
Title	Book review [Review of the book <i>Counselling: A problem-solving approach</i> , by D. N. Dixon & J. A. Glover]
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Counselling: A Problem-Solving Approach

David N. Dixon and John A. Glover
University of Nebraska — Lincoln
New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1984
239 pp (hardcover)

Reviewed by Elena Lui Hab Wah

David N. Dixon and John A. Glover wrote this book to introduce the Problem-Solving Approach to beginning counsellors who are preparing themselves for their practicum. Their main concern is the development of counselling students' competencies in enhancing their clients' skills in problem-solving for their clients' present and future success in problem situations. They claim that since problem-solving can describe different approaches to counselling, it can be used as a "Metatheory of Counselling". It also provides a framework for eclectic integration, which is very much needed by counselling students.

A decade ago, C. H. Patterson cautioned counsellors that professional activity can never be based upon a supposedly democratic principle of personal choice. In a recent article "New Light for Counselling Theory", he stressed again the unreliability of the eclectic approach because it is atheoretical and unsystematic, and has no common elements or principles (*Journal of Counselling and Development*, February 1985, Vol 63, pp. 349-350).

It is very timely that Dixon and Glover have created this Problem-Solving Model by synthesizing various counselling theories and also applying research in human cognition to the problem-solving process in counselling. It is really a commendable attempt by them in integrating and organizing such a massive amount of knowledge in educational and counselling psychology.

The text is made up of 13 chapters which can be grouped into 3 parts. Chapters 1-5 present the Problem-Solving Model and detail its use in counselling. Chapters 6-10 focus on the process and skills of problem-solving. Chapters 11-13 describe the use of this model in group counselling and training and also mention research in problem-solving counselling.

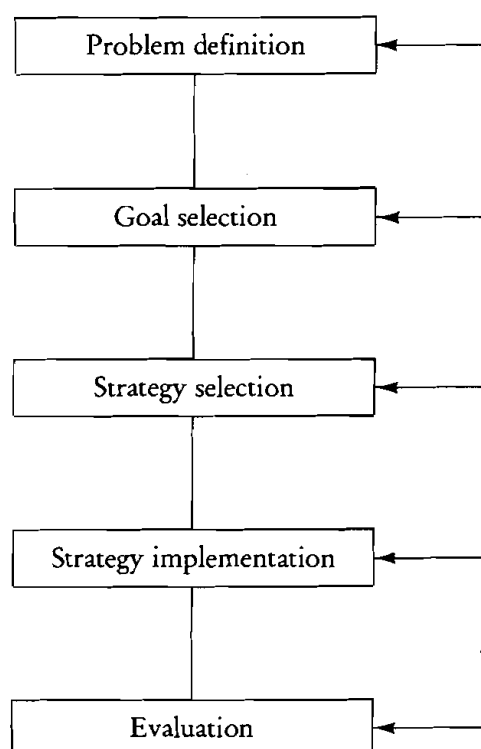
The examples, exercises and case studies chosen by the authors from both educational and therapeutic settings make the text very interesting and lively. Though only a few tables and diagrams are included, they suffice to illustrate the points raised in the text. The comprehensive current list of references and the separate indexes on authors and subjects are likely to be very useful for beginning counsellors.

The Problem-Solving Model draws support from cognitive psychology theories such as the "higher order rules" of Gagné (1964, 1972, 1977) and "meaningful learning" of Ausubel, Norak and Hanesian (1978). The historical views from psychologists like E.L. Thorndike, John Dewey and A. Kohler; the information-processing theory and Weizenbaum's computer program ELIZA (1966) are also quoted to substantiate the foundation of this model. Table 3.1 "Comparison of Problem-Solving Approach to Counselling" (p. 28) serves very well as a guide to relate those five components to those of the other approaches such as D'Zurilla and Goldfried, Kanfer and Busemeyer, Urban and Ford, Eisenberg and Delaney.

In Chapter 4, Dixon and Glover outline and analyse four counselling theories: client-centred, Gestalt, behavioural and cognitive-behavioural, to illustrate how the Problem-Solving Model may be employed as a metatheory for counselling theorists. They are only representing the diversity in the field. There is little doubt about the appropriateness of such representation, in terms of therapeutic or clinical counselling theories. However, if the Problem-Solving Model is also going to be applied in educational and vocational counselling (many cases and examples used in this book are of this nature), then theories like G.G. Williamson's trait-factors counselling

FIGURE 5.3 — PROBLEM-SOLVING RELATIONSHIP MODEL FOR INDIVIDUAL COUNSELLING

1. Expectation that process will be helpful
2. Perception of need/commitment to change
3. Perception of counsellor expertness
4. Perception of counsellor trustworthiness
5. Perception of counsellor attractiveness



(1939, 1950, 1965), W. Glassers' reality therapy (1965) and T. Gordon's effectiveness training (problem-ownership) (1974) should be presented and analysed too.

Moreover, well-known theories like T. Harris' "life position" (I'm O.K. — You're O.K., I'm O.K. — You're not O.K., I'm not O.K. — You're O.K., I'm not O.K. — You're not O.K.) and E. Berne's Transactional Analysis (Parent-Adult-Child and Life Script) are not covered in Chapter 7 where the authors deliberate on problem definition, attribution and resolutions.

In Chapter 15, which details the counselling relationship for problem-solving, the authors use the following model (Figure 5.3, p. 84) to illustrate the interaction between counselling relationship and problem-solving process.

The weaknesses of this model are: (1) there is no link between the relationship variables (on the left) and the problem-solving process (on the right), (2) it does not show how the 5 relationship variables interact with the 5 components of problem-solving process and (3) it is misleading in placing the perceptions of counsellor expertness, trustworthiness and attractiveness at the third, fourth and fifth

positions respectively. As a matter of fact, these variables may exist at any stage of the counselling process. And these variables are so closely related to one another that they may occur at the same moment in the problem-solving process.

Nevertheless, on the whole, the content of this book is very substantial and informative in terms of academic and professional knowledge. It has tapped resources and expertise from a great number of well-known theorists in the two fields of counselling and educational psychology. For readers with background in these fields, this book would serve as a very handy reference. And for those who favour creativity and innovation in counselling, this book is really a beautiful guide or a challenging companion. On the other hand, this book may not be preferred by readers who either wish for more practicality in problem-solving, or expect more elaboration on the theories and research mentioned. Perhaps it could be classified as an enriching reference for counselling students at the intermediate level of professional preparation.

Finally, the publishers should have provided more bio-data on the authors than just stating the university at which both of them work. ■