

THE ROLE OF THE COUNSELOR IN AN ADULT BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAM

by

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to survey the opinions of twenty-five Montana counselors about the role of the counselor in testing and counseling in adult basic education programs.

An open-ended questionnaire was mailed to the twenty-five counselors with items sampling their opinions as to what they thought the role of the counselor should be in an adult basic education program, what tests they would use in the program, who should administer the tests, who should interpret the tests, who should be hired to do the counseling in the program, and what the nature of the counseling program should be. The questions were determined through consultation with professors at Montana State University concerned with counselor education. A letter explaining the nature of the study and a stamped, self-addressed return envelope was sent in addition to the questionnaires. Each of the six questions was analyzed separately and percentages were computed on the basis of the counselor's responses.

Conclusions arrived at as a result of this study were: (1) counselors do not agree as to what the role of the counselor is in an adult basic education program. (2) A majority of counselors thought high school counselors should be the ones to administer the tests given. (3) Counselors are not in agreement as to what tests would be used in an adult basic education program. (4) A majority of the counselors reported that the high school counselor should be the one to interpret the tests. (5) A majority of counselors stated that high school counselors should be the ones hired to counsel adult basic education students. (6) There was no significant agreement as to what the nature of the counseling program should be. (7) Thirty seven percent of counselors related that the high school counselors do not have enough time to get involved in an adult basic education program.

Recommendations made were: (1) counselors take a closer look at adult basic education programs to find out what the role of the counselor should be in these programs. (2) Counselors do research to find out what tests are used in adult basic education programs and pick out tests to fit their programs. (3) Counselors should investigate the nature of the counseling program in adult basic education programs. (4) Counselors should find out how much time will be required to work in an adult basic education program. (5) Counselors should encourage the school to look into the possibility of hiring a person who is not employed as a high school counselor to do the counseling in an adult basic education program.

## CHAPTER I

### NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

The high school counselor of today is pressed to find time to do everything that is expected of him. There seems to be one common complaint among today's counselors, that they do not have enough time to do what they were trained to do -- counsel students. More and more time is being assigned to the counselor in the area of teaching duties, administrative duties, and secretarial duties. On top of all these duties, the counselor is expected to work with the students and their educational, vocational, and personal problems. Needless to say, the counselor finds it difficult to do a good job with the students when he has to spend time doing all of the other duties that are assigned to him.

An area that is new to the state of Montana and one in which the counselor is sure to become involved is that of adult basic education. More than likely, the counselor in the high school in Montana will be called upon to help set up and work in the programs of adult basic education that are being started in Montana communities.

The problem investigated in this study was to determine what opinions Montana counselors had in regard to the role of testing and counseling in adult basic education, who should administer and interpret the tests, who should be hired to do the counseling, and finally, what the nature of the counseling program should be.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH

Adult education includes so many different kinds of programs that it is hard to say how many people are involved or how many programs have been started. Olsen<sup>(9)</sup> estimated that there are more than 3,600,000 different adult education courses being offered in the United States and that the age range of the adult student is from 15 to over 65. Many of the programs that have been started include courses in adult basic education.

Today, according to published reports, there are many people in the United States who are considered to be illiterate. One of the problems that has appeared is how to define the term illiterate. Olsen points out that one definition of illiterate is "one who is at the sixth grade level of achievement", while another definition is "one who is unemployable". Olsen indicates that there are approximately 23 million Americans who do not have an eighth grade education. This group will probably be one of the groups that the counselor will be faced with in an adult basic education program.

According to the Handbook<sup>(1)</sup> published by the National Association for Public School Adult Education, members of an adult basic education program will exhibit some or all of the following characteristics: an inadequate self-image, total illiteracy or less than an adequate reading level, a background of unskilled or semi-skilled jobs in the "inner city" or rural farm areas, membership in an ethnic minority group, an apathetic outlook, limited or unrealistic aspirations, and lack of long-term goals.

These will be some of the problems and feelings that a counselor may encounter when working with adults in a basic education program.

The counselor may keep in mind that the person who is attending a program in an adult class will be attending class for different reasons than will the student who is attending school in a regular program. As Belanger<sup>(2)</sup> points out, the student who is enrolled in an adult basic education class is going to school because he wants to go and not because it is compulsory for him to attend. The adults will also have different pressures than those who are in the regular school program. Some of the things that adults will be faced with are time, need for independence, family provider, awareness that each decision will affect his dependents, and fear of making the wrong choice. These ideas presented by Belanger may help counselors become aware of some of the problems adult students are likely to encounter.

Another area that the counselor could become involved is in that of testing students in adult basic education classes. The testing program should be set up to help adult students begin at their level of achievement. Silverstein<sup>(10)</sup> discussed the testing program used for adults in a California school. The testing and counseling program provides immediate placement for the adults. The student is asked to fill out information about himself, write a composition, take a standardized test in arithmetic, and complete the reading and vocabulary sections of the California Achievement Test. The tests are corrected before the next class meets; and with the results of the test and the other information that was filled out, the counselor can place the student into classes that will meet his immediate

needs and permit the adult to work toward his goals. Silverstein had this to say about the testing and counseling program:

Because of the testing and counseling program, the dropout rate has been markedly diminished, and the curriculum has been refined to help adults toward realistic goals.

Cassel<sup>(3)</sup> described another testing program that was used with adults. The adult students were given a test in reading competency. Most of the tests were group tests, and they required a minimum of approximately sixth grade level of reading competency to have valid results. An adult who scored below the sixth grade level in reading was given a non-reading test. Some of the tests that were used in the program were: the Klapper Reading Inventory, the reading portion of the Wide Range Achievement Test Battery, and the California Achievement Test. Students whose reading level was at the sixth grade and above were given the California Test of Mental Maturity, S-Form, 1957, to obtain a "language", "non-language", and "total mental factors" Intelligence Quotient. The Revised Beta Examination was administered to students who were illiterate, non-English, and those reading below the sixth grade level competency.

The Curriculum Guide to Adult Basic Education<sup>(6)</sup> points out that tests administered in adult education show the teacher approximately at what grade level the student is performing. The guide suggests that an Intelligence Quotient test could be administered to help determine at what grade level the student was performing, but goes on to say that caution must be used when giving an Intelligence Quotient test. Some students may not show their true score due to the fact that they cannot

read well, they may not have read the directions, they may have been upset or anxious, or they may not have had the opportunity to learn the things that were being tested. The tests that were suggested to use by the Curriculum Guide were: the Amons Quick Test, the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, PTI-Oral Directions Test, Revised Beta Examination, Pitner General Ability Tests, Non-Language Series, and the Cattell Culture Fair Intelligence. The guide also suggested achievement tests be used as a means of selecting students for particular classes. It recommends that the person in charge of selecting the tests look for a detailed examination of what the test covers, relatively short examination time, illustrations and directions at the appropriate level of difficulty. The guide proposed the following achievement and reading tests: the Gates Reading Survey, McCall-Crabbs Standard Test Lessons in Reading, Stanford Achievement Test, Iowa Test of Basic Skills, Science Research Associates Achievement Series, California Achievement Tests, and the Sequential Tests of Educational Progress.

The Curriculum Guide mentioned that there were problems regarding interpretation of tests. Some of the problems were stated in test manuals, and suggestions for overcoming the problems were discussed. Three common problems mentioned in the guide were: misinterpretation of the test scores, lack of caution in interpreting intelligence test scores, and undue reliance on numerical rating. The guide went on to state:

The common pitfalls of testing can be avoided or minimized if the testing conditions are convenient, comfortable, and not anxiety provoking, and if the teacher's interpretation of test results is based upon an understanding of the test manual that accompanies the test being used.

The test mentioned by the above guide may be reviewed by educators who will be working with adults in an adult basic education program. A suitable testing program designed to fit the needs of a particular program may be derived from this list. It may be well for those who are working with adults to become familiar with Buros' Sixth Mental Measurement Yearbook. This work will give them further information about the tests that they may desire to use in an adult basic education program.

Ideas on counseling and guidance principles were set forth by the National Association for Public School Adult Education in a booklet called Counseling and Interviewing Adult Students.<sup>(4)</sup> This booklet explained that "guidance is not only an activity or a process, but a point of view. It involves a set of attitudes." Some of the guidance principles listed in the booklet were: respect for the individual and individual differences, acceptance of the individual as a personality, personal response to those one admires, understanding and permitting others to be what they are. In counseling situations the counselor should provide a satisfactory psychological atmosphere and allow the individual adult to say what he wishes. The counselor should help the individual evaluate his statements but the counselor encourages the student to arrive at his own decisions. The booklet listed some of the activities the counselor could use when working with adult students: conduct interviews with students and help them with long-term educational planning, schedule group meetings in which the counselor discusses educational opportunities and other services available for the adult student, develop a placement and referral system for the adult, help train other adult-education staff,

keep important records, and give standardized tests. The booklet summarized adult counseling by this statement:

Adult counseling in schools is designed to help individuals recognize how some form of education can help them with their problems. The counselor helps the adult student bring together all the available ingredients the student needs in order to make good decisions. Education counseling asks the individual to see himself as he is, as well as the way he would like to be. To serve the adult student fully, the counselor also needs to have available to him the guidance sources of the secondary school library, with respect to information on occupations and other educational opportunities in the community. This information should be related to a job placement service operated by the school, whereby both the student and the community can be served.

Deeney<sup>(5)</sup> showed that it has been estimated that Montana has approximately 50,000 adults who have not completed the eighth grade; and of this 50,000, approximately 30,000 have not completed the sixth grade. This study conducted by Deeney points out the need for adult basic education in Montana, and the background shows that the high-school counselor may play an important role in helping the adult student achieve his specific goals.

The methods used in the study, as well as the collection and analysis of the data, are in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS

The purpose of this investigation, as developed in the previous chapters, was to find out what Montana counselors think their role is in testing and counseling in adult basic education programs.

#### Population

A questionnaire was sent to twenty-five counselors in public and county high schools in Montana. The counselors were selected at random from a preliminary list compiled from the 1967-1968 Fall Reports by James W. Fitzpatrick, Guidance Services Supervisor for the Montana Department of Public Instruction. The list from which the twenty-five were selected consisted of all those listed as counselors in public or county high schools, or counselors serving more than one high school. School administrators serving as counselors, deans of boys or deans of girls, were not included in the original list. Each counselor on the preliminary list was assigned a number, and then 25 numbers were selected at random to make up the list of counselors to receive the questionnaire. Those on the list included counselors from Class A, B, and C schools, using the Montana High School Association's classification for basketball to determine which were A, B, or C schools. Generalizations arising from this study will be made to aid counselors in public and county high schools in the State of Montana.

### Collection of Data

A letter of explanation and an open-ended questionnaire (see Appendix A) along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope were sent to 25 counselors in Montana to find out what they thought the role of the counselor in an adult basic education program was. Out of the twenty-five questionnaires sent out, sixteen (64 percent) were returned to the investigator. The questionnaire was open-ended so as to allow the counselors to express their views as freely as possible. The questionnaire and letter of explanation were constructed through consultation with professors at Montana State University concerned with counselor education. The questions developed for this survey are presented below:

1. What do you think the role of the counselor is in an adult basic education program?
2. What tests would you use in an adult basic education program?
3. Who should administer the tests in an adult basic education program?
4. Who should interpret the tests in an adult basic education program?
5. Who do you think should be hired to do the counseling in an adult basic education program?
6. What do you think the nature of the counseling program should be?

### Analysis of Data

Each of the six questions was analyzed separately and percentages were computed on the basis of the counselor's responses. The percentages, reported in the next chapter, were rounded to the nearest whole number. Interpretations were presented along with the data. Chapter V contains conclusions arising from the study.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

Counselor responses, as reported on the questionnaires returned to the investigator, were evaluated according to the following areas: the role of the counselor in an adult basic education program, tests to be used in the program, administration of the tests, interpretation of the tests, the person to be hired to do the counseling, and the nature of the counseling program. The results, which are reported below, will be presented in that order.

Of the sixteen counselors who returned the questionnaires, six or 37 percent, responded to the question on the role of the counselor that high school counselors do not have enough time to get involved in an adult basic education program. The remaining 63 percent listed what they thought the role of the counselor in an adult basic education program should be: 1) teach or supervise some phase of the program; 2) survey the needs of the community and fulfill those needs with the school's resources; 3) act as a consultant for adults; 4) help participants achieve in the program, gain self insight, aid the instructors with problems -- emotional and learning disorders, and help with the overall program; 5) assist in the curriculum development, publicity, and give advice to the prospective students; 6) help set up realistic goals, counsel those who seek it, and interpret tests; 7) counselor should interview individual students, conduct group counseling sessions, and help set up the program; 8) interview and help the adult student set up his educational plan, set up placement and referral services; 9) set up a placement



types of tests. The Differential Aptitude Test was listed six times, the General Aptitude Test Battery and the Stanford Achievement Test were listed by three counselors, two counselors said they would use the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, while two others mentioned standard achievement tests. Other tests mentioned by the counselors were: achievement tests in math, science, and language; achievement and diagnostic reading tests; verbal and non-verbal Lorge Thorndike; interest inventory selected for the individual or the population; Iowa Test of Educational Development; any mental ability test; The Gates Reading Test; a reading survey test; and the Slossen Intelligence Test.

The results on what tests to use in an adult basic education program showed that 37 percent of the counselors mentioned the Differential Aptitude Test as one they would use. However, there was no significant agreement on any other test the counselors would administer. Counselors should become familiar with tests recommended for adult basic education so that they can select tests to fit their program if they become involved in adult basic education.

The third question that the counselors gave their opinions on was who should administer the tests in an adult basic education program. Forty four percent thought that high school counselors should administer tests; 37 percent said that high school counselors do not have enough time to get involved in the program; 12 percent thought that either the teacher or high school counselor should administer the tests; 6 percent stated that the administrator of the program should administer the tests.

There appears to be a general agreement that high school counselors

should be the ones to administer the tests in an adult basic education program. As previously mentioned, counselors should become familiar with the tests used in adult basic education programs so that they would be aware of what tests to administer adults in a basic education program.

Counselor's opinions as to whom should interpret the tests were as follows: 50 percent said they thought counselors should interpret the tests; 37 percent said counselors do not have enough time to get involved in the program; one felt that high school counselors should interpret the tests unless the General Aptitude Test Battery was given, in which cases the State Employment Service should interpret the tests; another stated if more than a reading test was given, then a psychologist, not a counselor, should interpret the tests.

There was agreement that high school counselors should be the ones to interpret the tests in adult basic education. The counselors should become familiar with the tests that are being used in adult basic education programs so that they would be aware of what the tests are attempting to measure.

The fifth question, as to whom should be hired to do the counseling in the program, brought these results: 50 percent stated that high school counselors should be the ones hired to do the counseling; 37 percent said that counselors in the high schools do not have enough time to get involved in the program; one felt that anyone who was able to establish rapport with adults should be hired to do the counseling, and the high school counselor may not always fit the bill; another said a counselor with basic training in psychology, work orientation, testing, and with work experience outside

the field of education should be hired to do the counseling.

Counselors are in agreement that high school counselors should be the ones hired to do the counseling in an adult basic education program. Before high school counselors can take on the job of counseling adults in a basic education program, the counselors are going to have to become familiar with current trends in adult basic education programs.

The sixth and final question concerning the nature of the program yielded the following results: 37 percent of the counselors thought that high school counselors do not have enough time to get involved in the program; 12 percent of the counselors stated that the program should be vocationally orientated; 12 percent of the counselors did not answer the question. The following is a list of what the remaining six counselors thought the nature of the program should be: 1) orientation--why, information about the program, individual counseling, and knowing the people and the community, or the program will not work; 2) assist in the planning of the program, help identify the special needs or abilities of the students, collect and disseminate information about careers and career training opportunities, make referreles, maintain liaison and cooperative relationships with other specialists, provide placement service, and develop long-range planning and occupational opportunities; 3) group counseling and individual counseling; 4) help the students spell out their goals, and help individuals fit the available courses into a realistic program; 5) help students with their long-range goals, conduct individual and group counseling sessions; 6) serve the needs (emotionally and educationally) of all members of the community, set up the program based on the individual needs in the community where the program is established.

### Summary of Results

The results brought out the fact that counselors do not agree on what the role of counseling should be, what tests to use, nor what the nature of the counseling program should be in adult basic education. Counselors do agree that high school counselors should be hired to counsel students in adult basic education programs, and that counselors should be the ones to administer and interpret the tests. The results point out that counselors are not familiar with adult basic education and that the counselors who will be involved in these programs are going to have to learn what is involved in counseling adults in basic education programs before they can do a good job.

The summary, conclusions, and recommendations suggested by the results of this study are reported in the final chapter which follows.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary

The purpose of this investigation was to learn what Montana counselors thought the role of the counselor was in testing and counseling students in adult basic education programs, who should administer and interpret the tests, who should be hired to do the counseling, and what the nature of the counseling program should be.

An open-ended questionnaire was sent to the twenty five counselors for the purpose of finding out what they thought the role of the counselor in an adult basic education program should be. The answers to the questions were compared and percentages were computed to see how many of the counselors agreed what the role of the counselor should be in an adult basic education program. The questions used in the questionnaire were constructed through consultation with professors at Montana State University concerned with counselor education.

A personal interview with each of the counselors would have probably produced better results than the mailed questionnaire brought. Another letter or post card sent out to those who did not respond could possibly have brought forth a higher percentage of questionnaires returned to the investigator.

#### Conclusions

Seven conclusions seemed apparent from results of this study.

1. Counselors do not agree as to what the role of the counselor is in an adult basic education program. No two counselors listed exactly the same thing for the role of the counselor in an adult basic education program.

2. Counselors are not in agreement as to what tests would be used in an adult basic education program. Thirty seven percent mentioned the Differential Aptitude Test as one they would use, but other than that, there was no significant agreement as to what tests would be used.
3. A majority of counselors thought that high school counselors should be the ones to administer tests given in adult basic education programs.
4. A majority of counselors reported that high school counselors should be the ones to interpret the tests in an adult basic education program.
5. A majority of the counselors reported that the one to be hired to counsel adult basic education students should be the high school counselor.
6. There was no significant agreement as to what the nature of the counseling program should be. Twelve percent stated the program should be vocationally oriented.
7. Thirty seven percent of the counselors stated that high-school counselors do not have enough time to get involved in an adult basic education program.

#### Recommendations

The following recommendations generated out of results and conclusions of this study, are offered for conduct of counseling and testing programs in adult basic education.

It is recommended that counselors take a closer look at adult basic education to find out what the role of the counselor should be in these programs. The counselors should also do some research to find out what tests are recommended to use with adults in a basic education program, and from the list select the ones that will fit their particular program. Another area counselors should investigate is what the nature of the counseling program involves in working with adults in basic education. Adult basic education is new in Montana and the counselors should do

research into what other states are doing in their programs, as the majority of counselors who responded to the questionnaire stated that high school counselors will be the ones to become involved in adult basic education programs.

It is recommended that counselors determine the amount of time that will be required of them in an adult basic education program. Counselors seem to think they do not have enough time to do what is required of them as high school counselors, and they probably will not have time to do a good job in either program if they add an adult basic education program to their already busy schedule.

It is recommended that the high school counselors encourage the school districts where adult basic education programs are being started to look into the possibility of hiring a person who is not employed as a high school counselor to do the counseling in an adult basic education program.

Similar studies should be conducted in the future to determine what the role of the counselor is in an adult basic education program, who should be hired to do the counseling, who should administer and interpret the tests, what tests to use in the program, and what the nature of the program would be as the role of counseling may change with the ever increasing demand for adult basic education programs.

## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

LETTER OF EXPLANATION

Dear Counselors:

Adult education is becoming increasingly important in the world of education today. Many adults who have returned to the classroom have less than an eighth-grade education. As a counselor, I am interested in learning what Montana counselors think their role is in adult basic education.

I would appreciate it very much if you would take a few minutes out of your busy schedule to fill out the enclosed questionnaire and return it to me as soon as possible. I will use the information in a study to fulfill the requirements for my Master's Degree at Montana State University.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Timothy J. Stanaway

Counselor

White Sulphur Springs High School

QUESTIONNAIRE

I would appreciate it if you would respond to the following questionnaire as fully as you can and return the questionnaire to me. Enclosed is a self-addressed, stamped envelope to use in returning the questionnaire.

1. What do you think the role of the counselor is in an adult basic education program?
  
2. What tests would you use in an adult basic education program?
  
3. Who should administer the tests in an adult basic education program?
  
4. Who should interpret the tests in an adult basic education program?
  
5. Who do you think should be hired to do the counseling in an adult basic education program?
  
6. What do you think the nature of the counseling program should be?

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