

PUPIL GUIDANCE:

AS A general rule, it might be said that guidance "has never had it so good." Almost every piece of federal legislation related to education in the past five years or so has contained some provision for the preparation of counselors and the support of guidance services. Regional accrediting agencies have stiffened their requirements with regard to the number and formal preparation of school counselors.

The American Personnel and Guidance Association, as well as state and local guidance associations, has enjoyed dramatic increases in membership. State departments of teacher certification have cooperated with professional associations in increasing the requirements for the certification of school counselors. Despite these considerable influences, all is not well in guidance circles.

The guidance movement is the victim at present of a three-pronged tug-of-war. The groups attempting to determine the direction in which guidance will move in the future are: (a) the federal government in general and the U.S. Office of Education in particular; (b) the various divisions of the American Personnel and Guidance Association and factions within these divisions; and (c) the proponents of selected answers to social problems confronting the nation. Each of these forces will be dealt with in turn. But emphasis should be placed on the fact that these forces are neither clear-cut nor mutually exclusive. Funding programs and struggles for power make for complicated schemes and contradictory positions on related matters.

The U.S. Office of Education

At a recent Chicago meeting of fund distributors and fund seekers, a highly-placed representative of the U.S. Office of Education explained that this federal agency has gone through three distinct eras. The first era was characterized by a sedentary group of pedants and civil servants providing pedagogues and other school personnel with outdated and generally trivial data; the second era began with the passage of the National Defense Education Act of 1958 and was note-

NEW DEVELOPMENTS AND INFLUENCES

ANTHONY C. RICCIO

Professor of Education, The Ohio
State University, Columbus

worthy for crash support of programs deemed vital to national defense; the current era is the era of leadership.

It is this notion of leadership that is presenting many problems to guidance and counseling personnel—for one of the major weaknesses of federal leadership is that the federal government has perennially had difficulty in attracting a sufficient number of top flight academicians and practitioners to the operational positions that transform relatively vague legislation affecting educational programs into specific guidelines for action. Especially is this problem troublesome for guidance when Washingtonians responsible for the establishment of operational guidelines have not had the benefit of formal preparation in professional fields of study in which they are expected to administer millions of dollars of tax funds.

A case in point centers around the recent changes made in the guidelines for the preparation of proposals for NDEA Guidance Institutes. Emphasis in the current crop of proposals is expected to be on elementary school and post-high school settings—as contrasted with the earlier emphasis on the secondary school. The difficulty is that the new guidelines for the preparation of elementary school proposals fly in the face of published thought in the field and the experiences of counselor educators who have been preparing elementary school guidance personnel. For example, it is now possible for a single program to include school administrators, school nurses, school psychologists, elementary teachers, and elementary counselors. Such a situation, especially in the mandatory self-contained institute concept, presents almost insurmountable problems with respect to scope and content of program. Experienced counselor educators would never have placed themselves in such a bind.

Again, the U.S. Office of Education has employed a clinical psychologist to prepare a model program for the preparation of elementary school counselors. The implication is quite clear that institutions following this model are quite likely to receive support. But the model emphasizes that elementary school coun-

selors must be steeped in such work as physiology, mental anatomy, and other studies far removed from the work done by elementary school counselors as distinguished from school psychologists. The result is that there will not be a definite and demonstrable relationship between what elementary school counselors do and what they will have been trained to do.

Still another provision makes it possible for what is normally graduate work in guidance to be taken at institutions which do not offer graduate programs. There are many who feel that guidance and counseling could get along very well without such leadership. In fact, at the Chicago meeting already referred to, several formal statements were presented by representatives of the American Personnel and Guidance Association and the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision. These papers were in opposition to the guidelines previously referred to. The response to these protests was quite simple but very effective—do you want the money or don't you?

The American Personnel and Guidance Association

For the past five years or so, the American Personnel and Guidance Association has been establishing commissions to study the role and preparation of school counselors. Various monographs and position papers have resulted from the work of these commissions. These products have had a significant impact on counselor education and guidance practices in the Nation. These papers were the result of literally hundreds of local, regional and national meetings.

Extensive attention was given in APGA publications and at APGA conventions to the issues involved in upgrading the preparation of counselors in all settings and thereby enhancing the profession and increasing the effectiveness of guidance services to youth. It is ironic that APGA, which served as one of the more effective lobbying groups in supporting NDEA legislation, should now find many of its professional endeavors—as contrasted to its political endeavors—threatened by the fruit of its political activity.

APGA and the U.S. Office of Education are headed toward serious and inevitable conflict should both continue on their respective courses. APGA is determined to upgrade the preparation of counselors in all settings; through the recently demised Project CAUSE and through recent changes in Institute guidelines, the U.S. Office of Education appears, inadvertently perhaps, to be moving in an opposite direction.

This conflict promises to have a great impact on the lives of counselor educators. On the one hand will be the APGA monographs and position papers representing years of work and professional commitment; on the other hand will be the pressure to secure promotions and salary increments on the home campus by meeting successfully the pressures to solicit funds to support professional programs. The manner in which individual counselor educators meet this problem will have an impact on the integrity of the people they prepare for the future. For it is always difficult for men to have to resolve publicly the ancient dilemma of living up to ideals or succumbing to manna.

Selected Social Problems

The impact of federal aid on the guidance and counseling movement has also taken another and perhaps more beneficial turn. As guidance and counseling personnel have submitted proposals to federal agencies, they have been encouraged in many instances to come up with innovative approaches to such long-time social problems as the values of poverty-ridden youth, juvenile delinquents, unwed mothers, and alienated youth.

Some of the more interesting approaches have seriously questioned what have been shibboleths in the field for some time. For example, there are now some people in guidance and counseling who believe that one possible solution to the war on poverty is to help poverty-ridden youth acquire middle-class values. A few years ago, the very thought of "leading" youth toward given values was heresy. Yet we have a whole new school of thought in guidance and counseling studying how particular value patterns might be developed and reinforced. Proponents of such practices refer to their work as interventionist counseling and view the counselor as either a role model for disadvantaged youth or as an intervening variable in the war on poverty. There are of course a number of people in the field who maintain that although such work may prove helpful it can hardly be called counseling.

Another example of innovation fostered by response to funded pleas involves the concept of *outreach counseling*. Counselors are literally encouraged to counsel youth wherever they can be reached. Mobile television units have been employed to record such outreach counseling for purposes of evaluating the effectiveness of this work as well as for use in the preparation of outreach counselors. Recent emphasis has also been placed on employing experimental group counseling techniques in working with youths with common problems.

Counselors have also been employed in Job Corps camps, Neighborhood Youth Corps projects, and a myriad of other settings. The counselors in each of these settings and the people who prepare them for work in these settings are literally compelled to examine whether techniques which appeared to be quite effective when employed with middle-class youth have equal relevance when employed with other youth.

Such work is ennobling in that it provides meat for one's social conscience and exciting in that, professionally speaking, it is literally virgin territory for guidance research. The extent to which guidance and counseling personnel are successful in meeting the social problems they are confronting will in no small measure determine the extent to which guidance services will continue to receive the generous funds and public plaudits they are currently receiving. ❧



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