DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 033 386 CG 004 071

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TITLE Role, Function, and Approach for Guidance in Career Development of Youth from Junior High Through Senior High. (Enclosure with March/April 1969 of "Ohio Guidance News and Views").
INSTITUTION Ohio State Dept. of Education, Columbus. Div. of Guidance and Testing.; West Georgia Coll., Carrollton.
Pub Date Apr 69
Note 12p.; Paper presented at the Vocational Development Seminar, West Georgia College, Carrollton, Georgia, August 20, 1968

EDRS Price EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.70
Descriptors *Career Planning, *Counseling Programs, Counselor Functions, *Counselor Role, Junior High School Students, Secondary Education, *Secondary School Students, *Vocational Education

Abstract

A neglected minority of our youth, those contemplating entry into the labor market at the end of secondary school, need an improved program to equip them to meet this labor market adequately. The role of guidance in the career development of junior and senior high youth includes: (1) helping the student to see himself as worthy, (2) helping students experience success, (3) helping students to find ways that school can make sense to them, (4) helping students consider and make decisions regarding the values of a work oriented society, (5) helping students develop an understanding of their own talents, and (6) helping students make choices from a wide range of alternatives. One of the most important functions of guidance for students headed towards entry into the labor market is to care about these students. Secondly, counselors need to seek these students out, and demonstrate their interest in them. Approaches to guidance for use with these students include: (1) the help and involvement of teachers, (2) the utilization of community resources, and (3) the offering of more relevant curricula. (Author/KJ)

ROLE, FUNCTION, AND APPROACH FOR GUIDANCE IN CAREER DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH FROM JUNIOR HIGH THROUGH SENIOR HIGH

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Address Prepared For Delivery At The Vocational Development Seminar
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"Ohio Guidance News & Views"
DIVISION OF GUIDANCE AND TESTING
State Department of Education
751 Northwest Boulevard, Columbus, Ohio 43212

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Introduction

There is both virtue and viability in narrowing one's perspective--provided the perspective, itself, is not lost. The gains which can be made by digging deeply in a very small area are significant provided the smallness of the area is kept clearly in focus. Those who are afraid of losing their perspective by narrowing their focus of concern must accept the fact that, by refusing to take this risk, they run the equally important risk of never increasing their competency. At times, the risk of losing perspective is one well worth taking. This conference, it seems to me, represents such a time of risk.

The program for this conference focuses on career development of junior and senior high school youth contemplating entry into the labor market upon leaving the secondary school. That this must surely be regarded as only a minority of our youth in these times is obvious. It is equally obvious that it has been a very much neglected minority, a very important minority, and a unique minority when compared with the remainder of the secondary school student population. The narrowness which necessarily results from focusing attention on career development for this minority of youth is very much overdue in American education. I welcome this opportunity to be a part of such an effort.

The title assigned is worded in a hierarchal order, which itself points both to the nature and the seriousness of the problem. In order, the three tasks assigned by this title are concerned with "role," "functions," and "approach for guidance" in career development for junior and senior high school students. The order itself is interesting in that we know much more about "role" than "functions" and some more about "functions" than about "approaches for guidance" for these students.

The knowledge gap existing among these three aspects represents, in capsule form, the challenges facing counselors today.

When I speak of "role," I am speaking of the task to be accomplished --about what it is we are trying to do. When I speak of "functions," I am speaking about the ways we seek to accomplish these tasks--about skills and methodologies. When I speak of "approaches to guidance," I am speaking about organizational arrangements. Each of these is a topic in and of itself. Here, I can only hope to comment rather briefly on each.

Before proceeding to comment on each of these three aspects, let me make sure there is no mistake regarding the portion of junior and senior high school youth for whom concern is being expressed here. Of the total secondary school population, somewhere around forty percent can be expected to graduate from high school and enter some college or university setting--of whom roughly half will some day receive a college degree. A second forty percent can be expected either to graduate or drop out from high school and later pursue some specialty training in some kind of post-high school vocational-technical education setting. This leaves approximately 20 percent of those who enter the junior high school and can reasonably be expected to seek entry into the labor market upon leaving the secondary school setting. I am speaking here in terms of what should be--not what has been--true for the junior-senior high school student population. I recognize, as should you, that the actual percentage may be closer to forty than to twenty percent across the country right now. How to make these percentages more closely correspond to the changing nature of our technological society, is another problem. The point to recognize here is that, under any circumstances, we are speaking about a minority of the student population--and one which should, if we do our job right, become even more of a minority in each of the next several years. The fact that this is so, makes no member of this minority group any less important to consider. If anything, it adds to the seriousness of their problems, and consequently, our challenges to be of help to them.

With this introduction, I would like now to proceed to a brief look at the problem from the standpoint of the three assignments implied in the title--role, functions, and approaches for guidance.

Role of Guidance in Career Development of Junior and Senior High School Youth Headed Towards Entry into the Labor Market

The role of guidance in career development--i.e., the goals to be met --is no different for these students than for any other segment of the student population. Simply to list such goals would be to bring nothing new to this audience. In an attempt to provide a more positive approach, the specification of each goal will be accompanied here by a series of questions bearing on methodological problems of goal attainment for this portion of the junior and senior high school student body.

The first role element is to help each student see himself as the worthy and worthwhile person he is. This role can be accomplished relatively easily with those students from affluent homes who are recognized student leaders, well accepted by both students and adults in the school and the community. But how is this goal to be attained for the slum dweller with shabby clothes who, at best, is pitied by his classmates and, at worst, is told in many ways every day that he isn't very worthwhile? How is the student to see himself as worthwhile in a school where he is made to feel he doesn't belong? It is time questions such as these were asked--and answered.

Second, we have a role of trying to help each student experience success in his own eyes. By this, of course, we mean encouraging each student to use himself as his ultimate standard of comparison. The trouble is, most people--including most students--don't view it this way. Instead, they view "success" as the ability to compete successfully with others. Again, this goal can be easily accomplished with students who "win" consistently--or even just sometimes. But how can we accomplish this guidance goal with the student who always "loses"--who is told very often and very directly that he has failed? In the comprehensive high school, the student headed towards immediate entry into the labor market is very seldom the class valedictorian--or even on the honor roll. How can we help each student see himself as successful?

Third, we have a goal of trying to help each student find ways that school can make sense to him. How are we to accomplish this goal in schools that don't? I am referring here to the still prevalent tendency in American secondary education to place highest priority on a view that the purpose of the secondary school is to prepare one for more schooling. The educational motivations of those headed towards college are most compatible with the structure of many secondary schools. How is school to make sense to the student whose prime educational motivations

are directed towards a desire to acquire job skills which will enable him to enter and compete successfully in the labor market? Again, we find ourselves faced with a most worthwhile goal, but one which is not easy to accomplish with many students in many schools.

Fourth, we seek to help each student consider and make decisions regarding the values of a work-oriented society. We do not, of course, insist that each student accept such values as his own, but we do aim to expose each to these values so that their desirability and appropriateness can be considered. Many students in our secondary schools have learned these values well prior to entering high school, for they have seen them demonstrated in the background, experiences, and attitudes of their parents for many years. Others have not. How are such values to be communicated to students whose parents regard work as a necessary burden to be endured? To the student whose parents have been on welfare roles for as long as the student can remember? To the student who sees his own occupational opportunities as limited to unskilled or, at the best, semi-skilled work of a tedious, repetitive nature? We have not yet faced such questions squarely in terms of attaining this guidance goal for students such as these.

Fifth, we have held as one of our goals that of trying to help each student develop an understanding and appreciation of his own talents and interests. How do we help a student who appears to be interested in nothing that is related to what the school has to offer? How is a student to be helped in positive ways to understand that his abilities, in comparison with others, are low? Is the notion of basing occupational decisions in part on aptitude and interest factors one which is viable for those students contemplating immediate entry into the job market after high school?

Sixth, we hold a goal of trying to help each student make choices from the widest possible range of alternatives which can be made available to him. With some students, this goal is very difficult to attain because we can find almost no limit to the number and variety of opportunities he could realistically consider. With others, it is equally difficult to attain for quite the opposite reason--namely, that the number and variety of alternatives appear extremely limited. How do we implement this goal for students with very limited opportunities none of which seems to appeal to the student? If we are going to insist on holding this as a role, we must be willing to face questions such as these squarely and answer them definitively.

Seventh, we have pictured a role for ourselves of helping each stu-

dent formulate plans for implementing the choices and decisions he has made. For the students we are speaking about here, this must mean, in part, a job placement function. How prepared are counselors to fulfill this function now? How is one to help a disadvantaged Negro student implement his decisions in those communities where racism is still a prevalent part of the community culture? How active an agent of change is the counselor supposed to be in order to attain this goal?

Finally, we have held very high the goal of helping each student accept some personal responsibility for his own destiny--of making meaningful to every student that what happens to him is, at least in part, a function of what he does or fails to do. This concept is easy to convey to those students with ample personal, intellectual, and financial resources for use in combatting societal pressures. How is the concept to be conveyed to those students who see themselves as victims of society? How does a student accept personal responsibility for his own destiny when it is obvious to all that, in his case, society is going to impinge on him much more than he can possibly hope to change society? There is no doubt but what the opportunity for an individual to exercise control over his own destiny is not equal for all students from all backgrounds in these times. In what ways does this influence the extent to which and the ways in which counselors implement this goal?

So far, I have spoken only about role. I have tried to do so by stating commonly accepted counselor goals in career development for junior and senior high school students and then raising questions regarding goal implementation for those students seeking immediate entry into the labor market. If I have had a point to make, it is simply this: The role of the counselor has been stated so often for so long it should be eminently clear that we know what it is we are trying to do. We are not nearly so well equipped to specify how we will do that which we are trying to accomplish.

Functions of Guidance in Career Development of Junior and Senior High School Youth Headed Towards Entry into the Labor Market

There are, to be sure, almost slanderous implications regarding students in some of the questions I have raised. In order to avoid wrong impressions, let me say that very few of the students involved could be described as disadvantaged, distraught, destitute, disinterested, dull, dropouts. That is, it would be most unusual to find many students faced with all the handicaps alluded to in the questions I have raised. Some students headed towards immediate entry into the labor market are un-

doubtedly not referred to in any of these questions. To admit these things in no way changes the fact that we are, in referring to these students, speaking about a portion of the student body for whom problems such as I have cited could not properly be regarded as uncommon. Let us recognize this as fact and look as realistically as we can at the question of function--of ways in which we might seek to fulfill the guidance role for these students.

In spite of its nebulous nature, it seems to me that perhaps one of the most effective functions we could perform for these students is to care about them. To really care. Not to wonder about them, or even be concerned about them, but to really care about them as important members of society. This, of course, is an attitudinal matter for counselors to consider--one that doesn't result in a degree, a diploma, or even a grade, and yet a most vital part of whatever it is we can call counselor education. For a student to see himself as worthwhile many times demands that he see this quality reflected in the attitudes and actions of those with whom he comes in contact. So many seem to credit students only when they evidence positive progress towards becoming more worthwhile. We need counselors who see students as already worthwhile when contact is first made--not a quality to be developed but one which already exists in the student because he is a human being. I can think of no more important counselor function than this.

Second, and in a more concrete way, it seems to me that counselors ought to function with these students by actively seeking them out. I am convinced that, unless counselors do so, many of these students will pass through--or drop out of--our secondary schools without ever having made any contact with any school counselor. There are many reasons why these students have not and will not actively seek out school counselors. Among these are: (1) They have felt that counselors are neither interested in nor that they understand such students; (2) they see counselors as primarily interested in the college-bound student (many physical facilities and counselor actions reinforce this belief); (3) they are not highly verbal individuals and so don't fit into the traditional counselor expectation mold in terms of interview behavior; and (4) many really don't see themselves as important nor do they understand why any adult figure in the school should care about them. They have ample evidence indicating that many such adult figures do not. For all these reasons, it seems to me that counselors should assume a more active role in making contact with these students than with many other students in the school.

Third, it seems to me that counselors should function by demonstra-

tion rather than by verbal actions with many of these students. We should expose them to the values of a work-oriented society by letting them experience work. We should show them occupational opportunities by field visitations more than by use of printed materials. We should let them experience such concrete things as the task of completing an application blank, participating in a job interview, and looking for employment opportunities by letting them experience such activities.

Fourth, it seems to me that counselors should view their functions as environmental change agents as very important in attempting to help these students. This includes many things. One example would lie in counselor attempts to influence curricular patterns in secondary schools so as to better meet the educational needs of these students. A second example would be counselor relationships with teachers designed to help plan specific activities through which one or more of these students could experience success. A third example would be counselor contacts with parents of these students. Such contacts may be among the most helpful things counselors could do to help foster favorable environmental conditions for students. Finally, counselor contacts with out-of-school groups, including prospective employers, youth centers, and service clubs hold potential for changing environmental opportunities for these youths in positive ways.

Fifth, counselors should function effectively as information resource agents for these students. Relatively speaking, these students can be expected to find their first employment after leaving school a shorter distance from home than do those students who complete some form of post-high school education or training as preparation for employment. The need for local occupational information pertaining to entry job opportunities is obvious. Equally obvious is the need for information regarding such very practical matters as labor union practices, operations of the public employment office, and opportunities for job re-training available on a local and/or wider geographic basis. Information regarding employer expectations concerning work habits is vital to communicate to these students. As with earlier examples cited, the more of this information, which can be communicated by demonstration, the better. It is obvious that some of it should be in the form of printed literature prepared locally for local distribution.

Sixth, the counselor should function in helping these students discover the kinds of things they can do and can reasonably be expected to learn to do. Hopefully, strong vocational education programs will be in existence which, in part, are directed towards meeting training needs of these students. Such programs will have provided these students with

rudimentary skills required for a variety of occupations and specific skill training in more than one particular occupational area. Armed with such information along with information about employment opportunities--particularly at the local level--the student is faced with making some decisions regarding his post-high school employment plans. This is certainly a counselor function which needs to be closely examined for these students.

My concern here is with a search for a different set of specific helping goals than might be used with other students. My worry lies in the necessity for recognizing that these students are those most likely to undergo frequent occupational changes during their adult working lives. Moreover, when compared with other students in the high school, they are the ones who must make their initial vocational decisions fastest. They are the least likely to derive their primary work values from intrinsic factors and the least likely to enter occupations in a career chain representing clear lines of advancement from the lowest entry level to a top management position. The specific counselor functions involved in helping these students make plans must surely be different. The question is, how and in what ways should these differences be viewed?

Answers to this question must surely be regarded as tentative and in need of serious research study. Yet, unless some answers are proposed, the basis for needed studies will remain unclear. I would suggest that perhaps the most helpful approach would involve: (a) Emphasizing as much as possible the variety of types of occupations the student could consider with the skills he has; (b) trying to determine and help the student determine as clearly as possible what he hopes to gain from working; (c) recognizing openly that the initial occupation the student enters may not be one with which he stays for a long time; (d) bringing job choice as well as occupational choice into the discussion in as specific a fashion as possible; (e) emphasizing job opportunities in the local community in concrete terms; (f) acquainting the student with resources for job hunting if he moves from the local community to another setting; and (g) emphasizing short-term goals relatively more than long-term occupational goals.

It could be very forcibly argued that such an approach contradicts guidance goals associated with freedom for the individual and maximizing the variety of opportunities from which he can choose. I hold those goals as strongly as anyone and would not propose this functional approach as a means of de-emphasizing them. Rather, I am simply thinking in terms of realities which these students face and realistic considerations with respect to how counselors might function so as to help these

students most. I would hope that ideas such as these can shortly be subjected to experimental test so that we will be able to operate on the basis of knowledge rather than thoughts.

Finally, it seems to me that the counselor should function as one who visits with and listens to these students as they attempt to work out their identity of being and purpose. To find an adult counselor with time to listen and who is truly interested in the student as a person would seem to be a tremendously valuable experience for these students. They cannot be expected to feel they are important unless someone else demonstrates his belief that they are. Again, it seems to me the key here probably lies more in demonstrated behavior than in verbal exchanges between counselor and student. It may take place in the counselor's office, but I suspect it may just as well take place during a field visit, in the shop, or in the hall. Again, I have no experimental evidence to back up my hunches, but I suspect with these students a series of shorter contacts--perhaps only ten to fifteen minutes in length--may be more fruitful than hour-long formal counseling sessions. It is a hunch which could be subjected to experimental test.

Approaches to Guidance in Career Development of Junior and Senior High School Youth Headed Towards Entry into the Labor Market

As a final part of this presentation, I have been asked to comment on approaches to guidance for these youths. Since I know even less about this than about function, accomplishment of this assignment should not take long.

There seems little doubt but what guidance for these youths should certainly be organized as a schoolwide set of activities involving classroom teachers as well as counselors. One of the serious strategic errors we have made in the past is to think the vocational education teacher as more key in this area than is the so-called "academic" teacher. It is almost as though we were admitting that vocational education teachers are needed to combat the tendency of the "academic" teachers to discourage, disappoint, and disillusion these students, both with respect to themselves and to school. So long as such a notion is held, the students cannot win. The time has come, it seems to me, to regard the teacher of English as much responsible for guidance of these students as the teacher of welding.

True, their responsibilities differ somewhat in kind in that the teacher of English has the task of helping the student learn English

which he can use to the very best of his ability. In addition to such general tasks, the shop teacher has the additional charge of helping students discover and develop various kinds of occupational skills. This does not make one more important in guidance than the other.

The basic point is simply this. There is no sensible way we can think about effective programs of guidance for these students unless classroom teachers are willing to be active participants along with counselors in the guidance process. It seems to me this old and time-honored principle of guidance is perhaps more basic to recognize for these students than for any other segment of the total student population.

Similarly, guidance programs for these students should certainly be organized so as to utilize community resources for guidance. These resources include both physical facilities--such as industrial plants--and people. The use of industrial workers as adult role models would seem particularly appropriate when one thinks of community resources for guidance.

It seems to me that the use of sub-professionals in guidance may be most appropriate for these students. I am thinking here particularly as people who may truly serve as a young, adult friend, as people who take students on field visits, who make contacts with parents of students, who serve as liaison function with employers both prior to hiring the student and during the first year or so the student is on the job. To those who would contend that this is supplying too much help to the student (and thereby keeping the student from caring for himself) I would say I think they are wrong. We have applied a "sink-or-swim" philosophy of guidance to these students for much too long--and for too many of them have, as a result, "sunk." Perhaps this view of the possible use of sub-professionals in guidance will not work. We won't know until we have tried. We do know that what we have tried in the past hasn't worked. The youth unemployment figures are all too dramatic an illustration of the truth of this statement.

Perhaps the most strategic organizational principles for guidance of these students is to be found in the patterns of course and curricular offerings available to them from the beginning of junior high school through all of the senior high school program. This, of course, is a completely separate topic and one slated for major discussion later in this workshop. I mention it here only to illustrate that I recognize its basic importance and the need to view guidance organization from this perspective.

Closing Remarks

This presentation began by very quickly focusing attention on a minority of the secondary school student population--those students who will seek immediate employment in the labor market upon leaving the secondary school. The utility of the entire presentation hinges on the extent to which my views, that these students should constitute a relatively small minority, are accepted by those who consider these remarks. I think they can be defended. Following this purposeful narrowing of purpose, I commented on the task to be accomplished by viewing the guidance role as a series of goals held for these youths--goals which, while essentially the same as those held for all other youths, may appropriately be considered as more difficult to attain for these youths than for others. I then commented briefly on ways we might seek to accomplish these goals and closed with a very few thoughts regarding organizational structures for guidance.

These remarks are intended to illustrate both my ignorance and certain of my convictions. My areas of ignorance have been clearly illustrated and require no further elaboration. My basic convictions behind what I have said here can be summarized in this way: I am convinced that these youths are too vitally important to American society for us to ignore. I am convinced that they have been essentially ignored for far too long. I am convinced that the goals of guidance are intended as much for these youths as for any others in the schools. I am convinced that some variations in guidance functions will be required to meet the guidance needs of these youths. I am convinced that basic changes are needed in the entire system of American public school education if the needs of these youths are to be met. Finally, I am convinced that we can, we must, and we shall find better ways of helping these very important persons. We cannot be in favor of progress and be opposed to change at the same time. We, too, must change. It is time we did so.

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