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THE NEED, FUNCTION, AND THEORY OF ELEMENTARY COUNSELING

ABSTRACT: A review of the literature on elementary counseling was made in an attempt to determine the status of this field. Specific issues involving need, function, and theory of elementary counseling were discussed.

Elementary school guidance in the United States is growing with great rapidity. An investigation (Van Hoose & Vafakas, 1968) revealed a total of 3,837 elementary counselors (K-6). A replication study (Van Hoose & Kurtz, 1970) indicated a total of 6,041 elementary counselors, representing a substantial increase. These facts certainly imply that elementary school guidance is well established and apparently supported in the United States. One wonders if this guidance movement that has gained such impetus in the United States will follow the same pattern in Canada as has been the case with secondary guidance. If the Province of Alberta is an indication, the elementary guidance movement is barely moving. A Provincial survey of Alberta (Altmann & Herman, 1970) found 62 people employed in an elementary guidance capacity during the 1968-70 school term. Ten of these people were trained as elementary counselors and were employed full time. The remaining 52 people were mainly visiting teachers or consultants who were also serving in a guidance capacity. The number of "helping" specialists is hardly impressive when the survey included 205,671 elementary school children.

The increased growth of this field in the United States suggests a recognition and an endorsement of elementary guidance. However, one must not fail to consider the financial support of the federal

government of the United States when considering the field's rapid growth (Title V of the National Defence Education Act). Will the field of elementary guidance gain the same support from administrators, teachers, and parents in Canada? If the program is to gain endorsement specific needs of elementary children, functions of elementary counselors, and approaches to working with elementary children will have to be defined. It was the purpose of this investigation to determine the status of these crucial factors.

Endorsing Forces

While some experts in the field of counseling feel there would be minor or no variations in comparing elementary and secondary counselor duties, the matter is still unresolved. With the overwhelming changes taking place in society today, children are presented with many stressful and seemingly unanswerable situations. Nitzschke and Hill (1964) view elementary children confronted by a vast array of needs including:

> 1. . . . to be mature in their understanding, their acceptance, and their sense of responsibility regarding themselves. 2. . . . to receive the fullest possible education to enable them to find their most productive place in the world of work. 3. . . . to mature in learning how to make wise choices, how to plan their lives sensibly, and how to solve their problems in a rational manner and also with a high sense of moral values. 4. . . . to develop those values, behaviors, and insights which enable them to live with a minimum of fruitless friction and a maximum of maturity in social attitudes and skills (p. 27).

Woodroof (1970) claims a need for elementary counseling and guidance by emphasizing the rapid social change in our society which is intensifying urban problems. He feels that because young children are constantly uprooted they have to cope with far more pressure and responsibilities today. Children find:

> It is difficult to establish a feeling of belongingness to home, friends, neighborhood, and school. Overcrowded homes and schools create tensions among children and between children and adults . . . more mothers are working . . . family life seems to be disintegrating . . . schools are getting bigger and bigger and more impersonal. The largeness of a school can destroy a child's sense of individuality; he becomes part of a large crowd. The result is often a loss of respect for people and time-honored values (pp. 29-30).

The many developmental stages and stresses taking place within and around a child during the formative ages of 5-12 would certainly demand the availability of a counselor in the elementary school.

In addition, the diverse individual differences in children as related to rate of development must also be understood, constantly considered, and competently dealt with. Piaget (1933) confirms this by suggesting that children advance through different stages of cognitive devel-

opment at various rates and levels of emotional strain. These developmental trends of children certainly give us clues of individual potentiality, but counselors must be available and perceptive to those needs if we are to be of greater assistance to our children. If we fail to concern ourselves with these crucial stages of child development, and the serious consequences of undetected physical, social, and emotional symptoms in our children, we are guilty of a serious oversight. The developmental years demand a great deal of clarification and interpretation from trained personnel. If recognition of difficulties can be made at an early stage, we may be instrumental in influencing changes and preventing future difficulties. Smith (1967) feels when professional and understanding help is not available, unheeded problems lead to our school dropouts, underachievers, slow learners, our physically and intellectually handicapped, and emotionally and socially disturbed children. Perhaps facts such as those presented by Dimick and Huff (1970) justify the development of elementary counseling:

> Let us assume that you are viewing the "average American elementary school classroom" of about thirty students. On the basis of our best predictions and judgements, this is what we will see. One or two of these students are or will become seriously neurotic. Four of them already have emotional problems. Seven of their marriages will end in divorce. One will become a problem drinker or alcoholic, and if the present trend continues, three of them will be hospitalized at some time for mental illness. As we view this group of faces and attempt to determine which of the children will be high school drop-college, we must also look at who among the group will be outs, who will go to college, and who will graduate from victims of suicide. Mental disturbances incapacitate more people than all other health problems combined, and mental patients occupy more than half of the country's hospital beds (p. 19).

The facts are frightening and our children comprise these facts. How often have we heard a teacher, counselor, or parent say "I told you so" or "I could have predicted he would wind up that way." These statements suggest that children present evidence of their needs, however many times we are unwilling or unavailable to do anything about it. Research evidence (Gluck & Gluck, 1950; Glueck & Glueck, 1959) indicates that potentially maladjusted or potentially delinquent children can be identified at an early age. It would seem plausible that these findings would apply to most problem areas.

Due to the fact that elementary counseling is still in its infancy stage, there is very little counseling research to support the program. The support has to be given by concerned parents, teachers, administrators, and other "helping" specialists. The needs and stresses of the time have been defined.

Functions of the Elementary Counselor

A common view held by many writers is that the usual guidance services available at the secondary level should be transmitted to the

elementary school with recommendations made in some instances concerning the exact amount of time the counselor should devote to each area during the year. One wonders to what extent some of these guidance services would be applicable to the elementary school.

A circular by the Board of Education of New York City as cited by Lytton (1968) defines the functions of the elementary counselor as follows:

> 1. Studies pupil needs through the use of records, observation, consultation and . . . interviews. Assists pupils in evaluating their abilities, attitudes, etc. Enlists the pupil's co-operation in formulating and carrying out plans to promote educational and social adjustment. Gives support to pupils in difficult personal and social situations.
>
> 2. Interprets pupil data to staff members and co-operates with staff in planning and carrying out measures to meet pupil need. Makes recommendations to the principal concerning class placement in special classes or schools.
>
> 3. Works with teachers both in assisting them to understand children better and to deal with children in the classroom in such a way as to avoid maladjustment and learning difficulties. Demonstrates use of group guidance techniques as a method of securing additional insights into children's behavior. Conducts teacher workshops . . .
>
> 4. Screens groups of children to identify those having special needs: gifted and talented pupils; underachievers; pupils to be referred to clinics . . . and social agencies; potentially maladjusted pupils; pupils to be tested for placement in classes for the retarded . . . provides individual counseling as needed.
>
> 5. Co-ordinates efforts of all specialists (psychologist, nurse, speech teacher, attendance teacher, etc.) . . . Arranges for case conferences as required.
>
> 6. Interprets pupil data to parents and seeks parental co-operation in formulating and carrying through appropriate plans. Conducts parent workshops (pp. 46-47).

A comparison of other state circulars and elementary counselor education programs (Altmann, 1970) indicated a high level of agreement on the functions of the elementary counselor.

Farwell and Peters (1957) cite differences in elementary and secondary counseling by suggesting that guidance in the elementary school should aid pupils to develop a harmonious and integrated personality core through carefully planned school experiences which reflect the integration of the forces impinging on the individual. They contrast this to guidance services of the secondary school which they perceive as assisting adolescents to extend themselves to the optimum in all the various aspects of adolescent and adult living, including educational planning, career choice, personal relationships, and living with one's self.

The ACES-ASCA committee on elementary counseling (1966) recommends three major functions of the elementary counselor to

consist of: counseling, consultation, and coordination.

The review of the literature concerning the role and function of the elementary counselor suggests that the ACES-ASCA statement on elementary counseling has strongly influenced, and has established the priorities of the elementary counselor's functions. Although these functions are stated rather broadly, maybe this is all that should be attempted, and can actually be done. Perhaps before fine discriminate counselor functions can be established one must take into account variables such as the school itself; the community and locale; "helping" services available; the administration's, teaching staff's, and parents' views of counseling; and most important — the preparation and unique skills of the counselor. Only after there has been an assessment of these and many other variables can more specific functions be defined for a particular counselor in a particular educational system. For example, in a small community where a limited number of helping services are available the counselor may have to spend a large percentage of his time doing diagnostic work. Counselor functions cannot be absolute and inflexible as writers, counselor educators, and departments of education would lead us to believe.

Here in the Province of Alberta the role or function of the elementary counselor has not yet been properly defined. One of the reasons for lack of definition is related to the fact that other professional helpers have in the past, and still are, serving particular needs of the elementary school children. These personnel would include visiting teachers or school psychologists, guidance consultants, and social workers. While these specialists have served the elementary school well for some time, they may have also found it necessary to extend their areas of expertise. With the emergence of elementary counseling these personnel will now have to redefine their roles.

Another difficulty that is apt to arise when there is a shortage of helping personnel is that an elementary counselor could very easily be caught in a situation in which he has to devote most of his attention to "crisis cases" or very deviant types of problems. In this type of situation the counselor would very possibly be extending the boundaries of his training and areas of competence.

Specialists from other disciplines, social worker, school psychologist, etc., although they all possess elements of commonality in their training, also possess unique qualifications which differ from one another. Specific functions of personnel must be defined to complement one another, thus establishing the element of "uniqueness" to each service.

Theory of Elementary Counseling

There continues to be a great amount of uncertainty as to how we counsel elementary children. Once again, if this dilemma is not clarified with research on counselor effectiveness and counseling outcome, how can we validly argue for public support of this field? There is lack of research and theory at all levels of counseling to support the

field. Many counseling approaches advocated by secondary counselors are not applicable to the elementary school, although in many cases it is being proposed. The elementary child is a unique individual, and theory, practice, and research must be built around him.

The American Personnel and Guidance Association's Committee on Dimensions of Elementary School Guidance (1966) states that counseling in the elementary school should consist of:

> . . . allowing the child to establish a relationship with someone to help him see himself as a more adequate person. In addition they suggest we must look and listen to hear what the child is saying to us in order to become more sensitive to the child's needs (p. 9).

No one would question that counseling should consist of, and the counselor should aspire to achieve, the goals just cited. However, the majority of the writers fail to describe the *process* that one would use to accomplish these tasks.

A recent statement by the curriculum branch of the Department of Education in Alberta (1970) states:

> The aim of elementary education is to provide opportunities for the development of self-actualized individuals who improve and enjoy the social and physical environment. Self-actualization, which includes the valuing of the individual worth of self and of others, develops when physiological, safety, love and esteem needs of individuals are met. Communicating, which is the ability to receive, process, and express impressions from the environment, is essential to self-actualization. Therefore, elementary education should provide opportunities for the improvement of intellectual, emotional and physical behaviors which, when used to acquire relevant and significant knowledge, increase the individual's ability to communicate. This ability to communicate is necessary for the development of self-worth and for the recognition of the worth of others (p. 6).

This statement indicates that the goals of elementary education are similar to the goals of counseling. Although this seems to be a unanimous suggestion by curriculum and guidance committees, the difficulty lies in the translations of these goals into practice. The goals for teachers and counselors have been defined; however, the theory and practice to be used to achieve these goals has almost completely been ignored. Cottingham (1970) indicates that researchers have emphasized descriptive features of elementary guidance rather than the conceptual elements undergirding such activities.

One asks oneself if many counselor educators are "guarding" or hiding their independent theories of counseling elementary children, or if indeed the theoretical mold that applied initially to their secondary school counseling orientations (Altmann, 1970) is applicable with little variation to the elementary school child?

Dinkmeyer (1966) has made one of the most significant contributions to the field by advocating "developmental counseling" as an approach to working with elementary children, stating:

> Developmental counseling provides the child with an opportunity to explore his feelings, his attitudes, convictions. The counselor starts with the problems that the child perceives and helps him to solve them. The counselor in this situation provides a relationship that accepts, understands, and does not judge. It provides the counselee with constant clarification of his basic perception of life. This relationship enables the counselee to become increasingly self-directed so that the goal is one of enabling the counselee to deal with both the developmental tasks and the general problems of living. This type of developmental counseling suggests that counselors would not only be problem-oriented, but would be concerned about all students in the school population (p. 266).

Krumboltz and Hosford (1967) have also made a valuable contribution by applying behavioral counseling to the elementary school.

> The main task then for counselors is to assist the individual in *learning* those behaviors that will result in a solution to his problem. From a behavioral approach, all relevant goals and objectives of counseling must be focused on behavior. Since students' problems are different from each other, the goals of counseling would be stated differently for each individual. Broad general goals for all individuals, e.g., self-understanding or increased ego strength, are deemed by the behavioral counselors as too abstract to be useful in specifying the purposes to be accomplished. The goals of the behavioral counselor may be organized under three categories: (1) altering maladaptive behavior, (2) learning the decision-making process, and (3) preventing problems (p. 240).

These behaviorists explicitly describe counseling as a learning process in which the counselor assists the client to learn and participate in behaviors which will aid him to solve his problem. The extent to which the counselor gets the client to participate in appropriate types of behavior will determine counselor effectiveness. The procedures and techniques the counselor incorporates into his "behavior repertoire" are derived from scientifically based knowledge of the learning process.

In comparing the efforts of Dinkmeyer to Krumboltz and Hosford (1967), one would have to cite many similarities. Dinkmeyer tends to put more of the responsibility on the client, terming it a "collaborative relationship" in which the *client* learns to investigate, analyze, and deliberate. If these objectives are accomplished, the client will have achieved the element of "self-direction" thus equipping him to deal more effectively with developmental tasks. Krumboltz and Hosford describe the counselor as being more assertive, in command, and directing the learning process.

Very few counseling approaches could be found in the literature which explicitly defined the counseling procedure as well as the two just cited.

Regardless of the counseling process being employed, the counselor himself must also be judged as to how he influences the counseling outcome. Truax and Carkhuff (1967) have pointed out that perhaps personal characteristics of the counselor have more effect than any

process. They cite three characteristics of an effective therapist by stating:

> 1. An effective therapist is integrated, nondefensive, and authentic or genuine in his therapeutic encounters.
>
> 2. An effective therapist can provide a non-threatening, safe, trusting or secure atmosphere by his acceptance, unconditional positive regard, love, or nonpossessive warmth for the client.
>
> 3. An effective therapist is able to "be with," "grasp the meaning of," or accurately and empathically understand the client on a moment-by-moment basis (p. 1).

Truax's extensive on-going research continuously supports his beliefs — people who offer high levels of accurate empathy (AE), nonpossessive warmth (NPW) and genuineness (GEN) produce positive changes in clients, while counselors or people who offer low levels of these conditions produce deterioration or no change in their clients. While Truax has not researched the field of elementary counseling per se, several interesting research efforts merit citation. Truax and Tatum (1966) in a study of socialization in preschool children found significant positive relationships between the level of nursery-school teachers' accurate empathy and nonpossessive warmth and the degree of improvement in preschool socialization.

Aspy and Hadlock (1966) found that pupils receiving relatively high levels of AE, NPW, and GEN showed 2.5 year gains in reading achievement compared to 0.7 year gains for pupils receiving relatively low levels of facilitative conditions.

The efforts by Truax indicate that high therapeutic counselor conditions have produced positive change in adults, adolescents, and more recently with children. The elementary school setting in which many counselors use play media, games, and other personal techniques to break down the communication barrier, demands very effective interpersonal relationship skills by counselors. These interpersonal characteristics have been identified, measured, and supported by research.

The success of an elementary counselor will depend on his ability to achieve early and throughout counseling acceptable levels of facilitative conditions. Certainly the amount of verbal communication and the language style of elementary children is qualitatively different from those of adolescent students. For these reasons, the proper atmosphere must be available if we are to communicate, understand, and be of assistance to elementary children. The contributions of Dinkmeyer, Krumboltz and Hosford, and Truax have provided us with valuable information on the counseling process applicable to working with elementary children. "Developmental Counseling," "Behavioral Counseling," any counseling have usually been found to be more beneficial than no counseling. High levels of counselor facilitative conditions, in addition to the unique counseling process, will possibly produce more favourable counseling results.

RESUME: On a effectué une revue de la littérature sur le counseling au niveau primaire afin d'en établir le statut. On a ensuite discuté de certains problèmes spécifiques concernant les besoins, la fonction et la théorie du counseling à ce niveau.

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1973 CGCA CONVENTION CALL

"Counselling in the Canadian Mosaic"

Northstar and Winnipeg Inns
June 5, 6, 7, 8, 1973

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Fifth Biennial CGCA Conference will be opened officially on Wednesday, June 6, with a Voyageur breakfast. In order to permit completion of registration a wine and cheese party will be held Tuesday evening, June 5. The CGCA Buffalo Banquet, June 7, will be followed by a moonlight cruise and dance on the Paddlewheel Queen. Interested delegates may participate in a post-conference sojourn, a week-end adventure cruise of Manitoba's northland aboard M.S. Lord Selkirk.
Information regarding registration, reservations, etc., will be distributed early in 1973. For further information contact:

Mr. Jerry Dragan,
Conference Chairman, 1973 CGCA Convention,
204-1181 Portage Avenue,
Winnipeg, Manitoba. R3C 0V8

THEME

"Counselling in the Canadian Mosaic" will be devoted to those areas encompassing the counselling activities of members and delegates. The following topics are sub-themes:

1) Counselling of Native Peoples and Minority Groups
2) Counselling and Human Development (emphasis on pre-school and young child)
3) Preventive and Developmental Counselling
4) Paraprofessional, Lay and Peer Counselling
5) Vocational Counselling
6) Counselling and The Canadian Woman: A Search for Fulfillment
7) Counselling the Parents of the "Special" Child; Counselling for Parents and their Children with Learning Disabilities
8) Counsellor Education and Upgrading and Self-renewal Programs for the Professional Counsellor
9) Counselling within a Community Setting
10) Pastoral, Marriage and Family Counselling
11) Elementary, Group and College Counselling
12) Developing Effective Group Guidance Programs
13) Counsellors as Change Agents for Humanistic Education

PROGRAM PROPOSALS AND RESEACH PAPERS

Any member of CGCA may propose a fully organized program of one hour in length, or, may offer detailed suggestions for programs. All proposals or suggestions will be acknowledged.

Proposals should be submitted before December 1, 1972. CGCA members and prospective members are also invited to read unpublished papers at this convention. Please note within which area your work would be categorized. An attempt will be made to publish many of the papers in the *Canadian Counsellor*. Abstracts will be available for distribution at the 1973 conference.
All programs or papers may be in French or English.
Authors should submit typed abstracts of their papers before January 31, 1973.
Appropriate forms for program proposals and research papers are obtainable from:

Dr. R. H. Henjum,
Faculty of Education,
University of Manitoba,
Winnipeg, Manitoba.
S3T 2N2

Eila Lamb,
Publicity Chairman.

INVITATION AU CONGRES 1973 DE LA SCOC

La Consultation dans la Mosaïque canadienne

Auberges Northstar et Winnipeg
les 5, 6, 7 et 8 juin 1973

INFORMATION GENERALE

Le Cinquième Congrès biennal de la SCOC débutera officiellement avec le petit déjeuner mercredi le 6 juin. On pourra compléter les formalités de l'inscription durant la soirée du mardi 5 juin à l'occasion d'une réception vins et fromages. Après le banquet du 7 juin, il y aura danse et croisière au clair de lune à bord du Paddlewheel Queen. Les délégués intéressés à demeurer pour le week-end pourront participer à une croisière dans le nord du Manitoba à bord du M. S. Lord Selkirk.
Les informations concernant l'inscription, les réservations, etc. seront disponibles au début de 1973. Pour plus d'informations, prière de contacter:

M. Jerry Dragan
Président, Congrès SCOC 1973
204-1181 Avenue Portage
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 0V8

LES THEMES

Sous le thème général "La Consultation dans la Mosaïque canadienne", les délégués et les membres pourront discuter et présenter des travaux regroupés sous les rubriques suivantes:

1) La consultation dans le cas des groupes indigènes et minoritaires
2) La consultation et le développement humain (accent sur le jeune enfant et le niveau préscolaire)
3) La consultation préventive
4) La consultation effectuée par les paraprofessionnels, les profanes et les pairs
5) La consultation professionnelle
6) La consultation et la femme canadienne: une recherche de l'actualisation de soi
7) La consultation pour les parents de "l'enfant exceptionnel": la consultation pour les parents dont les enfants éprouvent des difficultés d'apprentissage
8) La formation des conseillers: les programmes de recyclage et de perfectionnement destinés au professionnel de la consultation
9) La consultation dans un milieu communautaire
10) La consultation pastorale, familiale et maritale
11) La consultation au niveau primaire et collégial et le counseling de groupe
12) Le développement de programmes efficaces de counseling de groupe
13) Les conseillers en tant qu'agents de changement favorisant une éducation humaniste

PROJETS DE PROGRAMMES ET TRAVAUX DE RECHERCHE

Tout membre de la SCOC peut présenter un programme complet et organisé d'une durée d'une heure ou faire des suggestions détaillées de programmes. On considérera avec soins tous les projets et suggestions.

Les projets devraient être soumis avant le 1er décembre 1972. On invite aussi les membres de la SCOC et les membres éventuels à présenter des travaux inédits. On s'efforcera de publier autant de travaux que possible dans la revue Conseiller Canadien. Les sommaires des travaux seront prêts pour distribution au moment du congrès.

Tout programme ou travail peut être présenté en français ou en anglais.

Les auteurs devront soumettre le sommaire dactylographié de leur travail avant le 31 janvier 1973.

On peut se procurer les formulaires appropriés concernant les projets de programmes et les travaux de recherche en s'adressant à:

Dr. R. H. Henjum
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Eila Lamb
Présidente, Comité de la publication