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SECONDARY SCHOOL COUNSELLING IN ENGLAND AND CANADA: A MINI COMPARISON*

During May and June of 1970, it was my privilege to be a visiting professor at the University of Exeter in its Diploma Program in Counselling and to visit local educational authorities, colleges of education, and universities in other parts of England. At the conclusion of my stay in Exeter, I was a guest of the British Council and visited counsellor education programs at two other universities, Keele and Reading, as well as secondary school counsellors in two regionally different Local Educational Authorities—School Districts.

As one who has been both a secondary school and university counsellor in Canada and the U.S.A., what were by impressions of school counselling in England?

It was soon apparent to me that school counselling in England is a newcomer to the educational scene and still in its infancy. While it has many facets in common with secondary school counselling in North America, it does have some differences, particularly, in terms of the historical background in which it is being implemented.

The Education Act of England and Wales, 1944 increased the length of schooling from age 14 to 15 years (in 1972-73, this will be extended to age 16), and broadened the curriculum offerings by increasing the types of programs available to students. After writing the 11+ examination, the student enrolled at a grammar school, technical school, or modern school, depending upon his examination results and vocational plans. As the fallacy of this early and dangerous segregated streaming was soon realized, experimental programs with comprehensive secondary schools (multi-stream programs within one school) were started. The result has been that the majority of professional educators and the public have been expressing a desire for conversion of all secondary schools into comprehensive schools. Last year, prior to its defeat, the Labour Government had requested information from all Local Education Authorities regarding their plans for conversion to comprehensive secondary schools. It seemed to be the feeling of English educators that if the Labour Government had been re-elected, comprehensive schools would have been legislated. This, of course, would have been the death knell of the Direct Grammar Schools which get their funds directly from the central government and do not come under jurisdiction of the Local Educational Authorities (L.E.A.). These schools are modelled on the segregated English Public School—Eton and Harrow—and have always served an elite group but were required to allow twenty-five per cent of their enrolment space for bright students recommended by the Local Educational Authority.

It is easy to realize that in order to operate an effective comprehensive school, a radical change of philosophy and commitment from that prevail-

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ing in the segregated schools was required both in the school staff and in the curriculum. This was obviously much more difficult for those teachers who had been teaching in grammar schools for many years because they were no longer involved with an elite intellectual group. The unique homogeneous group became a heterogeneous one.

While the counsellor is a newcomer to the English educational scene, most schools have been receiving the services of a careers master. It has been his responsibility to provide vocational information to students and to act as a liaison with local employers, thereby assisting students to obtain employment or make career plans. Normally, this person had a teaching assignment, a few periods being allocated to his career master responsibilities.

Another traditional factor prevalent in most secondary schools into which the counsellor had to "fit" is the House Tutorial System. Under this system, the student body is divided into a number of Houses each with a House Master and a number of teachers as personal tutors. The students usually remain in the same House throughout their stay in a school and therefore have the continuity of contact with the same House Staff members—unless they change schools.

This, then, is the educational milieu into which the new English education professional, the secondary school counsellor, is being placed.

One of the role implementation factors which impressed me most was the fact that all counsellors were *full time* professionally prepared counsellors. This model prevailed in two widely separated Local Educational Authorities which I visited. The Americans who helped the English initiate their programs had convinced them that this was an essential aspect of a professional counselling program. Why are we unable to convince provincial authorities and school districts in Canada to implement a similar policy?

How do these secondary counsellors see their role?

In one L.E.A., I met with three counsellors and their principals in pairs, to discuss their mutual views of the counsellor's role. It was soon apparent that although these three counsellors were graduates of the same counsellor education program, they each had their own unique emphasis in the implementation of their roles. It should be noted that all three counsellors were located in comprehensive coeducational secondary schools.

One counsellor, who had an excellent relationship with his headmaster—easily the best of the three—seemed far too involved as an administrative assistant. This is not unusual in Canada. As we are all aware, it is frequently a criticism of counsellors that they let themselves become pseudo-administrators instead of concentrating on serving students by ensuring that the majority of their time is spent interacting with clients. This same counsellor was not overly concerned that students had to walk through the Deputy Headmaster's office to visit with the counsellor in his office.

One thing that impressed me in this particular situation was the fact that the headmaster and counsellor had, for the benefit of both staff and parents, a mutually agreed-upon, written description of the counsellor's role and function. On paper, at least, this looked excellent, but it did not appear to me that it was being practiced. In this case, the counsellor was responsible for coordinating the House Tutorial System which had been implemented at the time of his appointment. Politically, this was fortunate for him as it meant he did not have to fit into an existing House System which was func-

tioning with a philosophy contrary to his own. As there was no previous careers master in this school, the counsellor was responsible for vocational counselling for students and parents as well as for educational and personal counselling.

The educational psychologist in the central office and the counsellor cited had developed a statement on the role of the counsellor. Under "Unique Aspects of the School Counsellor's Role" one of the statements which caught my attention and one which does not seem to be mentioned often enough in North American literature was as follows:

"He has a special responsibility for studying the school as a miniature society. This implies observation and investigation of how the system affects the individual child (i.e. Streaming, Examination, Disciplinary Methods)."

This statement implies and assumes, of course, that the headmaster wants and is secure enough to handle this type of critical analysis. All too often, unfortunately, too many headmasters are too easily threatened by such comments. Most professional counsellors agree with the statement and believe that it should be part of every counsellor's role and that the principal, if he is open-minded and genuinely concerned with his students, will encourage such analyses.

Another counsellor and headmaster to whom I spoke disagreed as to where the counsellor should place his prime emphasis. The headmaster felt that the counsellor should be more concerned with the younger students entering the comprehensive school. The counsellor, however, was placing his emphasis on the senior students, particularly on their vocational counselling concerns and at the same time, was occupied with attendance for the general student body. The latter was a misuse of his professional preparation and is frequently a criticism of Canadian counsellors. While this one full-time counsellor did have an unreasonable student load of 900 students, it seemed that like so many counsellors, he had misemphasized his role priorities.

The last counsellor visited had a truly professional understanding of the counsellor's role and was attempting to implement it to the best of his ability and to the extent that the environment would permit. It was apparent that there was not the acceptance of counselling by the headmaster or the staff in this school that there was in the first case cited. Nevertheless, it appeared that the counsellor was much more aware of appropriate role priorities. For instance, he was counselling with several students who had school phobia problems. One twelve year old boy who was fearful of school was being given considerable supportive therapy by the counsellor as well as some instructional assistance in certain circumstances. The counsellor also knew his teachers, and introduced me to one teacher who was very concerned about the lack of good human relations between some teachers and students in the school. The main problem appeared to be that the majority of staff had been accustomed to teaching grammar school students (an elite intellectual group) and had not fully accepted the philosophy of comprehensive schools which are responsible for the education of all students.

In the second L.E.A., I met with the counsellors as a group. On talking to them, it was soon apparent that as a group they are faced with many of the same problems that confront Canadian counsellors—such as lack of role definition and no written statement for clarifying their role to themselves, the principal, teachers, parents, and students. It was obvious, too, that in spite of the fact they were all full-time counsellors, several of them lacked

full acceptance by their principals and were involved for a good deal of the time in questionable role duties—attendance, substitute teaching, clerical, administrative work, and discipline problems.

Perhaps, criticism should be directed towards counsellor education programs which prepare school counsellors without subjecting the candidates to a thorough discussion of the role of the professional school counsellor and the need for a written description of role within the school. Administrators, too, must be exposed to a thorough understanding of the counsellor's role during their preparation. The American Personnel and Guidance Association statement on the "Role of the Secondary School Counsellor" would seem to be an essential item for discussion with Canadian student counsellors and administrators until such time as the Canadian Guidance and Counselling Association issues a comparable statement. As Shertzer and Stone (1966) stated:

Every counsellor, by acts of omission and commission, contributes to the expectation for school counsellors. Each contributes to the success or failure of a role definition acceptable to present and future counsellors. Defining what is and what should be the counsellor's role is a personal responsibility that cannot be avoided. Those who, because of ignorance or indifference, try to stay on the sidelines, inevitably influence the course of events, even though their influence is due to lack of involvement.

School counsellors must become more concerned and sophisticated in defining what is relevant in the role and functions of the school counsellor, or others with less knowledge of the professional counsellor's role will do it for them.

The preparation of school counsellors in England is currently taking place at five universities: Exeter, Swansea, Reading, Keele and Manchester. The University of London is about to begin a program. In terms of need, however, these programs hardly begin to make a dent, as the five together are only graduating approximately 75 students per year. It is obvious that, if professionally prepared counsellors are to be made available in England at an increasing rate which will begin to meet the need, counsellor education programs will have to be expanded rapidly in a manner comparable to the growth made possible in the U.S.A. by the National Defense Education Act of 1958 and its subsequent extensions. "Title Va provided fifteen million dollars per year for the strengthening of guidance services in the schools and Title Vb provided approximately 7 million dollars per year for the conduct"² of counsellor education programs. A similar need exists in Canada if minimum standards of certification are to be rigidly enforced.

One thing that impressed me in England was the fact that experienced teachers who were interested in furthering their education were seconded from their L.E.A. at full pay with no obligation to return to their former employer. All Local Educational Authorities were obliged to pay into a central fund and, therefore, were keen for their teachers to make use of the fund. This scheme applied to one-year diploma programs following the three-year certificate program in which it is possible to specialize in a great variety of areas, examples of which are: primary education, secondary education, child development, educational technology, art education, adult education, science education, counselling, and handicapped children.

A similar scheme is certainly long overdue in Canada if we are to prepare professionals for student personnel services work in adequate numbers to begin to meet the tremendous need which exists in this country.

It is evident that while secondary school counselling in England is a much newer field than it is in Canada, the concept of a *full-time* counsellor has been implemented.

Counselling is an emerging and developing profession, both in England and Canada. It is still struggling to gain full professional recognition. Counsellors who conceptualize themselves as pupil-prodders, loose-ends coordinators, assistant administrators and task performers are in professional default² (Boy & Pine 1968) and should be censured by their professional peers. Until professional standards for counsellors are raised and licensing is enforced, this is not possible.

The Canadian Guidance and Counselling Association should form a professional standards committee to bring in a report regarding counsellor education programs, standards, certification and accreditation of institutions in Canada. The CGCA must convince the Federal and Provincial Governments to make more financial assistance available to universities for the preparation of counsellors—particularly in view of the fact that the Federal Government's own report shows that of all the school counsellors in Canada in 1967, only 1.8% had a degree in guidance, 4.5% had a diploma in guidance, and 67.3% had no certificate, diploma, or degree.³

Secondary School counselling in Canada has been in existence for thirty years or more.⁴ In England, it is only five years old. In spite of its infancy in England, secondary school counselling is implemented through full-time, professionally prepared counsellors. In contrast, school counselling in Canada has a long way to go before it can attain a similar status. Canadian provincial authorities must be persuaded to increase the minimum professional standards demanded of school counsellors, as well as adopting the concept of full-time counsellors. This will require the expansion of counsellor education programs to cope with the demand for a corps of professionally prepared and certified counsellors performing their roles on a full-time basis.

Canadian counsellors, like their English counterparts, need to be fully informed concerning their professional role with *all* its implications and to be insured that a written statement of their role is made available to all those with whom they work. It would be much more effective if the counsellor could demonstrate to his fellow professionals—administrators and teachers—that such a written role description had the support of his own professional organization, the Canadian Guidance and Counselling Association.

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