

Overview of Mexican Counselor's Functions

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The counseling was developed in Mexico at the beginning of the XX Century . In the years 1930-1940 the Psychological Department of the National Pedagogical Institute (Instituto Nacional de Pedagogía) works with some psychological issues. It had the objective of helping the Mexican children to develop mental and physical health (Caldera, 2007). In the XXI Century, the counseling has been growing in Mexico and many private and public universities offers this major at different levels (bachelor, master and doctorate). Nowadays, the counselors works at school settings, clinical settings, private consultation, and vocational institutes. In the 2013, the author did some research related to the main functions of the counselors in Mexico. The participants have different academic background such as psychology, counseling, marriage and family therapy, clinical therapy, psychopedagogy, education, and guidance, but all of them work as counselor. They work in different settings such as schools, private consultation, psychological clinics, human resources, and vocational institutes. A random sample of counselors was used from different Mexican counties. The total of the participants were 60 people. In order to get some information related to main functions as counselors, a semi-structured interviewed was used, the inquiries were related to sociodemographic aspects, population with whom work, main functions as counselors, and their identified needs as counselors. Next, the results are presented.

During the interviews, the participants answered some questions related to their sociodemographic aspects such as gender, nationality, academic degree, and years of experience in counseling field. Some sociodemographic results are showed below (see table 1).

Table 1. Sociodemographic Data

Gender		Nationality	Degree (psychology, guidance, education, therapy, counseling, psychological)		Years of experience		
Female	Male	Mexican	Bachelor level	Master level	< 9 years	10-19 years	20 or more years
75%	25%	100%	38%	62%	31%	56%	13%

This table reveals that most of the counselors are female, got master degree, have between 10 to 19 years of experience in the field, and all of the are Mexican.

The participants work with different populations like children, teenagers and adults. Most of them, worked in school settings at different school level: elementary school, middle school, high school, and college level. Few of them, worked as counselor with adult population.

The counselors who work with children between 6 to 11 years old , explain their main fuctions as counselors are:

- Support children who have psychological needs
- Help children to increase their academical skills
- Diagnose, advise, and follow up the cases who experience psychological difficulties
- Work with problematic children's parents, custodian or teachers
- Monitor the kids progress

- Advice children with behavior problems
- Counsel children that are referred by a teacher
- Offer treatment for children with learning disabilities.
- Address specific needs of students who face barriers to learning
- Observe the referred children in their school or problematic context
- Offer psychological assessment (projective and psychometric tests)
- Explain of the psychometric results to parents or custodian
- Work on psychoeducational programs
- Promote children successs
- Follow-up cases
- Practice universal values

The counselors who work with the puberty population explain that their main fuctions as counselors are:

- Track the academic progress
- Offer academic, social and psychological guidance to students
- Work some psychoeducational topics with parents
- Offer to teachers some pedagogical and social orientation.
- Develop strategies for academic improvement
- Develop and monitor strategies for students with social or learning disabilities
- Refer to specialists and follow up the cases
- Mediate between parents and teachers
- Facilitate conflict resolution between students or students and teachers
- Counsel people with behavior problems, poor academic performance, constant delays, and constant faults.
- Offer academic and psychosocial advice to student
- Use file-tracking of the students with academic and behavioral problems
- Counsel students, parents, and teachers
- Help with the high school's admission tests
- Help the student with their adjustment process to the school
- Assist people in the areas: social, emotional and academic
- Organize events and conferences for parenting class
- Offer continuing education for teachers
- Show the genuine interest of helping people

The counselors who work with adolescents explain that their main fuctions as counselors are:

- Work on the holistic formation of the teenagers
- Help with the parenting training
- Refer special cases like psychopatological issues to the specialists
- Work on sinergy with teachers, students and parents
- Tutor people
- Track students with low academic achievement.
- Monitor academic performance of students

- Monitor program progress of teachers.
- Design and coordinate activities such as conferences, seminars and workshops about life skills for parents, teachers, and students
- Offer counseling sessions to students
- Support the Discipline team
- Offer vocational guidance
- Implement drug, depression, and eating disorder prevention programs
- Offer psychological treatment for adolescents
- Offer psychological testing
- Practice the patience and the honesty

The counselors who work with young adult explain that their main functions as counselors are:

- Counsel about psychosocial skills
- Tutor people
- Coach for academic and personal success
- Perform psychological testing
- Offer academic advice
- Offer vocational guidance
- Refer to psychiatric when present major psychological disorders
- Plan, design, develop, and coordinate activities related to career guidance.
- Help people to develop leaderships
- Attend to trainings and conferences related to psychological wellness
- Offer respect

The counselors who work with young adult explain that their main functions as counselors are:

- Provide intake evaluations, assessments, and treatment to individuals and families
- Provide treatment to families and couples dealing with life transitions (i.e. death, divorce, separations, job changes, gender issues, etc.)
- Provide case management services
- Link clients to local community resources
- Provide intake evaluations and individual assessments including diagnosis and treatment of mental health disorders
- Provide counseling services to individuals and families utilizing the Brief Therapy model
- Provide group therapy and psycho-educational groups
- Apply ethics principles

According to previous results, each age group requires from counselors certain skills, role, attitudes and values that made their job very special. Also, there are certain areas that have in common such as: diagnosis, guidance, support, planning, evaluation, and working in synergy.

The 60 counselors that were interviewed, mentioned some needs as counselors. Some of these needs are cluster in 5 sections: human resources, holistic formation, recognition of counseling service and technology used in counseling service. These results are show in the

table 2.

Table 2. Counselor's needs

Human resources		Holistic formation	Recognition of counseling service		Technology used in counseling service		
Lack of counselors	Lack of specialization for counselors	Needs to work more on holistic formation	Lack of recognition as counselors	Lack of cooperation from teachers and parents during the counseling process	Do not use	Sometimes	Frequently
65%	35%	100%	60%	40%	23%	17%	60%

According to the table 2, more counselors are needed in Mexico because there is a lot demand of people who needs psychological attention in different settings. Also, the counselors needs to specialize more in psychology and marriage and family therapy. All of participants mentioned the needs to work more on holistic formation with students, parents, teachers and custodians. Most of participants said the need of more recognition of counseling services. It is important to highlights that in Mexico, still exist the prejudice that counselors, psychologists, therapists and psychiatrist work with “crazy people”. Since the globalization, it is important that counselors become familiar with the technology and use it more in their jobs.

This article shows the main functions of Mexican counselors at different ages population and the main needs of the Mexican counselors. Finally, it is helpful to remember a famous Carl Rogers's advice: “The relationship which I have found helpful is characterized by a sort of transparency on my part, in which my real feelings are evident; by an acceptance of this other person as a separate person with value in his own right; and by a deep empathic understanding which enables me to see his private world through his eyes.”

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