

GUIDANCE AND COUNSELOR TIME ANALYSIS STUDY IN FIVE
LARGE MONTANA HIGH SCHOOLS

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate how the full time high school guidance counselor used his time in various guidance related activities such as clerical work, administrative duties and others, to determine if too much time was spent in this manner or, if time spent was not significant enough to detract from the effectiveness of the guidance counselor.

Questionnaires were sent to five large Montana high schools for the purpose of obtaining statistics necessary to compute a ratio of total counseling hours spent in clerical duties and to acquire counselors' opinions and comments pertaining to the time they spend in clerical work. The questions used in the questionnaire were determined through consultation with professors at Montana State University concerned with counselor education. Ninety percent of the questionnaires were returned.

The questions asked the full time counselors of five large Montana high schools were analyzed and percentages were computed on the basis of their responses. Means were calculated for each counseling-related activity and these means were then used to indicate how these counselors used their time.

Conclusions drawn as a result of this investigation were as follows: (1) a majority of full time guidance counselors are not troubled by excessive clerical activities in their counseling program; (2) a minority of full time guidance counselors are troubled by excessive clerical activities in their counseling program; (3) full time secretarial help would free those counselors who are troubled by excessive clerical activities to counsel students; (4) student secretarial help could be used by a minority of the full time guidance counselors to obtain needed time for counseling students.

Recommendations made by the author were: (1) that counselors keep accurate records of how they spend their time; (2) that full time secretarial help be provided for counselors in order for them not to become bogged down with excessive clerical duties; and (3) that counselors utilize student secretarial help, if it is not possible to have full time secretarial help.

CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

General Statement of Problem

Frequently a guidance counselor finds himself too involved in duties that are of a clerical or administrative nature. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate how the full time high school guidance counselor spends his time in various guidance related activities such as clerical work, administrative duties and others to determine if too much time is spent in this manner or whether time spent is minimal and is not significant enough to detract from the effectiveness of the guidance counselor.

Questionnaires were sent to five large Montana high schools for the purpose of obtaining statistics necessary to compute a ratio of total counseling hours spent in clerical duties and to acquire counselors' opinions and comments pertaining to the time they spend in clerical work.

The information gathered will be studied to determine how the excessive clerical activities detract from the total effectiveness of the function of the guidance and counseling program.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this investigation is to study how the full time high school guidance counselor spends his time in various guidance-related activities such as clerical work, administrative duties and others to determine if too much time is spent in this manner or whether time spent

is minimal and is not significant enough to detract from the effectiveness of the guidance counselor.

Procedures

The school population studied will be the full-time guidance counselors in five large Montana high schools. Those high schools are Billings West, Great Falls Public, Missoula Sentinel, Helena, and Bozeman.

The method used to gather the necessary data will be a questionnaire sent to each full time counselor of the above mentioned high schools.

The researcher will send an inquiry to the Montana State Department of Public Instruction to obtain a list of full-time counselors employed in the state of Montana.

The data obtained will indicate the proportion of the counselor's time that is spent in the various counseling-related activities. The researcher will compute a ratio of the total counseling time to the time counselors spend in clerical duties.

The comments and opinions of the counselors as to their time spent in clerical duties and how this influences the effectiveness of their guidance and counseling program will be noted and recorded.

Previous Studies in the Field

In 1962, it was recommended by the American Personnel and Guidance Association that the guidance worker spend two-thirds to three-fourths of his time in work with students, parents, and staff.

In a study conducted by Pruett and Brown (10) it was discovered that only about 52.5 percent of the counselors' time was being spent in the areas recommended by the American Personnel and Guidance Association. In addition, the authors found that approximately one-fourth of the assigned guidance time was spent in non-guidance activities such as clerical work, administrative chores, scheduling, and substitute teaching.

According to the American School Counselor Association, "The school counselor's primary role is in counseling. He assumes other roles such as consultant, resource person, researcher, and educator, but only as these roles support his counseling relationships." If these secondary activities are allowed to absorb the majority of the counselor's time, he is no longer fulfilling his role as counselor. (8)

The stand of professional counselors on the overburdening of counselors with clerical activities is very well exemplified by Boy and Pine (2):

In order to insure the development of a meaningful role concept of the professional school counselor in the minds of students which is clear and not contradictory, and in order to have time to perform the professional counseling and other guidance services for which he is trained, the school counselor should not be responsible for clerical duties. Obviously, he will be involved in some of these activities from time to time, but his involvement will always be as a counselor and never as an administrator or a clerk."

Barry and Wolf (1) explain that far too many of our guidance personnel workers are forced to "spread themselves too thin" and "do nothing thoroughly". They state that, with this present proliferation of specialties, counselors are becoming "unprofessional generalists".

According to Gold (3), it is generally recognized that the tasks assigned to the counselor are not always those most appropriate to his

training and expected contribution. He also found that there have been few attempts to examine how a counselor spends his time.

Delimitation

The author applied the following delimiting factors:

1. The schools investigated were five large Montana high schools. They were Billings West, Great Falls Public, Missoula Sentinel, Helena, and Bozeman.
2. The study was concerned only with full-time guidance counselors.
3. The study was concerned with how much time was spent in guidance-related activities as compared with the actual amount of time spent counseling.

Definition of Terms

The author felt it was necessary to clarify the following terms:

1. The term "clerical" is meant to imply work that could be done by a secretary trained in typing, filing, recording test information and other general forms of paper work.
2. The term "full-time guidance counselor" is meant to refer to school personnel hired by the local school district for the purpose of counseling its students. Also, it was expected that a full-time guidance counselor would have 30 credits in the guidance and counseling curriculum.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate how the full-time guidance counselors of five large Montana high schools spend their time in various guidance-related activities such as clerical work, administrative duties and others to determine how much time is spent in work of a clerical nature.

Questionnaires were sent to the full-time guidance counselors of Billings West, Great Falls Public, Missoula Sentinel, Helena, and Bozeman high schools for the purpose of obtaining a breakdown of the time they have allotted for guidance and counseling activities. These figures were then used to compute a ratio of total counseling hours spent in clerical duties to those spent counseling students. These counselors were also asked to give their comments and suggestions pertaining to the time they spent in clerical work. The questions used in the questionnaire were determined through consultation with professors at Montana State University concerned with counselor education.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to Mathewson (7), non-guidance functions which should not be included in appropriate guidance functions of the guidance counselor are:

record-keeping of a routine clerical nature for large groups of pupils in which professional interpretations and decisions are not involved; routine pupil scheduling and programming not involving advisement decisions; problems related to regulatory discipline as contrasted with cases referred for counseling treatment of causes of discipline infringements; leadership of clubs and extra-curricular activities; study hall supervision; preliminary evaluation of cases of emotional disturbance or academic disability requiring the attention of psycho-clinical specialists.

Mathewson goes on to say that many school systems expend money for counseling and closely related guidance services but may get in return only a miscellany of activities like those mentioned above. It is no wonder that essential guidance outcomes, such as well-formulated educational-vocational plans, among secondary school youth may not be forthcoming under circumstances where counselors are taken away from primary functions to spend time on those that almost anyone in the school can conduct.

George E. Hill (4) feels that counselors are facing a dilemma. He makes the statement that most school counselors are functioning as what might be called "general practitioners" in the field of guidance. While there is emerging, especially in some large schools, a certain specialization of functions, this practice is not yet common. It is safe to predict that the school counselor in the smaller schools and in most large schools will continue to perform a great variety of guidance functions. Therefore, a major dilemma faces the conscientious school counselor: how can I perform all these duties, every one of which is important, within the limits of a reasonable working day and still perform them effectively?

In attempting to solve this dilemma, Hill suggested the following alternatives:

1. The school counselor and the guidance director seek to establish a priority list of functions. What must we get done? What could we let slide, or perhaps even reject, as part of our responsibility? This approach is sensible if it entails a critical reexamination of the functions and processes of guidance in a school. If it merely entails a sloughing off of the most easily avoided duties, then it is not professionally worthy.
2. The school counselor and guidance director seek to enlist fuller assistance from other members of the school staff in the performance of certain functions, which might just as well be put in the hands of teachers, supervisors, school psychologists, principals, or even clerical workers. If this involves a careful assessment of the qualifications of all persons involved and if it entails the development of a close working relationship geared to common purposes established as meeting the needs of the children, this is good guidance strategy. If, however, this means simply getting someone to do parts of the counselor's job, it, too, is not professionally worthy.

In a study conducted by the American School Counselor Association, secondary school counselors were asked: which of your present activities do not belong in a guidance program even though they may be part of the total administrative or instructional functions. One-half of the counselors surveyed responded by saying that in effect clerical duties are not legitimate responsibilities of the counselor. The counselors felt that clerical work kept them from doing what they felt would be more significant. (14)

Wrenn (14) came up with a recommendation in his book, The Counselor in a Changing World, "that adequate clerical help, or dictating equipment plus clerical help, be provided by schools so that excessive clerical responsibilities do not vitiate the counselor's major function."

In Principles and Practices of the Guidance Program, Smith (12) found that freedom from classroom routine posed the greatest problem for the busy

conscientious counselor. He felt that it was necessary for the counselor to set up a defense against becoming the schools' "handy-man and chief moppper-upper." Such necessary school functions as checking routine absences of pupils, handling discipline, performing clerical chores, and the like are sometimes assigned to the counselor for the reason that he can perform them without disrupting the scheduled program of instruction. These routine clerical functions frequently assigned counselors often result in the greatest loss of valuable time from more important duties.

Lowell Hults (6), in an article in Montana Education, expressed some definite feelings about counselors doing clerical work:

Although record-keeping, averaging grades for class rank, typing of applications and recommendations, filing, and other types of clerical work are essential to the operation of a good guidance program, such duties should be delegated to a competent clerical staff--never to the guidance director or his counseling staff.

Fortunate indeed are the students educated in a school system whose administrators have had the foresight to secure the help of enough competent secretaries and clerks to adequately and efficiently handle the essential clerical work in secondary school administrative and guidance offices. In schools lacking adequate office personnel, clerical work often becomes the responsibility of the guidance director or counselor so he necessarily spends a great deal of his time attending to routine office duties instead of counseling students.

In many school providing effective guidance programs, counselors devote ninety percent of their time counseling students and less than ten percent on clerical duties. Schools noticeably weak in guidance permit their counselors to spend nearly half of their time "clerking." It is a gross example of short-sightedness, false economy, and short-changing of the individual student's educational, vocational, and personal guidance wherever the latter condition exists.

From examining many studies and books concerning guidance and counseling, it becomes apparent that a closer look should be taken at the duties of counselors. It has been recognized that the duties assigned to the

counselor are not always those most appropriate to his training and preparation.

Therefore, the purpose of this investigation was to analyze how the full-time guidance counselors in five large Montana high schools spent their time in various guidance-related activities such as clerical work, administrative duties, and others to determine if too much time is spent in this manner, or if time spent is minimal and is not significant enough to detract from the effectiveness of the guidance counselor.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS OF THE GUIDANCE AND COUNSELOR TIME ANALYSIS STUDY IN FIVE LARGE MONTANA HIGH SCHOOLS

Oftentimes a guidance counselor finds himself too involved in duties that are of a clerical or administrative nature. The author felt this problem warranted further study because this waste of time is unfair to the school system, the counselor and, most of all, the students. The following are the results of this investigation.

Counselor responses to questions projected in the questionnaire were evaluated by the author according to the following areas:

1. Professional training and daily time allotted to guidance and counseling activities.
2. Time spent counseling students and all counseling related activities.
3. The effectiveness of the counselors' guidance programs with respect to excessive clerical work.
4. Comments and suggestions from counselors relating to their school time spent doing clerical work.

The author received nineteen questionnaires with adequate information to analyze the means for the amount of professional training and the daily time allotted to the counselors. There was a maximum of 124 credits in the area of guidance and counseling with a minimum of 28 credits, resulting in a mean of 55 credits for the nineteen counselors. A mean of $6\frac{1}{2}$ hours per day was arrived at for the daily time allotted to the counselors. Table I, page 11, shows the breakdown of each counselor's response to the amount of professional training and the daily time allotted to counseling activities.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate how the full time high school guidance counselor used his time in various guidance related activities such as clerical work, administrative duties and others, to determine if too much time was spent in this manner or, if time spent was not significant enough to detract from the effectiveness of the guidance counselor.

Questionnaires were sent to five large Montana high schools for the purpose of obtaining statistics necessary to compute a ratio of total counseling hours spent in clerical duties and to acquire counselors' opinions and comments pertaining to the time they spend in clerical work. The questions used in the questionnaire were determined through consultation with professors at Montana State University concerned with counselor education. Ninety percent of the questionnaires were returned.

The questions asked the full time counselors of five large Montana high schools were analyzed and percentages were computed on the basis of their responses. Means were calculated for each counseling-related activity and these means were then used to indicate how these counselors used their time.

Conclusions drawn as a result of this investigation were as follows: (1) a majority of full time guidance counselors are not troubled by excessive clerical activities in their counseling program; (2) a minority of full time guidance counselors are troubled by excessive clerical activities in their counseling program; (3) full time secretarial help would free those counselors who are troubled by excessive clerical activities to counsel students; (4) student secretarial help could be used by a minority of the full time guidance counselors to obtain needed time for counseling students.

Recommendations made by the author were: (1) that counselors keep accurate records of how they spend their time; (2) that full time secretarial help be provided for counselors in order for them not to become bogged down with excessive clerical duties; and (3) that counselors utilize student secretarial help, if it is not possible to have full time secretarial help.

TABLE I. PROFESSIONAL TRAINING OF POPULATION SAMPLE AND DAILY TIME ALLOTTED FOR COUNSELING ACTIVITIES

School	Sex	Professional training (credits)	Daily time allotted (hours)
Billings West	M	50	7
	M	80	6+
	F	35	5
	M	70	6
Great Falls Public	M	97	8
	F	45	7
	F	41	7
	M	48	8
	M	48	6
	M	28	6
Missoula Sentinel	F	50	6 $\frac{1}{2}$
	M	45	6
	M	45	7
	F	51	7
Helena Senior High	M	68	7
	M	124	7
	F	40	8
Bozeman Senior High	F	45	4
	M	33	6 $\frac{1}{2}$
12M 7F			
Means		55	6 $\frac{1}{2}$

It is important to note from the above table that the mean number of quarter credits of the counselors surveyed was fifty-five. Therefore, the professional preparation of the counselors far exceeded the minimum requirements for guidance personnel.

One of the questionnaires gave inadequate information to the remaining questions and, as a result, it was possible to make the computations for eighteen of the nineteen questionnaires received.

Out of a total of eighteen counselors participating in this study, one reported a low of twenty-four percent of his time spent in student counseling, while one counselor reported a high of ninety-eight percent of his time in student counseling. A mean of sixty-four percent was arrived at for the eighteen counselors in this activity. The counselors also had a mean of fourteen percent of their time spent in conferences with parents, teachers, and others. The amount of time spent in such conferences ranged from a high of twenty-five percent to a low of one percent. Recording information on cumulative folders consumed an average of three percent of the counselors' time. The amount of time spent in this activity was a high of ten percent and eight of the eighteen counselors reported they spent no time recording information. Administering and scoring tests had a mean of four percent for the counselors involved. One counselor reported a high of fourteen percent spent in this activity while five counselors spent no time administering tests. Preparing transcripts encompassed an average of two percent. One counselor reported he spent twelve percent of his time preparing transcripts, while twelve of the eighteen counselors reported that secretaries took care of this clerical activity. Eight counselors reported they did no filing while a high of fourteen percent was reported by one counselor. Again, secretaries do the biggest portion of the filing. Three-fourths of the counselors participating in this study reported they did no

typing, with one counselor reporting a high of five percent of his counseling time being consumed by this activity. The counselors were asked what other activities they were responsible for. These activities included such things as record keeping, teachers' conferences, correspondence, staff meetings, home calls, group counseling, scheduling, orientation, research, administrative duties, assisting teachers, and pre-registration. An average of nine percent of their time was spent in these various activities, ranging from a high of thirty percent to five counselors who reported they spent no time in work of this nature. Table II presents the mean amount of time spent in counseling and counseling-related activities. (For more detailed information on Table II, see Appendix D.)

TABLE II. MEAN PERCENTAGES OF TIME SPENT IN COUNSELING AND COUNSELING-RELATED ACTIVITIES BY FULL-TIME GUIDANCE COUNSELORS IN FIVE LARGE MONTANA HIGH SCHOOLS

Activities	Mean Percentages
Student counseling	64
Conferences with teachers, parents, etc.	14
Recording information on cumulative folders	3
Administering and scoring tests	4
Preparing transcript forms	2
Filing	3
Typing	1
Other	9

It is important to note the mean of sixty-four percent of counselors' time spent in student counseling. This almost meets the minimum requirements set by the American Personnel and Guidance Association.

The counselors were then asked if they felt clerical duties detracted from, did not influence, or added to the effectiveness of their guidance program. The counselors then gave comments and suggestions relating to time taken up by these clerical duties. Five of the eighteen counselors stated the clerical duties detracted from the effectiveness of their guidance program. The common reason given was that as a result of the clerical duties, they could not spend as much time counseling students as they would like to. Three counselors reported that clerical duties added to the effectiveness of their counseling program with the general consensus being that clerical duties allow one to become more familiar with the individual student. To the author's surprise, ten of the eighteen counselors stated that clerical duties do not influence the effectiveness of the guidance program. The counselors reported that clerical duties detracted from the effectiveness of their guidance program in the past, but within the last two years secretaries have been hired to do the clerical work and as a result no longer do clerical duties consume any appreciable amount of time. Table III, page 15, presents the attitudes of counselors toward clerical work and the effectiveness of their guidance program.

The fact that ten of the eighteen counselors reported that clerical activities did not affect their counseling program demonstrated that a majority of full-time guidance counselors were not troubled by excessive clerical activities.

TABLE III. ATTITUDES OF COUNSELORS TOWARD CLERICAL WORK AND THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THEIR GUIDANCE PROGRAM

Number of counselors	Add to program	Detract from program	Do not influence program
18	3	5	10

The last question the counselors responded to was an open ended question asking for any comments they had relating to the amount of school time they spent doing clerical work. Two typical responses to this question were that secretarial help should be increased to free counselors for the job they were hired for in the first place--counseling students--and that the little secretarial work they do is necessary for the counselors to perform their job properly. This latter response was made by a majority of the counselors who have at least full or part time secretarial help.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate how the full-time guidance counselors of five large Montana high schools spend their time in various guidance-related activities such as clerical work, administrative duties and others to determine how much time is spent in work of a clerical nature and how much time is spent counseling students.

Questionnaires were sent to the full-time guidance counselors of Billings West, Great Falls Public, Missoula Sentinel, Helena, and Bozeman high schools for the purpose of obtaining a breakdown of the time they have allotted for guidance and counseling activities. These figures were then used to compute a ratio of total counseling hours spent in clerical duties to those spent counseling students. These counselors were also asked to give their comments and suggestions pertaining to the time they spent in clerical work. The questions used in the questionnaire were determined through consultation with professors at Montana State University concerned with counselor education.

The results of the questionnaire were reported in Chapter III, page 10.

Conclusions

Several conclusions can be drawn from the results of this investigation:

1. A majority of full-time guidance counselors are not troubled by excessive clerical activities in their counseling program.

2. A minority of full-time guidance counselors are troubled by excessive clerical activities in their counseling program.
3. Full-time secretarial help would free those counselors who are troubled by excessive clerical activities to counsel students.
4. Student secretarial help could be used by a minority of the full-time guidance counselors to obtain needed time for counseling students. However, student secretarial help would have to be limited due to the confidential nature of the counselee's records.

Recommendations

After conducting this investigation, the author felt that the following recommendations were warranted:

1. That counselors keep accurate records of how they spend their time. This information could be very helpful to both the counselor and the administrator in determining what duties the counselor is responsible for. Keeping accurate records would be one way of determining if the counselor is performing the duties for which he was originally hired or if he is just a "glorified clerk." The American Personnel and Guidance Association recommended that counselors spend from two-thirds to three-fourths of their time counseling students. Hopefully the counselors' records would coincide with these recommendations.
2. That full-time secretarial help be provided for counselors, in order for them not to become bogged down with excessive clerical duties.

Full-time clerical help would free counselors from performing clerical tasks and give them the time they need to counsel students.

3. That counselors utilize student secretarial help if it is not possible to have full-time secretarial help. The value of student secretarial help would be limited due to the confidential nature of the counselee's records, but it would add valuable time to the counselor's day.
4. Follow up studies of this problem should be continued in the future.

Numerous recommendations could have been drawn from this investigation. However, the above recommendations were most apparent and pertained specifically to this study.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION FROM THE STATE DEPARTMENT

Box 33-11
Kountz Trailer Court
Bozeman, Montana
August 31, 1968

Mr. Jim Fitzpatrick
Director of Guidance and Counseling
Montana State Department of Public Instruction
Helena, Montana

Dear Mr. Fitzpatrick:

I am doing a survey in guidance and counselor education in conjunction with Montana State University, Bozeman. I am in need of a list of guidance counselors within the state. I would appreciate it greatly if you would send me a handbook that lists the guidance counselors throughout the state.

Thank you very much.

Respectfully,

Ray Johnson

APPENDIX B

COVER LETTER SENT TO ALL PARTICIPATING COUNSELORS

Date _____

Dear _____

I am conducting a survey in guidance and counselor education in conjunction with Montana State University. The purpose of the study is to determine how guidance counselors use the time they have allotted to guidance and counseling functions.

Enclosed you will find a questionnaire and self-addressed envelope. It will be greatly appreciated if you would fill out the enclosed questionnaire and return it to me as soon as possible.

The results of this study will be made available to you no later than January of 1969.

Your reply will be held in the strictest of confidence.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Respectfully,

Ray Johnson

APPENDIX C

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE FORM FOR A GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING TIME
ANALYSIS STUDY IN FIVE LARGE MONTANA HIGH SCHOOLS

NAME _____

SCHOOL _____

1. How many quarter hours of professional training do you have in the area of guidance and counseling? _____
2. How many hours per day do you have scheduled for guidance and counseling functions? _____
3. Of the total hours allotted for guidance and counseling functions, how many are spent in the following activities:
 - A. Student counseling _____
 - B. Conferences with parents and teachers _____
 - C. Recording information on cumulative records _____
 - D. Administering and scoring tests _____
 - E. Preparing student transcript forms _____
 - F. Filing _____
 - G. Typing _____
 - H. Other _____
4. Do you believe that the clerical activities you engage in add to, detract from, or do not influence the effectiveness of your guidance program? _____

5. Do you have any comments or opinions relating to the amount of school time you spend doing clerical work? _____

APPENDIX D

PERCENTAGES OF TIME SPENT IN COUNSELING AND COUNSELING-RELATED ACTIVITIES BY FULL-TIME COUNSELORS IN FIVE LARGE MONTANA HIGH SCHOOLS

	Student coun- seling	Confer- ences	Recording informa- tion	Adminis- tering tests	Preparing trans- cripts	Filing	Typing	Other
	66	08	08	--	--	--	--	16
	25	08	08	08	08	--	04	20
	56	14	--	14	--	01	01	14
	80	05	--	01	02	--	--	12
	43	15	--	02	--	05	05	30
	70	10	05	05	--	05	--	05
	66	17	08	04	--	04	--	01
	55	20	10	05	--	10	--	--
	50	20	07	--	--	14	--	09
	75	25	--	--	--	--	--	--
	60	12	06	06	12	--	--	04
	75	25	--	--	--	--	--	--
	42	21	--	05	--	05	--	28
	75	10	01	10	01	01	01	01
	98	01	--	--	--	--	--	01
	80	10	--	02	02	--	--	06
	95	03	--	00.5	--	--	01	00.5
	66	24	09	--	--	--	--	--
Means	64	14	03	04	02	03	01	09

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