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Janice Elaine Tucker

Ouachita Baptist University

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HIGH SCHOOL GUIDANCE COUNSELING AS
A VOCATION

A Research Paper
Presented to
Dr. Weldon E. Vogt

for
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90

by
Janice Elaine Tucker

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HIGH SCHOOL GUIDANCE COUNSELING AS A VOCATION

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to explore the field of high school guidance counseling as a vocation. The discussion includes information regarding guidance counseling in the United States in general and Arkansas specifically. The personal and educational requirements for guidance counseling are discussed as well as the requirements for establishing an adequate counseling program in a high school.

Counseling procedures and problems are included because counseling is one of the basic responsibilities of the guidance counselor; however, these areas are discussed only generally. A detailed study would constitute a separate paper.

STATUS OF GUIDANCE COUNSELING

Guidance counseling in public schools is a relatively recent addition but a most important one. The need for trained counselors in public schools was recognized by our national government when the National Defense Education Act of 1958 included Title V-A, which provides for reimbursement to local schools for a portion of the counselor's salary. Since 1946, Arkansas has furnished a portion of the salary to local schools for guidance counselors.¹

¹Jim Paul Franks, "Evaluation of Guidance Services in Arkansas for 1966-67," Division of Guidance Services, Arkansas State Department of Education. Little Rock, Arkansas, 1967. (Mimeographed.)

Data supplied by the United States Office of Education, Department of Health, Education and Welfare, estimates the number of counselors in 1960 in United States schools at about 29,336 with 12,556 working less than half-time. In full-time equivalents the number would be about 18,681.²

The Arkansas State Department of Education reported two hundred forty counselors employed in reimbursed guidance programs in Arkansas schools during 1966-1967. Two hundred of these were employed in full-time programs and 35 in half-time programs. Five of these full-time counselors were in pilot elementary programs. This is theoretically the equivalent of 217 full-time counselors.³

REQUIREMENTS FOR GUIDANCE COUNSELORS

The requirements for counselor certification for secondary schools in Arkansas follow:

1. A six-year secondary teaching certificate
2. Two years' teaching experience in public schools
3. One year work experience other than teaching
4. A master's degree in guidance and counseling
 - A. A minimum (3 semester hours) in each of the following areas is required:
 - (1) Principles and Practices of the Guidance Program
 - (2) Analysis of the Individual
 - (3) Occupational and Educational Information
 - (4) Counseling Techniques
 - (5) Organization and Administration of the Guidance Program
 - (6) Group Procedures in Guidance
 - (7) Supervised Practice in Counseling

²Edward G. Hoerber, The School Counselor. (New York: The Center for Applied Research in Education, Inc., 1966), p. 5.

³Franks, op. cit., p. 13.

B. The remaining hours for the master's degree shall be selected from a minimum of two of the following related areas: -

- (1) Guidance
- (2) Statistics
- (3) Research
- (4) Educational Philosophy
- (5) Curriculum
- (6) Psychology
- (7) Sociology
- (8) Business and Industrial Orientation

5. Requests for certification must be accompanied by a recommendation of the parent institution.

School counselors, according to nation-wide surveys, come almost universally from the teaching ranks and the majority from the school where they were teaching. However, this one characteristic is just about the only one that guidance counselors can be said to have in common. Although undergraduate majors of participants in programs of counselor education differ, one follow-up study found that majors in education (alone or combined with another subject) led the list (30 per cent), followed by majors in social sciences (17 per cent), psychology (14 per cent), biological and physical sciences (9 per cent), physical education (6 per cent), mathematics (4 per cent), business (3 per cent), English (3 per cent), foreign languages (2 per cent), and other majors (less than 2 per cent).⁵

In a report for the Commission on Guidance in American Schools, G. Gilbert Norris found that the school counselor

⁴Leroy Pennington, "Guidance Services in Arkansas Public Schools, Division of Guidance Services, State Department of Education, July, 1967, p. 6. (Mimeographed.)

⁵Roebler, op. cit., p. 55.

is likely to be male (two samples show 64 per cent and 51 per cent), the elementary counselor to be female (69 per cent). The average age is slightly over forty, and a substantial majority possess a master's degree (89 per cent and 70 per cent for secondary schools and 60 per cent for elementary school counselors). The following activities other than teaching experience have at one time or another been associated with the selection of school counselors: meeting the public, counseling, social work, youth activities outside school, working way through college, business or industry, travel, and occupational research.⁶

Opinions regarding counselor's personal characteristics have shown variability, yet several characteristics have appeared regularly in literature concerning the selection of guidance counselors. These seven areas of personal development are the most often considered:

1. Interpersonal relationships
2. Personal adjustment
3. Scholastic potentialities and educational background
4. Health and personal appearance
5. Leadership ability
6. Philosophy of life
7. Professional dedication⁷

STANDARDS FOR A GUIDANCE PROGRAM

Arkansas standards for a guidance program require that the counselors shall meet all the state certification requirements. The most desirable ratio is one counselor for each

⁶Roeber, loc. cit.

⁷Ibid., pp. 55-57.

three hundred students. A full-time counselor should never be assigned more than five hundred students. Arkansas standards also state that combinations of principal-counselor and coach-counselor are not acceptable. Study hall supervision is also not to be a part of the counselor's duties.

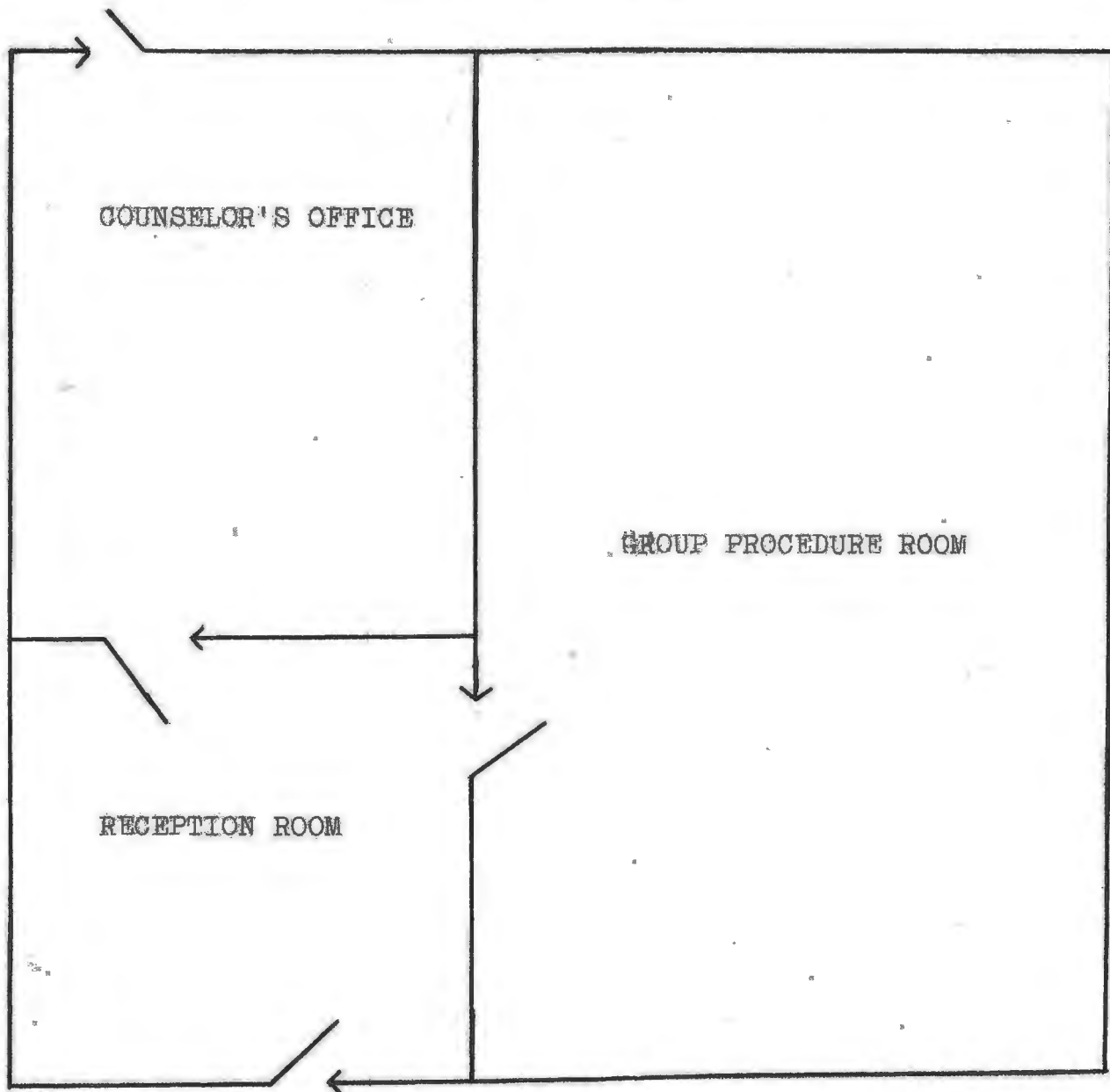
Certain facilities should be furnished for the best results in a counseling program. Each counselor needs a private office for counseling, a reception room or outer office for clerical help, and a small group testing, a large testing room for major testing and group guidance activities, sufficient office equipment (cabinet for cumulative records should be metal or fire resistant and have a lock), adequate materials for a testing program, and a loose-leaf file of occupational information. (See Figure 1.) A counselor needs secretarial help to release him to perform the professional duties for which he was trained.⁸

THE ROLE OF A GUIDANCE COUNSELOR

Because the counselor's position is relatively new in American schools, it has not yet been thoroughly and universally defined; lacking an exact definition of their unique duties and the proper preparation to perform them, some counselors have created confused images of what a guidance counselor really is. Opinions as to what work a counselor should do are now nearly as varied as the number of sources consulted.

⁸Pennington, op. cit., pp. 11-12.

FIGURE 1: FACILITIES*



POINTS TO CONSIDER IN LOCATING THE ABOVE FACILITIES

1. Near but separate from the administrative offices both physically and in the minds of the students.
2. Near or in the flow of student traffic.
3. Reasonable proximity to source of supply of students - studyhall, library, etc.
4. Common waiting rooms for principal and counselor should be avoided by all means.
5. In the major complex of school buildings - isolated offices should be avoided.

*Reproduced from "Guidance Services in Arkansas Public Schools," State Department of Education, July, 1967, p. 15. (Mimeographed.)

Students, teachers, school administrators, parents, and counselors themselves all have somewhat different ideas, too. However, a few broad areas of responsibility are consistently listed by all of these. A recent statement from the Commission on Guidance in American Schools has listed four major activities for school counselors:

1. Counseling students on matters of self-understanding, decision making, planning, using both the interview and group situations.
2. Consulting with staff and parents on questions of student understanding and student management.
3. Studying changes in the character of the student population and interpreting this information for the school administration and to curriculum-development committees.
4. Performing a liaison function between other school and community counseling resources and facilitating their use by teachers and students.⁹

The work of the counselor as defined by the Arkansas Board of Education involves service to the individual pupil, supplying information about the pupil and his environment to the teachers to enable them to teach more effectively, working with the school administrator in gathering and interpreting facts about the total program of the school in order to meet the needs of the individual pupil, and supplying leadership in the development of this guidance program.¹⁰

It is advisable for a counselor to make a cumulative record for each pupil in which will be kept information regarding

⁹Roeber, op. cit., p. 16.

¹⁰Pennington, op. cit. p. 6.

family background, health and physical status, scholastic records, aptitude, ability, achievement, interest, and other needed test results, activity records, honors and special recognition, and counseling notes. In addition to the personal counseling conferences, in which should be spent a minimum time allotment of one hour a year per pupil, an adequate information service should be provided to make current educational and occupational requirements available to students. An effective service can also be rendered when the counselor maintains a close working relationship with local employment agencies.¹¹

The best test for any guidance program is how well the students it served were able to function in their society. In order to rate a guidance program, therefore, a periodic contact with former students--graduates and drop-outs--is essential¹²

COUNSELING PROCEDURES.

The most important function of the guidance counselor, as implied by his title, lies in his helping relationships with students.¹³ Counseling has been defined as "an interacting relationship between two individuals where one, the counselor, is attempting to help the other, the counselee, to

¹¹Ibid., p. 5.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Roeber, op. cit., p. 23.

better understand himself in relationship to his present and future problems."¹⁴ Out of the counseling relationship should come growth and insight for both the counselee and the counselor. The growth for the counselee should enable him to live more fully; the growth for the counselor should better prepare him for his future helping relationships with other students.¹⁵

In most cases the desired result for counseling is not merely finding a solution for an immediate problem but leading the counselee to think for himself so that he will be able to solve other problems as well. Often counseling concerns itself with changing attitudes rather than behavior. Counseling always involves emotion and relationships between people.¹⁶

One of the most basic issues in counseling revolves around the role which the counselor should assume in the counseling process. No one role has been determined to be the best. It is a matter which the counselor sometimes decides unconsciously and often decides because of the nature of a particular case.

The authoritarian role is sometimes a necessary one for the counselor to assume, but it often is more of a function of his personality rather than a result of any personal

¹⁴James F. Adams, Problems in Counseling: A Case Study Approach (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1964), p. 1.

¹⁵Roeder, op. cit., p. 25.

¹⁶Adams, op. cit., p. 2.

conviction. However, there is a type of counseling that is counselor-centered but not authoritarian. This counselor-centered technique is often directed toward the giving and receiving of information, not toward the problems of the applicant. It could probably be most effectively used with superficial problems rather than deep-seated ones.

In client-centered counseling, the counselor feels that the time is the counselee's to use as he wishes and attempts to create in the mind of the counselee that he is interested in him and respects him as an individual. The major responsibility of the counselor is to insure that the counselee has a clear comprehension of all the issues which bear upon his problem; that the counselee understands to the best of his ability his own motivation; and insofar as the information is pertinent to the problem, that the counselee has this information available.

In client-centered-non-directive counseling, the counselor respects the integrity and personal autonomy of the individual and assumes that the individual has the capacity to solve his own problems. He maintains an attitude of willingness and acceptance, is permissive, and tries to see the situation as it appears to the counselee.

Eclectic-counseling attempts to use any of the other methods which has pragmatic value. Often a person who is inadequately trained claims to be an eclectic counselor.

However, many well-trained counselors believe that employing the best of all methods is constructive.¹⁷

Vocational counseling is often a part of the high school counselor's responsibilities. Vocational counseling involves basically the normal problems of normal people. The period of life that runs roughly from 15 years to 25 years of age is a growing-up stage in which an adolescent usually explores various fields. A typical high school student will select and discard six or eight occupations while he is in school. This is the period when the student is attempting to find out what constitutes adult behavior and what roles he wants to accept in life, which will include his vocational plans and selections.¹⁸

A person's self-concept is basic to his choice of a vocation. It determines largely his motivation in life, his behavior, and ultimately his adjustment and satisfaction in life. According to this theory, the occupation a person chooses should be one in which the individual expects to be able to be the kind of person he sees himself as being.

A person, therefore, can make an intelligent decision regarding what to do with his life only if he understands himself. The task of the counselor is "not to diagnose and describe a person's attributes to him, but to help him gain

¹⁷Adams, op. cit., pp. 5-11.

¹⁸Charles F. Kemp, The Pastor and Vocational Counseling. (St. Louis, Missouri: The Bethany Press, 1961), pp. 21-25.

an insight into his own feelings."¹⁹

It is also necessary for a student to have a clear understanding of all that a specific vocation involves before he can be sure that it is right for him. This is very difficult in light of the fact that there are more than 20,000 ways to earn a living.

One study of the interests of high school youths showed that 61.1 per cent were interested in entering a professional field in which only 4.4 per cent of the labor force was involved. Only 8.8 per cent of these students were interested in the agricultural or mechanical arts, while 61.1 per cent of the labor force was engaged in these fields. Occupational information and educational guidance must be made available to the student before he is qualified to make a wise decision.²⁰

A similar study of 2,700 high school students found that 25 per cent of the boys who listed the professions as their vocational choice had IQ's lower than is required for college entrance or success.²¹ This does not mean that these students will fail any more than high ability means that a student will succeed. Motivation plays an important role in the matter; however, test results and intelligence ratings are good indications of how well a person will perform in an occupation.

¹⁹Kemp, op. cit., p. 26.

²⁰Ibid., p. 27.

²¹Ibid., p. 31.

Making a vocational choice is a process which requires time and can be done only by the individual involved. In choosing a vocation, a person must consider his whole philosophy of life. During this time the vocational counselor stands beside the person as a guide, not as a dictator. Charles Kemp writes:

He has the high privilege of sharing with a person as he works through one of the most important and far-reaching decisions in his life. In one sense he shares his very destiny. This is a sacred responsibility.

The "Philosophy of Guidance Services" of the State Department of Education states that:

All pupils have problems. . . Counseling (the individual conference) is the heart of the guidance program. . . Most pupils need help and counsel with their emotional, social, and personal problems. A well trained counselor is capable of supplying this help. . . The school has a responsibility to the adults of the community and should provide counseling services to meet their needs. . .²²

From this statement, it can be seen that a counselor will be expected to help students with all kinds of problems.

There are many questions yet unanswered about counseling procedure. One of these is: who initiates the interview? Recent studies indicate that an interview arranged by the counselor is not inherently bad or good. It may or may not result in a self-referral type of commitment by a counselee,

²²Ibid., p. 34.

²³Pennington, op. cit. p. 4.

but it can provide an opportunity for the counselee to clarify his expectations for future counseling. Success depends, to a large extent, on the counselee's willingness to assume some responsibility for participation during the interview and for further contacts with the counselor.²⁴

Another controversial aspect of counseling involves the proper division of responsibility between counselee and counselor. The question of responsibility can be reduced to:

(1) whether a counselor follows a series of identifiable steps, such as analysis, synthesis, diagnosis, prognosis, counseling, and follow-up, and assumes that a counselee with added information about himself and his environment (largely provided by the counselor) is able to make decisions and plan for himself; or (2) whether a counselor concentrates upon clarification of a counselee's attitudes and assumes that a reorganization of attitudes frees a counselee's energies for higher forms of planning and adjustment.

Research has not proven that one method is better than another. Robert Gallis proposes in his The Journal of College Student Personnel that:

(a) lack of experience can be dealt with most effectively by counselor discovery and interpretation, and (b) distortion in perceptions can be most effectively dealt with by client self-discovery.²⁵

This distinction is important for the school counselor. If he is regularly confronted by large numbers of pupils

²⁴Roerber, op. cit., pp. 25-26.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 26-27.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 27.

who need information about themselves as a part of their normal development, the counselor may play an active part in supplying and helping to interpret information from tests, information about learning, occupations, or educational opportunities, as well as actual try-out experiences, to help pupils master tasks.²⁷

Another important issue in counseling is the division of responsibility concerning decision-making. In our culture, students are generally given a lot of freedom in making decisions. Therefore, a combination of independent actions and personal responsibility has been accepted as a goal for self-development. A "good decision" is one in which:

... . the individual who makes it is completely willing to take the consequences. In most cases the counselor would hope that the course a client decides to take is one in which he can make good grades or that the occupation he chooses will be one in which he will find success and satisfaction. But it is quite possible for a person to decide that it is necessary for him to take the risk involved in a field where no certainty exists. If he is willing to face failure if and when it confronts him and is ready to change to a less preferred alternative if circumstances demand that he do so, who is to say that his decision is a bad one? Perhaps we should never have had the prized works or our great composers, artists, and writers had there not been young men who were willing to take such risks.²⁸

A counselor's task in this matter is twofold. He must understand decision-making expectations which are appropriate to various maturing levels, and he must help others--such as parents and teachers--to understand these expectations.²⁹

²⁷ Ibid., p. 27.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 28.

In a case history cited by Mr. Adams, definite problems arose as a result of the guidance counselor's serving as a teacher and as a detention-hall supervisor on certain occasions. The counselor had Joan, the counsellee, as a student in his class and in the detention-hall. It was difficult for him to assume a triple role; and it was even more difficult for Joan, a girl with emotional problems already, to confide in him at one time and respect his authority at another. Partially because of this complex situation, the counselor was unable to help her. If at all possible, the counselor should be free to devote his time to counseling duties only.²⁹

Besides individual conferences, a counselor may be able to help students know themselves better through group procedures. A counselor can defend the use of group procedures because it is a way he can reach a larger number of students. However, there is no evidence that individual conferences and group procedures can be used interchangeably.

In group discussions the counselor may reflect and clarify what is said, or he may act as an observer. In some situations it is also acceptable for him to lecture. Such group procedures may be valuable for the orientation of the members, for solving common personal or social problems, for dealing with problems of a particular group of which the members are a part, or for giving information concerning vocational or educational facilities. The guidance counselor might find

²⁹ Adams, op. cit., pp. 32-35.

group discussions an effective means for counseling with teachers and parents about common problems, also.³⁰

CONCLUSION

This paper has been an attempt to discover what a person can expect from high school guidance counseling as a vocation and what will be expected of him as a counselor. A person must be well trained in all areas of counseling and have a thorough knowledge of himself as a person before he can attempt to understand others. This involves a great deal of effort and promises to be frustrating at times, but the task of helping others find themselves should be in itself rewarding.

³⁰ Abraham Luchins, Group Therapy: A Guide. (New York: Random House, 1964), 98-99.

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