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PREVIEW

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THE EFFECTS OF THE TEACHER-ADVISOR SYSTEM ON THE STUDENTS
OF OMAHA TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL, OMAHA, NEBRASKA, IN THE
AREAS OF ATTITUDE, ATTENDANCE, BEHAVIOR, AND ACHIEVEMENT

The University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Ed.D. 1985

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PREVIEW

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TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL, OMAHA, NEBRASKA, IN THE AREAS OF ATTITUDE,
ATTENDANCE, BEHAVIOR, AND ACHIEVEMENT

by

Odra Waymond Bradley

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Education

Major: Interdepartmental Area of Administration,
Curriculum and Instruction

Under the Supervision of Professor Alvah M. Kilgore

Lincoln, Nebraska

May, 1985

TITLE

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THE EFFECTS OF THE TEACHER-ADVISOR SYSTEM ON THE STUDENTS OF OMAHA
TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL, OMAHA, NEBRASKA, IN THE AREAS OF ATTITUDE,
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University of Nebraska, 1985

Advisor: Alvah M. Kilgore

This study examined the effects of the Teacher-Advisor System on the students of Technical High School in the areas of attitude, attendance, behavior, and achievement. Two basic research tools were used. Student perceptions of the effects of the Teacher-Advisor System on the attitude of the student body was measured by the use of an opinionnaire. To measure the change in attendance, behavior, and achievement, a modified static group (ex-post facto) comparison was used (Campbell & Stanley, 1968).

The basis for the opinionnaire was the eleven Teacher-Advisor goals that were established by the professional staff of Technical High School. From these eleven goals a twenty-seven question opinionnaire was designed. A two-way analysis of covariance was used to study the effects of the Teacher-Advisor System on attendance and behavior while a one-way analysis of covariance compared the academic achievement of the students. The number of absences was used as the measure of attendance and behavior was measured by the number of suspensions and expulsions. California Achievement Test scores were used as the covariant in the achievement measure of grade point averages.

The population for this study was the entire student body. The sample consisted of one hundred students, randomly selected from the population.

The findings of the study showed there was no statistically significant difference in attitude, attendance, or the behavior of the students. Three null hypotheses were developed in the area of achievement and there was a statistically significant difference in two of the three, with a decline in achievement.

The results of this study indicated that the Teacher-Advisor System made no statistically significant difference in the areas investigated. Since the problem being addressed dealt with the overload of the traditional counselor role and the consequent need for alternative forms of guidance, the Teacher-Advisor System was found to be an alternative. Further study of this approach to guidance with a lesser number of uncontrolled variables might bring positive results in regard to the factors studied in this research.

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PREVIEW

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

The function of "guidance" is as basic to the high school program and the needs of high school students as the other major aspects of the school, including curriculum and teaching. That students go to school to learn is generally agreed to by most parties concerned with the high school. The learning process requires that the schools employ teachers and other necessary personnel to complement the teaching function. Guidance is one of these necessary functions and has been a part of the high school since its inception (Jenkins, 1977).

High school counselors have been trained to perform many functions in their relationships with students. For the layman, counseling has essentially meant advising, telling, and directing. The layman would include, when describing the functions to be performed by the counselor, such duties as preparing class schedules, selecting courses, checking requirements for graduation, and monitoring student grades and credits.

Counseling is now seen, however, as an in-depth, personal experience between counselors and students with many possibilities for individuals to gain insights and understandings about themselves and others. Counseling is seen as a prelude to significant and meaningful behavior changes and to appropriate decision making (Downing, 1975).

Most often, a counselor is assigned to so large a group of students that individual contacts are very limited. This student load, in many cases 300 to 400 students per counselor, generally resulted in the counselor seeing the average student once or twice yearly and for only a few minutes. This student overload, along with other restrictions and an increasing need for guidance and direction on the part of high school students, caused some schools to look to other staff members to assist with the counseling function (Jenkins, 1977). A number of developments have occurred and are occurring outside of school that relate to in-school counseling. Urbanization, poverty, drugs, population control, morality, and crime are some sources of problems facing the counselor-counselee relationship.

Each student should be viewed by the counselor as a dynamically and potentially effective individual. The student's possibilities for progress, growth, and achievement are viewed as legion. The main problem of the counselor is to get the individual students to see themselves realistically and optimistically and to utilize their resources for obtaining the desired objectives. High self-confidence and a positive self-esteem are seen by the counselor as essential prerequisites to an effective, productive performance by the individual. These are characteristics that can be developed within the individual student. These characteristics are no longer left to chance for their development, nor is their possession regarded as an act of fate. The counselor of today must view creativity as a most desirable characteristic and feel the initiation and development of this

can be accomplished through a stimulating environment. Counseling is an indispensable part of an environment that fosters possibilities for stimulating and encouraging the individual toward higher productive actions (Downing, 1975).

Over the years, many methods were devised for providing guidance for the high school student in addition to the service provided by the school counselor. The "Home Room," which has been in use for many years, was designed to take care of such things as attendance, announcements, and orientation to new school rules. The home room also provided some guidance functions as teachers talked with small groups of students on a daily basis.

A "Teacher-Advisor System" may be thought of as the next logical step in the evolution of the guidance function. In seeking the solution to the overload of the high school counselor, it was most logical and natural to turn to the classroom teacher. This resource was accessible, teachers were certified and professional, and their teacher-pupil ratio was 1-20/25 against 1-300/400 for counselors. The impetus for re-organizing the guidance function to include the teaching staff grew out of the philosophy that guidance is everyone's responsibility. This philosophy was being restated at a time when there was more need for adult involvement in the lives of young people than ever before (Downing, 1975).

The concept of the Teacher-Advisor was one of the elements of the National Association of Secondary School Principals' Model Schools Project (Trump & Georgiades, 1972). The Teacher-Advisor concept has

probably been one part of the NASSP project with wide dissemination and currently exists in many high schools. How the school is organized to deliver guidance services may vary with local situations. The basis for the system, however, is the utilization of all professional staff members in the guidance role, including administrators. A structure such as this represents a logical way of delivering needed information, advisement, and decision making to students regardless of the size of the student body.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to ascertain and interpret the effects of the Teacher-Advisor System as related to student attitudes, attendance, behavior, and academic achievement at Omaha Technical High School, Omaha, Nebraska.

Definition of Terms

Guidance. As used in this study, guidance is a process of helping individuals through their own efforts to discover and develop their potentials both for personal happiness and social usefulness.

Counseling. A face-to-face relationship involving interaction between two persons in which growth takes place.

Teacher-advisor. A professional staff member who is assigned to and meets with a small group of students on a regular basis as part of the guidance and counseling system.

Group guides. Professional staff members who form the basis of the student support service in place of the traditional counselor. Functions and duties include counseling, guidance, tutoring, monitoring academic progress, and modifying student behavior.

Pre-set level of achievement. The level of achievement to be reached by the individual student in order for that student to receive credit in any given course. The level is set in advance, as the student enters the course.

Pacing. The time a student is given to complete a unit of work. Each student is given that amount of time the teacher judges to be needed.

Division leader. A professional staff member who serves as an instructional leader in one or more curriculum areas; sometimes referred to as a department chairperson.

Technical High School. A comprehensive high school in Omaha, Nebraska, embracing grades ten through twelve in which a program of individualized instruction was instituted beginning in 1972.

The Teacher-Advisor System

The Teacher-Advisor System was initiated at Technical High School in the fall of the 1981-1982 school year. The decision to reorganize the guidance service of Technical High School grew out of the staff's review of three evaluations by outside agencies, including the self-study for the North Central Association of Secondary Schools, the Dale Strotman Evaluation, and the Ron Meyer Evaluation (Technical

High School Files, 1979-1980).

One of the major objectives for initiating the Teacher-Advisor System was to help maintain the school's obligation of providing "extraordinary support for students" while involving the entire staff in the student support system. Five major areas of concern were established for teacher-advisors:

1. There was a need for improvement in attendance for students.
2. Students needed academic monitors.
3. Due to the nature of the school program, students needed a great deal of orientation and indoctrination.
4. One of the requirements of the program was that students be highly self-disciplined.
5. There was need for the dissemination of information and two-way communication on a regular basis (Technical High School Annual Evaluation, 1981).

From these concerns, teacher-advisement goals were established as follows:

1. To insure that the student had the opportunity to become familiar with and relate to at least one faculty member in the school.
2. To insure that the student gained a sense of belonging because of his or her association with the Teacher-Advisor group.
3. To assist the student with curriculum planning, registration, and program selection under the three-year plan.
4. To insure that the student developed effective study habits and skills.

5. To disseminate school information and develop a two-way communication system.

6. To insure that the student was aware of the responsibilities of all three parties to the school covenant (Technical High School Files, 1972).

7. To help develop a positive attitude concerning behavior.

8. To facilitate an effective means of student government.

9. To facilitate inter-staff communication about student progress.

10. To facilitate school and community involvement.

11. To insure that the student assumed his or her full responsibility for academic progress (Technical High School Files, 1981).

Background and Need for the Study

In the spring of 1972, the Technical High School staff was charged with the task of developing a new program which would meet the demands of parents, students, and other community residents (Technical High School Files, 1972). In response to this charge, a program of individualized instruction was developed. The new program was highly personalized to meet the needs of individual students. The program allowed variance in three major areas: pace, content, and performance criteria, thus permitting students to work at their own speed with personally manageable content and an individualized pre-determined performance level. The printed curriculum became the "focal point of attack" for students, enabling the teacher to "get

out from behind the desk" and assist the student in his or her attack upon the curriculum.

The traditional semester system, requiring all students to complete courses at the same time, was eliminated. Students were permitted and encouraged to enter and complete courses daily and were scheduled for classes every period within the eight-period school day. Study halls were eliminated. The number of classes for which a student could be scheduled was limited only by the student's ability. Grades and credit were given only on the basis of completed work and no failing grades were given. Students received grades and credit for performing at the pre-set level of achievement based on the student's ability (Technical High School Files, 1972).

The "Covenant," a written code agreed upon by parents, students, and staff, was formulated as a standard for shared responsibility in the decision-making process and the management of the school. This covenant contained a statement of the school philosophy and listed the responsibilities of each of the three parties. Each party became equally accountable for the management of the school (Technical High School Files, 1972).

The approach to student discipline was based, in part, on the Glasser philosophy--a concept of student involvement in developing self-discipline. Underlying all of the discipline procedures was a clear and accepted understanding of what was expected and what sanctions would be imposed. This philosophy permitted the staff to work with students in a non-threatening manner (Glasser, 1969).