

# FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS: A HUMAN DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST?

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IN THE literature and speeches of the past ten years relating to guidance functions in elementary schools there has appeared a statement which is typified thus: "Counseling (or guidance) in elementary schools must not be just a copy of counseling and guidance services in secondary schools; it must be distinctive."

This demurrer is received with head nods of agreement. In or associated with this kind of statement, however, have been two deficiencies. One is that some speakers or writers have not given any evidence of those elementary school counseling or guidance procedures which are supported by research evidence, although most persons are ready to offer opinions about such procedures.

On inspection, these opinions appear reasonable. The more fundamental deficiency lies in the explicit or implied "givens" in the statement—the given that present patterns of pupil service practices in the secondary school are the base for the development of elementary school pupil service practices, with some modification as appropriate for the age level of elementary school children.

Man institutionalizes his behavior, and this provides for both feelings of personal security and for cultural continuity. But institutionalized behavior must always be challenged so that human rather than institutional values can be kept paramount. It was inevitable, and justifiable, that present institutionalized pupil service procedures would be adopted for elementary schools, that they would be the givens for this rapidly expanding area of service.

It was equally inevitable that some persons would question whether past procedures could provide the best starting point for the functions of the in-school elementary level pupil service worker. This article will describe one of the efforts being made to discover the optimum array of functions of this in-school worker with minimal reference to the historical givens or to institutionalized procedures.

Look at the cumbersome circumlocution used in the preceding paragraphs: "the elementary level in-school worker." Its use shows a rejection of the word "counselor" as a given. If the term "counselor" is to be uncritically used, it follows

logically, as it has also followed in practice, that the prime function of the in-school worker is to counsel. Let us relook at the archtypical statement in the first paragraph. It protests that elementary school counselors must differ from their secondary counterparts. Operationally, however, this typically seems to mean only within the narrow band of certain givens.

The elementary school "counselor," we find on inspecting some propositions and practices, predominantly counsels. The difference between him and his secondary school counterpart lies in counseling procedures. The elementary school counselor, as another illustration, is supposed to provide occupational information, as does his secondary counterpart. The difference between the elementary and secondary school approaches to the topic seems to lie in the reading level and complexity of the occupational information. In practice, then, we find that, demurrers to the contrary, elementary school guidance, and particularly the functions of elementary school counselors, are indeed found in frequent numbers to be copies of secondary school procedures, right down to the premise that they are to serve pupils in crisis, or just those who seek their help.<sup>1</sup>

Although the details of the research activity to be reported here are the element of this article which may have the greatest interest for readers, it is necessary to briefly describe the context of this activity.

This research activity is being carried out by one of the regional research and demonstration centers of the Interprofessional Research Commission on Pupil Personnel Services (IRCOPPS). This is a body representing sixteen national professional and interest organizations which have concern for any one or several pupil service areas. The Commission was established because its constituent organizations acknowledged that present pupil services were inadequate in quantity and where they were adequate in quantity, there often were major inefficiencies in functions. The need was apparent to these associations that more valid research bases must be established for pupil services. They created the Commission, with a commitment to research. IRCOPPS was funded by a research grant from the National Institute of Mental Health, and the four research centers were set up.<sup>2</sup>

### **A Cross-Professional Worker**

The main research project of the Eastern Regional Center has been an investigation of a cross-professional worker for in-school service in elementary schools. His functions are bi-modal at their first level of analysis. He is first one who is to serve a development-enhancing function for all pupils. This requires the knowledges of psychology, particularly the psychology of learning, and of anthro-

<sup>1</sup> Statements of this kind are as irritating to write as to read. They cry for numbers and other documentation. The best evidence the author can state at this time is his own observation of programs and the observations of other persons. At the same time, so much change is occurring that it is just about impossible to acquire valid country-wide data other than of the head-count type. Likewise, data collected this year as to the degree to which elementary school guidance activities copy those of the secondary school would be valid for only a brief period.

<sup>2</sup> For information about the IRCOPPS, write to Gordon P. Liddle, Director, Central Office, West Education Annex, University of Maryland, College Park, Md. 20740.

pology and other research areas which bear on pupil effectiveness as learners and as humans. His second mode of functions includes those through which he assists in restoring to learning efficiency and general effectiveness those pupils who have fallen into learning deficiencies or general ineffectiveness.

In moving to a second level of analysis of his experimental functions, we must again examine context or rationale.

One major, historical given which can and does determine the function of in-school workers is the presence in school systems of those pupil services functionaries called psychologists and social workers. Their employment automatically places a limit on the in-school worker, a limit which typically is not challenged. Indeed, not only is this limit not challenged, but those school systems which have counselors in elementary schools, and also have system-based psychologists and social workers view themselves as fortunate; in fact, the only regret stated is that there are not enough psychologists and social workers.

This center, however, also rejects as given the traditional array of practices of school social workers and psychologists. This is not just because research ought to reject givens. These traditional practices are rejected because examination of the origin of these workers and their practices shows the operation of institutionalism more than of reason.

This statement posits a crucial issue, which can not be explored because of the limits of length of this article. Perhaps one can explain the rejection of this major given. Psychologists and social workers were functionaries developed at other

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times for other institutions, and certain of the practices which each of these professions considers its distinctive area of performance are defensible, less on professional training and competence grounds than on tradition and institutionalism. To put it in more positive tones, a rational case, at least for experimentation, can be made for having in-school elementary level pupil service workers learn to perform some functions which typically call for referral to specialists.

### **Child Development Consultant**

We turn again to the experimental practices. Because this trial worker had to be titled so as to distinguish him in our research from traditional practitioners, also included in the research, the term *child development consultant* (CDC) was chosen.<sup>3</sup> Eight CDCs are or have been engaged in concurrent training and practice. The training is offered by the interdisciplinary staff of this center, supplemented by other university and school system persons. Their effects on pupils over a two-year period are being measured by criterion instruments, and their functions and effects are being compared with those of five counselors. Two visiting teachers, stationed in schools for this research, provide an additional contrast group, even though their number is too small to permit any generalization. In all, 23 schools in two states are cooperating in the research.

There have been preliminary runs of some of the data. The final data runs will be made at the end of this first project in the summer of 1967.

Obviously statements about this experimental worker based on the best evidence cannot be made until analysis of the total pool of data is made in the summer of 1967. Short of that, however, we can state that a cross-professional worker can be trained, and he can function in schools. We cannot state his general effect on pupils as yet, nor his differential effect in contrast to traditional procedures for deploying elementary school pupil service personnel.

What if our findings confirm present (the traditional) practices as being best practices? Then society is in fortune, because we already have well-polished procedures within these historical givens. If we find that a cross-professional worker, designed "from scratch" for elementary schools, provides not only faster, more efficient services for the crisis cases, for the "problem" pupils, but has a pervasive, development-enhancing effect on all pupils, then society again is in fortune.

In that case, this comparatively new arena of pupil services, at least numerically speaking, can be developed in the manner of greatest benefit to most pupils. Thus it would not have to suffer either later redevelopment after practices become fixed, or, more problematic yet, to have redevelopment opposed because of the pressures of institutionalism. ☞

<sup>3</sup> It is not our intention to propagate a new title. If our research eventually justifies a cross-professional or interdisciplinary worker of this kind, we assume that no one would see the need for a new or additional worker in elementary schools. The research findings would merely suggest how those present and future persons operating under the title "counselor" might be trained and function. Our use of the term differs from that of the Guidance and Personnel Services Branch, U.S. Office of Education. Its term (with capital initials) refers to several of the traditional pupil service workers. See: Hyrum M. Smith and Louise O. Eckerson. *Guidance Services in Elementary Schools*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, Catalog #FS 5.225:25045; 1966.

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