

Vocational Counseling

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Introduction

Vocational counseling is a career focused on helping those who need to obtain work. There are many centers that might offer these counseling services, including those run by various government agencies, serving a diverse group of people (Zunker, 2002).

Frank Parson was born in 1854 and was trained in civil engineering at Cornell, later taught Mathematics, History and French in public schools. He was on faculty at Kansas State University in 1897- 1899 and later on faculty of Boston University. On May 1, 1908, Parsons presented a lecture that had tremendous impact on the career guidance movement, by presenting a report that described systematic guidance procedures used to counsel 80 men and women who used the bureau for help. Shortly later, he died on September 26, 1908, and his major work, choosing a Vocation, was published in May 1909 (Bemak, 2000). This paper describes the justification of the claim that Frank Parson is father of guidance and counseling and his contribution to the contemporary practice of guidance and counseling.

A Justification of Frank Parson as the Father of Guidance and Counseling

Frank Parsons (1854–1908) is known as the father of Vocational Guidance. Although he was educated as an engineer at Cornell University, he wrote several books on social reform movements and articles related to women's suffrage, taxation, and education for all. Additionally, he taught history, math, and French in public schools, worked as a railroad engineer, and passed the state bar examination for lawyers in Massachusetts in 1881.

Frank Parsons is regarded as the founder of the vocational guidance movement. He developed the talent-matching approach, which was later developed into the Trait and Factor Theory of Occupational Choice. At the centre of Parsons' theory is the concept of matching. His university occupations included teaching at Boston University School of Law and at Kansas State Agricultural College and serving as dean of the extension division of Ruskin College in Trenton, Missouri. However, Parsons is best known for his interests in helping individuals make occupational and career choices (Zunker, 2002)

Frank Parsons is often credited with being the father of the vocational guidance movement. His work with the Civic Service House led to the development of the Boston Vocation Bureau. In 1909 the Boston Vocation Bureau helped outline a system of vocational guidance in the Boston public schools. The work of the bureau influenced the need for and the use of vocational guidance both in the United States and other countries. By 1918 there were documented accounts of the bureau's influence as far away as Uruguay and China. Guidance and counseling in these early years were considered to be mostly vocational in nature, but as the profession advanced other personal concerns became part of the school counselor's agenda.

Career guidance appeared alongside advances made in the social sciences in the early 1900s. Frank Parsons, author of the 1909 work "Choosing a vocation" and who was also part of the development of 'vocational bureau' in Boston, USA, was one of the founders.

Contribution of Frank Parsons to the Contemporary Practice of Guidance and Counseling

In 1905, Parsons became director of one of the Civic Service House programs called the Breadwinner's Institute (Zunker, 2002). Afterwards, Parsons organized the Bureau of Vocational Guidance. Nine months later, Parsons used the Bureau to train young men to be counselors and managers for YMCA's schools, colleges, and businesses. A few years later, the School Committee of Boston created the first counselor certification program, and eventually the program was adopted by Harvard University as the first college-based counselor education program (Schmidt 2003). Also, the superintendent of Boston schools designated 100 elementary and secondary teachers to become vocational counselors, this became known as the Boston Plan. Within a few years, school systems across the country followed suit.

Zunker (2002) indicates that Parsons had a long history of concern for economic and political reforms that would benefit people. He published books and articles on a wide variety of topics, including taxation, women's suffrage, and education for all people. Of all his endeavors, Parsons was most interested in social reform and especially in assisting people to make sound occupational choices. Other pioneers in the field credited him with being the first counselor and he has often been referred to as the father of guidance (Schmidt, 2003). Parsons alone, of those individuals who had some direct connection with the organization and extension of guidance

services, had a definite, well-thought-out, and organized social philosophy, which he articulated often and at length (Studer, 2005).

Parsons became director of what was called the Breadwinners Institute from 1905 through 1907 (Schmidt, 2003). Parsons developed a plan for individualized counseling and opened the Vocational Bureau of Boston in January 1908. He served as its director and vocational counselor. The primary goal of the bureau was to develop the potential of Boston's growing immigrant population. Although Parsons was but one of many who were seeking social reforms at this time, he was able to secure the support of the leaders of powerful groups in business, labor, education, and politics (Schmidt, 2003).

Parsons also developed a plan for the education of counselors. His plan was outlined in his book *Choosing a Vocation* (1909), published posthumously. Parson's prescriptions for how counselees should examine themselves and their lives reflected his political and social philosophy (Parsons, 1909).

Frank Parsons became the first president and noted the economic, educational, and social demands for guidance and the counseling it entailed. He also felt that it was necessary for the very preservation of society itself counseling in regard to career choice remained an integral part of the movement (Campbell, 1997).

Conclusion

From the paper, it is clearly noted that Guidance and counseling in the early years were considered to be mostly vocational in nature, but as the profession advanced other personal concerns became part of the school counselor's agenda. Frank Parsons is regarded as the founder of the vocational guidance movement since he developed the talent-matching approach, which was later developed into the Trait and Factor Theory of Occupational Choice. Frank Parsons is also known as the father of Vocational Guidance as he wrote several books on social reform movements and articles related to women's suffrage, taxation, and education for all. It is also noted that Frank Parsons has done a lot in contributing to the contemporary practice of guidance and counseling, 6this manifests itself where he noted the economic, educational, and social demands for guidance and the counseling it entailed when he had become a president.

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