

Editorial

Revisiting and Contextualizing School Counseling in 20s: A Call for Integration and Innovation in the Face of Change

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In the wake of a rapidly changing world, where societal shifts, technological advancements, and a global pandemic have transformed the landscape of education, the need to revisit the field of school counseling has been more critical. As we move further into the 2020s, it is crucial that we pause, reflect, and reimagine school counseling to ensure that it remains responsive to the complex needs of today's students. Responding to the need, this editorial explores the evolving role of school counselors, advocates for a more integrative approach, and highlights the importance of contextualizing counseling practices within the broader framework of psychological wellbeing in educational sectors.

Keywords: *psychological wellbeing, school counseling, mindfulness-based interventions, compassionate school, resilience*

The Context

School counseling can trace its roots to the early days of the 20th century. Having evolved from a mixture of psychoanalytical and social philosophies (Gladding, 2009), the domain has already passed some informed experiences. In the journey, the 2020s have seen remarkable shifts in education, both in terms of how students engage with learning and the wellbeing concerns they face. The COVID-19 pandemic catalyzed transformations in schooling systems worldwide. Remote learning, hybrid models, and the sudden transition to online environments disrupted traditional methods of education delivery, leaving educators, students, and families grappling with new realities. Beyond the pandemic, issues such as the inter-generational tension, the rise of climate anxiety, and the increasing role of technology in young people's lives have introduced new complexities into the psychological and emotional worlds of students.



Today's students face a unique set of pressures. The mental health crisis among youth is escalating. Anxiety and depression rates have soared. And, concerns related to social identity, inclusivity, and digital well-being have taken center stage. As school counselors are at the forefront of supporting the psychological wellbeing of students, these shifts demand that we reconsider and recalibrate the practices, frameworks, and goals of school counseling. In addressing those, as Trolley (2011) advocates, early recognition and early intervention has been an important part of any counseling program.

The Shifts

It is evident that the role of school counselors has expanded from crisis management to holistic wellbeing. Traditionally, school counselors have been associated with helping students navigate academic challenges and providing support during crises, such as family trauma or peer conflict. While this role remains essential, there is a growing recognition that the scope of school counseling must expand to address the broader psychological and emotional needs of students. Though very little research exists that pertains to the adequacy of school counselor preparation (Trolley, 2011), the 2020s have shown us that mental health support in schools should no longer be seen as a peripheral service but as a fundamental pillar of student success and wellbeing. School counselors are uniquely positioned to support the social-emotional development of students and facilitate the development of essential life skills such as resilience, emotional regulation, and interpersonal communication. In this new era, counseling must be integrated into the broader educational experience, helping students thrive not just academically, but also psychologically and socially. ASCA advocates it as comprehensive school counseling program as integral to school culture. This requires moving beyond the reactive, crisis-driven model toward a more proactive and preventative approach that fosters emotional intelligence and positive mental health practices from an early age.

Likewise, one of the most promising developments in the field of school counseling during the 2020s is the integration of contemplative practices such as mindfulness, meditation, and self-compassion into counseling services. These practices are increasingly recognized for their ability to enhance emotional resilience, reduce stress, and foster deeper self-awareness. These are critical skills for students facing the overwhelming pressures of modern life. Mindfulness-based interventions, for example, have been shown to significantly reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression, increase attention span, and promote overall mental wellbeing. Incorporating these practices into school counseling not only provides students with immediate coping tools but also encourages long-term emotional growth and wellbeing (Kaffenberger & Carroll, 2011). Moreover, when school counselors introduce students to contemplative practices, they are also empowering them to take ownership of their mental health in ways that are self-directed and sustainable. The adoption of contemplative approaches, however, must be done thoughtfully and inclusively. It is essential to acknowledge that contemplative practices must be culturally responsive and adaptable to diverse student populations. For instance, educators should be mindful of the ways in which different cultural contexts interpret mindfulness and meditation practices, and ensure that these approaches do not impose a one-size-fits-all solution but instead invite personalized engagement with students' varied needs.

Most visible shifts are introduced by technological advancements. Technology has become an inextricable part of students' lives. School counselors must navigate this technological landscape, utilizing digital tools and platforms to engage with students in innovative ways. From virtual counseling sessions to online mental health resources, technology can be a powerful tool for enhancing counseling services. The ability to reach students remotely can provide timely support, particularly in underserved or rural areas where in-person access to counselors may be limited. However, the digital age also introduces challenges. The pervasive nature of social media, online gaming, and screen time has contributed to a range of mental health concerns, including digital addiction, cyberbullying, and the rise of social anxiety. School counselors must be equipped to address these issues in a way that promotes digital literacy, healthy online behaviors, and the responsible use of technology. Furthermore, counselors must be cautious about the over-reliance on digital platforms, recognizing that face-to-face, human-centered interactions remain essential for building trust and providing effective psychological support.

The 2020s have also seen a greater emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion in education. School counselors must be at the forefront of these efforts, fostering environments where all students feel seen, heard, and valued. The integration of culturally competent practices into counseling services is critical in ensuring that all students, regardless of background, receive the support they need to thrive. Counselors must actively engage in ongoing education and reflection to ensure that their approaches are informed by an understanding of the diverse experiences of students. This includes not only racial and ethnic diversity but also considerations of gender, socioeconomic status, disability, and LGBTQ+ identities. By embracing a more inclusive counseling framework, school counselors can better address the unique challenges faced by marginalized and underrepresented student populations, while also promoting a more empathetic and compassionate school culture overall.

Ahead with 2020s

As we look ahead, the future of school counseling in the 2020s and beyond is one of innovation, collaboration, and deep introspection. In order to support the psychological wellbeing of students, school counselors must be willing to embrace new models of care, ones that are holistic, proactive, and responsive to the realities of modern life. The integration of contemplative practices, the use of technology, and a commitment to cultural competence will all play key roles in shaping the profession going forward. But this vision can only be realized through collaboration among counselors, educators, parents, and communities.

For this, it seems school counseling and counseling psychology collaboration is the most. Although mental health professionals are providing services to students and schools, they are rarely integrated with broader school programming. SC and CP partnerships could lead the way in developing best practices for integrative and collaborative care in schools (Burkard et al., 2020). The fields may develop shared interest in several topics including: social-emotional learning, school safety and interpersonal violence, cultural competence, first generation student needs, college readiness and educational- vocational planning, social justice concerns, training and development.

It is only by working together that we can create school environments that truly nurture psychological, emotional, and academic growth of every student. In this context, the *Journal of Contemplative Education and Psychological Wellbeing* serves as an invaluable

platform for sharing research, insights, and innovations in the field, and we encourage all those engaged in school counseling to continue pushing the boundaries of what is possible in the pursuit of student wellbeing. The 2020s offer both immense challenges and unparalleled opportunities. The need for school counseling has never been greater, and the time to reimagine and reinvigorate this essential service is now.

About this Issue

This issue covers nine different evidence-based research articles, and a reflection of a PhD thesis. In original article section, *Dhakal* introduces the concept of ‘Global Spiritual Citizenship Education’ as a response to ‘spiritual bankruptcy’ within contemporary educational paradigms. Synthesising universal human values with culturally responsive pedagogies, the framework seeks to cultivate compassion, moral imagination, and interconnectedness within secular contexts. The study identifies evidence-based strategies that transcend religious boundaries while honouring local cultural epistemologies.

Lamichhane explores that contemplative practices are vital for socio-emotional wellbeing by integrating compassion, self-awareness, and ethical values to nurture life-oriented competencies. Emphasizing critical self-reflexivity, the study integrates autobiography and ethnography to bridge self and collective consciousness in the classroom. The findings indicate that teachers' practices in somatic and emotional awareness contributes to students' holistic wellbeing noting teachers' presence, compassion, and relational growth. In her article, *Siwakoti* explores that emotions play an important role in the lives of a human being. Knowing our emotions and acting accordingly really helps individual of all ages to make positive, responsible decisions and build healthy relationships with others. The purpose of her study was to explore, understand and create awareness towards Social and Emotional Learning for raising happy, confident, resilient and empathetic individual. She used a praxis driven approach in her study. *Silwal*, in her self-reflective inquiry explores how the bond between her and her child changed over time. She has looked at her stories, which included happy, sad, scary, and connecting moments. Bringing into reference John Bowlby's attachment theory, her reflective vignettes showed that the attachment bond is always changing and can be both secure and anxious, depending on the situation. In her article, *Pandey* argues that interactions between student and teachers significantly influence student's social, emotional and academic growth. Appreciative communication provides supportive learning environment encouraging student's engagement, enhancing student wellbeing and academic growth. This study suggests that a teacher's role extends beyond academic support to nurturing and inspiring. Words of encouragement can motivate students in the classroom.

Likewise, *Shrestha* explores perceptions and practices of career guidance from the lens of teachers and school counselors in secondary schools. Following the qualitative research approach, this study used phenomenological design to explore the participants' lived experiences about career guidance. The findings of this study show that the sources of career ideas and guidance mostly depend on parents, peers, and social media which are informal, while formal career guidance is quite limited and often provided too late in life. *Pokharel* explores emotional world of teachers working in inclusive classrooms, focusing on how they experience, express, and cope with the emotional demands of their work. It observes the delicate balance between teachers' feelings, their coping strategies, and the challenges faced

within diverse and inclusive learning environments. Drawing on the Japanese *Ikigai* framework, the study uncovers the deeper sense of purpose and meaning that sustains teachers' emotional wellbeing within complex classroom realities. The study illuminates the lived experiences and emotional realities of inclusive teaching and offers insights that can inform supportive practices, policies, and interventions aimed at fostering teacher wellbeing in inclusive education.

Dahal explores Gayatri Mantra as a culturally informed meditative practice for the academic promotion of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) as well as to the school community's wellbeing. The study is based on the Vedic cosmology of the mind and on contemporary SEL and wellbeing literature, integrates education upon a holistic, relational and culturally situated process. The practitioner inquiry methodology was applied in the research, which is based on the researcher (also the school principal and counselor) who initiated Gayatri Mantra chanting and silent reflection during morning assemblies.

Neupane explores the ways of parenting and its effects on children in academic performance. The lived experience of parents are included here while bringing up their children from early childhood to adolescents. The dimensions of parenting, such as parenting perceptions, responsibility, motivation, emotional regulation, home environment as well as encouragement of autonomy and wellbeing are at the center of the study. The results highlight the fact that the children who are academically successful tend to be brought up in a setting that presents itself as emotionally responsive, democratic and authoritative parenting. The study throws light on the mindful, and empathetic parenting for scholarly achievement to raise emotionally resilient children.

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To cite this editorial: Wagle, S. K., & Panta, C.N. (2025). Revisiting and contextualizing school counseling in 20s: A call for integration and innovation in the face of change. *Journal of Contemplative Education and Psychological Wellbeing*, 1(2), 1-6.

<https://doi.org/10.51474/jcepw.v1i2.747>