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GUIDELINES FOR COUNSELLOR EDUCATION IN CANADA

VANCE PEAVY

University of Victoria

SHARON ROBERTSON

University of Calgary

MARVIN WESTWOOD

*University of British Columbia**

Abstract

In June, 1981, the Canadian Guidance and Counselling Association (CGCA) accepted in principle a set of guidelines for counsellor education programs in Canada. In this article, the authors review the historical development of these guidelines, identify some definitions and working principles upon which they are based, and present them in their current form. The importance of, and advantages in having, a set of guidelines are discussed. Finally, unaddressed issues are considered.

At the national conference held in Calgary in June, 1981, the general assembly of the Canadian Guidance and Counselling Association (CGCA) adopted, in principle, a set of guidelines for counsellor education programs in Canada. The final draft of these guidelines was completed in January, 1982.

As members of the ad hoc committee which developed the guidelines, we believe that they represent an important achievement for CGCA and as such have far-reaching implications for counselling in Canada. For these reasons, we wish to offer some of our thoughts about the guidelines as they have appeared in their final form. More specifically, in this article we intend to present (a) a brief historical overview of the development of the guidelines, (b) some definitions and working principles upon which the guidelines are based, (c) a reproduction of the actual guidelines, (d) a discussion of the importance of and advantages in having these guidelines, and (e) a consideration of issues which have not been addressed by the guidelines in their current form.

* As the contributions of each author to the development of this article were virtually equal, the order of authorship is interchangeable. Financial support from the Canadian Guidance and Counselling Association and the University of Calgary is gratefully acknowledged.

Reprint requests should be sent to Vance Peavy, Department of Psychological Foundations in Education, University of Victoria, P.O. Box 1700, Victoria, B.C. V8W 2Y2.

Historical Overview

Although for a number of years some members of CGCA recognized a need for guidelines for counsellor education programs within Canada, direct action on this issue did not begin until Professor Myrne Nevison of the University of British Columbia organized a meeting-discussion of Canadian counsellor educators at the St. John's Conference in 1979. At this meeting, there was general agreement that guidelines for counsellor education programs were important enough to warrant the formation of an *ad hoc* committee to develop them. At the same meeting Professor Vance Peavy of the University of Victoria presented a slightly revised form of the guidelines adopted by the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) which is a division of the American Personnel and Guidance Association. The document prepared by Peavy was discussed and subsequently distributed to counsellor educators in Canada.

At the next meeting of the counsellor educators held in Ottawa in September, 1980, response to the Peavy/ACES document was reviewed and it was decided that rather than adapting a U.S. model to our Canadian setting, a truly Canadian version should be developed. Consequently, a three-person committee composed of Sharon Robertson from the University of Calgary, Vance Peavy, and Marvin

Westwood from the University of British Columbia was established with a mandate to develop a preliminary set of guidelines by December, 1980. This was done and subsequently two revisions were made by the committee based on input from counsellor educators across Canada. The guidelines thus developed were presented to the Counsellor Education Committee at the CGCA conference in Calgary in June, 1981. The committee recommended that the guidelines be adopted in principle by CGCA and this was passed by the General Assembly, with the provision that the committee meet one more time to incorporate those changes which had been suggested by counsellor educators at the Calgary meeting. The *ad hoc* committee met for the final time in December, 1981, to make final revisions and arrived at the guidelines which are presented in Appendix.

Definitions and Working Principles

In attempting to prepare the guidelines document, the *ad hoc* committee had to agree on some fundamental questions: specifically, "What is a counsellor?" and "What is counselling?"

Professional counsellors were defined as facilitators of human change and development. In order to facilitate human change and development, counsellors acquire an extensive set of specific interpersonal skills and competencies, adopt certain professional, ethical, and moral guidelines, acquire a behavioral science knowledge base, formulate a philosophical rationale for the conduct of their activities, and display what might be called a range of 'helping' attitudes and values.

Similarly, counselling was seen to be a complex human activity which has as its main goal the giving of aid by one person to another in the solution of the latter's life problems. It is comprised of specific and interlocking skills (Brammer, 1973), supported by a base of specialized knowledge, and infused with a set of values which constitute a counselling 'perspective' or 'ideology' (Halmos, 1965; Peterson, 1976; Wallis, 1973). In explicating the nature of counselling, questions such as 'What is the role of the counsellor?' or 'Who should counsel?' tend to deflect attention from the central issue. It is perhaps more instructive to state the central issue thusly: When the counselling perspective is invoked and counselling skills are used by whomever and whenever, are these skills used

reliably, effectively (Egan, 1975; Gazda, 1975) and ethically (Blackham, 1974)?

Members of the *ad hoc* committee further identified five working principles for establishing the guidelines. It was agreed that:

1. The guidelines should be flexible enough to permit different approaches to counsellor education.
2. They should emphasize generic skills, attitudes, and knowledges which underlie all counselling practice.
3. They should indicate both minimal and ideal preparation standards.
4. They should serve as standards for master level (and, possibly, diploma level) training programs but not doctoral level programs.
5. They should be reviewed periodically (e.g., every five years).

With this in mind, guidelines which appear in the Appendix of this article were prepared.

Why are the Guidelines Important?

["One characteristic of any professional group is the possession of a body of knowledge and skills as well as mutually acceptable ethical standards for putting them into practice"] (Association for Specialists in Group Work, 1979, p. 5). CGCA has surely shown leadership in raising the level of counselling practice in Canada over the past two decades. Beginning as a fledgling organization in 1965, CGCA has conducted both regional and national conferences, published an internationally respected journal, *The Canadian Counsellor*, developed a set of guidelines for ethical behavior, and now has adopted a set of guidelines for counsellor education programs for use across this country. Such activities reflect the gradual maturation of the organization in its efforts to develop a professional identity.

In fact, it was in 1975 that CGCA passed a resolution to "establish a set of guidelines for counsellor education" reflecting an attempt by the organization to establish standards and to regulate the profession internally. An effort was made to act on this resolution when CGCA funded a study by Jevne (1981) to determine the competencies of an effective counsellor and based upon these, to address the issue of what guidelines would best promote their development. Thus, while ACES in the United States had developed guidelines for counsellor preparation, CGCA recognized that what is appropriate for the

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American context may not be appropriate for Canada and took the initiative to develop a uniquely Canadian set of guidelines.

Although professionals should always be concerned about the quality of service their clients are receiving, in this age of accountability, both internal and external pressures are increasingly being placed on the members of CGCA and counsellor educators in particular to establish and maintain a set of professional standards. One has only to read the two special issues of *The Canadian Counsellor* (1981a, 1981b) which were devoted to counsellor education and school counselling to have this point driven home. In its position paper on school guidance services, the Canadian School Trustees' Association (1981) is particularly critical of counsellor training programs for not meeting the needs of school counsellors and they also recommend that requirements for certification of guidance counsellors be established. While the guidelines which have been presented here fail to address these issues directly in that they do not legislate program content or standards for accreditation, they do serve as a standard toward which all counsellor education programs in Canada might aspire. Thus, this nationally accepted set of guidelines may help to ensure that all programs provide students with those components of counsellor training which are held to be essential by most Canadian counsellor educators. Given the great diversity among programs which currently exists, this is truly a worthwhile goal.

Guidelines for Counsellor Education: Some Advantages

We have already discussed the importance of establishing guidelines especially as it pertains to the development of CGCA and to the enhanced professional status of counselling in Canada. Notwithstanding, there are some specific advantages in the adoption of guidelines which we think should be acknowledged as well. Such benefits will be discussed as they relate to a number of groups: (a) counsellor-training institutions, (b) counsellors-in-training, (c) counsellors in the field, and (d) clients who are referred to or seek counselling.

The Institution

The following are distinct advantages accruing to training institutions (i.e., university-based counsellor education programs) from adoption of the guidelines:

1. It gives institutions wishing to establish

programs an indication of the minimum number of faculty members required to offer the basic core competencies and to provide the necessary supervision for adequate preparation of a counsellor.

2. It aids university administrations in justifying budget requests to Ministries/Departments of Education or other funding sources.
3. It assists a department in bargaining with its university administration for the requisite number of faculty members, given the number of students enrolled in the program. Nationally based norms provide greater support for staff requisition than norms arrived at by a single department.
4. It allows departments to allocate teaching loads more easily. Reference to the supervisor/student ratios provided may be especially helpful in determining loads for clinically-based courses and practica.
5. It provides a basis by which developing departments can compare the quality of their program or curriculum to a nationally accepted standard.
6. It helps stimulate collegial discussion within and among university departments in terms of program goals and philosophy, research, teaching, supervision activities, and future program directions. Accurate representation of 'counselling in Canada' at the international association level will be possible with a greater degree of consistency among the various programs in this country.

Counsellors-In-Training

Another group which benefits from adoption of training guidelines consists of students who enter programs to become professional counsellors. The main advantages for the students are considered to be the following:

1. Students, as consumers of counsellor training, may become informed of what counselling competencies are held to be important by most counsellor educators in Canada and hence, what they might expect to be included in a program.
2. More consistency among programs in the

process or methods by which competencies are acquired and in the amount of clinical supervision received means that students in various programs are more likely to engage in adequate clinical experiences, at least to the minimal extent specified. This is particularly pertinent to the development of professional skills through pre-practicum training and experiences in practica for individual and group counselling.

3. Students may transfer more readily to comparable programs in other universities with greater congruity among university counsellor preparation programs.
4. Overall, with the establishment of national norms for counsellor training, prospective students can more effectively judge which program(s) are likely to provide them with the best and most appropriate counsellor preparation for their needs.

Practicing Counsellors

For counsellors who have completed their training and are currently working, adoption of the guidelines enables them to more readily identify competency areas which would provide direction for, or form the curriculum basis for in-service training. Directors or coordinators of counselling programs in schools, universities, manpower centers, etc., should also be better able to make decisions regarding hiring and program development when they know what expertise counsellors can be expected to offer.

Clients

It is obvious that the ultimate goal of developing guidelines for counsellor education is to meet the needs of clients more effectively through enhanced counsellor competence. More precisely, though, the estimated benefits to clients may be further broken down as follows:

1. Assurance is greater that clients will be helped by professionals who possess what most Canadian counsellor educators and counsellors consider to be essential skills and knowledges for assisting people in solving life problems and for helping them cope with normal developmental issues.
2. Clients are less exposed to the risk of seeking help from someone who, though well-intentioned, does not possess the

professional competencies to be sufficiently effective, but who is working as a "counsellor."

3. With greater consistency in levels of counsellor competence, clients, as consumers, may become more informed about what counsellors can do and may thereby lobby for the delivery of different or additional services by counsellors.
4. With greater uniformity in training, client expectations will probably become more homogeneous. Furthermore, clients are likely to experience more congruence between their expectations of what a counsellor can/should do and what the counsellor can, in fact, provide. Greater congruence of this type will reduce the amount of uncertainty, on the part of clients in our society, about what it is that a counsellor actually does.

There are, no doubt, other advantages emanating from the existence of guidelines for counsellor education which the reader may identify. Nevertheless, if the advantages indicated here are borne out in the near future, counselling in this country will have made significant progress as an evolving profession.

Issues Not Addressed

In working out this set of guidelines for counsellor education programs, a number of issues impinged upon our discussions but were necessarily left out of our final considerations. Here we briefly identify these issues in anticipation that they may be more fully discussed within CGCA in the near future.

1. *What About Counsellor Training Outside of University Departments?*

One of the working principles which guided our deliberations was "These guidelines are meant to apply to training programs at the M.Ed., M.A. (and, possibly, diploma) levels..." of (University) study. This meant that we were not mandated to work out guidelines for extra-University counsellor trainee programs as represented by such bodies as the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission, various pastoral counselling programs, counsellor training efforts within Workmen's Compensation Boards and lay counselling organizations.

For counselling positions *within* an educa-

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tional context such as schools, colleges and universities, virtually all of counsellor preparation is performed by appropriate university departments. However, *outside* of educational contexts— for example, Canada Employment and Immigration Commission, Workmen's Compensation Boards, Canadian Armed Forces— there are numerous programs (for the most part, short-term) for training employees to provide counselling services. CGCA has developed as an umbrella organization within which all manner of counsellors and individuals who perform counselling functions can become members.

It seemed to the members of this committee that some type of recognized guidance should be available to persons and organizations which sponsor counsellor education programs both within University Departments and outside of University settings.

How guidance for non-university counsellor preparation programs should be developed, by *whom*, and in *what* form, is, in our opinion, an issue which should gain attention within CGCA as soon as possible. First steps would seem to be the identification of the number and extent of such programs as well as the establishment of some mechanism within CGCA for the purpose of discussing this issue.

2. *Is There Any Interest in "Certification" of Programs?*

Does the adoption of "guidelines" for counsellor education programs on a national basis suggest that a further step is a "certification" procedure for programs? This committee did not develop an opinion on this issue. However, the issue was introduced into discussions, especially at the counsellor educator meetings during CGCA conferences at St. John's in 1979, Ottawa in 1980, and Calgary in 1981. At first glance, it seems that some quite strong opinions on this issue are to be found within CGCA both for and against any suggestion of program certification. It is our understanding that at least one Canadian university counselling program (Simon Fraser) plans to seek certification through the Association for Counsellor Education and Supervision, a division of the American Personnel and Guidance Association. A move within CGCA to use our guidelines in establishing a similar certification procedure would enable Canadian programs to seek accreditation within their own national organization rather than searching for such recognition abroad.

Should CGCA study the desirability of program certification? If so, *how* is this study to be carried out? As already pointed out, this committee did not develop an opinion on this issue. We do believe, however, that there may be enough interest in the matter that it should be brought under study within CGCA.

Concluding Comments

In view of the state of the literature on counsellor education, the tremendous variation in counsellor training programs in Canada, and our desire to maintain flexibility in approaches to counsellor preparation, we did not specify the expected competencies of the "well-trained counsellor" nor did we identify the methods by which these competencies might be attained. Rather, we attempted to identify issues (e.g., program objectives, curriculum, student selection, and advisement) with which all counsellor educators should be concerned in establishing and maintaining a program. In this article, we have argued that guidelines arising out of this orientation are both important and valuable to a number of specific groups including CGCA, institutions, counsellors-in-training, practicing counsellors, and perhaps most importantly, clients.

There are a number of issues which remain to be dealt with including counsellor training outside of university departments and certification. The guidelines presented here are intended to apply in the development of a "core" of skills, concepts, and knowledge which forms the "essential" basis for counsellor training in a wide spectrum of settings. Additional guidelines may be necessary for the establishment of specialties and, indeed, we understand that work on the development of guidelines for school counselling in Canada is already in progress. Within the next decade, other areas may have guidelines as well.

The task of constructing a set of guidelines for counsellor education programs in Canada has certainly been a challenging one for us. We hope that the development and review of guidelines such as these will remain a priority both for counsellor educators and for CGCA in the decade ahead.

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Appendix

Guidelines for Counsellor Education in Canada

The following guidelines were prepared by the *ad hoc* committee and were adopted by the general assembly of the biennial conference of the CGCA, at Calgary in June, 1981.

1.0. PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- 1.1 A graduate program in counsellor education should have a statement of its philosophy with accompanying program objectives. An example of such a set of objectives is given (see Annex A) although this is not intended to be the selected model for counselling.
- 1.2 Program objectives should be based on theory, research, and applied issues in counsellor education and supervision. They should also incorporate recommendations

by Canadian counsellors regarding special needs in preparing counsellors to practice in our society.

- 1.3 A set of program objectives should be accompanied by a system for continuously re-evaluating the objectives by faculty, students, and professionals in the field. Such re-evaluations should lead to the formulation of appropriate revisions.
- 1.4 Provisions should be made to assess each student's level of competence in terms of the objectives as he/she progresses through the program.

2.0 CURRICULUM

2.1 General Characteristics

There is a set of general characteristics which should be evident in such a counsellor preparation program.

- 2.1.1. The program should provide for the integration of theories-models and practical applications of counselling techniques.
- 2.1.2. Flexibility should be provided within the curriculum to allow for individual differences in competencies and knowledge in the design of a student's program.
- 2.1.3 The program should have a set of core competencies upon which specializations can be built.
- 2.1.4 The program should make provision for self-understanding and self-appraisal on the part of the student. Personal counselling for graduate students should be made available. Provisions should also be made for students to receive feedback from peers and instructors in reference to their use of skills and their personal impact on clients.

2.2 Core Concepts and Competencies

There are a number of key areas of study which are considered to be essential in providing a foundation upon which the counselling student may build more specialized knowledge and skills. Counsellor preparation programs should include the study of knowledge, skills, and attitudes in each of the competency areas as well as the discussion of professional, ethical and legal issues in counselling. The order in which the following competencies are presented is not meant to indicate their relative importance.

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- 2.2.1 Learning and human development
- 2.2.2 Research inquiry and evaluation methodology
- 2.2.3 Career development and the world of work
- 2.2.4 Individual and group counselling
- 2.2.5 Consultation methods
- 2.2.6 Psychological education
- 2.2.7 Assessment and testing

2.3 *Elective Concepts and Competencies*

Provision should be made for additional courses which may be selected by the student in consultation with the training institution. That is, courses should be offered to permit students to focus upon a particular area of interest (e.g., family counselling, rehabilitation counselling, elementary school counselling, counselling girls and women, psychological education, and vocational and career education).

2.4 *Practica*

Probably the most integral aspect of a counsellor education program is the supervised practicum experience. While it is considered that students may benefit from extensive, supervised practicum work, the following minimum guidelines are suggested:

- 2.4.1 In addition to a pre-practicum (laboratory instruction in basic counselling skills, especially interviewing) experience of 40 hours, a minimum of 120 hours of supervised practicum experience should be included in the program. Of these 120 hours, a minimum of 90 hours should be spent in direct client contact. Of these 90 hours, a minimum of 30 hours should be spent in each of (a) individual counselling and (b) group work.
- 2.4.2 Supervisors should include a combination of the following methods in discussing the student's counselling sessions: direct observation, review of audiotapes, review of videotapes, peer reactions.
- 2.4.3 Work settings need to have qualified on-site supervisors. Supervisors should have a minimum of a master's degree in counselling psychology plus significant counselling experience.
- 2.4.4 Supervisors of practicum students

(where they are full-time faculty members) should be responsible for no more than five trainees per term. Where applicable, such supervisory work should be credited as part of the supervisor's normal work load. In situations where the supervisor is a field person this particular norm does not apply. Where a program relies upon field personnel to be the key supervisors, no more than two graduate students are recommended unless the supervisors are to be released from other work responsibilities. The quality of supervision may not be compromised.

NOTE: The ACES requirements for courses and work settings seem to be a useful guide in this regard. These requirements are summarized in Annex B.

3.0 STUDENTS

3.1 *Selection*

Careful selection and screening of students is considered essential. Areas which should be considered in the selection process are:

- 3.1.1 *Courses.* Students should have a minimum of four courses in the social sciences or educational psychology as part of their undergraduate degree programs. These courses, where absent or in exceptional cases, may be taken as co-requisites during the graduate program. In certain cases course work may be substituted by the student demonstrating competence in the area via structured knowledge or skill assessment methods.
- 3.1.2 *Experiences.* Students should give evidence of having had satisfactory person-oriented field and/or work experience, i.e., related employment, child care or volunteer work.
- 3.1.3 *Personal characteristics.* Applicants should demonstrate personal characteristics which are consistent with the role of the counsellor which should be attended to at the point of selection.
- 3.1.4 *Flexibility.* Admissions criteria

should allow for flexibility by accepting candidates with varying backgrounds.

3.2 Advising

The department should provide written descriptions of programs including admission requirements, financial aid, program offerings and requirements for successful completion of the program.

4.0 QUALIFICATIONS OF COUNSELLOR EDUCATORS

Normally full-time instructors would possess a doctorate with a specialization in counselling. Part-time, sessional instructors and practicum supervisors are expected to have at least a master's degree in counselling.

5.0 NUMBER OF FACULTY AND STAFF

In order to provide a good program, it is necessary to offer guidelines for the number of faculty required. More specifically, counsellor education departments need some type of formula by which they can estimate the number of faculty needed for the type of program to be offered. Factors influencing staff/student ratios include among others: (a) number of students to be supervised by each faculty member, (b) number of students on part-time or full-time studies, and (c) number of students on thesis and non-thesis programs.

The CGCA *ad hoc* Committee on Counsellor Education was unable to develop such a formula in time for approval by the general assembly of the Association at the Calgary conference in June, 1981.

However, the *ad hoc* Committee offers two opinions regarding faculty-student ratios for a graduate program in counselling. a) A program should have sufficient instructor time to offer the core knowledge areas and supervision as outlined in this document. In the opinion of the *ad hoc* Committee, at least five full-time (or equivalent) instructors are required to implement such a program. b) A program as outlined in this document contains both professional and academic components which, in turn, require individualized practical, and research supervision. In the opinion of the *ad hoc* Committee, no more than seven full-time (or equivalent) students should be admitted to a program in any given year per full-time faculty member. This ratio would vary in certain

programs with additional constraints; e.g. programs admitting doctoral students, programs admitting a large proportion of part-time students, programs requiring more than 12 months to complete and so on.

Annex A

Program objectives: an example

One set of objectives which might serve as a sample model was developed from the DACUM¹ procedures carried out at the University of Victoria and at the Atlantic Institute of Education (participants were from St. Francis Xavier, Acadia, and Dalhousie Universities). These objectives have been listed below.

The student must be able to:

1. Demonstrate effective communication skills in interpersonal relationships.
2. Identify and specify problems and client needs.
3. Apply selected individual counselling methods.
4. Apply special group counselling methods.
5. Apply measurement and evaluation techniques.
6. Demonstrate consultation skills.
7. Apply behavior change techniques.
8. Administer a program of services.
9. Organize and conduct vocational and educational information programs.
10. Enlist and utilize community referral resources.
11. Employ effective instructional techniques.
12. Develop and implement programs in psychological education.
13. Demonstrate continuing improvement in professional education.
14. Conduct, survey, and evaluate research.
15. Intervene at the institutional level, i.e. psycho-social interventions.

1. DACUM is an acronym for developing a curriculum which refers to a committee process for developing program objectives and related learning activities.

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Annex B

ACES requirements for courses and work settings

Various questions were raised concerning "course" requirements and how they might fit into the framework or guidelines. For those who would like guidance with this topic we included the following ACES requirements for course and work settings.

A. *Course Areas*

1. Human growth and development.
2. Social and cultural foundations.
3. The helping relationship.
4. Groups.
5. Lifestyle and career development.
6. Appraisal of individuals.
7. Research and evaluation.
8. Professional orientation.

B. *Environmental and Specialized Studies*

1. Studies to prepare for work in specialized settings (e.g., rehabilitation counselling, employment counselling, school counselling).

C. *Supervised Studies*

1. Prepracticum. (A laboratory setting in which interviewing and basic counselling skills are taught via role-playing, videotaped feedback and coached clients.)
2. Practicum. (Supervised participation in a real counselling situation with individual and group clients.)

3. Internship.

(A 300-hour post-practicum on-the-job experience where the student is paid and supervised.)

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dr. R. Vance Peavy is a professor in the Department of Psychological Foundations in Education at the University of Victoria. Dr. Peavy is a senior member of the counselling faculty at the University of Victoria. He has a long-standing interest in the advancement of counselling in Canada and is well-known to the Canadian counselling community through his articles and research reports on counselling.

Dr. Sharon Robertson is an assistant professor in the Department of Educational Psychology, University of Calgary, where she is involved in the counselling psychology program. Currently, she is primarily responsible for the preparation of group counsellors and family life educators. From 1976-1978, Dr. Robertson held a full-time position as a sessional instructor in counselling and school psychology at the University of Alberta.

Dr. Martin Westwood is an associate professor in the Department of Counselling Psychology at the University of British Columbia. He was at McGill University for six years prior to moving to Vancouver, where he developed a research interest in cross-cultural counselling. Marv has been very active in the CGCA; especially in the area of counsellor education.