellor/ support teacher in addressing educational guidance needs for three respondents (one-fifth of the sample). Other responses to the need for educational guidance include motivating and encouraging (2 respondents) and a further two respondents using a specific academic reward system.

3.3 Other Activities of the Teacher Counsellor/ Support Teacher in Addressing Guidance Needs

The main theme to emerge from the answers to this section was liaison and networking with parents, with other agencies and with other staff. Almost two-thirds of the respondents (9) work with parents as part of their role as teacher counsellor/ support teacher in addressing the guidance needs of children. This work involves talking to parents about a child's behaviour, attending parent meetings, group work with parents and children, and occasional home visits.

Consultation/ networking with outside agencies was part of the role for a little over one third of the respondents (6). This usually involved both referral to outside agencies/ specialists e.g. psychologists, Lucena Clinic, and consultation with outside agencies in the identification of children at risk.

Liaison with, and '*informing*' staff was a constituent part of the teacher counsellors'/ support teachers' role in addressing the guidance needs of pupils for three of the respondents. Interaction with staff varies from '*modelling and staff inservice*', providing checklists, support etc. to raising awareness in the staff room of '*the real world for the child when s/he leaves the school building*'.

Promoting outside interests again emerged as a theme in this section (2 respondents); the teacher counsellors/ support teachers try to '*steer the children towards positive leisure time activities*' and encourage and support children with an interest in a particular area.

SECTION 4: Training Needs of Teacher Counsellors/ Support Teachers

The fourth area examined by the questionnaire was the inservice training needs of teacher counsellors/ support teachers. These are also broken down according to the categories of personal and social guidance training, educational guidance training and other guidance training needs. Table 7 provides a summary of responses.

Table 7: Guidance Training Needs of Teacher Counsellors/ Support Teachers

No. of Respondents	<i>GUIDANCE TRAINING NEEDS OF TEACHER COUNSELLORS/ SUPPORT TEACHERS</i>		
	Personal and Social Guidance Training Needs	Educational Guidance Training Needs	Other Guidance Training Needs
15			
14			
13			
12			
11	Skills in Specific Therapies (4.1)		
10	Knowledge/ Info on Specific Areas (4.1)		
9			
8			
7			
6	Counselling qualification/ training		Facilitation/ training skills
5		Information on Learning Difficulties	Support, Supervision & Care of Self
4			Need training in general
3			Referral to other agencies Knowledge in specific areas (4.3)
2		Self-esteem programmes	Network between Teacher counsellors/ support teachers
1	Miscellaneous	Miscellaneous	Miscellaneous

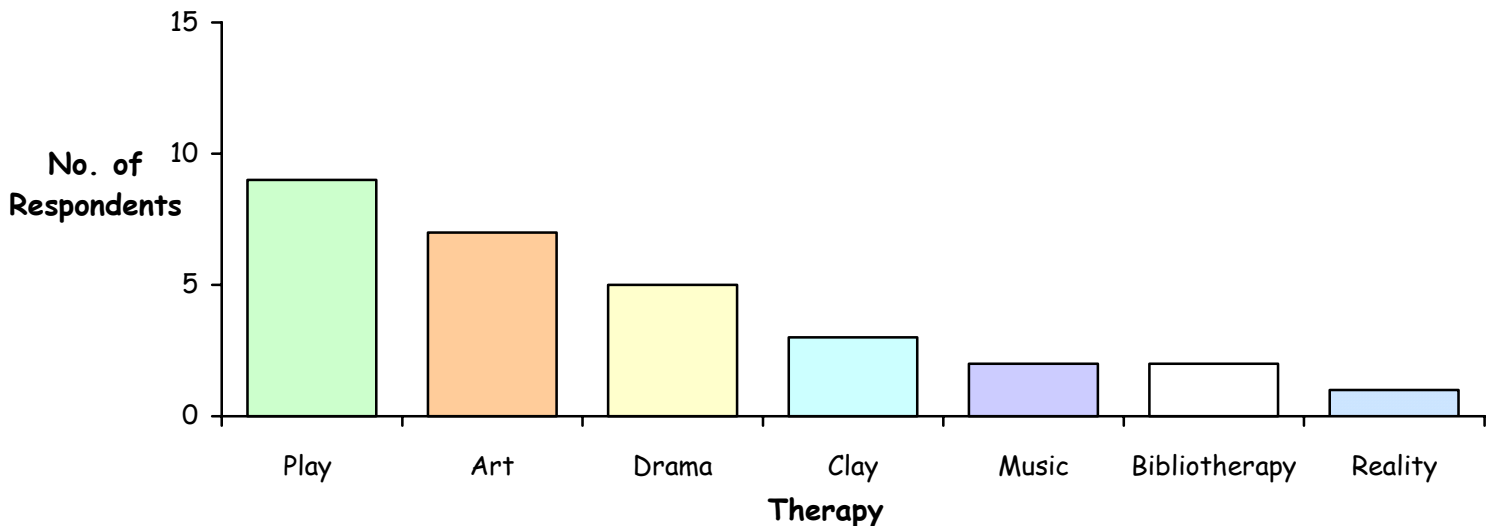
4.1 Need for Training in the Area of Personal and Social Guidance

The main need for training in the area of personal and social guidance expressed by the teacher counsellors/ support teachers is the need for skills in specific therapies used in dealing with children and knowledge in specific areas relating to their work. Eleven of the fifteen teacher counsellors/ support teachers expressed this need, indicating a need for skills in specific therapies:

- *Specific training in a therapeutic medium – I have tried to read in relation to these areas but feel I would gain more from meeting with an experienced practitioner.*
- *I feel if I was skilled in these areas, I would make more progress with the children*
- *Practical examples of how these therapies can be used with children.*
- *Skills to make best use of the therapies.*

The most popular therapy mentioned was the broad term of Play Therapy, followed by Art Therapy, Drama Therapy and Clay Therapy. Other specific therapies mentioned include Music Therapy, Bibliotherapy and Reality Therapy. Figure 1 (overleaf) shows the number of respondents expressing an interest in training for each type of therapy.

Figure 1: Training Needs in Specific Therapies



Tied closely to the need for skills in specific therapies is the need for knowledge in specific areas expressed by two-thirds of the fifteen teacher counsellors/ support teachers (10). Again the knowledge areas varied from bereavement/ abandonment (5), anger conflict management (4), abuse, neglect and trauma (4) and understanding different theories of psychological behaviour e.g. attachment theory, family systems theory etc. (3).

Just over one third of the sample (6) desired to have formal counselling training/ certification. This training/ qualification should have particular relevance to the role of the teacher counsellor/ support teacher in working with children:

- *Need a formal qualification in counselling – I believe I need more specific skills in relation to younger children.*
- *A suitable training in psychotherapy for young children , or counselling techniques.*
- *Counselling skills particularly in relation to counselling children.*

This view reiterates the views expressed in the INTO report 'The Teacher Counsellor Service' (INTO, 1996, p.15).

4.2 Need for Training in the Area of Educational Guidance

For four of the fifteen respondents (almost one third), their needs for training in educational guidance include the need for information on learning difficulties, the diagnosis of same and dealing with children with specific learning difficulties. The use of self-esteem programmes also emerged as an area of need for training (2 respondents). Other training needs in the area of educational guidance are skills in the area of dealing with school refusal and the use/ administration and familiarity with psychometric tests.

Two respondents indicated that their skills were adequate in this area:

- *I feel I have so many years experience of all classes that I feel competent dealing with children with learning problems.*
- *My skills are adequate in this area.*

Just under half the sample (7) failed to reply to this question reflecting the self-report (see section 3.2) that teacher counsellors/ support teachers view themselves as having no direct role in the provision of educational guidance. This could be due to the narrow perception of educational guidance needs as meaning academic help with core subjects. In fact educational guidance encompasses a whole range of

interventions designed to help pupils make educational decisions and choices e.g. motivating the child to decide to try harder at a particular subject.

4.3 Other Training Needs in the Area of Guidance

The most cited training need in this category was the need for group facilitation and training skills (6):

- *Dealing with other staff and facilitation.*
- *Managing meetings with staff and parents/ parents and children.*
- *Mediation skills – facilitation skills.*

The personal cost to the teacher counsellor/ support teacher of the activities involved in their role is apparent in the need for support, supervision and 'care of self' expressed by one-third of the respondents (5 respondents):

- *More support in managing myself as I witness tragedy and neglect.*
- *I can find myself very overburdened with problems and very isolated.*
- *How to process my own daily reactions to the sometimes horrific stories.*

The need for training in general, or the idea that any training would be welcome emerged in the case of four of the teacher counsellors/ support teachers:

- *Ongoing supervision and training is required.*
- *On-going opportunities for inservice.*
- *Always looking to improve on technique.*

Other needs for training include the need for information on referral to other agencies (3), the need for a forum for discussion, meetings and networking between teacher counsellors/ support teachers (2) and knowledge/ information on specific topics such as legal issues (2), report writing (2) and access to funding (1).

SECTION 5: Background Information

5.1 Length of time as Teacher Counsellor/ Support Teacher in School

Over half the Teacher counsellors/ support teachers who responded had been in the role for over 3 years at the time of the survey (8 respondents). Again over half had worked in their present school for over sixteen years; all had worked in their present school for six years or more.

5.2 Number and Age Range of Pupils

Just under half the schools had less than 250 pupils (7), with 3 schools having 251-350 pupils, 3 schools having 351-500 pupils and over 500 pupils in two of the schools. Two of the fifteen teacher counsellors/ support teachers who responded dealt with the broad age range of pupils between 4 and 12, one worked mainly with those aged 6-12, while six specialised in senior primary school pupils (aged 8 to 12/13) and six specialised in the junior age group (aged 4-8/9)

5.3 Relevant Training Undertaken

Twelve of the fifteen teacher counsellors/ support teachers who responded to the survey had received a 4 module course in Trinity College Dublin resulting in a Diploma in Curricular Studies. Two-thirds had received some level of training/ certification in Reality therapy. Apart from these, guidance and counselling training varies considerably from one respondent who claimed they had received no training whatsoever in guidance and counselling skills, to those who had attended various one-day workshops, those who have attended some form of counselling diploma/ certificate course to those who are studying guidance and counselling at a Master's level. One-day workshops and courses on specific topics include: group facilitation, Rainbows bereavement programme, gestalt therapy, circle time, art therapy, counselling weekends etc.. Table 8 shows the types of courses taken by and qualifications of the respondents.

Table 8 Training Courses Completed by Respondents

Type of Qualification/ Course	No. of Respondents
Diploma in Curricular Studies Trinity College Dublin	12
Training/ Certification in Reality Therapy	10
Various one-day workshops/ courses in specific topics and therapies	9
Diploma/ Certificate in Counselling Skills, Introduction to counselling skills Course	5
Week in Counselling skills for teacher counsellors/ support teachers (Chris Conliffe – Director Institute for Counselling and Personal Development)	3
M Ed in guidance and counselling in Trinity College Dublin (current)	1
Diploma in special education (St Patrick's College, Drumcondra)	1
NONE	1

5.4 Time spent by Teacher Counsellors/ Support Teachers

Table 9 below shows the average number of hours spent on each activity in an average week by the fifteen Teacher counsellors/ support teachers.

Table 9: Weekly Activities of the Teacher Counsellors/ Support Teachers

Activity	Average Number of Hours	Minimum Number of Hours	Maximum number of Hours
Group work	8.9	1	20
Other Activities*	3.2	0	7
Other work with disruptive students (apart from teaching the curriculum)	2.8	0	6
Working with parents on 'Parenting Skills'/ consultation with parents	1.8	1	5
Crisis management	1.6	1	5
Teaching core areas of the curriculum to disruptive students	1.5	0	5
Keeping records/ charting progress	1.5	0.5	3
Advising/ supporting Class Teachers with intervention and prevention of disruptive behaviour	1.4	0.5	4
Liasing with the School Psychological Services and other agencies concerning pupils welfare	1.3	0.5	3
Teaching mainstream classes	.6	0	5

*Other work includes one-to-one counselling, play therapy, self-esteem and confidence building, anger management and conflict resolution skills.

As the table shows on average most of the teacher counsellors'/ support teachers' time is spent on group work at approximately 9 hours per week. The next most demanding activity (on average) timewise comes under the category other. This category includes Circle Time with whole classes (5), individual work with children with specialised problems (1), breakfast club (1), and occasional teaching of mainstream classes (1). Since Circle time can be seen as a form of group work, group work can be seen as on average the main activity of the teacher counsellor. This group work includes social skills (all 15 respondents), assertiveness skills for thirteen of the fifteen respondents, bereavement counselling for thirteen of the fifteen respondents and practical skills for a little over one-third of respondents (6). However as the table shows the range of time spent on group work varies widely between counsellors from 1 to 20 hours in an average week, and looking at the other categories, there are large differences between teacher counsellors/ support teachers in the amounts of time spent on each activity. This is a result of the flexibility given to the teacher counsellors in their job specification and also an indication of development of the role in response to local needs; therefore no two counsellors will have the exact same allocation of time to different activities. This group work corresponds with elements of activities (iv) and (v) of the teacher counsellor job specification (1995) and with elements of item (iv) in the support teacher job specification (1998) (see appendix II for both job specifications).

Relating to activity (v) (1995) and elements of activity (iv) (1998), other work with disruptive pupils (i.e. not teaching core areas of the curriculum to them) takes up on average almost 3 hours per week. This work includes one-to-one counselling, play therapy, self-esteem and confidence building, anger management and conflict resolution skills.

Working with parents and liasing with other agencies about pupils' welfare combined takes up 3.2 hours of the teacher counsellors'/ support teachers' week. Corresponding with activity (vi) of the support

teachers' role (1998), this relates directly to the need for training in group facilitation skills, and information about other agencies identified in Section 4.

On average respondents spent 1.5 hours teaching core areas of the curriculum to disruptive students, which corresponds with activity (iv) (1995) and activity (iv) (1998).

Advising/ supporting class teachers with intervention and prevention of disruptive behaviour includes elements of activities (i) (ii) (iii) and (vi) of the teacher counsellors job specification (1995) and elements of activities (I) (ii) (iii) and (v) of the support teachers specification (1998). On average teacher counsellors/ support teachers spend 1.4 hours per week on this activity.

Teacher counsellors/ support teachers spend on average only 0.6 hour teaching mainstream classes, while most of the teacher counsellors are not involved in this activity (11), one of the respondents spends on average 5 hours per week teaching mainstream classes. Teaching of mainstream classes is neither part of the original nor of the revised job description.

When comparing the job specifications with the actual time spent on different activities by the teacher counsellors/ support teachers, it is clear that the respondents spend most of their time on activities corresponding to items (iv) and (v) of the teacher counsellor job specification and item (iv) of the support teacher job specification (shown below):

Teacher Counsellor Job Specification (1995)

- (iv) Identify individuals or small groups of pupils who are disruptive, *withdraw them for short periods*, teach them core areas of the curriculum in a way that is appropriate to their level of need and attentive capacities; use creative activities - art, craft, drama, play and personal and social skills activities as appropriate.
- (v) *Withdraw individuals or small groups of pupils who are disruptive for counselling*. The School Psychological Service, where available, could assist in this area. The focus of this approach would be to raise the pupils' self-esteem and to model and teach adaptive personal and social skills.

Support Teacher Job Specification (1998)

- (iv) Identify small groups and individual pupils who are disruptive/*withdrawn*, teach them *suitably adapted* core areas of the curriculum in a way that is appropriate to their level of need and attentive capacities for short periods; use creative activities - art, craft, drama, play, etc., and develop the pupils personal and social skills. (The School Psychological Service, where available, should assist in this area.). The focus of this approach is *to afford pupils experience of success*, to raise their self-esteem and to model and teach adaptive personal and social skills.

The average number of children that each teacher counsellor/ support teacher sees on a regular basis (i.e. once per week) on a one-to-one basis is 9, the range again varies greatly from 2 to 34. Six respondents see less than 5 at least once per week, six see between 5 and 15 and three teacher counsellors see more than 15 pupils at least one per week.

The average number seen in small group work on a regular basis is 36, but again the range varies from 0 to 60. Five respondents see between 0 and 30 inclusive, 6 see between 31 and 40 pupils, 1 sees between 41 and 50 and 3 see 51+ pupils on a regular basis in small group work. The wide range in numbers of pupils again reflects the needs based development of the teacher counsellors role, with differing emphases in each school.

5.5 Additional Comments

Nine of the fifteen respondents chose to give additional comments. Nearly half those who commented (4) reiterated the need for training in guidance:

- *Inservice to date while welcome has been inadequate especially when no counselling qualification is needed to apply for the position.*
- *I feel a desperate need for more specific training to handle my daily trauma – we are left dealing with so many children who never get professional help as the queues are always too long. I feel*

very much at the coal face and the more I talk to parents the more parents come to me. They are not coping themselves with what is happening; they just don't know how to deal with their children.

Another major theme of the additional comments is the need for more resources both in time and funding (4 respondents). Teacher counsellors/ support teachers express a frustration at not being able to offer the same service to all that need it:

- *Only a fraction of the children requiring help or an ear for a while are being facilitated*
- *The opportunity to talk to the teacher counsellor/ support teacher must be open to all students as the need arises but It is most difficult to strike a balance, especially if crisis management is an expectation.*
- *Funding for the Teacher counsellor/ support teacher Programme is non-existent and is very necessary to provide materials for children.*

Other themes emerging include the need for adequate supervision (2 respondents), the fact that individual work makes the most progress with difficult children (2 respondents) and thanking the National Centre for Guidance in Education for the questionnaire (2 respondents).

SECTION 6: Synthesis of Results

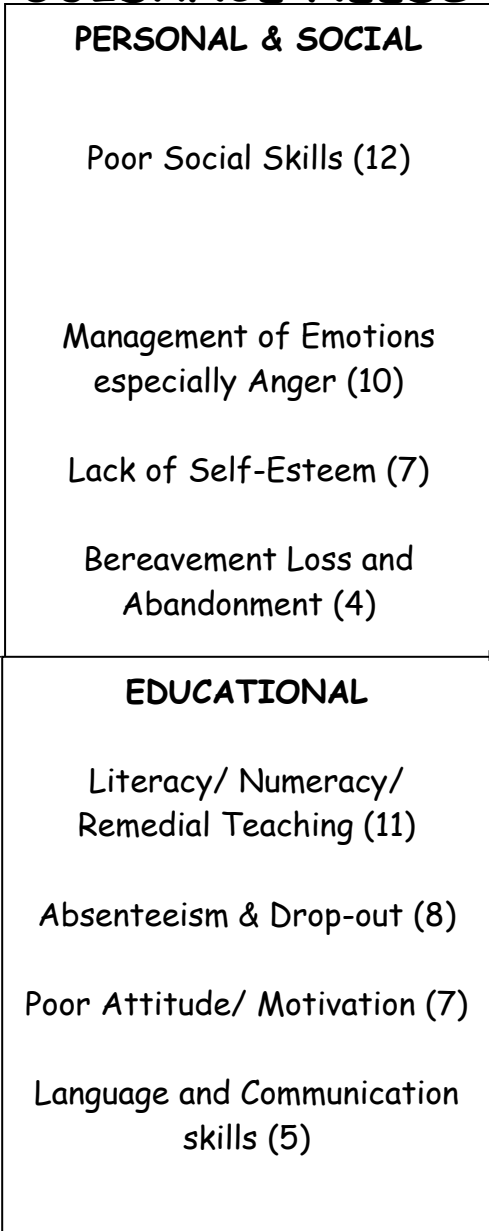
From this research, a picture emerges of the guidance role of the teacher counsellor/ support teacher in primary schools: the issues and problems they deal with on a daily basis; the level of whole school support for children who need assistance in the form of personal, social and educational guidance; the individual teacher counsellors/ support teachers role in giving this support; and their training needs in the area of guidance and counselling. Figure 2 attempts to show the overlap between these sections of the questionnaire illustrating the main guidance needs of the pupils, the main responses of the school to these guidance needs, (distinguishing between those activities specifically undertaken by the teacher counsellor/ support teacher as part of the school response and those undertaken on a whole school basis or by other members of staff¹), and the main training needs of the teacher counsellors/ support teachers. As established in section 1, the vast majority of the teacher counsellors/ support teachers who responded pointed to the lack of support and stability in family background for many of their pupils who have to deal with issues of substance abuse, loss, abandonment and abuse on a daily basis. This can be seen as one of the causes of the problems with which pupils present: lacking in social skills, inability to manage feelings especially anger, lack of self-esteem, sense of bereavement, loss and abandonment. The apparent lack of support in the home can also be linked into the needs of the pupils for educational guidance: the basic need for literacy and numeracy skills; the need to address chronic absenteeism and dropout; guidance for those with poor attitude and lack of motivation; and language and communication skills. Looking at current school responses, though some such as the specific programmes already mentioned in section 2.1 span many of the guidance needs (e.g. circle time and play therapies) and others while mainly addressing a particular need, may have positive effects elsewhere (e.g. any of the programmes involving the child sufficiently will improve their language and communication skills), the diagram shows a clear needs based response in the development of programmes and strategies to fulfil the guidance needs of pupils.

Lack of social skills is addressed through the provision of circle time and other programmes, activities addressing the management of feelings are directed at anger control, self esteem programmes address the lack of same apparent in many pupils. Low levels of literacy and numeracy are tackled through the provision of remedial teachers, special classes, special teachers and one-to-one work on academic areas by the teacher counsellor/ support teacher (though some respondents referred to this as only occasional). Encouragement and motivation, sometimes in the form of a specific reward system is given to those with a poor attitude and lack of motivation and attention; language development is offered in some schools to improve language and communication skills. Other schools have a whole school strategy for dealing with and addressing chronic absenteeism and dropout.

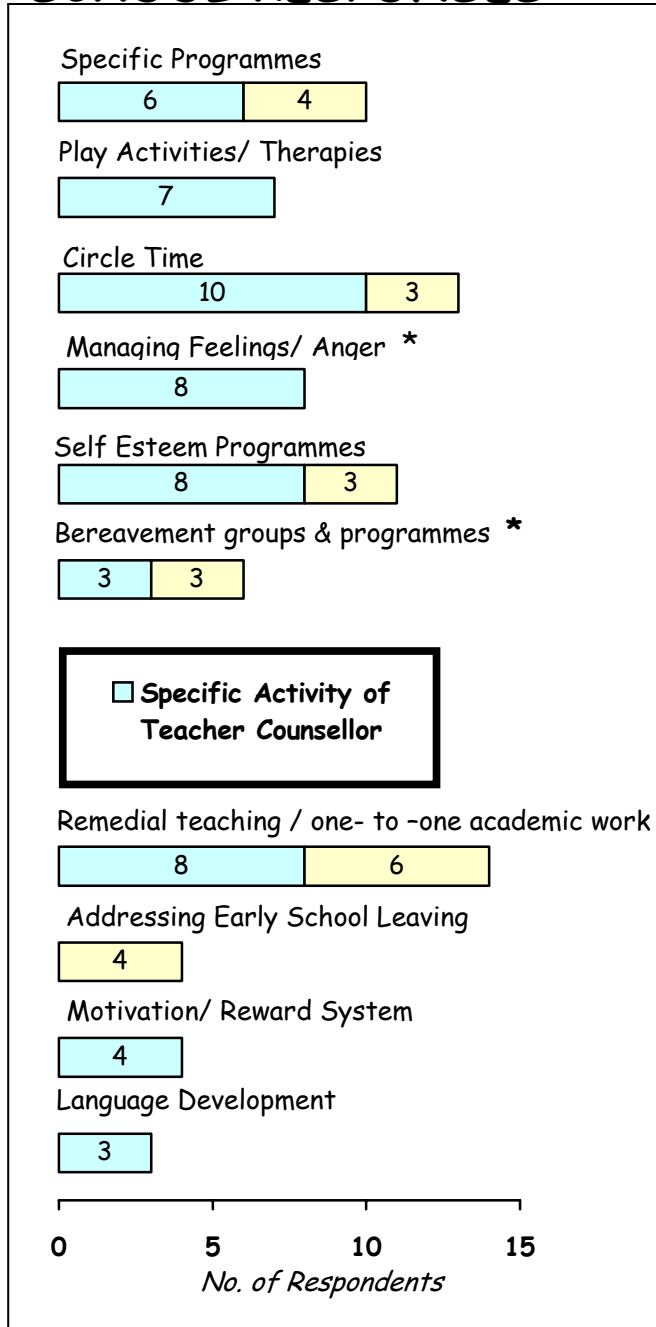
¹ Figures were calculated by combining the respondents who mentioned an activity as a school response and those who mentioned it as an activity of the teacher counsellor (section 2 and 3 of the questionnaire). Where the same activity was mentioned in both categories, it was included in the diagram as an activity specifically undertaken by the teacher counsellor as part of the school response. The **blue** therefore represents the activities of the teacher counsellor and the **yellow** represents activities undertaken on a whole school basis / by other members of staff. The **complete bar** represents the total school response to guidance needs.

Lack of Family Support/ Stability

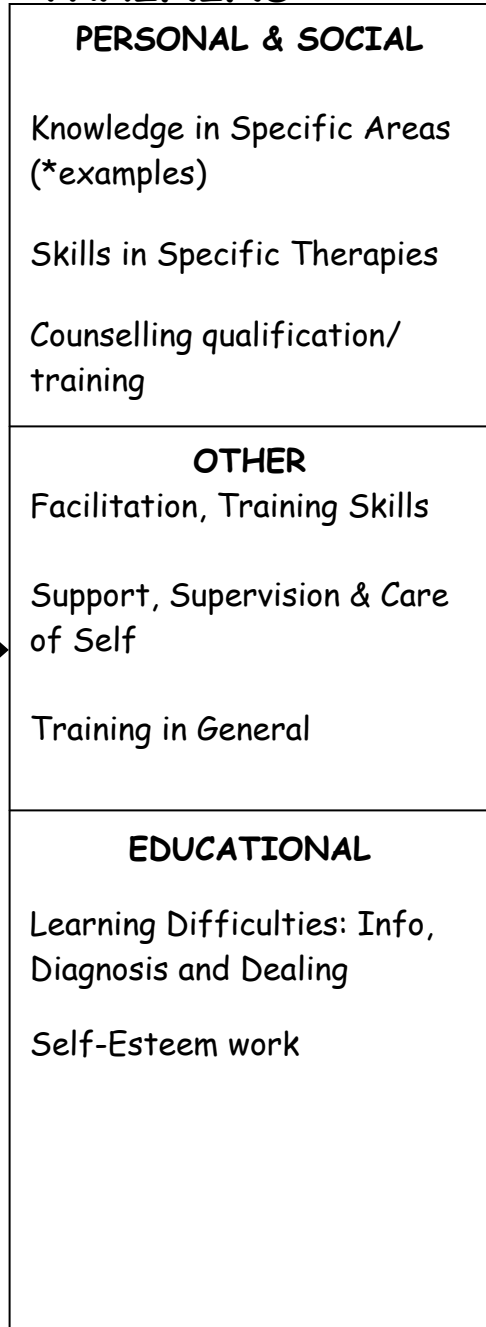
GUIDANCE NEEDS



SCHOOL RESPONSES



TRAINING



However the level of response to guidance needs is disparate. While the majority of respondents' schools provide circle time and other such programmes, and remedial / one-to-one assistance in academic work, only just over half are involved in work in feelings management and less than one-third involved in activities to directly address language development. Even where the level of response seems to almost equate with the level of need, for example ten respondents expressed the need to address the management of feelings especially anger, and eight referred to specific programmes and activities that directly addressed this need. These were not necessarily the same respondents who outlined the need. In reality, only four of the schools who claimed feelings and anger management as a response to guidance needs, had indeed expressed the need in Section 1. Therefore six of the original ten teacher counsellors/ support teachers who maintained the need to address the management of feelings had no specific response to this need.

The training needs of the teacher counsellors/ support teachers are clear – more knowledge and skills in the activities they are currently involved in, in addition to some sort of formal training/ qualification in counselling, backed up by other skills in facilitation, training, looking after one self. The need for on-going inservice training and ongoing supervision is evident in the responses to the questionnaire. The language used by some of the respondents indicates the great personal cost to the individual teacher counsellor/ support teacher in carrying out their role in the absence of such training and support. The teacher counsellors/ support teachers feel a '*desperate*' need for specific training in the face of '*horrific stories*' and '*daily trauma*', and support and supervision in what can become a very '*overburdened*' and '*isolated*' role.

- *I feel a desperate need for more specific training to handle my daily trauma.*
- *More support in managing myself as I witness tragedy and neglect.*
- *I can find myself very overburdened with problems and very isolated.*

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

It is clear from the results of this training needs analysis that the needs for training in guidance are great for the teacher counsellor/ support teacher scheme. Those working in the role at present vary in both experience in the role, experience in teaching, and in the training that they have received. While all of the teachers have worked in their present schools for more than 6 years, with an average service to the school of almost 16 years, their experience in the role of teacher counsellor/ support teacher varies between 3 months and 9 years. The training received also varies widely. While the majority of respondents have attended the Diploma in Curricular Studies in TCD, less than two thirds mentioned one-day workshops and training in specific topics and only one third had attended an introduction to counselling skills. One respondent in the teacher counsellor/ support teacher role for under 3 months claimed not to have received any training. This range of experience and training has two main implications. Firstly, the more experienced teacher counsellors can and should provide an excellent information resource for the Department of Education and Science in the development of the role and the development of further inservice training. Secondly, those new to the role of teacher counsellor/ support teacher should be provided with the opportunity to attend the relevant training courses of similar duration and in-career development afforded to those already in the role, and at the very least an induction module which should encompass and summarise those areas covered previously.

As evident from the guidance needs of the pupils and the training needs of the respondents themselves, the teacher counsellor/ support teacher scheme requires ongoing training in specialised areas. Respondents are working with children who face many issues at home from general parental apathy, substance abuse to marriage breakdown. These children then present with feelings of loss and abandonment, difficulties in controlling and expressing feelings especially anger, low self esteem and general lack of social skills. Their educational attainment is also effected due to lack of familial support, lack of motivation, poor attitude, absenteeism and dropout and consequently a low standard of core literacy and numeracy skills. The teacher counsellors/ support teachers have been encouraged by the Department of Education and Science to use '*creative therapies – art, craft, drama, play, and personal and social skills as appropriate*' (Department of Education, 1995, p.2), '*creative activities in the development of the pupils' personal and social skills*' (Department of Education and Science, 1998 ii, p.2) and '*therapeutic activities in the more aesthetic and creative areas of the primary school curriculum*' (Department of Education and Science, 1998 ii, p.1). However it is this area – skills in specific therapies to deal with children such as play, art, drama, clay, music and biblio therapies– that respondents expressed the biggest need for training. As one teacher counsellor/ support teacher concluded '*I have tried to read in relation to these areas but feel I would gain more from meeting with an experienced practitioner*'. Linked to this is the need for information and training in specific knowledge areas – bereavement, anger management, abuse, neglect etc..

The issue of the need for training in counselling skills is controversial. The Department of Education and Science made the decision to rename the teacher counsellors support teachers. The current job specification for support teachers makes no reference to counselling pupils - unlike the original job spec for teacher counsellors - indicating that the '*school psychological service where appropriate should assist in this area*' (Department of Education and Science, 1995 & 1998ii,p.2). However, the respondents still maintain a need for training in counselling skills. '*Children in the school in need of counselling must be referred to an appropriately qualified person*' (Department of Education and Science, 1999ii), yet the respondents argue that such an appropriately qualified person is not always available: '*we are left with so many children who never get professional help as the queues are always too long*'. In such situations, respondents need basic training in counselling skills, with particular emphasis on dealing with younger children.

Tied in with the need for training in an introduction to basic counselling skills is the need for centralised support and supervision for the scheme from the Department of Education and Science. There has been no replacement structure for the steering committee on training for teacher counsellors, which ran from 1995 to 1998. The Department of Education and Science evaluation report recommended that a co-ordinator for the scheme be appointed (Department of Education and Science, 1998i p.12). Such a co-

ordinator's role would include '*professional supervision*' and the organisation of in-career development on a whole school basis and for the teacher counsellors/ support teachers. The need for a scheme co-ordinator was referred to as a matter of some urgency in early 1999 (Department of Education and Science, 1999i). The teacher counsellors/ support teachers themselves expressed the need for such supervision and support. They felt the need for guidance in protecting themselves from the huge personal cost that dealing with such disruptive, disturbed and distraught children can cause. As one of the respondents commented '*I need more support in managing myself as I witness tragedy and neglect*'. Therefore, in conjunction with the appointment of a Co-ordinator for support, supervision and back up, a training course in basic counselling skills could usefully include topics such as care of oneself in dealing with trauma, recognising the need for referral and information on referral agencies.

Other areas where training is needed include group facilitation and training skills so that the teacher counsellor/ support teacher can disseminate their knowledge of dealing with the pupils to other staff, management and parents and also work with larger groups of pupils. The Department of Education and Science evaluation report recommends that parents are kept informed and actively included in dealing with their children (1998i). It was intended that this be encouraged through networking with the Home School Community Liaison Officer (Department of Education, 1999i). Group facilitation skills are clearly needed when looking at the amount of time that teacher counsellor support teachers spend with both class groups and small group work. From the analysis of time and activities in Section 5, group work is the main activity of the teacher counsellor/ support teacher; they spend more time on group work than any other activity. This is not including the extra time they spend liaising with groups of parents and advising and informing staff groups. Networking between and more information about other actors and agencies in the community were also a minor theme that emerged in the training needs of the teacher counsellors/ support teachers. This could link in with the role of the co-ordinator who could in the first instance co-ordinate a network of teacher counsellors/ support teachers, but also create links with other relevant community actors and agencies.

Aside from specific training needs there are general needs within the scheme for more consultation on the development of the role, and clarification of the current standing of the role. As already pointed out, those experienced in the role have a wealth of knowledge that can be used as a basis for developing the role further. Despite the re-labelling and redefinition of the role to exclude any element of counselling, the respondents insist that they need training in counselling skills in order to fulfil their role more effectively. There is a clear need therefore for discussion and consultation on this matter, which would lead to further clarification of the role of the support teacher. One step that must be taken '*as a matter of urgency*' (Department of Education and Science, 1998i, p.2) is the appointment of a co-ordinator for the scheme who will act as a provider of the professional support which is so badly needed.

To summarise on the basis of the review of the development of the role of the teacher counsellor / support teacher, and the views expressed by the sample in response to the training needs analysis questionnaire the following recommendations can be made:

- There is an urgent need for training in specific therapies (e.g. play therapy, drama therapy etc.) and specific knowledge areas pertaining to dealing with children
- The position of new employees in regard to training, needs to be addressed and a formal induction module put in place.
- Training should also incorporate group facilitation skills, basic counselling skills, issues dealing with referral, information on other agencies and care of self. (This is not to suggest that such a course would in any way qualify the support teacher as a 'counsellor' but rather that they could use some of the counselling skills in order to make their role more effective).
- The teacher counsellors/ support teachers themselves should be used as a training resource.
- A co-ordinator should be appointed to add to the structure of the scheme and also provide the much needed support and supervision for those working in the schools. This role could also be used to co-ordinate networks for the teacher counsellors/ support teachers, and to promote links with relevant community actors and agencies.

REFERENCES

Ceist Pharlaiminte Uimhir 338 (May 1999)

Department of Education (September 1995) *Pilot Scheme to address the problems of disruptive/ disturbed pupils in Primary Schools: Duties of Special Teaching*

Department of Education and Science (1998i) *Evaluation of the Teacher Counsellor Project*

Department of Education and Science (1998ii) *Pilot scheme to Address the Problems of Disruptive/ Disturbed Pupils in Primary Schools. Job Specification: Support Teachers.*

Department of Education and Science (1999i) Letter to the Minister for Education from a Member of the Inspectorate.

Department of Education and Science (1999ii) Letter from the Minister of Education

Irish National Teachers' Organisation (1996) *The Teacher Counsellor Service*. Unpublished Report

Irish National Teachers' Organisation (1999i) CEC Report 1998/1999

Irish National Teachers' Organisation (1999ii) 'Changes to the Teacher Counsellors Scheme – A Cause for Concern' Intouch, Issue no 13 April/May 1999

APPENDIX I: Questionnaire

PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHER COUNSELLORS: TRAINING NEEDS ANALYSIS

National Centre for Guidance in Education

The purpose of the following questionnaire is to assess the training needs of Teacher Counsellors in the area of guidance. In an Irish context, the term guidance is normally associated with post-primary schools. However the working definition presented below applies to guidance in all areas of education, for which the National Centre has support and development roles.

GUIDANCE: Guidance refers to a wide range of interventions and activities designed to assist people to make choices about their lives - personal and social, educational, and career; and to learn behaviours that contribute to personal, social, educational and career competencies.

The range of interventions that guidance encompasses in the context of a primary schools include:

- **Counselling:** Individual and small-group counselling to help pupils make choices and decisions, solve problems and change behaviours.
- **Information:** Helping pupils to acquire information that will help them make choices – personal, social, educational and career.
- **Assessment:** Administering, scoring and interpreting results of educational and profiling assessments, in order to learn more about the pupil. This information can then be used to help the pupil make choices, resolve problems and learn/change behaviours.
- **Consultation:** Sharing expertise and advising other teachers, school principals and parents who are in a helping relationship with a pupil.
- **Personal and Social Development Programmes:** Designing materials, presenting information, and engaging in discussion to aid pupils in making personal, social, educational and career choices, and in learning new competencies in these areas.

The questionnaire is divided into five sections: the guidance needs of pupils you work with, the school's responses to these needs, your particular role as teacher counsellor, the knowledge and skills needed to undertake the role of the teacher counsellor and finally statistical and other relevant data.

Please answer the following questions as honestly and as fully as you can– all responses will be treated as strictly confidential. Where there is not sufficient space to write down your answers, please continue on a separate page.

Thank-you

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NAME OF SCHOOL _____

SECTION 1: GUIDANCE NEEDS

Please describe the needs of pupils with whom you work in your role as Teacher Counsellor under the headings below:

A. PERSONAL AND SOCIAL

B. EDUCATIONAL

C. OTHER

SECTION 2: RESPONSE TO NEEDS

How does your school respond to those needs?

(i.e. Resources - programmes, persons, materials, equipment, hours/class periods etc.)

A. PERSONAL AND SOCIAL

B. EDUCATIONAL

C. OTHER

SECTION 3: ROLE OF THE TEACHER-COUNSELLOR

What activities do you as a teacher-counsellor specifically undertake to meet these needs?

(i.e. Resources - programmes, persons, materials, equipment, hours/class periods etc.)

A. PERSONAL AND SOCIAL

B. EDUCATIONAL

C. OTHER

SECTION 4: TRAINING NEEDS

In your opinion, what knowledge and what skills do you require in order to work more effectively with your pupils?

<i>KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED</i>	<i>SKILLS REQUIRED</i>
<i>A. PERSONAL AND SOCIAL</i>	<i>A. PERSONAL AND SOCIAL</i>
<i>B. EDUCATIONAL</i>	<i>B. EDUCATIONAL</i>
<i>C. OTHER</i>	<i>C. OTHER</i>

- 5.7 At present, how many pupils do you see *regularly* (at least once per week) on a one-to-one basis?
- 5.8 At present, approximately how many do you see *regularly* (at least once per week) in small group work?.....

Are there any additional comments you would like to make?

Thank you for your time and effort in completing this questionnaire.

**Please return by post or fax to: Sarah Ryan
Researcher/Information Officer
The National Centre for Guidance in Education
189/193 Parnell Street
Dublin 1**

**PH: (01) 8731411
FAX: (01) 8731316**

***APPENDIX II: Teacher Counsellor and Support
Teacher Job Specification***

***APPENDIX III: Recommendations from the INTO
Report 'The Teacher Counsellor Service' concerning
Incareer Development***

Incareer Development

SUPERVISION

The INTO recommends:

- (i) *that a counselling supervisor be appointed to provide a support service to the teacher counsellors and to facilitate self evaluation within the counselling process.*
(INTO, 1996, p.12)

CURRENT PROVISION

The INTO recommends:

- (i) *that an orientation programme be provided annually for all newly appointed teacher counsellors;*
- (ii) *that a diploma course in teacher counselling be developed in conjunction with an appropriate third level institution;*
- (iii) *that introductory courses in a variety of counselling approaches be provided for all teacher counsellors on a periodic basis;*
- (iv) *that teacher counsellors be facilitated in acquiring qualifications in various counselling approaches;*
- (v) *that teacher counsellors be facilitated to attend courses and seminars pertaining to their role, subject to the approval of their Board of Management;*
- (vi) *that an appropriate allowance be paid to holders of the diploma in teacher counselling;*
- (vii) *that travel expenses and subsistence allowances be paid to all teacher counsellors attending inservice, as appropriate; and*
- (viii) *that inservice also be provided to school principals, school staffs, school management and to the Inspectorate regarding the continuous development of the teacher counsellor service.*

(INTO, 1996, p.14-15)