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Trends and Changes in School Counselor CACREP Standards in the United States

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Abstract

Counseling and educational reform have been responsive to major societal change. This evolution is also reflected in counselor preparation. We examined changes in the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) school counselor preparation standards over four decades in the United States. Constant comparative analysis revealed substantial increases in school counselor preparation demands from 1982 to 2016. Data suggest persistent increases in the array and breadth of competency-based standards, including emergent foci (e.g., crisis response, addiction). Future considerations around school counselor identity, expectations and professional collaboration in school counselor preparation are considered.

Keywords: school counselor preparation, CACREP standards, content analysis

Since the establishment of school counseling in the United States, the role has evolved based on the needs of society (Ponton & Duba, 2009). Vocational guidance by teachers as an additional duty began in the late 1800s in response to the Industrial Revolution (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001). At the turn of the 20th century, the fundamentals of counseling evolved from an informal construct to an occupation—from lending an ear and offering advice to providing vocational direction, promoting mental health, and advocating for institutional change (Gladding, 2007). Opportunities, especially for vocational guidance, flourished in the wake of national and world events (e.g., World War I, the Great Depression). The National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958 stimulated considerable growth, almost quadrupling the number of counselors in American schools by providing considerable funding to prepare students for careers in mathematics and science (Bradley & Cox, 2001; Stone & Dahir, 2015.

More contemporary reforms to school counseling include developmental and organizational frameworks (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000), an equity focus (The Education Trust, 1997), accountability on results and standardized testing (e.g., through No Child Left Behind; NCLB; Dollarhide & Lemberger, 2006; Johnson & Johnson, 2002), as well as collaborative initiatives with career and technical education work with Perkins legislation (Packard et al., 2012; Perkins

Collaborative Resource Network, 2022, and within schools and across communities (Sabens & Zyromski, 2009). The introduction of a set of national school counseling standards in 1997 (Campbell & Dahir, 1997) made way for the introduction to the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model in 2003 (with revisions in 2005, 2012, and 2019) which aimed to further standardize the role across the United States (ASCA, 2019a).

More generally, the profession has seen changes to the role of counselors, regardless of setting. First emerging in 2005, the "20/20" initiative aimed to establish of a core set of principles to unify counseling professionals under one shared identity throughout the United States (Kennedy, 2008). Spearheaded by the American Counseling Association (ACA) and the American Association of State Counseling Boards (AASCB), and comprised of 31 counseling organizations in the United States, the initiative pushed for a stronger unified professional identity, parity in graduate programs, licensure portability across states within the United States, and an added focus on advocacy as part of the counselor's role (ACA, n.d.; Kaplan et al., 2014; Merlin et al., 2017). Until 2018, ASCA was a division of ACA (ACA, 2018) but now acts as a legally affiliated, but independent agency.

These different foci within the profession of counseling did not develop independently; rather, Bradley and Cox (2001) offered the illustration of "a ball of multicolored yarns" (p. 27), with each thread distinct and separate, yet all bound together. A complete history of the school counseling role in the United States. is out of the scope of this manuscript, but is readily available (see: Gysbers, 2010; Stone & Dahir, 2015). Most important, this growth and evolution of school counseling corresponded with movements toward professionalism and formalization of school counselor preparation in the United States.

School Counselor Preparation

A full accounting of the development of counseling preparation standards across all counseling specialties and organizations is vast and broad. The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) school counseling standards, however, provide a specific illustration of the emergence of professional standardization and specialization. In fact, rise of counseling in schools following the NDEA prompted the

Association of Counselor Education and Supervision's (ACES) five-year study of guidelines for the preparation of secondary school counselors (Collison, 2001; Stripling, 1967). At the same time, ASCA was engaged in studying the role of the school counselors (Fitzgerald, 1964). Shortly thereafter, the American Personnel and Guidance Association (APGA) presented a statement of policy intended to improve the quality of counselor preparation (Stripling, 1967). Perhaps not surprisingly, growth also prompted state departments of education to become interested in more specified roles of school counselors.

The varied studies and perspectives led to a somewhat contested creation of school counseling preparation standards. Most preparation standard creation emanated from faculty or counselor educators rather than practitioners. Position papers even noted the limited collaboration between counselor educators and secondary school counselors (Forster, 1977). Additionally, APGA and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) had competing ideas.

The first U. S. counselor preparation standards we could locate were from 1969 (Whiteley, 1969). Though some of these standards mirror contemporary standards put forth by CACREP, these 1969 standards are specific to student personnel services in higher education. A later iteration in 1973 carried over many of these standards from 1969 and list the eight core curricular areas that still exist today in contemporary CACREP standards (Dash, 1975). The eight core areas include professional orientation and ethical practice, social and cultural diversity, human growth and development, career development, helping relationships, group work, assessment, and research (Neukrug, 2015).

Early efforts to standardize accreditation gave way to the formal incorporation of CACREP sponsored by the ACA in 1981 (Bobby, 2013). CACREP, primarily informed by counselor educators, established a set of standards to govern institutions that seek accreditation of their professional preparation programs in counseling across all foci or specialties (termed "program areas" within CACREP). There are currently 917 CACREP accredited programs across 10 program areas: addiction counseling, career counseling, clinical mental health counseling, rehabilitation counseling, community counseling, college counseling, gerontological counseling, marriage, couple and family counseling, school counseling, and counselor education and supervision (CACREP, 2022b).

Of these 917 programs, 273 programs offer the school counseling program area. Not all school counseling programs across the United States are CACREP accredited, but CACREP is the most common national accreditation, and houses the most accessible directory and repository of programs. CACREP's establishment of accreditation standards introduced a measure of accountability and uniformity for school counselor preparation, as well as a recognized shared professional identity.

To date, CACREP has released six iterations of school counselor program area standards, beginning in 1985, with specific enumerated school counseling standards provided through 2016 (with an expected revision in 2023—as of this writing, the 2023 standards are under review). Each iteration of CACREP standards offers themes of change in school counselor preparation.

Research Question

It is common for school counselors in the United States to feel a discrepancy between their expected role based on how they were trained, and their actual role based on the knowledge and desires of school leaders (Cinotti, 2014). There is also an on-going conversation regarding whether school counselors should view themselves as primarily educators with counseling skills or counselors who happen to work in a school setting, with some tension in trying to balance education and mental health student needs (DeKruyf et al., 2013). Examining CACREP school counseling program area standards may shed light on the role that school counselor training programs have had in defining and clarifying the role. Our inquiry attempted to inform this work based on an important question: What are the major themes of change in CACREP preparation standards in school counselor education from 1985 to 2016?

Method

Data Source

By design, CACREP publishes revised standards every seven years. Although initial standards were released in 1982, the school counseling specialty standards introduced in 1985 have undergone five major revisions in 1988, 1994, 2001, 2009, and 2016. These revisions align with CACREP's vision statement and its commitment "to the development of standards and procedures that reflect the needs of a dynamic, diverse and complex society" (CACREP, 2022a, para. 3). As we are focused on the revisions or changes in school counseling standards specifically, our data source starts with the 1985 standards through 2016 — six sets of standards in all.

There is no consistent format for CACREP Standards (www.cacrep.org). They generally feature numbered or lettered headings with nested numbered or lettered items underneath, with some iterations (e.g., 2016 standards) having up to four levels of nestedness. Top level items usually relate to larger themes of the counseling and/or school counseling profession (e.g., foundations, knowledge and skills, consultation, leadership) with sub-items (i.e., subheadings and sub-standards) further specifying what these themes may look like in practice. Visually, CACREP standards are reminiscent of Ethical Standards (see ACA, 2014; ASCA, 2016).

It is important to note that this inquiry did not include school counseling standards prior to 1985, nor did it include an array of training standards that are common across all counseling specialties. Environmental and Specialized Studies standards emerged in the 1970s, but evolved into a first distinct Specialty Standards for School Counseling in 1985. Common core curricular standards for all specialties have remained mostly consistent, including the eight areas:

professional counseling orientation and ethical practice, social and cultural diversity, human growth and development, career development, counseling and helping relationships, group counseling and group work, assessment and testing, and research and program evaluation. They are not included in this investigation for school counseling specific standards.

Research Design

The research team used Constant Comparison Analysis (CCA) to analyze the CACREP School Counselor preparation standards data. CCA is a form of content analysis and is "one of the most commonly used qualitative data analysis techniques" (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011, p. 75), and was initially created to look at data collected over a series of rounds or stages (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011). CCA is also an appropriate method for analyzing and answering overarching, general questions about data (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). Moreover, historical documents (e.g., school counselor preparation standards over time) are an appropriate source of data for use with constant comparison analysis (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2012). Constant comparison analysis has previously been used in studies with documents on school-based topics (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2012).

We utilized a deductive process creating a priori codes for looking at the standards in each round of revisions to the school counseling CACREP standards. Our initial readings of the standards from 1985 to 2016 revealed dramatic changes between the initial standards (1985) and current standards (2016). The change in standards varied in intensity with minimal changes from 1985 to 2001, then large-scale changes in 2009, and again in 2016. This led to a conversation about how the structure (i.e., formatting, headings, subheadings, nestedness) seemed to change over time, with the specificity regarding expectations of school counselors in training taking the form of additions and deletions across each set of standards. Onwuegbuzie and colleagues (2012) refer to this initial exploration as axial coding, wherein researchers chunk data into similar categories. The axial coding process yielded three categories of changes that were coded as: Structural Changes, Additions, and Deletions to review the data. Structural Changes referred to changes to the formatting and themes of the CACREP standards themselves, whereas Additions and Deletions referred to changes in wording and the content within the standards.

Structural Changes included introductory information preceding the listing of standards, as well as major headings within the school counseling program area standards. Additions and Deletions were limited to core or meaningful counseling terminology. For this reason, we did not include prepositions and conjunctions (e.g., the, and) in the analysis, instead only focusing on language germane to counselor preparation. In consideration of Additions and Deletions, data previously identified as Structural Changes were not considered for these latter two categories, resulting in addition and deletion coding focused on the subheadings and sub-standards listed under major headings, and the specifics of what they entailed (e.g., setting of the internship experience, areas of expertise, specifics of recording hours). Though "thick description" is often key to transferability and trustworthiness in qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2016), these secondary data and theme categories provide limited context for additional depth or interpretation due to the brevity and clarity of the data.

The research team prospectively discussed potential bias prior to coding and agreed to code with scrutiny even when assumptions were made about terminology in counseling. For example, the team coded exact language instead of assuming "advising" is equivalent to "counseling" when used within the standards. A similar process in research procedures has been utilized to examine mental health reform policy (Shek et al., 2010) among other topics.

Research Team

The team consisted of five researchers—two professors of school counselor education and three graduate students. Both professors worked previously as middle school counselors. Both have worked with CACREP and ASCA in a variety of roles (e.g., board member, program and standard review). Perhaps relevant to these data, one author was prepared under the 1994 CACREP standards, the other under the 2009 CACREP standards. The graduate students were all enrolled in a masters of school counseling program under the 2016 standards and had taken classes in research methods.

Data Analysis

Researchers reviewed the standards independently by reading each iteration of school counseling area standards sequentially from 1985 through 2016. Each researcher then independently coded the data into smaller meaningful parts based on our predetermined categories – structural changes, additions, and deletions.

For credibility and dependability, the researchers then compared and discussed their findings to reach agreement on the coding. Generally, most coding reached 90-95% agreement from the initial review, with Structural Changes needing the most discussion. For example, the research team discussed how to code the change in format from the 2001 to the 2009 standards regarding the language "programs must provide evidence that student learning has occurred…" (CACREP, 2009, p. 39), and whether the inclusion of this statement should be considered an Addition or a Structural Change (agreement reached it was the latter).

These conversations yielded consensus data from which the changes in CACREP school counseling preparation standards were organized and evaluated. The research team then discussed the data for confirmability and to consider implications of changes over time. Our team used a constructivist approach to debate the meaning of the evolution of standards over time, and practiced reflexivity to ensure our own biases were considered in our interpretation. Particular attention was centered on potential bias from

school counseling and research experiences (Barry et al., 1999). These conversations led to triangulation of our constructions and speculations about patterns in the data which enhanced the rigor and trustworthiness of our findings (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007).

Results

Although we did not include the 1982 standards as part of our data source since school counseling environmental area standards (program area) were not yet established, we note the significance of the 1982 standards in laying the groundwork for the development and emergence of specialty standards in 1985. From 1985-1988, there was one major structural change, twelve additions, and one deletion. The revision from 1988-1994 showed two structural changes, five additions, and six deletions. Revisions from 1994-2001 showed zero structural changes, fourteen additions, and zero deletions. The 2001-2009 revisions were marked by one major structural change, sixteen additions, and two deletions, and the 2009-2016 revisions brought three structural changes, two additions, and six deletions. We next briefly discuss the data in these specific categories.

Structural Changes

Overall, there were eight major structural changes to the major headings within the school counseling program area CACREP standards from 1988 to 2016. First, beyond the initial introduction of specialty standards in 1985 which included the first school counseling specific standards, 1988 introduced enumerated sub-standards with specified areas of expected competency such as "history," "philosophy," "ethics," "organization and administration," and "appraisal," among others. The newly included headings of Environmental and Specialized Studies both focused on the specific roles and functions of school counselors within the enumerated sub-standards of: (a) 1. Organization & Administration; (b) 2. Counseling-Coordination-Consultation; (c) 3. Appraisal; (d) 6. Professional Ethics, Growth, & Development. Under the initial standards (1982), Specialized Studies was a one-paragraph nested item under the heading Environmental and Specialized Studies. Thus, the 1988 standards expanded and specified the differences between Environmental Studies and Specialized Studies.

The second structural change was the addition of a narrative paragraph before 1988's enhanced enumerated standards. This narrative paragraph spelled out the intent that all school counselors could facilitate K-12 student self-understanding, personal development and decision making. Further, this paragraph marked the first promulgation of school counselor service delivery through a comprehensive and developmental program. The third structural change came in 1994 wherein the aforementioned narrative paragraph was eliminated and replaced by more detail provided within existing enumerated standards, and the addition of a Clinical Instruction subheading which put forth requirements for an internship under the supervision of a certified school counselor.

Fourth, though structure was largely intact in the 2001 revision, 2009 saw a major expansion and change in headings that matched (e.g., assessment, research) and extended (e.g., leadership) the application of the common core curricular areas of CACREP – these eight core CACREP areas being: professional orientation and ethical practice, social and cultural diversity, human growth and development, career development, helping relationships, group work, assessment, and research. The fifth structural change (2009) included three of the eight top level headings within the school counseling standards mirroring core curricular content areas required of all CACREP programs, specifically: diversity and advocacy, assessment, and research and evaluation.

Sixth, also in 2009, the listing of clinical practice requirements was eliminated. This deletion, however, was related to broader structural changes in the entire CACREP standards, not just in school counseling. Seventh, and perhaps most significantly, the 2009 standards narrative put responsibility on counselor education programs to "...provide evidence that student learning has occurred…" (p. 39) for the first time, indicating a shift to outcome-based standards.

Eighth and finally, the 2016 standards continue narration language about preparing counselors to promote academic, career, and personal/social development of students, but changed from K-12 (kindergarten, age 5 through grade 12; ages 17-18) to P-12 (pre-school, ages 2-4 through grade 12; ages 17-18). The 2016 standards also feature simplified enumerated headings more closely resembling previous iterations (e.g., 1988, 2001). Although statements on evidence for student learning are no longer present, this expectation is reflected in broader restructuring of the full CACREP standards.

Additions

Arguably most consequential, the bulk of changes to CACREP school counseling program area standards have been the enhancement and expansion of expectations for school counselors in training. Throughout the decades, the role of school counselors has broadened in the United States. The first set of school counseling specific standards in 1985 built upon the 1982 CACREP standards and added specified training for the educational setting. This initial set of school counseling standards viewed school counselors as staff members tasked to manage individual and group counseling and consult with teachers. In the 1985 standards, the school counseling role evolved to counselors being viewed as programmatic and systematic leaders engaged in broad advocacy and collaboration.

Expectations for school counselors also expanded beyond providing individual, small and large group counseling and consultation with teachers. Under the 1988 standards, school counselors were being trained to coordinate testing programs, more intentionally consider diversity, and administer and interpret assessments to gain an understanding of student interests, abilities, and aptitudes. School counselors were also expected to continue

professional development, conduct occasional follow-up studies on graduates, and work closely with community agencies and outside specialists.

The revisions from 1988 to 1994 specifically marked an increase in the importance of school counselors aligning guidance curriculum with the total school curriculum, while also adhering to the ASCA ethical standards and guidelines. One of the most significant additions to school counseling standards came in 1994 with a statement requiring a 600-hour school counseling internship including 240 direct service hours.

Additions in 2001 specified 14 pillars of diversity such as race/ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, gender, and socioeconomic status that counselors were expected to be proficient in working with. The 2001 standards also called on counselors to look for alternative funding for their programs. The additive nature of the standards continued into the 2009 Standards, mentioning the expectation for programs to align with the ASCA National Model, and for counselors to advocate for the school counselor identity.

In addition to CACREP revisions generally adding to the roles and responsibilities of the school counselor, other additions included elaboration on the scope and use of specific terms. "Assessments" and "Data" first appeared in the CACREP standards in the 1980s in relation to school counselors placing students into classes based on aptitudes, interests, or abilities. The scope of "Assessments" and "Data" were broadened to include use in guiding and evaluating comprehensive school counseling programs through 1994 and 2001. Consequentially, the use of these terms continued to expand through the 2009 standards which included the expectation of school counselors as critical consumers of school counseling research.

Another concept introduced in the 2001 CACREP standards was a focus on systems theory, and school, family, community partnerships. These standards also connected personal characteristics of the counselor such as self-awareness and sensitivity to others with the ability to relate to diverse individuals, groups, and classrooms. The focus on school-community collaboration was expanded in the 2009 standards to incorporate counselors working to empower communities to act on behalf of students. This emphasis on systems-level work in the 2009 standards also included standards regarding school counselors' understanding of multicultural counseling concerns, the effects of stereotyping, and the capacity to provide programming designed to close achievement gaps. The revision between the 2009 to 2016 standards saw a reduction in size and specificity, marking the first set of standards that were smaller than their predecessor.

Deletions

The past three and a half decades of revisions to the CACREP standards have seen far fewer deletions than additions. Some deletions served to provide agency to school counselors' practice. Specifically, early versions of the CACREP standards were restrictive in some regards. For example, the 1982 standards specify "vocational choice theory" as part of the training for school counselors in lifestyle and career development. The specificity of theory to be taught by programs is deleted from the next revision of standards. Subsequent mentioning of the use of theory by school counselors is generalized thereby allowing counselors more autonomy in their approach.

Although school counselor self-awareness is a consistent idea throughout the many revisions, the methods by which CACREP recommends self-awareness to be achieved has changed. The 1982 standards included the use of audio and video tape recordings for school counselor reflection and self-analysis. The statement regarding the use of audio and video tape recordings is deleted with the next round of revisions and does not appear again.

The period between 1988 and 1994 saw a large number of deletions within school counseling CACREP standards. For example, the 1988 standards expected school counselors to conduct occasional follow-up studies on graduates, a standard that was not carried through to the next set of standards. The specific language on school counselors having a role in test coordination and interpretation of test scores was also dropped. Lastly, explicit mentions of professional development were eliminated during the revision to the 1994 standards.

Revisions from 1994 to 2009 saw few deletions. Small changes in language included "alcohol and drugs" being deleted in favor of "substances", and "K-12" changing to "P-12". Content-wise, the most striking deletion surrounds aspects of diversity school counselors were expected to consider in the 2001 standards some of which included race, ethnicity, cultural heritage, nationality, socioeconomic status, and family structure. In 2009 these groups are no longer specifically listed.

In contrast to the relatively few deletions between 1994 and 2001, the revision from 2009 to 2016 included several deletions in school counseling standards. The 2009 CACREP standards consisted of six pages under eight headings. By comparison, the 2016 CACREP standards are comprised of two pages under three headings. The major deletions between these two sets of standards include: discussion of the philosophy of the school counseling profession, mention of the ASCA National Model specifically with the 2016 standards opting instead for a general inclusion of "models of school counseling programs" (CACREP, 2016, p. 32). The concepts of school counselor identity, counselors' understanding of pedagogy and content knowledge, specificity of issues that affect student development, and discussion of community empowerment were also deleted between 2009 and 2016. Unlike the changes from 1982 through 2009, the 2016 CACREP standards represent a less comprehensive and specific set of standards, and are the shortest since 1985, the first year of school counseling specific standards. For reference, pure word count from standards edition was 1985-159 words, 1988-549 words, 1994-502 words, 2001-886 words, 2009-1259 words, and 2016-367 words.

Notably, some of the specifics removed between the 2009 and 2016 school counseling standards (e.g., school counselor identity, school counseling philosophy) can be

found in Section 2 of the 2016 CACREP Standards, under the Professional Counseling Identity heading. These concepts were previously found within specialty standards, but now appear as part of an overarching set of standards indicating movement towards a general, shared counselor identity regardless of specialty.

Discussion

An Expansive School Counselor Role

The overarching theme in school counseling program standards data, until the most recent edition, seems to be an increasing demand on school counselor candidates (via school counselor preparation breadth). The initial counselor preparation standards (i.e., 1982) were generalized for all counselors with environmental standards (e.g., school) appearing in 1985. These initial school counseling standards noted themes such as teaching expertise, reflective of an expansion of roles, duties, and competency outside of traditional counseling (i.e., a one-to-one theory-based counseling process). The results suggest the preparation for tasks specific to school counseling seemed to proliferate in these data when examined across iterations.

This is especially true considering the movement toward competency-based preparation standards in 2009 (termed outcome-based in this iteration). For example, even by a measure as simple as word count, the standards in 1985 have almost one tenth of the number of words that the 2009 standards do (159 and 1,259 words, respectively). This trend of expanding the expectations for school counselors is not unique to CACREP School Counseling standards. It mirrors other outside influences on school counselor preparation seeking to incorporate more (or different) foci. For example, The Education Trust's Transforming School Counseling Initiative (Martin, 2010) sought an increased role for school counselors in academic achievement. Ultimately this focus was not fully recognized in many of the CACREP school counseling program standard area revisions (Dahir & Stone, 2011). Related, other movements have prioritized college access and college admissions counseling (Better Make Room, 2022). Authors (Pérusse et al., 2017) suggest school counselors play a key role in informing and helping students plan for other, non-college postsecondary options, especially for traditionally underserved students.

Although they do not appear specifically in the data, generally, these calls to expand, enhance or change school counseling preparation may also reflect the increasing client needs, demands and expectations of P-12 public education (McGlothlin & Davis, 2004). For example, the shift from a K-12 focus to a P-12 focus for school counselors is also in line with the international trend towards expansion of Early Childhood Education (ECE) services (Hong et al., 2015; Meier, 2015). The 2009 standards paid additional attention to the environments and communities where students live, and school counselors' role in closing achievement gaps.

As early as 1968, writings intimate a concern that specialty foci may diffuse energy in the creation of standards – that creating common standards for all counselors became

a more accepted approach (Forster, 1977). At the same time in 1977, ACES acknowledged and welcomed specialized needs for different settings (ACES, 1977). It appears much like today (e.g., "20/20"; ACA, n.d.), where different opinions exist regarding the general or specific nature of school counselor preparation. The complex relationships that exist between ASCA, CACREP, and ACA speak to the multitude of influences that inform school counselor preparation in professional associations alone. The recent distancing between ASCA and ACA (ACA, 2018) and the creation of preparation standards by ASCA (2019c) suggests uncertainty of what counselor preparation will look like in coming decades.

Outcome Based Standards

Beyond the increasing demands on the role of the school counselor and competing ideas in professional organizations, 2009 saw a significant shift to outcome-based standards – that is a shift from focuses on what students should know to what, specifically, students should be able to do (Hartel & Foegeding, 2004). Although the first five sets of CACREP preparation standards (1982, 1985, 1988, 1994, 2001) were termed "competency-based", the 2009 standards required evidence of specifically on what school counselor trainees should be able to do, with each standard being started with a verb (e.g., knows, understands, demonstrates, identifies). The oversight on candidate assessment (what students can do) as compared to program assessment (what programs teach about) increased the demands on counselor preparation programs and the rigor in school counselor preparation in 2009 (Swank & Lambie, 2012; Urofsky & Bobby, 2012). When the increased expectations of school counselors are combined with the increased evidence required of student competence in training programs, the reach, complexity and demands of school counselor preparation are enormous.

Limitations

These data provide a narrow but important source to examine school counselor preparation over time. Using U. S. school counseling specialty accreditation standards provide generalizable, but less nuanced or detailed understanding about school counselor preparation over time. This study did not include detailed analyses of the early evolution of standards (1960s-70s), nor the evolution of the foundational core standards in CACREP. For example, the core requirements around clinical training hours, faculty expertise in school counseling, clinical supervision, faculty/ratios, movement to a required 60-hour program, a merger and collaboration with the Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE) and more are certainly influential to school counselor preparation.

In particular, core curricular standards for all counseling specialties were not a part of this inquiry. CACREP's decision to pare down specialty standards in 2016 in favor of generalized standards may have shifted some standards previously found within specialties to be located in sections

related to counselor identity. For example, while the diversity and equity focus of CACREP School Counseling Standards seems to have hit a peak in 2001 (e.g., the 2001 standards specify race/ethnicity, age, gender, religion, and other aspects of identity not mentioned in 2009 or 2016) there are extensive core curricular standards that still do. Given the recent rise in public attention to issues of equity, police brutality, gun violence, and marginalization in the United States (Diemer et al., 2020) and calls for school counselors to be social justice advocates (Bemak & Chung, 2005), it would not be surprising if future iterations of CACREP School Counseling standards (and other program/specialty areas) re-included these topics.

Along with data limitations, researcher bias (e.g., the actual experiences as a school counselor, CACREP and ASCA involvement) may have influenced the interpretation of standards, and subsequent discussions of their implications. Despite the limitations, the content on school counselor program area standards, attention to reflexivity and trustworthiness and resulting analysis provide guidance and frame debate about historical trends, current and future school counselor preparation.

Future Research

There are numerous considerations and areas for research on the future of school counselor preparation. Core curricular standards, complexity of counseling specialties, state licensure and different preparation standards need further research. The evolution of school counseling expectations somehow moved to be more specific (e.g., the enumerated tasks, roles, functions) and complex (e.g., complicated functions like leadership or advocacy) simultaneously. Development of the breadth of school counselor knowledge and skill versus the depth of knowledge and skill are difficult to resolve. State boards of education in the United States set their own standards and still vary quite a bit in terms of school counselor credentialing. Similarly, the emergence of ASCA's own version of School Counselor Preparation Standards (ASCA, 2019c) despite long-standing CACREP standards adds complexity. Differences around the American educational system, or education policy, or the role in mental health or knowledge of psychopharmacology presents a new, bifurcated agenda for school counselor preparation programs to consider. In the end, the actual content and requirements in school counselor preparation (e.g., CACREP, ASCA, state boards of education) are ripe for further research and debate.

Some (e.g., Romanowski, 2020) have pushed against the use of U.S.-based accreditation being transferred to other countries, arguing that it's a form of neocolonialism that undermines cultural norms. Despite this caution, U.S.-based school counseling models have been used as a template for other countries (e.g., China, Turkey; Köse, 2017; Shi, 2018). Though debate about school counselor role continues, the United States has a relatively well-established, standardized set of training expectations, especially when compared to other countries (Köse, 2017; Nguyen-Thi et al., 2020; Shi, 2018). Most scholarship suggest school counseling is a more

emergent profession internationally (e.g., India, Israel, Vietnam; Akos et al., 2014; Heled & Davidovitch, 2020; Pham & Akos, 2020). International counselor educators looking to establish more consistency in training programs may consider CACREP or the new ASCA standards as a possible template to inform their country's own standards when coupled with a country's norms, values, and role expectations. While some suggest the school counselor role is ill-defined, and collaboration with stakeholders is lacking (e.g., Malaysia; Kok & Low, 2017), the issue may be more universal – that school counselor (or those serving in a comparable role) expectations are just extremely diverse and expansive.

Conclusion and Implications for School Counseling

For decades, scholars have bemoaned role conflict and ambiguity for school counselors (see Blake, 2020; Levy & Lemberger-Truelove, 2021). However, one way to interpret our analyses of the CACREP preparation standards data is that the school counselor role is neither in conflict nor ambiguous, but evolving, expansive and context dependent. The school counseling literature is replete with dozens of other or related roles or functions recommended for school counselors. These include but are not limited to roles in IEP/504 and special education (Geddes Hall, 2015), multitiered systems of support (MTSS; Ziomek-Daigle et al., 2016), trauma education (Chatters & Liu, 2020), advocating for immigrant students (Goh et al., 2007) and more. These expectations are further complicated by the varied desires of stakeholders in schools (Cervoni & DeLucia-Waack, 2011). For example, a principal or headmaster may have expectations on student test scores, while students desire support for social needs, sexual identity, career readiness or any number of developmental needs. Additionally, the most recent CACREP standards (2016) are broad and provide significant room for interpretation.

The preparation and practice of contemporary school counselors indeed are both a challenge. CACREP standards, ASCA competencies and National Model, and state guidelines and evaluation tools provide a varied and extensive foundation. Empirical research, policy and emerging trends also need to be considered regarding the priorities, content, assignments, site placements and supervision experiences of counselors in training. Most importantly, school counselor educators need to balance comprehensive preparation with acceptance, understanding and compassion for the varied and contextual demands on the practicing school counselor. No matter the preparation standards, school counselors will need continued professional development to ensure competence in serving the schools and communities where they work. Student, cultural, and community needs should dictate priorities, approaches, and collaborations. Together, all involved in the school counseling profession will have to navigate the desires for a common identity with the multiplicity of students, schools, and local communities.

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