

The Centennial of Counselor Education: Origin and Early Development of a Discipline

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July 7, 2011, marks the centennial of counselor education as a formal discipline. In recognition of its 100th birthday, the author of this article describes the origins of the discipline, beginning with its prehistory in the work of Frank Parsons to establish the practice of vocational guidance, describing the 1st course in counselor education at Harvard University in 1911, and ending with the formation of the 1st university department of counselor education at Boston University in 1914.

July 7, 2011, marks the centennial of counselor education as a formal discipline. In recognition of its 100th birthday, this article describes the origins of the discipline, beginning with its prehistory in the work of Frank Parsons to establish vocational guidance in the Boston schools. Parsons (1908) coined the term *vocational guidance*, using it for the first time in his *First Report to Executive Committee and Trustees* of the Boston Vocational Bureau. With the publication of his book *Choosing a Vocation* the following year, Parsons (1909) originated counseling as a discipline separate from its roots in social work and the practice of “friendly visits” (Richmond, 1917).

Several teachers in the Boston schools quickly became interested in the new profession of counseling, with its initial focus on vocational guidance. However, educational programs that taught guidance and counseling as a separate discipline did not exist. To fill this gap, Parsons planned to offer training to teachers and employment personnel. He had outlined an educational program for counselors at the same time that he had planned the Boston Vocational Bureau. Although the Bureau became part of the Civic House, the training plan was taken up by the Boston YMCA. The YMCA issued an eight-page circular announcing a School for Vocational Counselors with Parsons as dean and Ralph Albertson, Lucinda Wyman Prince, and Philip Davis as faculty (Brewer, 1942). The Boston YMCA scheduled the first course in vocational guidance to begin October 5, 1908. The announcement for the course explained that it aimed “to fit young men to become vocational counselors and manage vocation bureaus in connection with YMCAs, schools, colleges and universities, and public systems, associations and businesses anywhere in the county” (Zytowski, 2001, p. 60). Unfortunately, Parsons died on September 26, 1908. In deference to Parsons’s wishes, the course was subsequently taught by Ralph Albertson, a close friend and colleague of Parsons. Albertson worked as superintendent of personnel at Filene’s Department Store and was later recognized as a pioneer in the field of human resources.

Beginning on November 8, 1908, the YMCA course met on 16 Saturday evenings, with attendance varying between 16 and 25 (Brewer, 1942).

Boston Public Schools Course for Counselors

On the basis of the success of the YMCA’s informal course, the Boston School Board authorized Superintendent Stanton Brooks on June 7, 1909, to invite the Vocational Bureau, founded by Parsons and then directed by Bloomfield, to help design a vocational counseling service for schoolchildren. To staff the service, the Vocational Bureau and a School Committee designed a course in vocational guidance for teachers in the Boston schools. Three mass meetings were held with teachers and one with principals in the fall of 1909 and the spring of 1910 to recruit volunteers (Bloomfield, 1911). Following these meetings, the principal of each school in Boston, with the exception of one elementary school, appointed a teacher or group of teachers to be known as “vocational counselors.” Each teacher volunteered to serve as a vocational counselor, in addition to his or her regular duties, and further agreed to attend the training course (Brewer, 1942). The course taught by Bloomfield began in the fall of 1910. The Boston School Vocational Counselors, as they were called, met twice a month during the school year to study principles and methods of guidance. During these meeting at the Boston English High School, they discussed educational opportunities in the city and the vocational problems faced by their students and graduates. As part of their in-service training, the 117 officially appointed vocational counselors were to personally study the home, street, and other influences on the vocational direction of one student in their own classroom. The counselors were required to keep records for comparison and systematic study. They also conferred with employers who were invited to the sessions (Bloomfield, 1913). The subjects covered

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in lectures included principles of vocational guidance, the shoe industry, the boy and girl in the department store, the sources and methods of vocational guidance, the machine industry, trades for boys, the telephone industry for girls, stenography and typewriting for girls, bookbinding for girls, architecture, and the use of statistics. The course was offered again for the next 2 years. The students for the 1911–1912 course included 35 individuals holding college degrees. The topics for 1911 to 1912 were mechanical and civil engineering, electrical engineering, the machine trades, agriculture, textile mill working, the building trades, the selling clerk, the needle trades, opportunities in the department store, a social suggestion on boys and girls as wage earners, training nurses, conditions in industry for the young girl wage earner, and vocational opportunities for girls who complete high school. Topics for 1912 to 1913 were the shoe and leather industry, lunchroom and restaurant work for young women, the department store, education for store employment, the metal trades, the profession of business, girls in the candy factory, printing, and the new child labor law.

In the fall of 1913, the School Committee took responsibility for the course as part of the newly formed Department of Vocational Guidance in the Boston Public Schools. The Boston School Board had established the department early in 1913 under the direction of the assistant superintendent Frank V. Thompson, who would later become the fourth president of what is now the National Career Development Association (NCDA), a division in the American Counseling Association. The School Committee focused the course on occupational information, case studies, and the exchange of techniques.

Despite the success of the course, Bloomfield realized that if counseling was to become a profession, more than in-service training of teachers was needed. Bloomfield wrote in 1913, “Nobody has expected that attending occupational talks would alone equip for effective vocational guidance” (p. 8). Nevertheless, the large body of counselors-in-training did afford a foundation for a more formal field of guidance, one located at a university. Bloomfield believed that a department of vocational guidance at a university was vital to the future of the discipline. A university department would formalize vocational guidance as an independent discipline related to yet separate from the fields of psychology, economics, education, and social service (Bloomfield, 1915b). Such a department would be critical in conducting research and studies of career-building possibilities on which to grow the field (Bloomfield, 1914).

Trained as a social worker at Harvard University, Bloomfield had witnessed social service providers professionalize the practice of benevolence by constructing new models and methods based on science. Social work was being taught at American universities. Led by Harvard, universities during this period had diversified their curricula to include more practical and scientific subjects. Following the lead of social work, Bloomfield wanted counseling to become a profession by

formulating common goals and establishing uniform training curricula in universities that could credential its graduates. In this way, counselors could construct their own occupational identity and professionalize their functions and activities.

First University Course in Counselor Education

On July 7, 1911, Bloomfield presented the first university course on counseling. It consisted of 10 lectures on vocational guidance given to 41 teachers. Classes met Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 4:00 p.m. for 3 weeks. The course was offered by Harvard University Summer School, which had been founded in 1871 as an open-enrollment school that did not offer any degrees. Accordingly, Bloomfield’s initial course on vocational guidance did not count for any degree for students enrolled at Harvard College.

Given its success, the next 2 years, the course called “Vocational Guidance” grew to a 6-week sequence of lectures and conferences, along with readings supplemented by a series of organized visits to commercial, educational, and social institutions (Bloomfield, 1914). Classes met 5 days per week at 11:00 a.m. Described as preparing teachers to provide vocational guidance to students, the course cost 20 dollars and was limited to 50 students. Beginning in 1912, the course was accepted for credit toward the degree of associate in arts. This degree program was designed for working adults enrolled in Harvard University Extension School, which President Lowell founded in 1910 to serve the educational interests and needs of the Greater Boston community.

The announcement for the 1913 course read as follows:

This course has been provided in view of the present demand for co-operation with young people concerning selection of and preparation for vocations appropriate to their opportunities and capacities, and because of the increased responsibility thus put upon school teachers, and others. The lectures will aim to show the purpose of the new movement, to describe what is now being done in various parts of the world, and to guide the students to an understanding of sound principles in vocational cooperation and to the best sources of the knowledge and methods necessary for effective work. (Bloomfield, 1913, pp. 11–12)

The course addressed the following topics: influence of school and home on choice of a vocation, the need for vocational guidance, duties of the vocational counselor, techniques of vocational guidance, how to investigate occupations, placement, problems in vocational guidance, and case studies.

In Bloomfield’s course, students read Parsons’s (1909) book and heard about Lysander Richards’s (1881) book *Vocophy: The New Profession*. However, neither of these books could stand as a textbook. So Bloomfield prepared two textbooks for use in his courses. The first, in 1911, was *The Vocational*

Guidance of Youth. It sold for 60 cents. *Readings in Vocational Guidance* (Bloomfield, 1915a) was an edited volume of 40 addresses, articles, and reports that presented the viewpoint, foundations, and methods of vocational guidance. Bloomfield (1915c) expanded the 1911 book into *Youth, School, and Vocation*. It served as an instructional manual and guide for school personnel who wished to provide vocational guidance.

Although the Harvard summer school course was beginning the move to professionalize counseling, the course proved to be insufficient to meet the increasing demands for training opportunities. In response, Bloomfield organized the Vocational Bureau Training Course with lectures and conferences. Starting in October 1912, superintendents from six cities sent selected teachers on Monday afternoons to intensively study vocational guidance. For example, the superintendent of Newton Schools at the time, Frank Ellsworth Spaulding, sent teachers for training. He organized the Newton Plan, which outlined the work of the Educational and Vocational Guidance Department of the city schools in Newton, Massachusetts. When Spaulding became superintendent of schools in Minneapolis in 1914 and in Cleveland in 1917, he established similar vocational bureaus for each school system (Avery, 1918).

Graduate Courses and First Department of Counselor Education

Although Harvard offered the first university course in counselor education in 1911, the University of Chicago offered what has been called the first graduate course in vocational guidance (Bennett, 1937) during the summer quarter of 1912. In 1910, Frank M. Leavitt, later to become the first president of what is now called NCDA, had left his position as the principal of the manual training school in Boston to become an associate professor of industrial arts in the School of Education at the University of Chicago. There, in 1912, Leavitt taught a graduate course titled "Industrial Education in Public Schools" that included vocational guidance as the last of nine topics in the course (Bennett, 1937). A year later, during the 6-week term in the summer quarter of 1913, Leavitt presented a graduate course specifically on vocational guidance.

Beginning on February 8, 1913, Teachers College, Columbia University, in New York City offered a course titled "Vocational Guidance." One could earn two credits, either undergraduate or graduate credit, costing 10 dollars. The course met on Saturday mornings from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. In addition to lectures, the course offered students practical training by doing fieldwork on special problems of vocational guidance. The instructor was Frederick Gordon Bonser, a professor of industrial arts. Also beginning in 1913, the University of Missouri-Columbia offered the first course titled "Vocational Guidance" for academic credit toward the bachelor of science degree in education. It was taught by Joseph Dolliver Elliff, a professor of high school administration.

Credit for founding the first department of counselor education in a university goes to Bloomfield. In 1913, the Employment Managers Association (founded by Bloomfield in 1912 and now called the American Management Association) sponsored a course at Boston University on the "Theory and Practice of Vocational Guidance." It was an extension course for teachers that was not designed for regular study in the College of Liberal Arts. The course was taught by Bloomfield, who had been appointed as a special instructor of vocational guidance. The initial course had 29 enrollees (Brewer, 1942). The course had six main sections: vocational guidance as a modern social problem, elements in the choice of a vocation, factors in vocational guidance, the practice of vocational guidance, summary of cautions, and methods of organization for providing guidance. Related practical work was optional. Option 1 involved studying a vocational agency, whereas Option 2 involved studying vocational guidance either with a counselor in a school or with an employment manager in a factory or mercantile establishment (Bloomfield, 1915c). In his autobiography, Lysander Richards (1925) recalled that two students in that course visited him to discuss his book *Vocophy: The New Profession* (pp. 45-46).

In 1914, the Vocational Bureau Training Course was transferred to Boston University, which then established a Department of Vocational Guidance, the first of its kind (Bloomfield, 1914). With the rank of "Special Professor Vocational Guidance," Bloomfield served as department head until 1917, when he was replaced by Frederick Allen. Each year from 1914 to 1917, Bloomfield taught a course titled "Theory and Practice of Vocational Guidance." During the summers of 1914 and 1915, Bloomfield taught an advanced course in vocational guidance at the University of California. During the summers of 1916 and 1917, he taught both a general and a specialized course in vocational guidance at Teachers College, Columbia University.

By 1915, 20 universities and colleges offered courses in vocational guidance (Bloomfield, 1915b). In 1915, Jesse B. Davis of Grand Rapids gave a 6-week course at the University of Minnesota in vocational and moral guidance. In the summer of 1916, John Brewer began giving two courses at Harvard University: "Principles of Vocational Guidance" and "Problems in Vocational Guidance." Also in 1916, William Alonzo Wheatley (superintendent of schools for Middletown, Connecticut) gave a course in vocational guidance at New York University Summer School and at McKendree College in Illinois; the college president, Huber William Hurt, gave a course in vocational guidance.

From these beginnings a century ago, the discipline of counselor education has now grown to over 600 programs in American universities. These programs reside in departments of education, psychology, or human services. They offer training in school counseling, college counseling, gerontological counseling, marriage and family therapy, substance abuse and addictions counseling, rehabilitation counseling, community counseling, clinical mental health counseling, and career counseling. Students study human growth and development,

social and cultural diversity, relationships, group work, career development, counseling techniques, assessment, research and program evaluation, and professional ethics and identity. The programs also participate in supervised clinical experience. The faculty members in counselor education programs are supported by the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision. A national accrediting body, the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Programs, maintains standards and improves the education, credentialing, and supervision of counselors. By 2008, 216 institutions that have over 500 programs had been accredited. At its centennial, the profession of counselor education is vital and vibrant, and ready for a 2nd century of scholarly contribution and social service.

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