

SCHOOL TRUSTEES VS. COUNSELLOR EDUCATORS: A REACTION TO THE JEVNE REPORT

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Abstract

While the Jevne (1981) report reflects the view of guidance counsellors and educators, it is at variance with public expectations as outlined by the Canadian School Trustees Association. Educators and counsellors are reminded of the obligation they owe ratepayers to provide the services for which they were hired.

Résumé

Le rapport Jevne (1981) est conforme aux points de vue des conseillers en orientation et des éducateurs, mais il est incompatible à celui des attentes du public tel qu'énoncé par l'Association canadienne des conseillers scolaires. Les éducateurs et les conseillers doivent se rappeler qu'ils se doivent de donner les services pour lesquels les contribuables payent la note.

Counselling psychology and counsellor education are in the midst of an identity crisis which has led to a period of self-examination, and rightly so. The Counseling Psychology Division 17 of the American Psychological Association is planning a special review of the subject at the 1981 Annual Meeting. The Canadian Guidance and Counseling Association (CGCA) commissioned the study by Jevne (1981) which surveyed attitudes and priorities of Canadian educators and practitioners in the guidance and counselling field. This issue of the *Canadian Counsellor* is part of this examination process.

Canadian university guidance and counselling programs continue to receive many applicants and the programs continue to reflect the expectations of those who participate in the program rather than the school systems and public who will be the real clients after graduation. The Jevne report reflects this view of the guidance and counselling field — a view that is at variance with the expectations of the real world.

The Canadian School Trustees Association position paper (CSTA, 1980) senses the widespread public dissatisfaction with the schools in the field of career education, especially when this education is translated into "jobs." The trustees see a vital role for the guidance counsellor in the school's program of assisting students to find out who they are, where they are going, and who they want to be. Counsellor educators, however, are criticized for providing training in a psycho-therapeutic model with an emphasis on personal-social counselling. The different expectations expressed by school staff, administration,

parents, and employers result in role confusion for the guidance counsellor beginning a new job. In decentralized systems principals are already specifying the role definition of staff counsellors which is often incongruent with the self-perception of those counsellors.

In surveying the literature, Jevne found a reluctance to define counselling which she saw as an obstacle to training, evaluation and research of needed guidance and counselling competencies. CGCA defines the counsellor very broadly as including "all persons engaged in providing education, vocation, placement, personal and any other kind of services in the field of guidance to the public" (Jevne, 1981, p. 61). The results of Jevne's survey clearly identify the bias of the counselling profession in Canada and reflect the problems perceived by the CSTA.

Jevne found counsellor preparation emphasized self-awareness and personal characteristics while placing measurement techniques, information services, evaluation and research ability at the lower end of the scale. Vocational psychology was ranked between fourth and sixth in terms of the importance of theory for counsellors. In terms of function, career/vocation/education was ranked first by higher education counsellors but much lower by counsellor educators and students. Since college and university counsellors are on the firing line dealing with the secondary school graduates who are confused about both role and career, this tends to further support the CSTA position.

If a common theme can be drawn from the Jevne findings it is that the criticisms of the trustees are merited. Counsellor educators and

students as a group place little importance on career education and the vocational guidance components of counselling. At the same time this group wants public acceptance of their role. A somewhat cynical observation might be that counsellors have failed to convince a skeptical public that the counsellor's preferred and ideal role has much usefulness in the schools. If counsellors want jobs in the education field in the future they will have to start providing service that the ratepayers desire. The public's perception of what guidance and counselling should be has not changed too much in the past 30 years; the public still prefers an emphasis on career orientation rather than on one-to-one therapy. When school boards had extra financial resources there was a willingness to permit the extra staffing needed to provide personal-social counselling in schools. This is no longer true.

Counsellor educators, like many university professors, are not held in high esteem by a large portion of the public. There are commonly held views that academics do things which "don't really matter" to the real world. To the extent that we continue to prepare counsellors who cannot or do not want to meet public and teacher expectations, this view is validated. The Jevne report demonstrates where our values lie; perhaps it is time to consider where our bread and butter lies in the field of education.

References

- Canadian School Trustees Association. *Position paper on school guidance services*. Author, 1980.
- Jevne, R. Counsellor competencies and selected issues in Canadian counsellor education. *Canadian Counsellor*, 1981, 15, 57-63.