

Need for a developmental approach to

Continuity in the Guidance Program

CONTINUITY is not always seen in a guidance program. There appear to be trends, however, which show promise in this direction. Guidance programs have developed through the secondary school and thus have been more corrective and curative than developmental. When the school guidance and counseling program and the attendant functions and processes are seen developmentally, then continuity in a guidance program becomes a possibility.

Perhaps we should give some attention here to definition. Perceptions regarding guidance vary among individuals. Professional guidance is that assistance given to boys and girls which *helps* them to *understand* and *accept* themselves and to reach their optimum development.¹ This does not eliminate the fact that pupils have learning experiences about the world of the past, present or projected future. Within a guidance program is the emphasis that the formal learning experiences of the curriculum can be more effective if the pupil focuses first on knowledge of himself—his assets, limitations, aspirations and responsibilities. With this focus upon the individual, the concept of counseling

existing at the heart and core of the guidance program comes to the fore.

An organized guidance program without sufficient professionally prepared personnel and without enough time devoted to the counseling activity will be hampered, if not completely hindered, in developing continuity in professional guidance. An understanding of human traits—potentials, past performance, feelings and attitudes—is essential if the individual is to develop a meaningful self-concept. Many experiences provide a backdrop for gaining these insights but it is in counseling that the focus is on the individual counselee. Here, in an atmosphere that is permissive and acceptant, the counselee can look at himself in perspective with all of the environmental and societal forces which have been and will be instrumental in the formulation of a personality core capable of adjusting to ever-emerging phenomena. The subject matter of professional guidance, in its implicit form and succinctly stated, is the makeup of each individual.²

Considerable disparity may appear to exist on the surface when professional guidance workers consider their activity.

¹ H. J. Peters and G. F. Farwell. *Guidance: A Developmental Approach*. Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1959. p. 20.

² G. F. Farwell and H. J. Peters. *Guidance Readings for Counselors*. Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1960. p. 1.

There is, however, emphasis on (a) understanding the individual as a prime requisite, thus child study; (b) counseling as a necessary aspect of a guidance program; (c) sensitivity to environmental conditions and influences; and (d) the need for professional coordination. There are variables within these four aspects of definition and they are expressed differently. However, a search will reveal these constructs underlying a sound position in guidance work.

Child Study

In order to discuss continuity in educational practice and particularly with respect to the guidance program, a beginning consideration must center on child study. This is sometimes referred to as pupil appraisal or pupil inventory. Regardless of label, the concern focuses on a knowledge of the pupil as a person. In old records that can be uncovered from the files in most schools, there will be revealed some identifying data, a list of courses taken and evaluations rendered, maybe a scattered notation about a standardized test score, and attendance records. If one goes to the high school for this record, a frequent experience will be the discovery of a high school record only. No information is included in the pupil's record prior to high school enrollment.

Records of the past 10 to 12 years in some schools, however, will reveal something quite different. A developmental cumulative record is provided showing meaningful trends in growth, learning and behavior. Such a record extends from the first year of schooling, with reports from "beyond school" which have been acquired through follow-up studies.

In School "A," continuity in child study

was provided in this manner. The program was coordinated by the director of pupil personnel services and in-service work preceded implementation of the program plan. Kindergarten teachers were hired with the understanding that half of each day during the first semester was to be spent in the kindergarten classroom, the other half was to be spent in individual work with each pupil and his parents both in school and through home visitation. The purpose was to gain insight into the preschool experiences of each child and to obtain some knowledge about the home attitudes and feelings toward the child, toward education and the school. Continuity was promoted through a planned testing program for each level, a planned program of teacher conferences between grade levels and school levels, and a coordinated program of consultation among teachers and the guidance coordinators for each level. This school system believed that continuity in child study was important enough to provide personnel, finances, and time to implement such a program.

Another example of attempted continuity in child study is represented by School "B," which has many rural schools feeding into the high school. Recently the school counselors have begun a co-ordinated effort in helping these small feeder schools to identify early the strengths and weaknesses of their pupils. Their objective is the early detection of individual performance so that subsequent educational planning at the higher levels can be more meaningful. Even though this high school system has no direct financial responsibility for the children from the feeder schools before they enter the high school, the staff recognizes

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the importance of a developmental approach and the need to avoid major difficulties when they do ultimately assume responsibility for these individuals. Unless continuity in child study is achieved, teachers and others involved with the concerns of pupils must continually strive to reconstruct past experience. This, unfortunately, cannot be done without the present situation biasing the recall. Can an adequate picture consistently be gained if retrospect is the main or only guideline for child study activity?

Career Development

Guidance had much of its original inception and implementation in relation to *vocational guidance*. Many persons still operate within the narrow framework of vocational guidance rather than the newer and broader theory of career development. In recent years there has been a tendency to drop the labels, vocational guidance, educational guidance, health guidance, *et al.*, and to think fundamentally in terms of a guidance program and function centered on the people themselves rather than on their problems.

Despite this shift, however, there still exists within developmental guidance programs a concern for the world of work. Caplow, Super, Roe, Ginzberg and others have emphasized, in differing theoretical ways, the role of work in the life of most people, most families. Work is a way of life. The concept of career development provides a framework for another aspect of continuity in guidance programs which goes far beyond the notion of a choice of an occupational area or a specific job. It encompasses an organismic framework for total development and the real import of the work-

day world in childhood, adolescence and adulthood.

A program of continuity can be sifted from the guidance activity of School "C." In this particular school, planned discussions about parents' occupations and the total life-space that resulted for the employed person as well as his family were begun in the third grade. General concepts and information about work were considered. Attention was directed to the worthwhileness of and the dignity in all kinds of work, to general attitudes about the pleasures and displeasures of working, and to the association that comes to the family group as a result of the breadwinner's occupation, including the type of home, its location, and the hours the breadwinner has for his family. In the early and intermediate grades, generalized consideration of the world of work leads to study of the relationships between the curriculum and one's progress in the life-work of his choice.

As continuity in the career development aspect of the program improved, more specific and detailed information became available and was discussed. A tie-in was made between educational development and career development and the implications for choices. A key issue in continuity for career development lies in the hope of the adjusting capacity and flexibility of each potential worker. Technical, social and psychological implications of new inventions, automation, and mobile populations imply great need for personal qualities that make for continually *adjusting* individuals as contrasted with qualities that make for *adjusted* individuals. Allport, in *Becoming*, gives repeated emphasis to man's need to contend with change both in himself and among his surroundings.

A program in occupational and educational information which lacks continuity

and which operates as though the concept of career or vocational development never existed can be cited in School "D." In this program no organized plan existed for considering the world of work as a developmental influence until the junior and senior years of high school.

Elaborate "career days" and "college days" were planned and implemented but the pupils allowed to participate were juniors and seniors who already had been through the major aspect of their compulsory education. What was the basis for their educational planning? Could it have centered on the belief that work is a way of life? Boys and girls do not develop in a vacuum their work habits, attitudes toward various occupational areas and specific jobs, or knowledge about the prerequisites for occupational entry.

It would appear essential that a guidance program, that is developmental and that has continuity, must provide progressive, generalized-to-specific, career knowledge beginning early in the school life of the child. Such a program will not exist if counselors, teachers and administrators do not know of the literature in career development and if they do not value effort expended toward this end. School drop-outs and school graduates have choices to make about their educational objectives when compulsory school attendance ceases. These plans relate to further education or to a life's work. The school counselor and other guidance workers who do not see continuity implemented through the concept of career development are ignoring a speciality which should be unique to the background and programming within the area of guidance.

Child study and career development programming have little meaning if they are not personalized for the individual

school child. It is within the counseling aspect of the guidance program that each school citizen should be guaranteed his inalienable right to be considered a person of worthwhileness and dignity. Counseling is an individualized affair. Practically all school workers will give voice to respect for each individual but most school workers find they must operate within a group framework for implementation of individual consideration. Most professionally prepared school counselors believe that each child should be guaranteed the opportunity for individual consultation in private where he can sound out, sound off, or be sounded out regarding any and all aspects of his personal patterns for growth.

Counseling, in a developmental sense, is a process that has little practice or research evidence to support claims. Historically, counseling has been seen as a process for those with troubles, in trouble, or with critical choices to make. Theorists in counseling propose that a certain level of maturity must be reached before the individual can profit from counseling. The research horizons have not been pushed down into the elementary grades to any degree to validate this proposal.

Many school systems provide counselors at the junior and senior high levels. Frequently these counselors have little time to counsel because they are saddled with all types of extraneous duties, though the primary function of the school counselor should be counseling. Few school systems provide school counselors at the elementary level and a disturbing feature about Title V (*a* and *b*) of the National Defense Education Act lies in the fact that it perpetuates a concept of guidance that denies the features of developmentalism and continuity throughout the school years.

School "E" provides three full-time counselors at the junior-senior high school level. The student-to-counselor ratio is approximately 375 to 1, which far exceeds generally proposed standards, since most counselors consider themselves fortunate to have about 50 percent of their time for counseling. There are provisions in the staffing structure of this system to add a system-wide director of guidance and additional counselors at all levels. It will be five years before this program of staffing reaches fruition. At that time it may be possible to report that this system has a program that believes in and implements a counseling activity with continuity. A longitudinal research program should be planned concurrently to evaluate the effectiveness of such a counseling program.

School "F" represents the opposite of continuity in counseling. One full-time counselor is employed for approximately 800 students. The job specifications in this case are so organized that the counselor is expected to spend the major portion of his time assisting seniors in college placement. The next major allocation of time, as specified by the administration, is directed toward pupils with reported intentions to drop out of school. This type of program is too late with too little and presents no continuity in the counseling function.

Program Coordination

The last phase of continuity in professional guidance to be touched upon relates to the function of program coordination. At the University of Wisconsin too frequently the administrative request for personnel is in terms of a guidance program in the secondary school. Counselor educators sometimes inquire about the guidance activities of

the elementary school. A common response to this inquiry places the sole responsibility for guidance upon the classroom teacher. There seems to be little indication of coordination, or even a desire for coordination, regarding the guidance and counseling effort. This, by the very nature of staff assignment, gives support to an older concept that boys and girls get specialized help from professional school counselors only if they are sufficiently "deviant" or if they have rather obvious difficulties such as "failures" in school subjects, reading disabilities, or behavior control.

In School System "G," continuity in coordination can be demonstrated. The director of guidance coordinates the guidance and counseling function from the kindergarten level through the junior college level. Each school has a staff member professionally prepared for the task of the guidance specialization. Teachers, administrators and counselors perform guidance functions; the former two professional groups have the guidance function as a secondary responsibility, the latter group has the guidance and counseling activity as a primary responsibility. Coordinated planning and effort tend to minimize omission and duplication in favor of maximum utilization of staff time and processes. Rothney,³ in the introductory chapter to the report of his eight-year longitudinal study, noted that good counselors do not wait until problems reach the *acute* stage. They are concerned with the *development* of youth and they are aware that, in the process, many problems must arise. They try to help youth to anticipate problems and to plan ahead so that these can be avoided or adroitly met.

³ John W. M. Rothney, *Guidance Practices and Results*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958. p. 27.

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