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Doctoral Preparation in Counselor Education: Past, present and emerging issues

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Abstract

The availability of well-trained scholars to teach and supervise master's level counselors, who constitute the majority of the field of counseling, is critical to the continuance of the profession. The purpose of this article is to examine how doctoral preparation has been viewed in the past, how we are looking at it currently, and the implications for future training.

### Doctoral Preparation in Counselor Education: Past, Present, and Emerging Issues

The availability of well-trained scholars to teach and supervise master's level counselors, who constitute the majority of the field of counseling, is critical to the continuance of the profession. However, a discussion on doctoral preparation in counselor education has infrequently been considered in the counseling literature. Specifically, the majority of articles addressing doctoral preparation in counseling were published between 1977 and 1999. Over the last eight years, there has been virtually no information available on current issues related to doctoral training in programs accredited by the Council on Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). The purpose of this article is to examine how we have looked at doctoral preparation in the past, how we are looking at it currently and the implications for future training.

#### History of Doctoral Preparation in Counselor Education

Historians in counselor education chronicle the roots of doctoral preparation in counseling to the early 1900's (Betz, 1986; Sweeney, 2001). During this period, school and vocational guidance was utilized to assist young people with exploring their talents and making informative career choices. Several major federal initiatives garnered this development leading to a rapid increase in doctoral preparation programs.

For example, the depression and subsequent World Wars continued the national focus on the importance of guidance especially as it related to work and aptitude. The political climate of World War II and the government's concern for national security prompted the passage of the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) in 1958. Specifically, the act declared that "the security of the Nation requires the fullest

development of the mental resources and technical skills of its young men and women” (NDEA PL 85-864, p. 1581). The act sought to expand guidance, counseling, and testing nationally in order to identify and guide talented young people to help insure the “defense of the Nation” (NDEA PL 85-864, p.1581). This act did three things: (a) it increased the number of guidance and testing programs in the schools; (b) it gave money to institutions of higher education to improve, expand, or develop programs that would train the counselors; and (c) it provided fellowships to entice people into earning advance degrees in counseling with preference given to those who would become faculty (NDEA PL 85-864, p.1591). Training programs had access to the \$15,000,000 per year for three years to improve or develop programs in counselor education. Fellowships were granted that today would amount to the equivalent of paying a person approximately \$25,000 per year to attend graduate school above and beyond covering the tuition costs and additional stipends for dependents. The specific funding for training programs spawned an increase in the development of departments of counselor education (Sweeney, 2001). Overall, 92 counselor education programs were instituted as a result of this funding (West, Bubbenzer, Books, & Hackney, 1995).

The 1960s brought another federal initiative that impacted the field of counseling. In 1963 the Community Mental Health Services Act, Title II provided \$150,000,000 over three years for the construction of community mental health centers in an effort to better address the needs patients who were considered mentally retarded or mentally disabled (CMH PL 88-164, 1963, p 282). The result was that state mental hospitals lost funding, prompting a wave of deinstitutionalization. Patients who were formerly residents of these hospitals were absorbed into the surrounding communities, increasing the need for

mental health workers and agencies that could provide clinical services (Gladding, 2004). In response, counselor education began to provide training for not only school counselors but community agency counselors as well (Sweeney, 2001; Betz, 1986). According to West et al. (1995), this shift during the 70s and 80s to include preparation for counselors in non-school settings “had a powerful effect on counselor education doctoral programs.”

#### *CACREP Accreditation*

At the beginning of the 1970s several counseling scholars posited that without national standards to guide preparation programs in counseling, the profession would lack credibility (Forster, 1977; Sweeney, 1992). The discussions on preparation standards, which began during 1950s, culminated with the first preparation standards being drafted by the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) in 1973 (Sweeney 1992; Forster, 1977). These original standards were not intended to apply to preparation of doctoral students (Forster, 1977). However in 1976, lead by Robert Stripling, an ACES committee was formed to develop guidelines for advanced graduate preparation (Forster, 1977). These standards evolved by 1981 into the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP)(Sweeney, 1992, 2001).

In the early development of the CACREP standards, doctoral preparation was a significant consideration especially as it related to professional identity (Fong, 1990; Forster, 1977; Lanning, 1988, 1990; Maples 1989; Randolph, 1990; West et al., 1995; Zimpfer, 1993). These standards were also instrumental in stimulating studies on counselor education and supervision. Investigations which became the focus of attention in the counseling literature between 1986 –1999 included: (a) how programs met the CACREP standards (West et al., 1995; Zimpfer, Cox, West, Bubenzer, & Brooks, 1997);

(b) follow-ups of counselor education doctoral graduates (Zimpfer, 1996); (c) career aspiration of doctoral students (Poidevant & Loesch, 1991); and (d) exploring differences between counseling psychology doctoral programs and counselor education (Zimpfer, 1993).

CACREP standards have been revised every seven years, and the standards have become more counselor identified over time. These changing standards reflect the broader professional goals of (a) preparing counseling doctoral students to work as counselor educators, supervisors, and advanced practitioners in academic and clinical settings, (b) extending the knowledge base of the counseling profession in a climate of scholarly inquiry, and (c) preparing doctoral students to generate new knowledge for the counseling profession through research that results in dissertations that are appropriate to the field of counselor education (CACREP, 2001). An overarching theme of the 2001 CACREP standards is that programs ensure that students develop a strong professional counselor identity while mastering the knowledge and skills to practice effectively. Moreover, CACREP standards are at the point that accredited doctoral counseling programs must make changes to maintain accreditation status (Hollis, 2000).

#### Emerging Issues: Effects on Doctoral Preparation

Since the implementation of the 2001 CACREP standards, new issues concerning professional identity and professional training have emerged. Currently, 47 states including the District of Columbia have counseling licensure laws. Along with the increase in counseling licensure has come the need for counselors to have meaningful clinical experiences which has created a corresponding need for professionally competent supervisors from the counseling profession. For example, several states have or are now

considering post-master's supervision credentialing for counselor supervisors (Hollis, 2000). Requirements for the supervision credential or endorsement often includes being a graduate from a counselor education program and having supervision training within the scope of practice of professional counselors. These particular requirements have greatly increased the demand for counselor preparation coursework and clinical training to be under the direction of well-qualified professors. The 2001 CACREP standards have defined a qualified faculty member as a person having a "doctoral degree, preferably from an accredited counselor education program" and that the "faculty member is clearly committed to preparing professional counselors and promoting the development of the student's professional counselor identity" (CACREP, 2001, p.66). Current recruitment and advertising for faculty positions in counselor education also reflect this standard. Specifically, many counselor faculty searches are now requesting that applicants have degrees from CACREP- accredited doctoral counseling programs.

It is also important to note the employment status of counselor education doctoral graduates. The increase in demand for counselor-identified faculty and supervisors in providing appropriate supervision has led to the increase in need for counselor educators. A large number of counselor educators trained in the 1950s and 1960s through the National Defense Education Act have retired, leaving many counselor education positions vacant, particularly in the field of school counseling (Paisley & McMahon, 2001). A second challenge that increases career opportunities for counselor educators and supervisors is our increasingly diverse society. The Hispanic population has now become the largest minority group and African Americans are the largest racial group in the United States (United States Census, 2000). To respond to this multicultural

phenomenon, the CACREP standards now require counseling programs to provide distinct training in multicultural counseling and social advocacy. As a result, doctoral students graduating from a CACREP- accredited counseling program (which now requires advance multicultural counseling training) have become preferred applicants in the counselor education faculty search process (Lee, 2001; Locke, Myers & Herr, 2001; Osborne, Collison, House, Gray, Firth & Lou, 1998).

It is equally important to highlight the overwhelming need for racial minority counselor educators. For example, of the 156 CACREP- accredited counseling programs in the United States, only 49 faculty (out of approximately 1100) are African American (Bradley & Holcomb-McCoy, 2002, 2004). There are still many counseling programs that have no racial minority faculty and a significant number of programs have never employed African American, Hispanic, or Native American faculty (Holcomb-McCoy & Bradley, 2003). Thus, racial minority doctoral students graduating from CACREP- accredited counseling programs will be in great demand.

#### Implications and Conclusion

The CACREP standards have served to guide programs in preparing doctoral students. Some research has been done looking at how previous standards influenced doctoral preparation programs. It is clear, however, that more deliberation is needed to insure that doctoral training programs are adequately addressing the emerging needs of the counseling profession. Counselor education doctoral programs have an important and prestigious function in preparing scholars, supervisors, and leaders for the counseling profession. The effort that is put into ensuring high quality and socially relevant

programs today ensures that counseling will be a strong and positive force in society tomorrow.

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