

Book Review

STUDENT COUNSELLING IN PRACTICE

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£1.50 paperback £3.00 hardback.

The University of Keele was the first British University to establish a regular Counsellor Training Programme and also to operate a comprehensive counselling service for its own students. This is a well documented study of how this service works out in practice with a number of fascinating case histories.

The Counselling was based on the ideas of Carl Rogers and emphasizes the passive empathetic role of the Counsellor and the active and responsible role of the subject. The ideas of Carl Rogers have perhaps been one of the most exciting alternatives to classical psychoanalysis and clearly in a university setting - that is with clients trained to use their minds and observe - the probability of success is perhaps higher than outside. The danger of course is that people who use their intellect as a tool can also use it as a protection and armour against the realities of life.

In practice however the technique seemed to work very well.

There is a fascinating analysis of the counsellor's own flow of experience in the counselling process. It is not only the 'client' who is unsure, ambivalent and looking for help. As the nervous student at his first visit slowly and hesitantly communicates his need, the counsellor also slowly and hesitantly responds, or doesn't respond. The client has said that it all seems so pointless and the counsellor considers a range of responses from 'Have you seen a doctor?', to 'Do you sometimes think you are mad?' What he actually says is 'Go on'. As the interview progresses the counsellor begins to try his hypotheses as to the underlying - and so far unverballed - problems. He remains sensitive and accepting at one level while at another his mind is trying to unravel and understand.

With a population of university students approaching a third of a million the need for student counselling is obviously very great - not only in terms of human distress but also in terms of the cost effectiveness and also human effectiveness of higher education.