

**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE ROLE OF CONSULTANT
TO COUNSELORS: ESPECIALLY THE
OCCUPATIONAL CONSULTANT**

BY

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AN INVESTIGATION OF THE ROLE OF CONSULTANT TO COUNSELORS;
ESPECIALLY THE OCCUPATIONAL CONSULTANT

A Research Paper
Presented to
the Graduate Council of
Austin Peay State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in Education

by
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August, 1977

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a Research Paper written by Brenda Joyce Melton entitled "An Investigation of the Role of Consultant to Counselors; Especially the Occupational Consultant." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts in Education, with a major in Guidance and Counseling.


Major Professor

Accepted for the
Graduate Council:


Dean of the Graduate School

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Jesse B. Davis served as the first school counselor at Central High School in Detroit, Michigan in 1898. It was Frank Parsons in the early 1900's who led the vocational guidance movement. Because of changes in patterns of living and especially because of the influence of World War II, the need for counselors, especially vocational counselors grew rapidly.¹ Today the counselor position is a typical one in the school setting as well as various other settings. The school counselor serves numerous functions. He must be knowledgeable in human relationships and have a storehouse of information. Many counselors seem ill-prepared in these qualifications, especially in their access to relevant information. Often a counselor may be placed in a rural school setting where needed information is difficult to attain. The counselor may be in a school situation in which he has so many duties that the time factor involved may not permit him to gather the information or he may not have access to needed information required in his work.

Because of these factors, it has come into question in recent years whether or not a school guidance counselor should be viewed as the sole resource in providing

occupational and/or other informational services to the student. It has been proposed by some investigators that the school counselor might profit in his effectiveness in dealing with students by using resources within and outside of the school setting. Such resources as paraprofessionals,² consultants to counselors,³ and occupational consultants⁴ have been suggested as possible aids to the school guidance counselor.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the roles of consultants to counselors. Special emphasis is focused on the occupational consultant, a new role that appears particularly necessary. It is hoped that the result will be a clearer understanding of these roles and their potentials.

Definition of a Consultant

The consultant is a relatively new role in the field of educational counseling. There have been consultants in private and public employment for many years. However, no matter in what area the consultants work, they usually share these common characteristics according to Stiller:

- (1) They are experts in their field. They have an expertise usually uncommon to those whom they advise. They are specialized in their particular concerns.
- (2) They are outsiders. They are not within the job situation with which they are concerned. They are external to the job. They are not supervisors of the employees.

The consultants are free to make recommendations and those concerned are free to accept or reject the recommendations.

(3) They hold no vested interests in the situation for which they are consulting. The consultant holds no responsibility for the actions of those whom he consults. He receives a fee or salary for the provision of knowledge or insights, not for the consequences of his advice.⁵

As can be seen from above, consultation is defined as a voluntary relationship between a professional helper and a client in which the consultant attempts to help the client solve some current or potential problem. The consultant is an outsider who offers his expertise to the client. The client has a temporary relationship with the consultant which is viewed as reasonable and desirable.⁶

The consultant must bring an array of knowledge with him to the client-consultant relationship. He must have faith that the client will accept his expertise and he must know the methods of helping his client to change. The consultant may have to use a variety of techniques in his services to be effective. He must decide exactly what his client wants and needs and adapt his techniques to those wants and needs and to the particular situation.⁷

The consultant-to-counselors concept was made popular by such men as James L. Lister and by papers presented at the 1969 APGA convention by Tolbert and others. The idea

was explored further in another paper presented at the 1971 APGA convention by M. G. Burke, "On Becoming a Consultant". In general the consultant to the counselor has a nonevaluative relationship with the counselor and attempts to serve the counselor in any way that seems productive.⁸

The Need for Consultant to Counselors

The need for a consultant-to-counselors arose from the fact that many counselors need access to other types of information than that which is readily at their hands. As previously stated many counselors are often too caught up in other duties to gather plentiful, relevant information or they may be in a rural setting in which profitable information is difficult to attain. Counselors who are new to the field are in special need of consulting services. This consultation service might make the difference in the continued growth of the counselor or his inability to cope with particular problems. The consultant may also help to keep the counselor attuned to new trends, developments, and innovations in the counseling field. The consultant can help the counselor to resolve conflicts. He can aid the counselor in improving his counseling behavior and in initiating evaluative research. The consultant might also help the more experienced counselor to deal effectively with support personnel and education of beginning counselors.⁹

The Role of the Consultant to Counselors

The role of the consultant-to-counselors has been viewed somewhat differently by different writers. One writer suggests that the consultant be assigned to one large school or to two or three smaller schools. This seems to be the usual consensus of the role of the consultant distribution. The consultant would work directly with 10-15 full time school counselors in a consultant-client relationship and would be administratively responsible to the local principal or superintendent and to the guidance director or supervisor of pupil personnel. The consultant would spend approximately one-fourth of his time counseling with students and consulting with teachers, but the majority of his time would be spent consulting with counselors individually and in groups.¹⁰ Other writers suggest that the consultant should be responsible only to the guidance counselor for consulting purposes.¹¹ The consultant would offer suggestions for improvement, expose people to new ideas and perhaps demonstrate new ways of doing things.¹² He would attempt to "maximize the helping capacity" of the people with whom he worked. The consultant would perform such activities as taking over difficult counseling cases, recommending student referrals, and providing information, thus aiding the counselor in his heavy load and obligations.¹³ The consultant might

hold in-service training sessions in which counselors could talk about and attempt to resolve past, current, or potential problems. The consultant would try to promote communication and coordination among his clientele. Workshops might be held to promote this communication and coordination between different counselors and between counselors and their associations. The consultant should keep a library of resources and be well informed about other available resources so that he would be well prepared to answer questions and dispense needed information. The consultant might also perform an evaluative function; he might help his clients examine their guidance procedures to see if they are functioning in accordance with the stated purposes. He can review existing programs and offer constructive suggestions for improvement.¹⁴

One writer suggests that the consultant must be an effective, experienced counselor. He should complete two or three more years of counselor education, with special emphasis on advising and working with student counselors, host counselors, teachers and other educational personnel.¹⁵ Another writer emphasizes that the function of staff development should be the major one for the consultant. This writer also suggests that the consultant must be competent in various areas in which counselors work, such as counseling, vocational development and

placement. The consultant should be prepared to professionally do anything to help his clients function and develop more effectively.¹⁶

Although the consultant is not directly responsible to his clients - that is he cannot force them to take his advice, he does have certain responsibilities. The consultant "prototype" which is likely to be most useful to counselors has been developed in California, Iowa, Texas, and in the "Area Guidance Consultant" model in New York. This person is based full time in a specific area and is responsible to several school districts either through a county or regional unit. He is not paid by any specific local district but draws an annual salary from the county unit or regional district. However, he could not exist in a school district unless that specific district sees him as useful. The consultant's responsibility administratively is to an intermediate school unit and professionally is to the counselors who work in the territory concerned.¹⁷

The Determination of the Consultant to Counselors Job and Functions

It is not clear exactly who determines the consultant's job. The requirements and role of the consultant may vary in differing areas and situations. One writer expresses the need for the national professional

association to establish guidelines as to the consultant's functions, obligations and training. The states should in turn interpret these national guidelines into guidelines for the state, and make sure that consultants know what is expected of them and how to follow those expectations.¹⁸

The Future for the Consultant to Counselors

The future for consultants-to-counselors is uncertain. It may be that the concept of having consultants in guidance may never develop sufficiently and may become a passing fad.¹⁹ On the other hand, there may emerge a "pyramidal distribution" of counseling personnel with support personnel at the base and the consultant to counselors at the apex.²⁰

CHAPTER II

THE OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION CONSULTANT

One variation to the consultant-to-counselors to emerge in recent years has been the Occupational Information Consultant. As is the case with the consultant-to-counselors, the role and functions of the Occupational Information Consultant have not been clearly defined. The name and function of this consultant may vary somewhat in different areas. For example the Occupational Information Consultant may also be known as Specialist Occupational Career Guidance, Career Guidance Coordinator, Supervisor of Vocational Guidance, Counselor, Vocational Guidance Director, Coordinator of Vocational Guidance,²¹ Occupational Specialist,²² Career Advisor²³ or various other titles.

The Need for the Occupational Consultant

The need for the occupational consultant arose from the fact that guidance counselors were often ill-prepared to meet the student's needs in providing occupational information. Guidance counselors often place more stress on or at least have more access to information about colleges or other institutions of higher education which prepare people for careers than about the careers themselves.²⁴ Because of the recent stress on career

education in the United States and the concern over unemployment, it has become imperative that schools develop a workable system of effective career guidance.

The student needs to understand what is available and where and how he can acquire a job or vocation which is suitable to his needs.²⁵ One rationale for the occupational specialist role cites the following points:

(a) an acute shortage of counselors exists and the occupational specialist is needed to bring the ratio of students within acceptable limits; (b) universities are not providing sufficient graduates to meet the counselor shortage and student needs; (c) counseling, as a course of study, is offered only at the graduate level and new course development has encountered serious obstacles; and (d) counselor education programs have a built-in academic bias that limits the graduates' exposure to or experience with the world of work.²⁶

Definition of the Occupational Consultant

In view of the fact that counselors as well as clients need access to more and better occupational information, the role of the Occupational Information Consultant has emerged and is defined as follows: "A professional staff member who gives more than half of his time to compiling, appraising, distributing and facilitating the effective and ethical use of occupational information

by counselors, teachers, administrators and other members of the school, college or agency staff. His primary assignment and responsibilities are to raise the quality of the occupational information made available to students and clients by anyone in the organization."²⁷

The Role of the Occupational Consultant

The role and function of the occupational consultant will vary in different areas. Basically the role is as follows: (1) He would determine what information teachers and counselors need to better enable them to relate their instruction and counseling to the world of work; (2) He would identify entry-level jobs in the community; (3) He would serve as a liaison between the school and the world of work; (4) He would develop opportunities for students to obtain career information; (5) He would incorporate computerized career counseling services; (6) He would maintain a library on careers and employment opportunities; (7) He would help teachers to incorporate career information in their instruction; (8) He would aid the guidance counselor in providing career associated activities; (9) He would prepare research studies relating to students' career choices and placement; and (10) He would develop an efficient and effective means of distributing career information to all students.²⁸ The occupational

consultant might also work with potential or actual school dropouts, use career resource persons, and have individual or group career counseling.²⁹

Occupational Consultant Programs

One program concerning career advisement was implemented in Los Angeles City schools in September 1971. It utilized 37 individuals as "partners" to students, parents, teachers, administrators, school guidance staffs and business-industry representatives. The primary duties of these career advisors involved guiding high school students who were seeking job training. They advised the students about enrollment, transportation and follow-up investigations. They also acted as liaisons with school personnel and guidance staffs and publicized their services to pupils, parents, businesses, and service clubs. These career advisors exhibited such strengths as bringing together work related needs of students, stimulating new job-training opportunities, helping students to acquire "marketable" skills, offering purposeful experiences to disadvantaged students, enabling students a means of paying college expenses, deemphasizing general education, and stressing career development. These advisors together with students, community members, and career educators increased the probability that the young people would attain economic self-sufficiency.³⁰

Legislation Effecting the Occupational Consultant

Though California in 1968 and New York in 1969 were the first states to enact legislation to provide for school support personnel in counseling, Florida was the first state to adopt legislation which provided for specific support personnel in the area of career development. An act by the Florida legislature in 1970 provided for the occupational specialist position. These occupational specialists were to replace counselors in approximately 50 percent of all counseling positions. The role, function and training of these specialists were left to the individual schools. By January 1972, forty-seven occupational specialists were employed in the state of Florida. By July 1973 the number had increased to 303 and the state was providing unit funding. This occupational specialist program received six million dollars in 1973-1974 and about 426 occupational specialists were employed. By 1974-1975, approximately eight million dollars was being provided for the more than 600 occupational specialists positions. On a statistical test conducted on students who worked with occupational specialists in Florida, it was found that these students had a more positive attitude about school and demonstrated a wider knowledge of the world of work than those students who did not work with the occupational specialists. There seems to be evidence

that the occupational specialist can accomplish their objectives and become an important part of the guidance team.³¹

Individual cases of people holding similar positions to that of occupational specialist or occupational information consultant have been cited in New Jersey, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Georgia, West Virginia, and Michigan. Some of these consultants give more than half of their time to this work while others function on a part-time basis. Some of these consultants held doctoral degrees, some held masters degrees and some had industrial, business or other work experience outside of education. Some of these consultants had no specific budget for their work, but a few had budgets of more than \$50,000.³²

CHAPTER III

DISCUSSION

Summary

The role and specifications of the occupational information consultants are many and varied. It would seem profitable if the position is to prosper for general guidelines to be established by the national organization concerned with this position. As was stated in reviewing the position of consultant-to-counselors, general guidelines could be established from which the particular state could interpret guides to meet their needs.

The position of the occupational consultant has become more widespread in recent years as indicated by the occupation's popularity in the state of Florida. Perhaps the position of occupational information consultant will become more popular in years to come. If the popularity for this position depends on the need for career guidance, there certainly should appear more occupational consultants in the near future.

Implications

As evidenced by the research above, the roles of the consultants-to-counselors and the occupational consultants have many implications for further implementation. The state of Tennessee would be a prime candidate for

implementation of these roles, especially that of occupational consultant. Tennessee is primarily a rural state; agriculture dominates as a leading means of income. Many students living in these rural areas often become caught up in their rural surroundings. They do not know where else to look for employment and what kind of employment for which to look. The result is that the student often resorts to his family's vocational means of living. The family economic means of support may or may not be satisfactory economically and mentally to the student. Whether or not this means of support is satisfaction, the student should, at least, have suitable choices. Compounding this problem for the student is the fact that the guidance counselor may be caught in the same type of situation. He may have lived and worked in a rural setting throughout his life and may not have become familiar with various economic opportunities and vocational choices. The occupational consultant could be a valuable source in supplying these choices.

In Tennessee an occupational consultant could be assigned to two or three small rural counties or to a one city or one county metropolitan area. The consultants would function as described in the above research to provide relevant occupational information to the differing areas.

Perhaps coming years will provide the development of an occupational consultant in Tennessee. Legislation would need to be passed and funds made available, as was the case in Florida, for this position to emerge. With the current emphasis on vocational education, the emergence of the occupational consultant in the state of Tennessee may be a reasonable expectation.

FOOTNOTES

¹Henry Borou, Ed., Man In a World at Work, (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1964), 4-14.

²Marcia Wehr and Joe Sittmer, "Paraprofessional Trainees and Counselor Education Students: A Comparison of Personality and Predicted Counseling Effectiveness," Counselor Education and Supervision, XII (June, 1973), 255.

³James L. Lister, "The Consultant to Counselors: A New Professional Role," School Counselor, XVI (May, 1969), 349.

⁴Robert Hoppock and Bernard Novick, "The Occupational Information Consultant: A New Profession?," The Personnel and Guidance Journal, XLIX (March, 1971), 555.

⁵Alfred Stiller, "Presenting: The Consultant to Counselors," School Counselor, XXI (May, 1974), 342-343.

⁶Lippitt, Ronald, "Dimensions of the Consultant's Job," Journal of Social Issues, II (March, 1959), 5-6.

⁷Stiller, p. 343.

⁸Stiller, pp. 342-349.

⁹Lister, pp. 349-350.

¹⁰Lister, p. 351.

¹¹Stiller, p. 342.

¹²Stiller, p. 344.

¹³Lister, p. 351.

¹⁴Stiller, pp. 345-346.

¹⁵Lister, p. 351.

¹⁶Stiller, p. 349.

¹⁷Stiller, p. 347.

¹⁸Stiller, p. 348.

¹⁹Stiller, pp. 348-349.

²⁰Lister, p. 353.

²¹Hoppock and Novick, p. 557.

²²Robert D. Myrick and Gary Wilkinson, "The Occupational Specialist: A Study of Guidance Support Personnel," Vocational Guidance Quarterly, XXIV (March, 1976), p. 244.

²³Wendell H. Jones, "Career Advisors: Catalysts for Career Education," Vocational Guidance Quarterly, XXI (June, 1973), 298.

²⁴Hoppock and Novick, p. 555.

²⁵Jones, pp. 298-299.

²⁶Myrick and Wilkinson, p. 244.

²⁷Hoppock and Novick, p. 556.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Myrick and Wilkinson, pp. 245-246.

³⁰Jones, pp. 299-301.

³¹Myrick and Wilkinson, pp. 244-249.

³²Hoppock and Novick, pp. 556-557.

- Borou, Henry, Ed., Man In a World at Work. Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1964.
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