

A Reaction to Mark Pope's (2000) "A Brief History of Career Counseling in the United States"

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The author acknowledges the significance of the 6 steps presented by M. Pope (2000) in his article "A Brief History of Career Counseling in the United States." It is proposed that the historical stages for each kind of career counselor are most appropriately organized around federal legislation that affects it. Alternative "stages," which the author believes are appropriate in tracing the history of the school counselor movement, are presented as an example of this approach.

Pope (2000) has made a valuable contribution to the literature with his recent article "A Brief History of Career Counseling in the United States." By providing a document that covers persons in all age categories at all educational levels in both educational and noneducational settings, he has provided readers with a very broad perspective. This breadth of coverage, however, is almost sure to cause difficulties for many practicing career counselors in various settings who try to draw personal meaning from Pope's article.

An underlying theme evident throughout Pope's (2000) article is the importance and influence of federal legislation on career counselors and career counseling. I believe that "stages" in career counseling for any kind of counselor become most meaningful if viewed from the contents of the federal legislation that created it and is currently supporting it. Thus, the historical stages for one kind of counselor will be different from those for another. In the case of career counseling, Pope's Stages 1 and 2 can be viewed as common to all kinds of counselors because they did not involve any specific federal career counseling legislation. On the other hand, Pope's Stages 3–6 are all connected to a wide variety of federal laws, each of which applies to counselors in some settings but not in others.

As one who has been identified with the school counselor movement since 1947, I have a strong need to share with today's school counselors stages of career counseling for them as I experienced them during the last 50

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years. It is unfortunate that the historical events that are associated with each school counselor stage during this time have not yet become a common part of most of the literature. Thus, about all that can be done here is to provide only some personal recollections with reference to the four stages of development of the school counselor movement that have grown out of specific federal legislation during the last 50 years. That is the purpose of this article.

Stage 1: Occupational Information and Guidance Branch, Bureau of Vocational Education, U.S. Office of Education (USOE; 1938–1946)

Prior to 1938, school guidance programs were introduced in many, but not nearly all, K–12 school districts. Student personnel services were also introduced in many 4-year colleges and universities. In 1938, enactment by the Congress of the George-Dean Vocational Education Act provided a significant step forward by establishing the Occupational Information and Guidance Branch in the Bureau of Vocational Education in the USOE. Under provisions of this legislation, state departments of education were provided funds for use in employing state supervisors of guidance. Almost all states did so. The prime mission of these new state supervisors was to encourage local K–12 systems to introduce and operate school guidance programs at the K–12 (but primarily at the secondary school) level. Some of the state supervisors seemed to be competent in the counseling and guidance field. Others did not. For example, I was on a program in 1951 with a state supervisor of guidance whose business card said, on the back, “Guidance Is A Very Good Thing”! That seemed to be most of what he knew about it.

During the late 1940s, the 50 state guidance supervisors formed the National Association of Guidance Supervisors (NAGS). During the 1950s, NAGS became “NAGSCT” by adding “Counselor Trainers” to its title and, between 1960 and 1961, it became the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision.

NAGS members had no established way to increase the number of qualified school counselors or to require K–12 school systems to have counselors. For example, I received a lifetime counselor certificate from the Maryland State Department of Education in 1948 by virtue of having completed two courses: (a) Occupational Information and (b) Principles of Guidance. At that time, I was a senior in the College of Education at the University of Maryland. I did not receive my master’s degree in guidance until 1950, 2 years after I had begun work as a school counselor. Even with this obviously inadequate academic background, I had a distinct feeling I was better qualified to be a school counselor than were most other counselors with whom I came in contact at that time.

Stage 2: Occupational Information and Guidance Branch, USOE (1946–1962)

In 1946, Congress enacted the George-Barden Vocational Education Act, which was the first federal legislation to provide funds that could be used to prepare school counselors through college or university pro-

grams. At that time, there were about 80 counselor education institutions in the nation; 40 of these were preparing counselors at the undergraduate level, and 40 were preparing counselors at the graduate level (C. Froehlich, personal communication, 1951). One of the first things Harry Jager, director of the Occupational Information and Guidance Branch of the USOE, did after this legislation was passed, was to issue a formal USOE policy statement that said, "Counselor education is graduate education." By limiting federal funds supporting counselor education to institutions at which counselor education programs operated at the graduate level, most of the institutions that had provided counselor education at the undergraduate level either changed to the graduate level or ceased operations.

In making this judgment, Jager, a former high school principal, used the then existing model for preparation of school principals. That is, he reasoned that counselors, like high school principals, were best seen as "teachers plus." Thus, in many states, the only firm requirement for becoming a school counselor was that the applicant have a teaching certificate and some bona fide teaching experience. In my case, I had to begin working as a teacher-counselor, and I actually taught courses to high school students part of the day. If I had tried to become a full-time school counselor without teaching experience, I could not have worked in a Maryland high school at that time.

In addition, Jager directed his staff members to prepare and distribute to persons who were designated as "reimbursed counselor trainers" what, in effect, were syllabi for courses that were declared "reimbursable." As I recall, there were eight such courses, with names such as (a) Principles of Guidance, (b) Analysis of the Individual, (c) Occupational Information, (d) Counseling Techniques, (e) Group Procedures in Guidance, (f) Organization and Administration of Guidance, (g) Research and Evaluation in Guidance, and (h) Guidance Practice.

State supervisors of guidance were encouraged to establish counselor certification standards that would require courses in each of these areas. Very little flexibility existed for reimbursed counselor educators and only slightly more for nonreimbursed counselor educators.

Between approximately 1950 and 1952, the federal government ceased operating the Occupational Information and Guidance Branch. Jager, having no place to go, retired. Almost immediately, that branch was reestablished and headed by a person much more inclined to work collaboratively with counselor educators. Exactly how all of this was arranged is not known to me. There is no doubt that it happened and that it resulted in much more flexibility in counselor education programs.

Stage 3: Influence of the National Defense Education Act (1958–1962)

The passage and implementation of the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) in 1958 has had a greater influence on the career counseling movement than any other single event. Although I have no written records on much of this, I was told by Willis E. Dugan (personal communication, 1984) that the number of counselor education programs increased from

about 80 in 1958 to more than 400 in 1962. All of these increases took place at the graduate level.

Title V-B of NDEA provided \$7.5 million per year between 1958 and (about) 1964 to reimburse K-12 counselor education programs and provide stipends for graduate students enrolled in NDEA institutes. There was intense competition among counselor education programs for such institutes, and equally strong competition among graduate students for admission to such programs. Most of the NDEA counseling and guidance institutes were conducted during summer sessions, with a smaller number being conducted on a full-year basis. I was a member of an advisory group of counselor educators appointed by Ralph Bedell, Chief, USOE, Title V-B, charged with recommending which institutions should be awarded V-B grants and which should not. Two other members of that advisory group, Robert Stripling and Willis Dugan, used their influence to make the work of this advisory group the beginning of a movement to create standards for counselor education programs.

Although they were eligible to receive V-B funds, NDEA counseling and guidance institutes were not required to provide a strong emphasis on career counseling. Instead, the strong emphasis was placed on helping intellectually able high school leavers (i.e., graduates and dropouts) gain admission to higher education. The legislation strongly reinforced the existing tendency of many school counselors to devote their primary efforts to helping students who were headed toward 4-year colleges and universities.

As I recall, Title V-A of NDEA provided \$15 million per year for use by state departments of education to improve the quality of K-12 school guidance programs. The law emphasized the need to provide counseling for "intellectually able" students and aimed to help such persons enroll in 4-year colleges and universities.

There was no specific requirement in either Title V-A or Title V-B for providing youth with career counseling. To overcome this, I submitted proposals each year from 1958 to 1962 to establish NDEA institutes for "intellectually able students who choose not to attend four-year colleges." I never had trouble getting these institutes funded.

Shortly before the passage of NDEA, Congress had enacted legislation calling for career counselors in both (a) vocational rehabilitation and (b) veterans administration settings. Both of these pieces of legislation provided funds required to employ professional staff persons as well as some subsidies to students. Vocational rehabilitation officials decided that their counselors, like school counselors, would be employed at the master's level. The Veterans Administration took a different stance and emphasized the preparation of what they called "counseling psychologists" at the doctorate level.

During the late 1950s and early 1960s, the U.S. Employment Service also undertook an effort to equip its career counselors with some expertise by sponsoring a variety of short-term programs and workshops. Most of these were conducted by school counselor educators. This was the beginning of a movement to employ counselor aides at the subprofessional level. That movement became strongest in the mid-1960s, with funding of several Counselor Aide University Summer Education (CAUSE) programs. This was never well accepted by the school counselors whom I knew.

Stage 4: Resurgence of Career Counseling as a Priority (1963–Present)

The 1963 revision of the 1961 federal vocational education legislation contained a provision for establishing a career guidance and counseling branch. Although it did not provide stipends for individuals who were preparing to become counselors, it did provide some funds that local K–12 school systems could use in implementing career guidance programs. These funds were not sufficient to pay counselors' salaries. Despite this, many school counselors expressed interest in renewing their participation in career counseling. In the mid-1960s, several hundred of these counselors banded together to form the Guidance Division of the American Vocational Association. Although the expertise of school counselors historically has been greater in the area of college counseling than in career counseling, counselor interest in career counseling has continued to grow over the last 30 years.

Up to \$10 million of federal education funds per year were made available for use in career education during 1974–1982. The key role of the school counselor in implementing career education in K–12 school systems was heavily emphasized during that entire period. School counselor interest in career counseling seemed to grow markedly each year between 1974 and 1982. That interest continues today.

During the 1974–1982 period, small but significant efforts were made to emphasize the career counseling needs of (a) women, (b) individuals from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds, and (c) individuals with handicaps. Of these three groups, only the needs of persons with handicaps have been helped to a noticeable degree with federal funds. The career counseling needs of both women and minorities continue to be inadequate.

The recently enacted School-to-Work Opportunities Act and the Workforce Investment Act both hold potential for positive changes in career counseling, but hard evidence that they can improve the quality of career counseling is not yet available. The manner in which the programs are being implemented seems to be quite similar to what was referred to during the 1970s as “career education.” The prime differences seem to be the focus on career education as an educational reform package and the absence of “educational reform” goals in the School-to-Work Opportunities Act and the Workforce Investment Act.

Need for a History of Changes in the Content of Career Counseling

The most meaningful history of career counseling would be one that concentrates on how the content of career counseling has changed over time. Just as a separate history is needed for each of the major pieces of federal career counseling legislation, so too is there a need for a history of how the content of career counseling has changed course by course, often reflecting societal changes.

For example, I very much wish more attention had been given to the changing needs for career counseling brought about by the Information Age. It is becoming increasingly clear that almost all career counseling

today will require that some attention be given to client postsecondary education plans. Fifty years ago, a high school diploma was more than enough for most jobs. Today, it is not. It is equally clear that, for most persons, the need for career counseling will probably occur multiple times during their working lives. The old notion of "choosing a vocation," based on the assumption that one does this only once, must be discarded. The need for *work values* will continue to be more important than the need for *occupational values*. This, too, has great implications for the future of career counseling.

Remarks

Pope's (2000) article provides much useful information for individuals who are trying to understand both career counseling and career counselors. It deserves careful study. At the same time, there is a need to write the history of career counseling with a focus on both federal legislation that affected career counseling and factors that influenced changes in its contents.

References

- Pope, M. (2000) A brief history of career counseling in the United States. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 48, 194-211.