

## WHAT IS EDUCATIONAL COUNSELING?

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### Abstract

This paper explores the etymological, conceptual, and historical foundations of counseling, with a particular focus on the evolution of educational and school counseling. Drawing from Latin, French, and English linguistic roots, the term counseling is shown to encompass far more than the simple act of giving advice; it represents a structured, professional, and ethically grounded interpersonal process aimed at supporting individuals or groups in their personal, emotional, cognitive, and social development. The study highlights key theoretical contributions that define counseling as a collaborative relationship centered on self-understanding, adaptive functioning, and the mobilization of personal resources. A brief historical overview underscores the emergence of modern counseling with Frank Parsons and traces the development of Romanian counseling services from early psychotechnical laboratories to contemporary psycho-pedagogical assistance centers. The re-establishment of professional school counseling in Romania after the 1990s is examined in relation to new social and educational challenges requiring specialized interventions. The paper concludes by outlining the comprehensive roles, objectives, and thematic areas addressed by school counselors, emphasizing their essential function in fostering student well-being, preventing crisis situations, and supporting lifelong development within the educational environment.

*Keywords: counseling, educational counseling, school counseling, professional guidance, psycho-pedagogical assistance, student development, counseling history*

### 1. Etymology

At first sight, identifying what the term counseling means it is not the easiest thing to do no matter who or what is interested in these problematics. In Romanian, the term comes from French and signify above all *to offer advices* and, by extension, *to counsel someone* in a certain problem he/she raises.

We rather go to the Latin etymology where consultation means a deliberation, a problem to be discussed in a counsel, an advice/direction/good word/word of wisdom regarding of what to do in a due situation. Just like in the case of the term counsel, we can appeal the term *consilium* implying the place, the very location where a case of common interest is to be deliberated.

We can easily see from the explanations above that the general term of counseling transcends the idea of a mere advice provided to someone in need by an expert – the so-called counselor and addressed to the counseled, also called a client (Egan, 1999)

The British cognitive psychologist A. Reber has named *counselling* an entire area of services implying **informing, guiding, advising, supporting an individual or a social group in order their problems to be solved or planning their own future.**

Therefore, through the term of counseling we generally understand the following:

a. a human mutual relationship between a professional person - the counselor - as the provider of this kind of services and the beneficiary of these - the counseled one - as a client of the former. by extension, in the case of educational counseling – the domain that matters to us right now – or the school counseling as it is commonly known we have the school counselor (the school counseling teacher, to be more precise) who counsels the client (a student, a parent, a tutor, another fellow teacher);

b. a relationship based on alliance, partnership cooperation and mutual help respectively (A. Ivey, 1994) with the main goal in exploring / experimenting emotions, feelings, needs, ideas in order to properly counsel the client regarding a harmonious development (A. Băban, 2009); more than that, this relationships looks forward for the client to gain a superior understanding of himself/herself (a self-knowledge) and to learn how to use his/her own resources / strengths in order to cope with life's problems.

c. a complex action of recommend the means of proceed or behave in a certain situation in the daily activities (G. Corey, 2009); it comes from a counselor (here, a school counselor) and addressed to the client (usually a student

who has a minor intervention in this); therefore, the counselor has to provide the best way or strategy (from an entire cluster) according to the nature of the problem and the personality of the latter.

d. a complex process of mutual learning that regards cognitive, social, emotional skills that help the client to optimally adapt to the encountered difficulties and even optimize various aspects of both professional and optimal life.

e. a long-life process of providing a compatibility between individual / group resources, demands, expectations, values and interests and real offer coming from domains as education and social-professional integrations (E. Cocoradă, 2010).

Synthetically, the counseling as understood in general terms implies as follows:

- a relationship between people;
- a special form of social communication;
- a pattern of active listening;
- a strategy of preventing personal crisis situations (death, war traumas, divorce, separation from families, drug abuse); here one can see the proactive nature of educational counseling;
- a specialized help / support provided to the beneficiary in need;
- a form of helping others under the sign of confidentiality;
- an activity according to the principle of human development;
- an action to make the client clarify his/her own problems;
- an activity at a professional level (implying specialists as counselor, teachers, psychologists);
- an endeavor based on scientific principles and theories that appeals to special methods, strategies and techniques of professional counseling (of psychological, pedagogical, vocational, crisis-oriented types);

In the professional literature, but also in daily life (especially in developed countries as USA) someone can make a genuine distinction between *counseling* and *guidance* (which implies provided directions addressed to the client and supporting regarding client's future career). Therefore, we commonly use the expression **school counseling AND guidance**.

## 2. History of professional counseling in brief

**Frank Parsons** (1854 – 1908), a professor and social reformer in Boston, Massachusetts it is called the very father of counseling thanks to the fact he was the first in the known world who intended the development of special services of career counseling and guidance, an absolute new thing is his era.

In Romania, reforming ideas about the domain came early enough starting with 1922 and 1925 respectively when we have the Institute of Experimental, Compared and Applied Psychology and the Psychotechnical Laboratory of Tramway Society.

Starting with 1950 we have the first Counsel of School and Professional Guidance together with the laboratories connected to it; later a lot of scientifically based researches regarding counseling appeared thanks to the Institute of Psycho-pedagogical Studies in Bucharest and other related institutions in the main cities in Romania.

Sometimes in the 80s the school counselors were replaced in their tasks and position by any other teachers and unfortunately no one has done a proper educational counseling since. The importance of school counseling and counselors were seriously diminished. No one in the Communist regime cared about the fact a school counselor is a specialist doing professional activities based on certain laws, principles, methodology and professional deontology, dedicated spaces (counseling offices) and special tools and resources. This fact has led to the fading away of the idea of the necessity of school counseling in schools (most of them coordinated through a tough authority) and most of the activities a school counselor does were organized by various teachers and educators during guidance classes or parents-teacher meetings (not to mention teachers-principal meetings).

Back in the 90's Romania felt the need of the presence of a professional school teacher in the most of educational institutions (kindergartens, public and later private schools). This need was based of the serious new issues that appeared in schools at that time, problems no advised teacher could ever entirely handle: well-being, leisure but also negative phenomena like school violence, drug abuse, alcohol consumption, school early leaving and so on. Soon counseling-oriented specialized centers appeared in most of the counties under the special name Psycho-pedagogical Assistance Centers. This term, assistance, is not really identical with schooling but equivalent only. These centers functioned under the counties school inspectorates and in time they organized under the so-called County's Center of Educational Resources and Educational Assistance, a parallel institution to national school inspectorates. School counseling cabinets were then established and they were useful to every school where more than 500 students were there to study. The school counselors were therefore called *teachers in centers and offices of psycho-pedagogical assistance*, a long name later replaced by the more proper *teaching school counselor* name. They were graduated teachers mandatory specialized in Social Sciences, especially Psychology and Pedagogy

(including Sociology) and every one of them was to prove pedagogical studies in order to become teacher in both secondary and high schools.

In brief, educational counseling consists in a human relationship of mutual assistance and support between the specialized in Psychology and school counseling and the student (a group of students) in order to provide personal developing and preventing (not necessary solving) problematic crisis situations.

The school counselor (more precise, the teaching school counselor) has the fundamental role in helping and supporting students to make necessary steps towards recognizing, clarifying, evaluating and updating of the personal system of values (Băban, 2009). Despite the fact a counselor has no competences in psychological evaluation, he has – when the situation demands it – to further recommend to the client the consulting of a therapy specialist (medical psychologist, psychiatrist, psychotherapist). The strategies used by these specialists are of cognitive, motivational, emotional and behavioral nature both for individuals and groups.

The school counselor intervenes both in the school counseling office and classes during the Counseling and guidance sustained by the home teachers (formerly called home teaching classes) and during teachers-parents' meetings, demonstrative lessons and during teachers' meetings respectively.

The main objectives followed by the teaching school counselor are the personal development of the client, promoting health and well-being and so on. The integration of artificial intelligence into school counseling practices enhances counselors' ability to identify students' needs, personalize support strategies, and proactively address emerging academic, emotional, and social challenges. (Voinea, 2025)

The main subjects approached by a school counselor are more than 20; between them we mention the following:

- knowledge / self-knowledge and developing the personal image; cultivating the self-esteem;
- developing skills in school, professional and personal communication;
- conflict management;
- assertive communication;
- developing skills in preventing abuses;
- developing a healthy sexual life;
- preventing STD;
- improving skills in tolerance against frustration and preventing negative affectivity – anxiety, depression, physical and verbal aggressivity, suicidal tendencies, anger management;
- stress management;
- becoming a volunteer;
- problem-solving;
- improving learning skills starting from the personal learning style (according to Leming);
- time management;
- promoting a healthy life style;
- creativity developing;
- promoting various national and international projects (like Erasmus +);
- offering specialized counseling to teachers and other educators in need in order their teaching skills to be improved.

### Conclusions

Counseling, particularly in educational settings, emerges as a complex and dynamic professional activity rooted in a rich historical and conceptual foundation. Far beyond giving advice, it represents a structured interpersonal process grounded in scientific principles, ethical standards, and a deep understanding of human development. The historical evolution of counseling—internationally and in Romania—illustrates its growing necessity in responding to students' academic, emotional, and social needs. Today, the role of the school counselor is indispensable, as counselors provide personalized support, promote well-being, prevent crisis situations, and contribute to the healthy development of students, teachers, and school communities. As educational systems continue to face new social pressures and challenges, high-quality school counseling remains a vital component of effective and inclusive education.

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