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EDITORIAL

Counsellor Training in Transition

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Counsellor competence and agency accountability for counsellor competence are topics of increasing concern. It is an issue for clients, counsellors, professional associations and agency administrators. The concern is of two types: one the level of competence and the other the areas of competence. This latter area has come to the fore in recent times with, for example, the increasing emphasis placed by the educational system on career education, life skills and vocational guidance. Many of the counsellors now expected to work in these areas have not been provided with adequate training.

This was a particular concern in 1977, when Dr. John Brosseau then President of CGCA approached the Minister responsible for the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission with a proposal for a series of seminars which would bring counsellor educators from across the country together with administrators of counselling and guidance.

In response to this proposal, CEIC made it possible for CGCA to hold an invitational seminar for counsellor educators prior to the Western Regional Conference in Saskatoon, in 1978.

Representatives of fourteen universities from eight provinces were in attendance to discuss vocational counselling and counsellor education.

Dr. Al Herman from the University of

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Calgary spoke on the question "Are theories of vocational development aiding counselling practice?" In his opening statement he suggested that of all the counselling done in schools and agencies "vocational" counselling is done least effectively. After referring briefly to the more well known theories, he concluded, paraphrasing Osipow, that theories abound, objectives have broadened but curiously the methods used by the counsellor in his daily work are remarkably similar to those he used in 1948. Al Herman suggested that counsellor educators have neglected vocational theory and the application of this theory to the practice of vocational counselling.

Since that time there has been an increase in emphasis on vocational development in counsellor education programs. A second concern that was expressed at the Saskatoon symposium was the extent of training in counselling provided by the faculties of education and this concern was pursued at a similar meeting of counsellor educators at St. John in 1979 with Dr. Myrne Nevison in the chair. This meeting gave rise to the preparation of the counsellor education guidelines which were approved by CGCA in 1981 and are printed in this issue. It now remains for institutions to abide by these guidelines and for employers to hire only those who meet the standard of training specified.

At that same meeting in 1978, Geoff Anderson, Director of Career Counselling for the Alberta Department of Advanced Education and Manpower posed the question "For what markets are we training counsellors?" He pointed out that universities are training counsellors for work in school settings and are

ignoring the significant markets which exist in other agencies which probably employ more counsellors than do schools. He offered several suggestions for adapting counsellor education programs to the needs which exist in these other markets; they are:

- 1) Place a greater emphasis on the training of counsellors with other than teaching background;
- 2) Stress a broad understanding of the world of work with a practicum outside the school environments;
- 3) Give career guidance equal time with psychology courses;
- 4) Provide broader training in group counselling skills;
- 5) Train counsellors to help adults as well as students.

Mr. Anderson based his remarks on research which shows that most career decisions are made by adults. The prime factor is a changing economy which is resulting in many more career decisions being made by women as they return to the labour market, and by people making mid-career decisions, etc. There is a great need for training counsellors to work with these adults.

This need for trained counsellors of adults has not been as well addressed as it should have been. There are today far too many people

working as counsellors who have not had the benefit of adequate formal training. Admittedly, the situation is complicated by the fact that many counsellors in non-school situations, get their jobs and then hope to get the training on the job because there is a lack of training programs for rehabilitation counsellors, employment counsellors, offender counsellors etc. In fact they get very limited training indeed which is most unfortunate for them, for their employer and most of all for their clients. Some employers themselves are becoming concerned about the situation and are instituting competency based counsellor training programs as in-service training programs. Such an arrangement is possible only for a relatively few organizations which can afford to develop and offer such a program. Furthermore, the training at its most ambitious, is but equivalent to little more than one full year of intensive academic training. It is interesting to note that the Federal Employment Institute in West Germany found it advisable and necessary to establish a special three-year training institution for vocational guidance and employment counsellors. All students in this large program have worked at other occupations before enrolling and they are paid a salary while they study. It may be necessary for Canada to establish similar institutes for the training of counsellors who work outside the educational system.