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ABSTRACT

This report highlights the current status of career counseling in the province of British Columbia and presents the recommendations of this province regarding future developments. There is emphasis upon the need for Federal participation in the development of self-counseling system and information services for potential post-secondary students who seek career direction. The report represents a consolidation of facts, points of view and recommendations presented by professional counselors at post-secondary institutions and Officials of the Department of Education, British Columbia. (Author)

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REPORT ON CAREER COUNSELLING IN BRITISH COLUMBIA (CURRENT STATUS AND RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING FUTURE REQUIREMENTS IN POST-SECONDARY CAREER COUNSELLING)

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND
   - 1.1 Definition of Career Counselling
   - 1.2 The Role of Career Counsellors
   - 1.3 Types of Clients and The Needs of Persons Who Seek Career Counselling
   - 1.4 General Statement Regarding Recommendations for Changes Needed in the Future of Career Counselling

2. THE CURRENT STATUS OF CAREER COUNSELLING IN BRITISH COLUMBIA
   - 2.1 Types of Counselling Services which are Available
   - 2.2 The Counselling of Persons Toward Specific Program Areas -- and the Implications

3. RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING FUTURE REQUIREMENTS IN THE REALM OF POST-SECONDARY CAREER COUNSELLING
   - 3.1 The Need for Coordinated Federal and Provincial Participation -- A Re-evaluation of the Entire Counselling Process
   - 3.2 The Need for the Establishment of a Self-Counselling System
   - 3.3 Refined Selection Methods Regarding the Hiring of Career Counselling Personnel
   - 3.4 When to Begin Career Counselling for the Sake of Optimal Benefit to Individuals
   - 3.5 Programs of Exploration for Persons Who are Yet Undecided About Career Choice
   - 3.6 The Role and Responsibility of Business and Industry in the Provision of Career Counselling Information Regarding Specific Types of Employment
   - 3.7 The General Need for an Empirical (ie. Factual) Presentation of Career Counselling Information.

4. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

5. REFERENCES

CG 010 377

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Definition of Career Counselling

Career counselling may be defined as an activity performed by professionals to assist persons toward making an intelligent choice regarding a future career.

Career counselling should provide a person with various kinds of knowledge, decision-making skills and awareness concerning personal, social, cultural, economic and job-specific information which will ultimately allow the pursuit of an intelligent and individual career direction.

1.2 The Role of Career Counsellors

The role of career counsellors in educational institutions may be described as that of a "helper" who provides a support service to persons seeking career direction and information. A career counsellor ideally should not be an admissions officer, a decision-maker or an authority figure. The kinds of functions which a career counsellor fulfills include:

(a) individual and group counselling
(b) provision of information services (regarding personal development, training and education)
(c) assessment and inventory services (testing and measurement)
(d) consultative and liaison services (with instructors in institutions, the public, other agencies)
(e) referral services (within and outside institutions)
(f) research and evaluation activities (regarding students, programs, etc.)

The traditional role of institutional counsellors was generally that of a clinician, concerned largely with the personal and emotional problems of clients rather than with their career directions.

The main focus for the future regarding the role of career counsellors should not be a clinical approach but rather an integrative approach to address the career informational needs of many individuals, each of whom has a personal preference regarding career choice.

1.3 Types of Clients and the Needs of Persons Who Seek Career Counselling

What kinds of persons seek career counselling and what are their needs?

Basically, four types of clients seek career counselling information services:

(a) persons emerging from secondary schools
(b) persons emerging from B.T.S.D./upgrading programs
(c) mature persons who are unemployed or underemployed and seek upgrading in order to enter the work force.
(d) mature persons who seek a new thrust in order to re-enter the work force (eg. housewives, etc.)

The needs of all of these persons should be addressed by the provision of accurate, up-to-date and unbiased career information.

1.4 General Statement Regarding Recommendations for Changes Needed in the Future of Career Counselling

In general, major recommendations for changes needed in the future of career counselling (on a provincial and a national level) include:

(a) the need for developing a self-counselling system which provides career information to individuals in all communities throughout the province. Self-counselling should precede professional career counselling.
(b) the need for establishing clearly defined selection methods for hiring career counselling personnel.
(c) the need for more coordinated Federal and Provincial participation in several areas such as

-- a review of current Federal and Provincial counselling activities with a view to innovation in counselling in general and a need to stress in-depth career counselling leading to employment.

-- a clear identification of and consensus on counselling needs and role in light of the fact that there may be duplication of services. This is viewed as an especially urgent need in times of economic and budgetary constraint.

-- the need for effective utilization of federal funds which are allocated to counselling activities in the province at the present time.

-- a need for infusion of additional funds as required to improve and make more relevant career/technical/and vocational counselling.

2. THE CURRENT STATUS OF CAREER COUNSELLING IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

It is observed that counselling as it exists at the present time is not adequate in terms of counselling persons for specific careers. Divergence is apparent in the streams of education and among post-secondary educational programs. This situation is detrimental to the clientele of education.

In addition, it is observed that formal education may not prepare a person in all cases with the necessary knowledge/skills/competence and conceptual "tools" needed for pursing an intelligent career direction.

It is also apparent that inadequate career counselling is one of the contributing factors in this situation.

2.1 Types of Counselling Services which are Available

At the present time, various sectors have counselling services, most of which deal with personal counselling rather than in-depth career and employability counselling.

Counselling services are available at:

(a) Public Schools -- (counselling activities generally are not in tune with current occurrences in Business and Industry; counselling duties are often delegated to teachers whose major responsibility is teaching and not counselling).

(b) Community Colleges -- (counselling services provided are often not fully adequate since counselling personnel are involved with other responsibilities).

(c) Universities -- (often, counselling becomes recruiting of persons into specific faculties and disciplines).

(d) Federal Department of Manpower and Immigration offices -- (counsellors place persons into a vacant job position or into a CMTP (Canada Manpower Training Program); this type of counselling is not in fact considered to be career counselling but rather a referral/admissions function.

(e) Provincial Department of Labour offices -- Information is provided by trade and employment-sensitive personnel as a function for the recruiting of persons for enrolment in pre-apprentice and apprenticeship programs. This sector has a large information-giving and admissions component).

(f) Community Counselling Agencies -- (counselling is done through a testing and mailing process; this is not considered to be a comprehensive or in-depth approach to career counselling).

Within institutions, the major reasons for inadequate counselling services relate to:

(i) the fragmented role of counsellors (ie. in many cases, admissions and referral responsibilities become the major role, replacing career counselling)

(ii) insufficient numbers

(iii) inadequate data

(iv) non-current data

(v) sociological factors

2.2 The Counselling of Persons Toward Specific Program Areas -- And The Implications

Broadly speaking, a prevalent perception exists in society which purports that university education will provide a person with a higher measure of success and prestige than career/technical/vocational/trades training and education.

Consequently, in the past, secondary school counsellors especially have often "glorified" university programs, encouraged persons to enter university programs and discouraged individuals from entering vocational/trades training programs. Often, parental and peer group

pressure also contribute to certain choices.

Today, we note that many graduates emerge from universities not adequately prepared for the employment world.

While it is certainly recognized that
(a) universities prepare highly qualified manpower for Medical, Business, Science and Humanities fields, and,
(b) both intrinsic (culture-oriented) and extrinsic (employment-oriented) values of education are important,
nevertheless, it is suggested that persons should not be counselled into specific institutional programs, but rather be offered factual, current and realistic data concerning a wide range of possible career choices. They should also be alerted to information regarding laddering and articulation between and among program areas and post-secondary institutions.

A comprehensive range of post-secondary educational opportunities exists in the following areas:

(a) Career, Vocational and Technical programs -- In general, these programs include education and training in a wide spectrum of pre-employment and pre-apprenticeship trade and industrial training fields.

(b) University Academic and Technological Institute transfer programs -- Academic programs include the Humanities, Natural, Social and Health Sciences, and Business and Commerce disciplines. Technological programs include education and training in various medical, industrial, scientific and commercial fields.

(c) Adult Basic Education programs -- These develop basic knowledge in language, mathematics and science required for employment or preparation for other post-secondary programs.

(d) Adult Continuing Recurrent Education programs -- Credit and non-credit continuing recurrent education programs are offered. These are designed to address a multitude of learning needs in a community.

Career counsellors should assist individuals in a way which ultimately allows an intelligent and appropriate career choice in terms of personal preference and job opportunities to be made.

Counsellors can make a significant contribution by alerting persons to avoiding involvement in lengthy programs which do not necessarily lead to employment.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING FUTURE REQUIREMENTS IN THE REALM OF POST-SECONDARY COUNSELLING

The Department of Education of the Province of British Columbia offers to the delegates of the conference several observations and recommendations regarding future career counselling requirements and developments in the post-secondary sector and community-based service agencies.

3.1 The Need for Coordinated Federal and Provincial Participation -- A Re-evaluation of the Entire Counselling Process

It is recommended that there should be more coordinated Federal and Provincial participation regarding a re-evaluation of the entire counselling process.

(a) A review of current Federal and Provincial counselling activities should be carried out with the aim to innovate counselling in general, stressing in-depth career counselling leading to employment and clearly identifying the needs and role of counselling to avoid possible duplication of services. (How is it done? If a counsellor's role is fragmented with other duties, how adequate are the services which are provided? Is there duplication of services? If so, what are the implications regarding accountability to the public in use of funds?)

Review is regarded as an especially urgent need in times of economic and budgetary constraint.

(b) There is a need for effective utilization of federal funds which are allocated to counselling activities in the province at the present time.

(c) There is a need for infusion of additional funds as required to improve and make more relevant career/technical and vocational counselling.

3.2 The Need for the Establishment of a Self-Counselling System

It is recommended that a self-counselling system be developed which provides career information in an audio-visual form to both individuals and groups in communities throughout the province. Self-counselling should precede career counselling.

(a) Self-counselling is viewed as part of an integrated means for making intelligent decisions about future careers.

(b) The Canadian Classification and Dictionary of Occupations (CCDO) lists approximately 6,700 occupations. In fact, there are thousands of identified occupations. Factual and relevant information should be offered to persons regarding occupations.

(c) In light of current and future social evolutionary processes which have been accelerating at an ever-increasing pace within Business, Industry and Technology, today, persons find themselves in an entirely new, different, more complex social framework which requires extensive and specialized training and education, (sometimes in several areas) in order to enter the employment force as competent and qualified employees.

(d) At the present time, there is a trend in many O.E.C.D. (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries toward mass post-secondary education.

(e) Recurrent education is becoming more and more pronounced in our society as individuals alternate periods of time throughout life between employment and formal education and training. Consequently, there is a need to address the educational and training needs of many persons ranging in age from 16 to 65. A self-counselling system would provide persons with information regarding many career options.

(f) A self-counselling system basically involves the preparation of audio-visual tapes which relay basic information concerning various careers eg. welder, secretary, baker, teacher, nurse and so forth.

(g) A central self-counselling establishment should be initiated in the province. Audio-visual tapes should be available in

major centres throughout the province. Tapes should not be confined to or located in places which are not readily accessible to the community.

(h) Self-counselling centres should be staffed by technicians to assist in the operation of audio-visual tapes and equipment. Persons may come to centres for self-counselling in specific areas of interest.

(i) Upon completion of the self-counselling process, when a person has identified a specific career direction, the technician will refer the person to an appropriate career counsellor. Referral actually enhances the role of the professional counsellor as an integral part of the career counselling process.

(j) The initial cost of establishing self-counselling centres will be greater initially than in the long-range. It is not regarded as costly when viewed in terms of the entire country. It is considered as cost-effective in the long-range. The system should be developed in terms of a building block process which takes into account the mobility factor and a total manpower development policy with regard to mobility and shortages in the employment sector.

3.3 Refined Selection Methods Regarding the Hiring of Career Counselling Personnel

It is recommended that certain mandatory requirements or pre-requisites be considered for the purpose of hiring career counsellors by institutions and other agencies:

(a) A potential career counsellor should be a person who is familiar with the Business and Industrial sector. A person should have been employed in Business and/or Industry for at least five years.

(b) A potential career counsellor should not be an "in-grown" product of the educational system, that is, not a direct entry from an institution.

(c) In general, a potential career counsellor should be a person who possesses various qualities relating to a fresh approach, personal insight and understanding toward other people, practical and factual awareness and knowledge of institutions, programs, laddering systems, the employment market, social trends and occupational forecasting/ current and projected manpower needs data.

3.4 When to Begin Career Counselling for the Sake of Optimal Benefit to Individuals

Career counselling should be a rational and long-term progression and development rather than a "crash" method. That is, persons should not receive counselling for the first time after finding that they are failing in a program in which they have been enrolled for six months or for two years.

Ideally, the preparation of persons for the employment world should be carried out through a long-term process of career education, similar to methods proven successful elsewhere. These methods build on the presupposition that intelligent vocational/career decision-making requires the development of:

(a) knowledge and awareness of personal goals and preferences in life.
(b) adequate and realistic perception and understanding of the employment world.
(c) mature and responsible decision-making skills and conceptual "tools" based on knowledge about oneself and about future career options.

Consequently, career education/career counselling for the sake of optimal benefit to individuals should commence in elementary schools, leading to work experience at the junior and senior secondary levels. This method would perhaps alleviate some of the problems at the post-secondary level which relate to career development. It is suggested that in-service education for teachers will be required in order to better acquaint them with career education. In addition, at the Community College level, a system of co-op education involving work and part-day institutional instruction may contribute significantly to the integration of Business, Industry and Education.

3.5 Programs of Exploration for Persons Who are Yet Undecided About Career Choice

It is recommended that programs of exploration and experimentation should be encouraged for persons who are yet undecided about future career choice. For example, teachers and career counsellors should encourage individuals to possibly:

(a) work
(b) travel
(c) enter a college
(d) proceed to further training if desired.

Such an experimental/exploratory sequence may lead a person to the appropriate career choice, if uncertainty exists.

3.6 The Role and Responsibility of Business and Industry in the Provision of Career Counselling Information Regarding Specific Types of Employment

It is suggested that within an integrative process of career counselling, the Business and Industrial sectors of the economy, which ultimately receive manpower from educational institutions and other areas, should also assume a role and responsibility in the provision of information to career counsellors. This information should relate to:

(a) specific types of employment, and,
(b) the expectations of Business and Industry regarding future employees.

Information may be received through the establishment of committees which function on the basis of clearly defined, realistic and practical terms of reference.

3.7 The General Need for an Empirical (ie. Factual) Presentation of Career Counselling Information

In conclusion, it is recommended that future developments in audio-visual and other career counselling activities and methods regarding individuals and groups should be guided by a factual and realistic presentation of information. Included, should be information on:

(a) prerequisites to programs (in order to enable persons to cope with curriculum content)
(b) duration of a program (for example, is there an apprenticeship involved, or, is it a pre-employment program?)
(c) general curriculum content requirements throughout the program
(d) current salary scales
(e) job mobility factors (will there be movement from one location to another and how often?)

(f) job satisfaction factors (is there an opportunity for advancement, development and challenge?)

Basically, honest and unglorified facts must be given regarding the advantages and disadvantages involved within a specific career area.

Awareness of personal individuality and preference should be a fundamental guideline in delivering career counselling services. Professional career counsellors should offer information and facts which will allow the making of personal decisions regarding future career/vocational choice.

4. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 It is recommended that more coordinated Federal and Provincial participation should occur regarding a re-evaluation of the entire counselling process.

-- the need to innovate counselling in general.
-- stress in-depth career counselling leading to employment.
-- identification of and consensus on the needs and role of counselling.

4.2 It is recommended that a self-counselling system should be developed which provides career information on various careers

-- utilization of audio-visual tapes available in major centres throughout the province.
-- tapes should not be confined to or located in places which are not readily accessible to the community.
-- regarding cost, the system should be developed in terms of a building block process which takes into account a total manpower development policy in respect of mobility and shortages in the employment section.

4.3 It is recommended that refined selection methods be considered for the purpose of hiring career counsellors.

-- familiarity with the Business and Industrial sectors
-- not a direct entry from an institutional setting.

4.4 It is recommended that career counselling for the sake of optimal benefit to individuals should commence in elementary schools leading to work experience at the junior and senior secondary level
-- career counselling should be a rational and long-term progression and development rather than a "crash" method.

4.5 It is recommended that programs of exploration and experimentation should be encouraged for persons who are yet undecided about future career choice.

4.6 It is recommended that Business and Industry should assume a role and responsibility in the provision of information regarding employment to career counsellors and actual participation in the counselling process where the need arises.

4.7 It is recommended that in general, future developments in audio-visual and other career counselling activities and methods regarding individuals and groups should be guided by a factual and realistic presentation of information.
-- awareness of personal individuality and preference should be a fundamental guideline in delivering career counselling services.

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