

International Perspectives on School Psychologists Role in Crisis Prevention and Intervention

**Symposium Session at the
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Purpose of Symposium

Around the world, school psychologists are engaged in a variety of roles related to crisis prevention and intervention. The ISPA International Crisis Response Network committee (ICRN) has arranged this symposium session to provide a forum for school psychologists from many countries to share their roles and perspectives related to crisis intervention and prevention.

Outline of Symposium

Presenters Each Address 5 Questions

- 1. What sort of Crisis Prevention activities do school psychologists in your country engage in?*
- 2. What sort of Crisis Intervention activities do school psychologists in your country engage in?*
- 3. What sort of Crisis Intervention training is available for school psychologists in your country?*
- 4. What sort of Crisis Prevention and Intervention roles may school psychologists in your country be interested in the future?*
- 5. Please identify literature relevant to Crisis Prevention and Intervention that school psychologists in your country may access.*

Kuwait

1. What sort of crisis prevention activities do school psychologists in your country engage in?

The primary source for crisis prevention in Kuwait is school counselors. Because of the structure of international schoolwork it is difficult to have and maintain a prevention network. Currently, there are a limited number of trained and certified psychologists within the Arab world. It is easy in countries such as Kuwait to call a person a psychologist who has only a BA and limited experience.

There is a Counselor's Network that has been operating for approximately 9 years which attempts to address some of these issues. The Network has been highly effective in providing a vehicle for communication across the various international schools.

The International schools are separated by culture and language from the government schools. The government schools have a system of social workers that received training in the U.S. However, there is no communication as to whether this training is being applied.

2. What sort of crisis intervention activities do school psychologists in your country engage in?

Counselors respond to requests for assistance from teachers in their individual schools regarding issues around:

- The death of a student or staff member
- Student or staff suicide
- The serious injury of a student or staff member
- Threats to the safety of students or staff, including bomb threats
- Threatened invasions from Iraq

Each school currently has their own individual way of dealing with crisis. Usually the school administration asks the counselors to handle crises such as death from car accidents while there are administrative policies for handling bomb threats. During national emergencies there is more of a national policy that is sent from the Ministry. Schools hold regular bomb, evacuation and fire drills.

In addition there is an Informal Administration Network that has developed, similar to the Counselor's Network, to allow administration to discuss these issues regardless of international school affiliation.

3. What sort of crisis intervention training is available for school psychologists in your country?

Currently there are no official training programs in Kuwait. I have written a pamphlet on *Grief and loss in Children*, which is often used by schools to assist in understanding the grieving process. I also have distributed, to the Counselor's Network, other information that assists the counselors in handling crisis. I have also assisted counselors in the schools in finding appropriate help for students and staff in crisis and also in helping them to develop appropriate plans in the school.

4. What sort of crisis prevention and intervention roles may school psychologists in your country be interested in the future?

There are an extremely limited number of school psychologists within the Arab region. I believe that some form of regional standards and training needs to be developed. Kuwait has developed a law (with the assistance of our school director) based on the special education law in

the United States. This law requires testing by psychologists. Currently the people administering these tests have minimal training in the area. It is necessary to develop training for these individuals. There are similar situations in other Arab countries.

Counselors are interested in receiving additional training. A format for this needs to be developed and there are movements in this direction.

5. Please identify literature relevant to crisis prevention and intervention that school psychologists in your country may access.

Counselors have access to journals and other literature from all over the world through internet links. In addition we have made use and are making use of the following books:

Karola, A. M. *Grief and Loss in Children*

Pitcher, G. D., Poland, S. (1992). *Crisis Intervention in the schools*. New York: Guilford Press.

Poland, S., McCormick, J. S. (1999). *Coping with Crisis: Lessons Learned. A Complete and Comprehensive Guide to School Crisis Intervention*. Longmont, CO: Sopris West.

Poland, S. (1989). *Suicide Intervention in the Schools*. New York: Guilford Press. Ed. By Andrea S. Canter and Servio A. Carroll. *Crisis Prevention and Response: A Collection of NASP Resources*.

South Africa

1. What sort of crisis prevention activities do school psychologists in your country engage in?

There is very little or no crisis prevention activities undertaken by school psychologists. This varies depending on the province and district in the country (9 provinces in with 9 different Education Departments under the National Department of Education)

Because of a lack of staff including school psychologists there are minimal crisis prevention activities in which school psychologists are involved.

Different schools in different areas made an attempt on there own to secure the physical property by security fencing and alarm systems, as well as an internal emergency plan in case of a crisis.

The ratio between the learners and the School Psychologists is of great concern at this stage.

2. What sort of crisis intervention activities do school psychologists in your country engage in?

This varies by province and district, although some schools in different communities would be able to request private psychologists to assist them in case of a trauma or crisis.

In case of a natural disaster or human generated situations the Government will assist by providing material needs, communities may assist as well.

In regions where School Psychologists are available, they would then render the necessary services, counseling and therapy to those involved.

3. What sort of crisis intervention training is available for school psychologists in your country?

Crisis intervention training is still limited in S.A. The training is more about intervention than prevention at this stage at Universities. There are some workshops on Crisis and Trauma Counseling for post graduate School Psychologists in the field, but it also seems limited. This is an area that needs attention and development.

4. What sort of crisis prevention and intervention roles may school psychologists in your country be interested in the future?

In view of the above mentioned facts and reality in South African's Education Department and schools there is a need to reconsider the role of the School Psychologist. The School Psychologist needs to change from an individual approach to the role of a consultant who will empower educators at schools to cope with crisis prevention and intervention. Training for School Psychologists needs attention and restructuring in view of the serious problem of crime and violence in South Africa at this stage.

5. Please identify literature relevant to crisis prevention and intervention that school psychologists in your country may access.

Relevant literature that is available on the international market and the websites are all available to School Psychologists in South Africa as well as relevant Journal Articles. For instance:

Eagle, G and Friedman, M. (1993). *Creating and Running a Clinic for Specialized Psychological Services: The Wits Trauma Clinic*. Conference Proceedings of the 11th National Conference of the Psychological Association of South Africa. PASA: Durban

Eagle, G. (1994). *Post-traumatic Stress as a Diagnostic Category: Challenges Posed Through Working in the South African Context*. Unpublished paper presented at the First Conference of the Psychological Society of South Africa. University of the Western Cape.

Figley, C. (1985). *Trauma and its Wake*. New York: Brunner Mazel.

Michelson, C. (1991). *Trauma, Level of Distress, and Coping Amongst Displaces in the Pietermaritzburg Area*. Unpublished Masters dissertation. University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

Raphael, B. (1988). *When Disaster Strikes*. London: Hutchinson Strake, G. (1994). *Integrating African and Western Healing Practices in South Africa*. American Journal of Psychotherapy, 48 (3), pp 455-467.

China

1. *What sort of crisis prevention activities do school psychologists in your country engage in?*

The school psychologists in China engage mainly in three parts of activities of Crisis Prevention:

- A. Make a series of training to administrators, teachers and practitioners in schools in coping with crisis, especially when a school trauma strikes, how to address the trauma in order to protect the rights of children in the utmost.
- B. Hold different kinds of lectures and training for students, parents and social workers in the community. Now in most of the cities, a kind of lessons named “Mental Health Education Activities” are given to the students in most schools. The main content is focused on the training to help students understand themselves, master some kinds of skills in adjusting themselves and know possible ways to protect themselves.
- C. Join in social activities related to keeping mental health and do counseling for students and parents. In many cities, in different levels of government there are such kinds of organization for the development of students in mental health. Usually school psychologists are the members of the organization.

2. *What sort of crisis intervention activities do school psychologists in your country engage in?*

- A. Hold Mental Health Counseling Office, or manage Hotline of Crisis Intervention, especially for suicide.
- B. When crisis takes place, usually do counseling for students, teachers and parents, going with the special team sent by the Education Department of the Government.

3. *What sort of crisis intervention training is available for school psychologists in your country?*

Until now, we have not constructed a set of available training programs in Crisis Intervention for school psychologists in China.

4. *What sort of crisis prevention and intervention roles may school psychologists in your country be interested in the future?*

- A. The key organizer and director in Crisis Prevention and Intervention, mainly in schools.
- B. The main co-operator in communities when crisis strikes, especially for children and their parents.
- C. The chief director for the training to school administrators, teachers and practitioners.

5. *Please identify literature relevant to crisis prevention and intervention that school psychologists in your country may access.*

In China, we have several sorts of translated versions of literature relevant to Crisis Prevention and Intervention, but we have not any topnotch books which are accepted by the government or national psychology association.

France

1. *What sort of crisis prevention activities do school psychologists in your country engage in?*

Not much crisis prevention activities; a little with school's managers.

Previous few years "pioneer's era" psychologists have been working in schools to solve crisis situations, was not that organized and it wasn't official either

During the school year 2000/2001 "professional era" (organized and trained)

Today we are setting up that plan of action at local and national levels

Creation of a helping unit composed of four or five persons. Its purpose is:

- advise isolated psychologists,
- support people involved in crisis situations or direct those people towards other colleagues,
- keep update useful addresses and publications related to that topic.

Nomination of a national coordinator whose role is to:

- conduct the helping unit
- coordinate the activity of the association members in our field.
- maintain the link with the other associations, especially ISPA

At the local level: Setting up intervention groups, voluntary psychologists in each region to intervene in a crisis situation.

2 to 3 operational groups in 2000/2001, 6 to 8 in 2001/2002.

2. *What sort of crisis intervention activities do school psychologists in your country engage in?*

Crisis intervention activities when pupils are implicated:

sexual abuses made by professors

suicide or suicide attempts

horrible death of pupils or professor

The crisis intervention begins only if the managers and parents accept the conditions proposed by the psychologists: confidentiality, voluntarily of participants...

3. *What sort of crisis intervention training is available for school psychologists in your country?*

Training with psychologists or doctors working in hospital and a little with school psychologists. Several organized training sessions occurred in the past couple of years.

September 2000 : basic training

90 people (more than a half of the association members) for 4 days.

September 2001 : specialized training

20 voluntary psychologists (a one-day-course with specialists: processes to follow, help for the victims ...)

October 2001 : specialized training

Training for the heads of psychology departments (12 persons) to decide on the action activating.

2001 – 2002

2 meetings of the national unit to pile up documentation and to coordinate the whole of the activities.

Creation of a regional supervision with specialists.

4. *What sort of crisis prevention and intervention roles may school psychologists in your country be interested in the future?*

In the future: evaluation of procedures and strengthening of practices.

Organize the national unit to follow the setting up of this process and to adopt the procedures according to the lacks and needs noticed in the field

Keep in touch with National Education colleagues, in France and with International colleagues of ISPA.

5. *Please identify literature relevant to crisis prevention and intervention that school psychologists in your country may access.*

While access to the literature is possible, it is not organized by our profession...maybe in the future.

New Zealand

1. *What sort of crisis prevention activities do school psychologists in your country engage in?*

Psychologists are often involved in helping school staff to become aware of the risk factors associated with preventable trauma and, particularly in cases of suicide and drug abuse, helping them to identify students who may be at risk.

Some systems level projects are designed to address the needs of young people that are often associated with depression, suicide and violent unsafe behavior but these are carried out in schools that request such projects rather than across the board.

The Specialist Education Service has a programme that it does deliver to many schools across the country - 'Eliminating Violence'. Training course for teachers that also includes a component in which the school must set up a system to address issues of violence throughout the school - including staff relationships.

Psychologists are taking roles in primary prevention as schools are beginning to ask for help to address the issues that affect large groups of young people.

Psychologists pick up individual casework where suicide risk is identified and work with the families and schools to support the development of better alternatives for young people.

2. *What sort of crisis intervention activities do school psychologists in your country engage in?*

Educational psychologists respond to requests for assistance from educational facilities through from early childhood to year thirteen.

- _ Death of a student or staff member
- _ Student or staff suicide
- _ Serious injury of student or staff member
- _ Major disruption (e.g. serious storms or earthquakes)
- _ Threats to the safety of students or staff, including the presence at the school of an individual behaving in a dangerous or threatening manner
- _ Violent acts of physical or sexual abuse

Educational Psychologists work in multi-disciplinary teams (Psychologists, Special Education Advisors, School Guidance counselors, Principals and other staff members) to promote the restoration of pre-crisis levels of functioning while simultaneously carrying out the atypical activities brought about by the traumatic event.

Crisis intervention is given priority in educational psychologists' work.

Frequently, schools will manage crisis events on their own. Most serious incidents do, however, require the additional support of educational psychologists and assistance is sometimes sought when schools have faced repeated crisis events and their resources are exhausted.

Many psychologists work with principals and their staff members in both practical and supportive ways.

3. *What sort of crisis intervention training is available for school psychologists in your country?*

Specialist Education Services provided national training to staff when crisis intervention was recognized as a critical component of the psychologists' role. Since then, area teams hold regular training days in general and specific aspects of crisis intervention.

Educational psychologists have been invited to attend seminars delivered by known experts in the crisis intervention field.

Assessment guides for suicide were published by the Ministry of Education and made available free to all secondary and intermediate schools. These also provided valuable information for psychologists.

New trainees are introduced to crisis management in their university courses. They are encouraged to take further in-service training in this area once they have gained more experience working within school systems.

The government funded a national project in which Massey University was contracted to train all school guidance counselors in the country in assessment of suicide risk, preventative measures and response to suicide.

Schools are invited to request training from Specialist Education Services in general and specific issues related to traumatic events.

4. *What sort of crisis prevention and intervention roles may school psychologists in your country be interested in the future?*

Educational Psychologists work in crisis intervention has evolved in the last ten years. Initially, psychologists worked directly to help with crisis response. Later, more work was carried out assisting educational facilities to develop systems to better and more independently respond to events within educational settings. This work continues as more schools perceive the need for proactive measures or see the need to review their plans.

While direct response and plan development continue, psychologists are taking roles in primary prevention as schools are beginning to ask for help to address the issues that affect large groups of young people. Anecdotal evidence from discussion with educational psychologists suggests that psychologists see this type of work as the area in which they might make their greatest contribution.

5. *Please identify literature relevant to crisis prevention and intervention that school psychologists in your country may access.*

Educational psychologists have access to journal and other literature from all over the world through internet links and excellent library services. In addition to this, there is some homegrown material. This includes:

Annan, J. (1999). *Psychologist Support Following Crisis Events in Schools: The First Forty-eight hours*. The Bulletin, 96, 42-44

Beautrais, A., Coggan, C., Fergusojn, D., & Rivers, L. (1998). *A Guide for Schools: Young People at Risk of Suicide*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

Rivers, L. (1995). *Young Person Suicide: Guidelines to Understanding, Preventing and Dealing with the Aftermath*. Wellington: Specialist Education Services.

Specialist Education Services. (1993). *Guidelines to Assist in the Management of Traumatic Incidents*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

Switzerland

1. *What sort of crisis prevention activities do school psychologists in your country engage in?*

Our country is divided up into 25 cantons, state. The school psychologists work under different premises in every canton (state). In the cantons of Zurich school psychologists hardly do any intervention work, as well as in most of the cantons of the alpine region (Grisson, Valais, Appenzell, etc.). I do know though, that Uri and Unterwalden chose a different approach. There school psychologists do crisis intervention.

In Bern crisis intervention is done by working with the school classes, the philosophy is to empower them by telling them what to do or give them further education.

Some schools in Switzerland engage people from the outside to do prevention work, peace work, social work, etc.

2. *What sort of crisis intervention activities do school psychologists in your country engage in?*

No-blame approach, mythodrama, peace, most of the psychologists do counseling.

My institute, Institute for Conflict Management, works together with school psychologists throughout the country to monitor and help in group orientated interventions.

3. *What sort of crisis intervention training is available for school psychologists in your country?*

It really depends on what employee (Canton or Community) allows.

Training is possible in private institutions, as well as among the further education programs of the Swiss Federation of School Psychologists.

3. *What sort of crisis prevention and intervention roles may school psychologists in your country be interested in the future?*

Personally I think it should be group orientated, no-blame approach and - most important - the teachers should have to participate as well.

4. *Please identify literature relevant to crisis prevention and intervention that school psychologists in your country may access.*

Guggenbuhl, A. (1996). *The Incredible Fascination of Violence*. Spring Publications, Woodstock, CT (originally German, translated to Danish, Swedish, Dutch, Russian and Japanese).

Symposium Discussion

Comments!!! Questions??? Discussion...

Additional Questions to Address?

- A. *What sort of Crisis Prevention programs, services are provided in the schools in your country?*
- B. *What sort of Crisis Intervention / Crisis Prevention research is available from your country?*
- C. *Other important ?'s...*

*Special thanks
to all the contributors, presenters,
and participants...*

Additional literature related to this presentation is available from NASP at www.nasponline.org

Brock, S. E., Lazarus, P. J., & Jimerson S. R. (Eds.) (2002). Best Practices in School Crisis Prevention and Intervention. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

Section I, Introduction: From Theory to Practice

Section II, Primary Prevention: Preventing and Preparing for Crisis Events

Section III, Secondary Prevention: The Immediate Response to Crisis Events

Section IV, Secondary Prevention: Responding to Specific Crises

Section V, Tertiary Prevention: Long Term Treatment of Traumatized Individuals

Section VI, Special Issues in Crisis Prevention and Response

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