Secondary school counseling: past, present, and future

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The only thing more perplexing than trying to sort out the present situation in secondary school counseling is trying to predict its future. I have chosen to attack the problem and the issues in three stages—past, present, and future—for, as any good manpower analyst knows, the future can be best foretold by a hard and careful look at past trends and present conditions.

THE PAST

The emergence of secondary school counseling as a profession in the United States has been a long, slow, tedious process. It has involved much hard work and has required much hope, faith, and risk on the part of leaders in the field. As early as 1898, Jesse Davis at Central High School in Detroit, Michigan, acted as a class counselor and spent most of his time actively counseling 500 students regarding their educational and vocational careers. In 1907 he became principal of his school and was able to employ counselors to serve all his students through the seventh grade. By 1916 his ideas had been incorporated in 38 states.

Also at this time vocational counseling was introduced into the Boston school system, the first guidance convention was held there, the first guidance newsletter was published, and Harvard University offered the first university level course in vocational guidance. The National Vocational Guidance Association, Inc., was founded at Grand Rapids, Michigan, in 1913. In 1917, the first department of education was formed at Harvard under a new name—the Bureau of Vocational Guidance.

Progress was slow during World War I and during the postwar prosperity of the 1920s, but the Great Depression stimulated interest in vocational guidance, vocational education, and government-supported training and counseling programs for out-of-school youth and adults. In 1939 the U.S. Office of Education's Occupational Information and Guidance Service reported that 2,286 school counselors were employed at least half time in 1,297 schools in 702 cities and towns in 46 states.

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) was born as an independent organization in 1953. A study at the University of Michigan (Deslen 1958) predicted that approximately 40,000 counselors would be employed in the elementary and secondary schools of the U.S. by 1960–61. Of these, 23 percent would be employed full time, 30 percent at least half time, and the remainder less than half time. Deslen's forecast turned out to be reasonably ac-

curate. Secondary school counselors were never in a better position than they were in 1960–61. They were envied by teachers, sought after by administrators, held sacred by parents and students, and favored by the federal government.

Spurred on by the "race for space" and the pursuit of excellence, between 1959 and 1963 14,000 secondary school counselors and teachers were trained in over 400 National Defense Education Act (NDEA) Institutes, and the number of full-time counselors in public secondary schools grew from 12,000 in 1958–59 to 29,545 by 1963–64. The NDEA of 1958 (amended in 1961–63 and 1964), the Manpower Development and Training Act of 1962, the Vocational Education Act of 1963, the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the Higher Education Act of 1965 all had a profound effect on the development, organization, and progress of the secondary school counseling movement (Odell 1971).

Stiller (1967) identified four stages through which secondary school counseling had passed in its first 40 years as a profession. The first stage, from 1910 to 1940, emphasized Parson's concept of analysis of the individual and of the job market, which would lead to man-job matching. In the second stage, from 1946 to 1956, emphasis shifted to Carl Rogers' self-concept theory of meeting the needs of youth as these needs were perceived by youth themselves. Counselors became more conscious of the philosophical orientation from which evolved their working philosophy and behavior. In the third stage, which occurred in the late fifties and early sixties, counselors' theoretical background was not considered as important as their experience and personal characteristics. This was the period in which the training of the school counselor was broadened and the period that was heavily influenced by the NDEA Institutes and supportive congressional legislation for the profession. The fourth stage, during the sixties, was one of professionalization. It was the period during which ASCA published its "Statement of Policy for Secondary School Counselors and Guidelines for Implementation" and worked more closely with national organizations of school administrators. ASCA also more clearly defined the role of the secondary school counselor and provided a "Guideline on the Role of the Counselor" to all secondary school guidance departments throughout the country. The Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) became another independent branch of APGA, and the need for improving techniques and practicums for counselors was emphasized more extensively in counselor education.

THE PRESENT

Secondary school counseling in the 1970s is in a stage of innovation. There is much controversy about the "new role" of the secondary school counselor, and the role is in the process of study and revision by many groups. The central issue concerns the "counselor" label itself, the issue being raised by those competing professional organizations that would like to see the counseling profession abolished or at least changed in its image. And there are those who feel that the label "advisor," "human relations specialist," "psychologist," or "applied behavioral scientist" would more adequately describe the tasks of the secondary school counselor. School counseling is also being questioned by some colleagues, parents, board of education members, taxpayers, and students. On the other hand, there is support by equal or greater numbers of individuals in these groups.

Budgets are being cut from national to local levels, and schools are beginning to hurt. A few schools have already

eliminated counseling jobs. Ratios are far from one counselor to 300 students. Few, if any, school counselors are in a position to see all their students, yet students are clamoring to see counselors. This trend will surely continue, since families are increasingly depending on schools to raise their children.

Group counseling is being attempted in many secondary schools, with small groups of from 10 to 15 students discussing not only traditional guidance and counseling concerns but also such issues as study skills, human relations, drug abuse, and sex education. Parents, either alone or with students, are also participating in such counseling situations.

A well-known debate is again in progress: Will the counselor be a generalist, providing educational, vocational, and personal services to students, or will the counselor choose the area of service in which he or she feels most competent and comfortable and become *the* educational or *the* vocational or *the* personal counseling specialist in the school?

All sorts of new projects are being piloted, the most common being career education. Now in the process of development at national, state, and local levels are curriculums (K–12) to introduce and continuously expose children to the world of work. Cooperative work-study programs are more widely used, not only with potential dropouts but with all students who show an interest in or a need for work experience. Examples of these are the Distributive Education Program, the Work-Oriented Curriculum, and the Cooperative Occupational Training Program, with occasional linkages to the in-school and out-of-school Neighborhood Youth Corps Programs. Volunteer Work Programs, Business-Industrial-Education (BIE) Days, and Career Days in new guises and formats are more frequently organized; these help students, teachers, and counselors learn more about existing and emerging occupational fields.

Automated equipment is being marketed and bought by many school systems so that students may learn by audiovisual media about specific careers and educational institutions beyond the high school. Computer-assisted occupational and educational information systems are being tested in various schools to provide students, independently and individually, with up-to-date vocational, educational, and personal information. More attractive and informal rooms are springing up, where students can browse in occupational and educational information systems in a relaxed atmosphere. These are just a few of the innovations now being tried.

THE FUTURE

In the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (U.S. Department of Labor 1972), the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimated that 54,000 school counselors were employed full time during the 1970–71 school year. More than four-fifths, or 44,000, worked in public secondary schools, the remaining 10,000 in elementary schools. The Bureau defined the role of the secondary school counselor as being "concerned with the personal and social development of pupils and the planning and achievement of their educational and vocational goals [p. 55]."

Hitchcock (1965), when he was executive director of APGA, estimated that more than 150,000 school counselors would be needed by 1975. This forecast and others of his were challenged by several counselor educators, including Isaksen of Florida State University, who warned that there were varying factors that could make Hitchcock's projections quite uncertain and inadequate (Isaksen 1967). Isaksen questioned the assumption that the ratio of one counselor to 300 students at the secondary level and one to 600 at the elementary level was adequate. He speculated that this ratio would be very inadequate with special groups, such as the disadvantaged. He also questioned the assumption that most trained counselors intended to remain in counseling positions. And he challenged the assumption related to changes in school population based on a declining birthrate. Isaksen concluded that "it is not unreasonable to assume that by 1975 we will need as many as 200,000 counselors in our elementary and secondary schools [p. 82]."

A consultant in counseling and guidance services in the State Department of Public Instruction, Madison, Wisconsin (Erpenbach 1973), has reported that state projections indicate the need for 21,000 more school counselors and 23,000 replacements for school counselors by 1980. He has added that we can expect to find about half the counselors needed to fill these positions. Erpenbach has cited what he sees as the needs of tomorrow's secondary school counselor: more responsiveness to inner-city and rural youth, counseling of girls, fiscal support for more adequate information systems, improvement of counselor training and strengthening of the qualifications of counselors already in the field, help for students making educational and vocational decisions in periods of high unemployment, communication with parents, drug abuse programs, and dropout programs. To these concerns I would like to add several more.

- The training of paraprofessionals is essential so that the secondary school counselor can be freed from a wide variety of clerical and routine administrative tasks.
- An effort must be made to improve public relations programs on all levels —national, state, and local—for the purpose of informing society about the strengths and limitations of the school counselor's role.
- Administrators (especially principals, vice principals, and guidance directors)

must be educated about the importance of counselors' working with students, parents, teachers, and the community instead of with computers, report cards, college applications, and tests.

- Psychological education (Ivey & Alschuler 1973) should be incorporated into counselor training programs.
- Continuing concern should be given to the redefinition of the secondary school counselor's role and function in response to the changes demanded by parents, employers, students, and taxpayers.

The recurring interest in vocational guidance and counseling services directed to the needs of students enrolled in or interested in vocational education is manifested in the Vocational Education Amendments of 1968. The thrust toward career education and the concern for wider and deeper offerings in vocational and technical education will create a substantial demand for additional counselors in secondary and postsecondary education. A more definitive study of current employment and employment prospects in this field is imperative.

CONCLUSIONS

It is my belief that the forecasters of the mid-sixties were overoptimistic in their prediction that 150,000 to 200,000 counselors would be employed in school systems (K–12) by 1975. Erpenbach's estimate that 21,000 additional counselors will be needed by 1980, for a total of 75,000, seems a more reasonable forecast. As Erpenbach has also forecasted, however, 23,000 additional counselors will be needed by 1980 to replace those among the 54,000 currently employed who will marry, die, retire, or move to other fields of work. If four-fifths of all school counselors in 1970 were secondary school counselors, and if this ratio is maintained in 1980, we can expect approximately 60,000 secondary school counselors to be employed in U.S. schools by 1980. This suggests a lively demand for about 40,000 new secondary school counselors throughout the 1970s—with the possibility, as suggested by Erpenbach, that the trained supply will not be adequate to meet the demand.

Students, parents, teachers, and administrators all over the country have felt the impact of counseling as a service, not as a product. There is reason to anticipate that counseling services will continue to be sought, perhaps even more than at present. ■

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