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ABSTRACT

This paper is composed of three sections. The first discusses research and the background rationale for the counselor education program at the University of Minnesota. Studies by Peterson and Brown, Harper, Brown and Pfister are included, each being concerned with the teaching requirement for counselors. The University of Minnesota's program is set up to prepare counselors who have no teaching experience. To date, five candidates have completed the program. Included in the program of two years of graduate study are a counseling theory course, practicum, and internship. The internship is spent in a public school setting with an in school supervisor who could give immediate feedback. Interns were encouraged to bring guidance into the classroom, and had to teach a four week unit on identity. Evaluation at this time is difficult. All graduates from the programs have been offered second year contracts and superiors attest to the satisfactoriness of these counselors and their work. While many of the counselors have self doubts, they feel that they have a good working relationship with students and teachers. Tentative feelings about the program are that there is no need for previous teaching experience to be an effective counselor, provided the training offered is adequate. [Not available in hard copy due to marginal legibility of original document.] (KJ)

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Specialist's Project

Counselors Without Teaching Experience*

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*Adapted from a program presented at the American Personnel and Guidance Association Convention, New Orleans, March, 1970 (Program participants: Terry Haubenhoffer, Phyllis Paul and Ruthanne Strohn.)

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Background and Rationale

There is a shortage of high school counselors. Students in our country often are deprived of professional counseling entirely or must seek help from counselors with inadequate training and credentials. Golann and Magoon (1966) list three ways this manpower shortage can be abated:

1. Improved mental health services through educational and consultation programs for teachers.
2. Train increased numbers of school counselors, psychologists and other helping specialists.
3. Utilize additional sources of manpower and provide modified types of mental health services.

The authors of this paper are the products of some who are attempting to prepare an increased number of counselors by utilizing a previously ignored source of manpower.

During the last decade the debate was begun: Need counselors in the secondary schools meet the requirement of having first been teachers in order to be effective and successful? In 1969 five students were the first to complete a program in counselor education at the University of Minnesota designed to test the validity of the teaching requirement.

Arguments on this issue have appeared in the literature since the early sixties. Most of what has been

reported reflects opinions and biases of the authors rather than any kind of empirical evidence (Ricker, 1969). Two literature reviews point up pertinent aspects of the teaching requirement issue (Brown and Peterson, 1968 and Ricker, 1969).

Proponents of the teaching requirement in the preparation of school counselors state that such experience is necessary because:

1. It is required by state law.
2. There is a strong reluctance on the part of high school administrators to hire counselors who have not taught.
3. The school has a right to expect a basic commitment to education on the part of the counselor as evidenced by a teaching certificate and successful teaching experience.
4. A counselor who has not taught can never fully understand the classroom situation or student-teacher relationships.
5. Counselors must have taught in order to have the trust and respect of the faculty.

These arguments are familiar to those in the counseling profession. Those who oppose the teaching requirement for counselors have written:

1. Teacher preparation, in addition to lengthening the potential counselor's time in preparation for his work, may deprive counselors of a firm background in the behavioral and social sciences.
2. Teaching and counseling are inherently different, requiring different kinds of people with differing value systems. It is just as illogical to require teaching experience for counselors as to require counseling experience for teachers.

3. Eliminating the teaching requirement for counselors would bring a wider variety of people into the field, creating a greater potential for innovation and change.
4. In denying work to those counselors without teaching experience, the profession is denied the services of a valuable group of people during a time of need for specialists.

Unfortunately there is little empirical evidence available to support arguments on either side of the issue. A study by Peterson and Brown (1968), compared the self-perceptions of school counselors who had no former teaching experience with a sample of teacher-experienced counselors. The two samples were matched by age, sex and size of school in which they were employed. Seventy-two pairs were identified and sixty-two completed the questionnaire. Of these, thirteen pairs did not meet the criteria leaving a final sample of forty-nine paired counselors.

The counselors were asked to rate themselves in three general areas: relationships, school procedures and policies, and ability to perform guidance functions. A limitation of the study was that they rated themselves as they recalled themselves to be as beginning counselors. Some significant differences in the self-perceptions of the two groups were found:

1. Counselors without teaching experience perceived themselves to be less accepted as beginning counselors by administrators than counselors with teaching. This difference, however, did not appear after at least eight weeks on the job. There were no significant differences between the groups in their perceptions of acceptance by teachers, students, parents or other counselors.

2. Counselors without teaching experience rated themselves lower than counselors with experience on initial understanding of certain school policies. The areas of difference were scheduling, extracurricular activities, grading policies and discipline policies. There was no difference between the groups in their ratings of understanding of ability grouping and national testing programs.
3. In the area of ability to perform guidance functions there was but one difference in the self-ratings of the teacher-experienced and non-teacher-experienced groups. Those who had not taught perceived themselves less able than their teacher prepared counterparts to give vocational information.

Another study, by Harper, Brown and Pfister (1970), compared forty-three counselors' perception of their performance of various guidance functions with their principals' ratings of how they performed the same functions. The findings of this study are summarized below:

1. Both groups reported better than average initial acceptance by administrators, teachers, students and parents. Counselors' ratings were significantly higher only on initial acceptance of students.
2. Greater acceptance of non-teaching counselors was reported as these people gained experience.
3. There was no significant difference in ratings of the two groups on the performance of guidance functions.

Administrators' attitudes are particularly important since they set precedent in hiring and re-hiring of non-teaching counselors.

Wittner and Webser (1969) found counselors without teaching experience to be less dogmatic and more permissive, supportive and understanding than counselors with

teaching experience. The problem with these findings is that these differences were found during graduate training and may not necessarily continue after the non-teaching counselors gain experience in the schools.

These studies suggest the need for further research. There are some differences in the ways that teacher-experienced and non-teacher-experienced counselors perceive their initial effectiveness in the schools. Despite the restrictions on certification many counselors without teaching experience are working in our schools and can likely be helpful in future investigations of the issue. Do the differences found by Peterson and Brown dissipate with time? Some of their results seem to indicate this. Can these differences in self-perceptions be somewhat eliminated by offering a counseling internship to counselors-in-training who have not had teaching experience? How are non-teaching counselors actually accepted by the personnel and students in their schools? Are they judged to be effective counselors by their co-workers despite the alleged handicap of not having taught? Questions such as these can be answered only through research. Research can be done only if there are people in the schools to serve as subjects for studies. The standard counselor certification requirement of one to three years of successful teaching experience may "carry with it a more pervasive set of values which deter the emergence of new vocational roles in the school system" (Golann and Magoon,

1966, p. 85). Liberation of this requirement would open the door to experimentation and a new, possibly more exciting, breed of school counselor.

The Program and Internship

As the preceding research indicates, there are people within the field of education who believe that teaching experience need not be a prerequisite for counselor certification. With this background the program of training established by the University of Minnesota to prepare counselors who have not taught may be described.

The birth of this program arose from the hopes of integrating the guidance function more fully into the educational mainstream. In order to achieve this end counselor educators expanded the selection base to candidates without teaching experience. The rationale was that broadened cultural and academic experiences would encourage creative approaches to complex school situations. Within this framework the counselor is seen as something more than a technician who supplements administrative and teaching duties. Rather he is seen as one who functions in a helping relationship to influence values and effect behavior change - a more complimentary function within the educational process.

Provisions for the training and certification of a total of thirty students has been made through the Minnesota State Department of Education. To date five candidates have completed the course work and internship which comprise the program.

The program consists of two years of graduate study culminating in a Master of Arts degree in Educational Psychology and a Specialists' Certificate in Guidance and Counseling. The additional credits beyond the master's program give the candidate the opportunity to pursue courses in the social and behavioral sciences needed to make him the specialist that schools increasingly seek.

The program incorporates courses in statistics, testing and measurement, student personnel work, research, psychological foundations, history and philosophy of education and practicum and internship experiences.

Specialized aspects of the program included a counseling theory course and practicum that utilized the services of five instructors in a team teaching approach in three hour blocks of time. Theory and practical experiences in group counseling was also provided. Further choices were available in the areas of Educational Psychology and Curriculum and Instruction.

One unique factor considered most valuable by the five participants was the internship. This was a pilot project implemented within the Minneapolis public school system which placed student counselors in half-time counseling positions throughout the city. This experience gave the interns first hand exposure to the public school structure and procedures as well as classroom management problems. It proved to be an excellent opportunity to

translate the theoretical orientation of the first year's course work in a practical way.

Within each individual school the intern was responsible for a reasonable number of students, usually 150 to 200. Intern functions included program planning, personal orientation, group work, career development and in some instances instituting behavior modification practices.

Each intern had an in-school supervisor who was available to give immediate feedback and assistance concerning school activities. In addition, a University consultant and a representative from the Minneapolis schools central office provided liaisons between the school, the community and the University.

Flexibility was built into the internship program, and this encouraged students to attempt innovative programs without the haunting fear of failure experienced by most first year counselors. Failure was considered a legitimate learning experience and was dealt with accordingly. Interns were urged to take counseling out of the four walls of the office. In one instance this meant bringing guidance to an English classroom. The intern developed and taught a four week unit on identity.

One more built-in source of reinforcement was a part of the program. Bi-weekly seminars provided a ready and consistent network through which joys and depression, successes and failures could be shared. Experiences,

learnings and pitfalls incurred during the internship were capsulated in a booklet prepared by the five participants. This booklet has been shared with Minneapolis school principals and counselors and with prospective interns.

Specifics within the two year program have changed somewhat in an attempt to develop the most relevant course work and growth experiences. Because of the success of the first year the internship remains an integral part of the program. At this point the number of interns has almost doubled and other school systems are participating in this part of the counselor education program.

First Year on the Job

After all the philosophizing and all the theoretical and practical training, the real test comes with an employed counselor working in a school system. It is from this situation that the final answers to our questions will come. Only five counselors have been prepared under this special program to date. Their experiences, both tangible and perceived can be shared.

More concrete evidence for evaluation will be forthcoming. A questionnaire has been submitted to administrators, special services personnel, fellow counselors and teachers. It will provide data regarding each counselor's effectiveness as perceived by colleagues. This supplements continuing contacts and school visits by University personnel.

In the meantime subjective evidence has accumulated regarding the acceptance accorded each counselor. The first indication of this is that each counselor has been offered a second year contract. Each counselor had earlier been assured of a job in the system in which he interned. Each was offered positions in two or more school systems. All participants accepted positions in different suburban areas of Minneapolis. Those who could not accept a contract offer for the second year because of personal circumstances have been assured of getting a good recommendation to help him secure an out-of-state position. Verbal affirmation from superiors also attests to the satisfactoriness of these counselors and their work.

The counselors also have their own perceptions. They are open to feedback which validates their effectiveness. They have self-doubt. They are not all equally confident in all areas. But they consider themselves to be making a significant contribution, and they seek continued educational experiences which will add to their professional skill and personal strength.

One common goal has been realized. Each of the counselors finds that he has good working relationships with students. This perception is based upon some assumptions about student behavior. It is assumed that when a student specifically requests of a principal that he would like to involve one of us with his particular problem, the student sees us as one with whom he can confidently communicate and expect some resolution to come from it. Each of the counselors assumes that when a student seeks us out to share his joy as well as his problem he sees us as being a significant person to himself. We assume that when one of us is greeted with invitations to sit with students at lunch in the cafeteria, the students see us as a person to be trusted with friends and with the precious time of relief from academia. We assume that when one of us is greeted openly in the halls with fond repartee, the student sees us as a non-destructive, non-punishing person. We assume that when we work with a student to the point where both he and we can see change, there has

been an underlying mutual reinforcement which is the foundation of every good relationship.

Each counselor also has a good working relationship with most of the administrators. Differences of opinions as to how to reach similar goals seems to be the principal hurdle. As counselors we try to find choices for the student and to individualize the total program to fit specific needs. The administrators work from a viewpoint which considers how the student will effect and fit into the total program. Both philosophical aims seek to help the student be better prepared to live with himself and with others as a result of his educational experience. Some evidence that the counselors have been able to resolve these differences in perspective is suggested by their suggestions considered and acted upon. Their willingness to sometimes risk themselves and their ideas for a student has usually had a salutary effect.

Each counselor feels he has fairly good working relationships with teachers. Two of the counselors believe this is an area in which they could grow stronger. The third cries, "This is part of my need, so don't think I'm great because teachers are my friends." "But," the others reply, "it is part of our need, too. And you have succeeded." No one of the counselors under study appears to be alienated from faculty members because of non-teaching experience. Rather, each is part of a role-pattern

which separates the teacher from the counselor. When difficulties are experienced with a teacher, it is usually the same teacher with whom others are having difficulty too. It is the same teacher who will say to a counselor, "But you've forgotten how it is in the classroom."

This is not offered as an excuse nor to suggest that there is no possibility for change. Ideally, with experience and learning in human relations, each counselor should overcome this by applying his knowledge and compassion to human problems of development.

Certain assumptions are made about the behaviors of teachers with whom we have worked well. We assume that when a teacher approaches us to help with more than one student over a period of time, that teacher feels that we are involved in the educational process. We assume that when a teacher comes to us with her own personal need, she sees us as at least one who will listen. We assume that when teachers invite us to join in their personal fellowship, she sees us at least as a comfortable peer.

We feel accepted by our colleagues. If we err, we err in the direction that we fit too well, that we are too conforming.

But we think we have rippled the waters in our schools. What each counselor has done cannot be said to never have been done before. But each one has contributed uniquely in his time in his school. One counselor has assumed the job of deliberately reinforcing first year

teachers. Another has initiated small groups to work on problems of underachievement. One has been working on the prospects for a school within a school. One deliberately made himself more available to students by regularly eating lunch with them. One made himself available for group work in the classroom situation. One worked on new programs for career development. Some of the counselors have followed the traditional patterns, but much of their energies have been directed toward reaching out for the new.

The experience of these counselors has led them to question the reasons given for requiring teaching experience. To the argument that it is required by law, we say that laws can be changed. To the argument that administrators are reluctant to hire us, we say that we are visible evidence that they will and did, in fact, choose us over other applicants. To the argument that we have not demonstrated a basic commitment to education, we say that the assumption made here is that counseling is some kind of reward one receives after going through the purgatory of teaching. We cannot accept this. We have demonstrated our commitment through two years of graduate study including one year of half-time work in the school setting - a very prodigious program. The reward from this through our counseling need be no greater nor less than that which teachers should presumably experience.

To the argument that because of our lack of teaching experience we do not understand the classroom or the student-teacher relationship; we say this is true if one assumes that in order to help one must first experience identical feelings. Perhaps this is desirable when one examines the success of organizations such as Alcoholics Anonymous, which is built upon this premise. But this assumption then also limits the effects of therapists in treating all kinds of problems. We say that compassion, empathic understanding, knowledge of behavior and its effects and the resources of feeling common to all men make worthy substitutes for first hand experience which in and of itself yields very individualized results. Our internship gave us some insight. Our commitment to continued classroom and group experiences will give us more.

To the argument that because of our lack of teaching experience we do not have the trust and respect of the faculty we say that we have no overt evidence of this. We feel effective and accepted. But we would also welcome more concrete evidence to support or perchance disprove our feelings.

Each counselor has perceived limitations in performing efficiently in his job. We have concluded from our conversations with other first year counselors that the limitations are more the result of the new situation common to all new counselors than they are the effect of

lack of teaching experience. The handicaps include time taken for paper work, for finding out the sources of information, for learning about courses and teachers. We experienced the inadequacies and frustrations involved with not knowing the political "ins and outs" of the school, with not knowing what the expectations would be of us as counselors and of reconciling our own needs to these expectations, and with the revelation that what was hoped for was not realized: that of immediate competency. We are finding limits, but we are also discovering where our special talents may be used.

The question for counselors coming through this program is not whether we are deprived because we do not have teaching experience. The question is have we brought with us the skills and personal characteristics which will enable us to be good counselors. This is what must be answered by each counselor with or without teaching experience. In examining the history of the emergence of the school counselor as a professional person it appears that the teaching requirement was included de facto rather than emanating from a reasoned decision based on valid evidence. We believe that teaching experience might even be harmful to some, since it sets them in a behavioral mold which if not disturbed by other experiences would make them impervious to some of the realities in the non-academic world.

Specifically, some of the experience which we have brought includes college counseling, "Y" counseling, summer camping with teen-agers, summer employment of teen-agers and being a mother. If experiences such as these together with a carefully planned graduate program can make up for or even surpass those of teaching experience, then we should be successful. If they do not, then we may fail. Thus far we have felt more success than failure. So may it be.

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