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RECENT PERSONNEL RESEARCH SIGNIFICANT TO VITAL EDUCATIONAL PROCEDURES

EARLE E. EMME AND EUGENE M. EMME

The attitude of college faculties toward counseling or personnel work varies from positive rejection and ridicule to enthusiastic endorsement and unquestioned acceptance. A few typical faculty reactions indicate positive or negative reaction to personnel procedures:

TYPICAL NEGATIVE REACTIONS

1. Personnel emphasis is just a fad that will blow over as other fads have done.
2. If a student gets his studies that is all there is important for him.
3. Advising the student is doing things for him that he should do himself.
4. Guidance may have some value but it should be cared for in the various departments.
5. Intelligence tests don't determine the student's grade reliably.
6. Achievement tests don't seem to help much.
7. This emphasis upon the student's past record is secondary. His college record depends upon what he wants to make of himself.
8. There are too many "spoon-fed" methods these days.
9. Why spend so much time on poor students? They should not be in college if they cannot pass their work.

TYPICAL FAVORABLE REACTIONS

1. The individual and his future is the only criterion for education.
2. Any curriculum that does not put the individual completely at the center of the curriculum is out-moded.
3. These subject-matter teachers do not realize how far they are behind the times.
4. The giving of many tests is very significant whether any skilled use is made of them or not.
5. Personnel work is simply good education.
6. What good is a lot of memorized subject matter if it isn't related to the interest and possible skills of the student?
7. Helping the student to discover a worthy and adapted purpose is essential to enthusiastic educational endeavor.
8. Student mortality is often times caused by ill health, home crises, economic limitations, emotional immaturity, rather than low intelligence.
9. Many able students are not going to college and numerous with poor educational equipment are going; hence the need for sound educational advising.

10. Some students are setting their goals too high and others not high enough.

Educational leadership is compelled to take some position on aspects of personnel procedures. Curriculum outputs according to Bower and Emme (1) reveal that the trends have been evolving over a long period of time. Beginning with the disciplinary view of training the mind on difficult subjects, today, the experience, need, and interests of learners have much to do in determining what is to be taught and what procedures are to be used in mastering them.

Thus personnel procedures and vital educational leadership have at least two factors of primary interest as a common task, the student who is immersed in the process, and the process itself. *The student is the center of reference in both of them.* Here lies the base for assembling this recent research.

The following criteria were used in the selection of this research:

1. Related educational findings of personnel significance.
2. Personnel findings related to educational procedures on the secondary level.
3. Prevailing emphasis in personnel procedures.
4. Significant personnel trends.
5. Time limitation means but a few typical references can be presented.

SENSING STUDENT NEEDS

The many aspects of college life present a veiled background for understanding guidance whether it be by the teacher or specialist-guidance officer. Some schools are beginning to sense certain of the specialized functions but the teaching-guidance aspect sags at many points. Teaching responsibility is still the chief value in a good school. Houston (15) finds that unless teachers offer well planned instruction and are genuinely interested in students they will have little opportunity to become guides. He adds that the teacher has the responsibility of relating as far as possible the subject of instruction to vocation, leisure time, and other adult needs and interests.

The sincere professional aspect of *sensing needs* is emphasized by O'Shea (22). He reports that the activities of a Midwestern group of 30 college psychiatrists and clinical psychologists have met regularly for the past four years thinking through carefully some 12 topics such as: types of students needing most help, criteria for excluding students from college, responsibility of the col-

lege toward the excluded ones, cooperation with the administration and counselors, etc. Many other guidance conferences and organizations are sincerely trying to understand the guidance process.

AIMS AND PURPOSES

Who goes to college? Pressey (26) warns that some people should set their goals higher than they do, but other persons' goals should be lower. Educational goals should be determined on the basis of ability and opportunity of the individual to be over- or under-motivated. Jordan (16) reports from the records of 15,000 high school seniors on the North Carolina high school senior examination. They were divided into those going to college and those not going to college. Those going to college did have higher grades. But it was also shown that thousands of able students are not going to college and that thousands with poor ability are going.

Trabue (34) points out varied functions of guidance such as efficient instruction, measurements and advising on abilities, health diagnosis, emotional maturity, etc. An important function, he adds, is the "emphasis upon integrated personalities." Small colleges make some claim that they are doing a better job of this, but many large schools make strong denial with counter claims. Certainly, the more progressive and honest institutions will definitely point out in their educational aims just what they are equipped to do in this regard.

TYPES OF HUMAN NEEDS

Brumbaugh and Haggerty in their annual report of the North Central Association reveal the encouraging news that almost half of all accredited institutions (45.03 per cent) indicate that they prefer a body of students representative of the United States as a whole (4). Emme (11) found that an entire freshman class revealed 19 areas of student difficulty. In the order of greatest frequency they are as follows: academic; religion; teachers; economic; library; educational advising; personal student relations; athletics; vocation; rooming; social and amusement activities; relation to other races and colleges; home; health; relation with teachers outside of class, etc. Students usually report difficulties in the selection of courses and failure therein, study habits, concentration, note taking, examinations, and problems peculiar to particular departments. Stuit (32) studied the performances of the Iowa qualifying examination of majors in various academic departments. He found differential characteristics of majors in the various de-

partments and that this information was valuable in the counseling the student concerning the choice of a major. Academic aspects of student adjustment are likewise revealed by Smeltzer (29). Students were asked to consider their total difficulties. It was found that the group of difficulties directly related to instruction was of greatest importance to them.

Winston (38) investigated the factors of student adjustment and selected the factors of *economic security*, delayed *matriculation*, and uncertainty of *vocational* choice as being very important. It was pointed out that these are frequently overlooked in guidance procedures. Goetsch (13) found that 1,023 High School graduates of Milwaukee revealed the economic factor in that 42% were not in school; that of the 602 not in school, 70% indicated that they would be if a complete scholarship could be provided. More than three out of four gave economic reasons for discontinuing their education. Student relationship to *home* is too frequently overlooked in educational procedures and guidance. Tests have been devised by Emme and Henry (12) to measure their relationship. Students are not in agreement in their attitudes toward both parents. And some indicate dislike while others go to the other extremes and reveal overaffection and dependence.

Helping the student to solve these relationships is a difficult task even for those skilled in this understanding. Suffice here is to point out something of the delicate and treacherous nature of the beginning of this early parent-student relationship. Liss (17) finds that the home experiences of love, affection, and understanding develop security in the child. The tragedy of parental domination in the ruination of the individual initiative of many college students in their younger days is well stated by Bender (2). Children need a great deal more love and warmth from the world and from adults than we are accustomed to giving them. *Children are not spoiled by affection and attention but by infantile parents who indulge themselves by giving the child attention when it pleases them and holding it back when it displeases them; who do not consider the child's developmental needs, and who admire the child not for its own sake but for theirs.* This means a terrible disillusioning finding, that some of the so-called wonderful parent-and-student love relationships are mere parental selfishness. Here the counselor has one of his greatest difficulties if he tries to help the student.

Closely allied with the above, but not limited to it, are the *emotional problems of students*. Prescott (25) is the first educa-

tor to base his major interest in education on this aspect of the entire educational process. He points out the emotional needs of learners. Zackary (40) maintains there are two emotional needs of primary importance: the need to feel that the individual has achieved acceptably, and the need to feel wanted and secure with other persons. It is emphasized that *people of all ages must be able to feel that they are contributing to their group, and that they are secure in friendship and affection, and that they have a meaningful place in the home and the community.*

Where the emphasis is on general counseling the recognition of acute student problems is likely to be overlooked. In one large state university it was stated that they did not have as many as 10 students each year with serious personality difficulties. But Chassell (5) reports on the basis of two years of consulting experience in a women's college, that approximately 10-25% of the students need expert advice; that many of the difficulties resolve into deep personality problems. These problems, according to Dr. Chassell, focus within the areas of professional future, social, and sexual adjustments. She feels that they need a release principle operating in an atmosphere of security, enabling the student to acquire increased control. She says that psychoanalysis is rarely needed. But in the environmental modification, the efforts of faculty members and parents are important.

Sprague (30) looks at student adjustment more from the standpoint of clinical procedures and psychiatric approaches. He feels that psychiatry has moved ahead on so many fronts that a *classification of problems* would be very useful. He submits the following classification after many years of experience: 1. Intellectual; 2. School placement and adjustment; 3. Problems of special mental capacities, interests, disabilities; 4. Emotion and personality; 5. Objectives, ideals, beliefs, unenlightenment; 6. Social and recreational adjustment; 7. Physical; 8. Psychosis. To be sure, educational procedures would have added functions in most schools if some of these issues were in the minds of educators and personnel officers.

UNDERSTANDING HUMAN NATURE

To understand the whole person is a skill and resource limited to a very few. Emotion, intelligence, social values, purposes, motivation,—these are but a few of the many aspects of a given individual if complete counseling is to take place. What confusion exists at that point! Physicians admit that a great many of the

patients coming to them reveal no organic difficulty after examination. Blalock (3) asserts that one-third of the patients coming for attention present no primary physical illness at his clinic. Likewise, when students come to a counselor, the true cause of their difficulty or complaint is highly involved for the counselor. Symptoms are confused with causes. Sometimes administrative officers take such student reports at their face-value when the underlying motive or cause presented by the student as a symptom or face saving device is something altogether different. O'Shea (21) emphasizes the fact that the psychologist is probably the officer best fitted to act as a pivot and integrating factor in such student situations. This may be true, but the responsibilities resting on every teacher and every person on the staff of an educational institution, has a definite responsibility for the total personnel program. Naturally these phases of understanding people mean that individuals sensitive and informed on student life should have appropriate responsibility in such matters. Such persons assigned, and all others cooperating in the task would be the ideal situation.

UNDERSTANDING OF PERSONALITY FACTORS

Too little critical comment has been made about quackery methods and the "gullibility" of human nature. It is likewise easy for educators to become certain of *practices and viewpoints*. It has been thought wise, for example, to limit extra-curriculum activities. And there are reasons for this position. But Wilkins (36) found at Oberlin no evidence that the work of seniors holding many offices had suffered thereby. Phi Beta Kappa members were more active than others in organizations. Studies of student employment, campus work, N. Y. A., and other forms of activity, make the educator duly cautious over some of the previously accepted views.

Interests indicated by students are sometimes taken as basic guides in student counseling. Pintner and Forlano (23) in their study of dominant interests and personality characteristics found that there was a trend for high interest groups to be less neurotic but there were no clear-cut patterns of maladjusted tendencies characterizing the various interest-value trends of divergent groups. Research need not be cited to point out the value of individual *achievement* in personality adjustment.

GUIDANCE METHODS

Wrenn (39) in his critical evaluation of the Guidance Movement makes it clear that *improvement is possible*. He points out

that the survey method might be used; cross-section studies could be made; developmental studies over a long period. These would show weaknesses and strengths of personnel procedures. Among many of the findings on counseling methods, Stromberg (31) reveals one of them when he reports that guidance is not an art of patient listening and giving anecdotal advice. Nor is departmental advising the best procedure where all members of the department advise students in their turn in order to come to a better understanding of their students, regardless of the quality of help given.

Lowry (18) points out the value of a combination of environmental and direct approaches to personal guidance. And much has been written upon the use of tests. Cureton (7) emphatically emphasizes that the validity of all mental hygiene and adjustment inventories is doubtful and great caution should be used in interpreting interest-pattern tests. Certainly no one should place any credence in any test until he understands its reliability and validity, its appropriateness for his situation, its previous use elsewhere, and care in the interpretation of the results.

Darley (9) urges the importance of a systematic case study in individual diagnosis and counseling which should include a systematic analysis of tests, grades, achievement, abilities, personality, etc.; definition of the problems of the student; and third, an organization of the record. Dunlap (10) says the success of the program depends upon the training of advisers and counselors, and the giving of sufficient time for individual analysis, discussion and decision. Poffenberger (24) emphasizes that inasmuch as the field is so new another professional group ought to evolve which has been trained in the essential portions of psychiatry, psychology, and social work. Perhaps this is professionalizing guidance work, but it does make clear that varied and many functions of advising seem important.

Regardless of procedures, something should be done about individual student difficulties. For example, Ullman (35) worked with stagefright among musicians. All known cues for stagefright were eliminated and then negatively adapted to the subjects. Two musicians who suffered greatly from stagefright were first given a different instrument in different surroundings. Later an audience of one was given, and still later informal groups. Confidence was gradually built up until the normal audience situation could be faced.

COUNSELING LEADERSHIP

The counselor has a definite relationship with the students in his classes and with other students. Taft (33) gives a linear explanation of this function. The taking and giving of help are seen as two opposite but complementary currents in a single complex process. Counseling prescribes that the counselor give specific and adapted information, but at the same time he must be objective in the procedure as he maintains a sincere interest in the student's welfare. This balance is difficult to acquire. Meek (19) relates effective teachers to the counseling function by emphasizing skill in discovering, recognizing, and interpreting individual needs; being at ease, relaxed, and informal; having enriching life experiences, some sort of creative experience, etc. Quick (27) emphasizes training on the job for graduate training in personnel work. But courses in psychology, sociology, economics, history, and government were prerequisites. For faculty members on the job the recommendation by Miller (20) is that a credit course be given, preferably under the direction of the psychology department. Mature student counselors might engage in the same procedure. The Michigan Psychological Association went into this matter carefully and approved the following report as presented by Green (14): 1. The desired undergraduate program is a broad one, including more study of sciences and languages than arts or historical subjects; 2. 15 courses in psychology, 5 in social science, 3 in medicine, and 5 in languages and sciences.

Qualifications of counselors may vary but Raphael (28) reports that the counselors should be well-balanced, broadly educated, humanly understanding individuals, and sympathetic with the local situation.

EVALUATION

The chief test of personnel procedures is, were students reliably informed and guided? Cole (6) evaluated a boy's guidance club program. One hundred of the members of a boy's club who asked for vocational guidance were checked 5 years later. They were compared with a control group of 100 members of the club who had received no guidance. The group receiving the guidance excelled in length of school attendance, grades, level of occupational status reached, job satisfaction, earnings, and extent of employment. The equating factors common to the two groups make the study significant. Likewise, Williamson and Bordin (37) mated a control group with 405 freshman men and women who received ad-

vice during 1933-36. One year later the results showed that 80% of the counseled had achieved satisfactory adjustment as against 66% of the control group. Counseled students obtained better grades also.

A final word is that counseling work is skill and not work that "just anyone" can perform. Darley (8) made a study of advising and supplemented it with clinical procedures. Clinical diagnosis confirmed test results from 20.4% to 52.2% for men and from 21.6% to 45.7% for women; the highest percentage in both groups occurred on results of the adjustment inventory scored from home adjustment. He emphasizes that the use of existing test scores required interpretation and clinical judgment rather than mechanical use of the scores as a basis of therapeutic work.

SUMMARY

Thus, vital educational procedures can enlarge their scope to include personnel views and practices; so good education includes guidance. And guidance, worthy of the name, is good education. Each is an integral part of the other.

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