

The Work Activities of Professional School Counselors: Are the National Standards Being Addressed?

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Abstract:

This national study was designed to identify school counselors' perceptions of the importance of performing work activities that promote students' academic, career, and personal/social development. Furthermore, this study investigated how frequently school counselors performed work activities that promote these areas of students' development. Results suggest that school counselors rate their work activities as important and the counselors are frequently performing these work activities.

Article:

School counselors have been vital components of the educational system since the 1920s, though the professional identity and daily activities of school counselors have evolved significantly since the inception of the profession (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000; Myrick, 1997). The issues of role, practice, and professional identity have been addressed extensively in the literature for many years and these issues continue to be discussed (American School Counselor Association, 1999; Baker, 2001; Bowers & Hatch, 2002; Dahir, 2001; Education Trust, 1997; Gysbers, 2001; Gysbers & Henderson; Herr, 2002; Hughey, 2002; Sink, 2002; Whiston, 2002). Borders (2002) specifically mentioned the role conflict and questioned whether school counselors should focus on mental health concerns for students or students' educational goals. Paisley and McMahon (2001) also recognized the conflicting areas of emphasis for school counselors' work, alternating between students' educational issues and students' personal and social development.

In the 1990s, national school reform initiatives prompted the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Governing Board to develop the National Standards for School Counseling Programs (NSSCP; Campbell & Dahir, 1997; Dahir, 2001). In March 2001, ASCA's Governing Board agreed to the development of a national school counseling model (Bowers & Hatch, 2002). These documents continue to influence the focus of school counseling programs and the interventions provided by school counselors (Campbell & Dahir; Dahir; Dahir, Sheldon, & Valiga, 1998; Paisley & Borders, 1995; Sink & MacDonald, 1998). Several writers (Bowers & Hatch; Campbell & Dahir; House & Hayes, 2002; Lenhardt & Young, 2001; Rowell & Hong, 2002; Whiston, 2002) have cited the current standards-driven environment as driving school counselors to provide evidence of their contribution to the academic development of students. Moreover, questions and concerns exist regarding the role school counselors perform in the educational system and in particular their role in relation to the academic, career, and personal/social development of students. Yet, professional literature still lacks empirical research regarding the role and function of school counselors and the impact of the National Standards (Adelman & Taylor, 2002; Bemak, 2000; Burnham & Jackson, 2000; Green & Keys, 2001; House & Hayes; Johnson, 2000; Kuranz, 2002; Paisley & McMahon, 2001; Sears & Granello, 2002; Sink, 2002).

PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

This study was designed to identify and gain a detailed description of the work activities currently being performed by school counselors and to provide empirical information about the role of school counselors. In addition, this study sought to determine if the work activities of school counselors are promoting student development in the three areas of the National Standards (i.e., academic, career, and personal/social

development). This study addressed two research questions: The first question considered school counselors' perceptions of the importance of counselor effectiveness in performing work activities that promote students' academic, career, and personal/social development. The second question assessed the frequency with which school counselors performed critical work activities that promote students' academic, career, and personal/social development.

Specifically, this study utilized data collected by the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) through a nationwide job analysis survey investigating school counselors' ratings of importance and performance frequency of a defined set of work activities. An expert panel also was used to classify the set of work activities according to the degree to which each work activity promoted students' academic, career, or personal/social development. The scale for classifying the work activities included "highly promotes," "moderately promotes," "somewhat promotes," and "does not promote." For this study, only the work activities rated as highly promoting student development were examined.

METHODS

In 2002, NBCC updated standards for the National Certified School Counselor credential. As part of that process, NBCC conducted a national job analysis survey (JAS) of school counselors. The JAS was designed to report on the frequency and perceived importance of work behaviors performed by school counselors. The JAS identified 193 work behaviors. The instrument consisted of two scales, one measuring how frequently a respondent performed an activity and the other measuring how important a respondent rated the activity. This study used the archival data from the completed surveys.

Participants

The survey had been sent electronically to 2,400 National Certified Counselors. A total of 526 surveys were returned yielding a response rate of approximately 17%. The participants of this study indicated a wide range of educational and experiential backgrounds; however, all the participants indicated their employment as school counselor. The participants represented all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Approximately 77.0% of the participants were female and 18.9% were male. Racial composition of the participants was Caucasian (84.4%), African American (5.5%), Hispanic (1.3%), Asian American (.6%), Native American (.6%), Pacific Islander (.2%), and multiracial and other (2.7%). Fifty-eight percent ($n = 365$) of the participants reported having a teaching degree prior to becoming a school counselor, and 37.3% ($n = 196$) reported not having a teaching degree. Similarly, 65% ($n = 342$) reported having teaching experience prior to becoming a school counselor, and 28.7% ($n = 151$) reported having no teaching experience prior to becoming a school counselor. Approximately 28.6% ($n = 150$) of the participants reported 0–5 years of full-time school counseling experience, 39.0% ($n = 205$) reported 6–15 years of full-time school counseling experience, 19.6% ($n = 19.6$) reported 16–25 years of experience, and 8.2% ($n = 43$) reported more than 25 years of full-time school counseling experience.

The work settings of the participants ranged from primary schools to counselor education departments; however, the majority (70.9%) of the participants' work settings were reported as primary through high school settings. A majority (74.5%) of the participants were employed full-time in one school setting. Participants' education level varied, though a majority (65.5%) held a master's degree as their highest degree earned. Participants held degrees in school counseling (66.7%), community/agency counseling (9.3%), mental health counseling (9.0%), psychology (5.1%), rehabilitation counseling (1.9%), marriage and family counseling (1.7%), and other types of degrees (6.3%). More in-depth demographic information is available from the principal author upon request.

Instrumentation

The JAS listed 193 work tasks and included two scales, one measuring how frequently a respondent performed an activity and the second measuring how important the respondent rated the activity. A 5-point Likert-type scale was used to measure frequency and importance of each work activity. The Frequency scale range was 1—"never"; 2—"rarely"; 3—"occasionally"; 4—"frequently"; and 5—"routinely." The Importance scale range was

1—“none”; 2—“somewhat”; 3—“moderate”; 4—“very”; and 5—“critical.” The JAS was based on an existing instrument, “Work Behavior Analysis of Professional Counselors” (NBCC: Loesch & Vacc, 1993).

The JAS was used by NBCC for test development purposes, and thus the data available for publication were limited by the principal author’s agreement with NBCC. However, the data presented are a substantive sampling of the entire data set and provide sufficient information from which to draw legitimate conclusions. In order to preserve confidentiality of the entire data set, a panel of six subject matter experts was convened to systematically classify the work behavior items listed on the JAS. This was done in order to use only the work activities that were considered by the expert panel as highly promoting the NSSCP.

The panel members were selected based on recognition as leaders in the field of school counseling and counselor education as evidenced by their participation in national counseling professional organizations, authoring professional literature about school counseling, or supervising district-level programs that have implemented the NSSCP. Subject matter experts rated the 193 work behavior items to determine to what extent each work behavior promoted students’ academic, career, or personal/social development. The experts rated each item on a 4-point Likert-type scale. The scale ranges are 4—“highly promotes”; 3—“moderately promotes”; 2—“somewhat promotes”; and 1—“does not promote.” For purposes of this research, only the work behaviors identified by the panel of experts as highly promoting student development in the three content areas of the NSSCP were examined. To determine the criteria for inclusion in a specific content area, the principal author used an 83.32% agreement rate among the panel of experts. For a work behavior item to be included in one or more of the three content areas of the NSSCP, five out of six of the experts must have assigned an item a rating of 4, indicating, in the opinion of the expert, that the work behavior highly promotes student development in a particular content area.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Work Activities of Professional School Counselors That Highly Promote Academic Development of Students

| Importance | | Work Activity | Frequency | |
|------------|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
| 4.5 | .77 | Provide general school counseling | 4.6 | .80 |
| 4.4 | .74 | Facilitate students’ development of decision-making skills | 4.4 | .74 |
| 4.4 | .69 | Identify students’ support system | 4.2 | .79 |
| 4.2 | .89 | Promote healthy lifestyle choices | 4.1 | .99 |
| 4.0 | 1.09 | Plan and conduct classroom guidance | 4.0 | 1.18 |
| 3.9 | 1.04 | Collaborate with teachers on development of academic goals | 3.9 | 1.11 |
| 3.9 | 1.00 | Evaluate students’ educational skills | 3.9 | 1.10 |
| 3.8 | 1.21 | Implement planned sequential program of large and small group and individual activities | 3.6 | 1.30 |
| 3.8 | 1.09 | Collaborate with teachers on instructional intervention strategies | 3.7 | 1.14 |
| 3.8 | 1.06 | Assess students’ educational preparation | 3.9 | 1.19 |
| 3.8 | 1.04 | Develop academic intervention plans | 3.7 | 1.10 |
| 3.7 | 1.10 | Assist students in understanding test results | 3.5 | 1.29 |
| 3.5 | 1.41 | Counsel students about postgraduation plans | 3.2 | 1.60 |
| 3.5 | 1.08 | Use tests results for student decision making | 3.5 | 1.24 |

The expert panelists classified 14 work behaviors from the JAS as highly promoting academic development of students. They classified 20 work behaviors from the JAS as highly promoting career development of students. The expert panelists also classified 25 items as highly promoting the personal/social development of students. They rated 9 items as highly promoting student development common to all three content areas of the NSSCP.

RESULTS

Importance and Frequency of School Counselors' Work Activities Promoting Students' Academic Development

Importance and frequency mean ratings as well as standard deviations are presented in Table 1 for the 14 work behaviors that were classified by expert panelists as highly promoting students' academic development. The highest mean scores in terms of importance reported by the participants included providing general school counseling, facilitating students' development of decision-making skills, identifying students' support system, promoting healthy lifestyle choices, and planning and conducting classroom guidance lessons. These mean scores ranged from 4.0 to 4.5, indicating these activities were rated as very important by practicing school counselors. Similarly, these same five work activities were rated as frequently performed work activities by practicing school counselors, with mean scores ranging from 4.0 to 4.6.

Standard deviations for the work activities with the highest mean scores (above 4.0) resulted in the lowest standard deviations (less than 1.00), indicating the most consensus among the participants' responses. Importance item mean scores for the remaining nine work activities were reported as moderately to very important, and frequency mean scores were reported as occasionally to frequently performed work activities.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Work Activities of Professional School Counselors That Highly Promote Career Development of Students

| Importance | | Work Activity | Frequency | |
|------------|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
| 4.4 | .74 | Facilitate students' development of decision-making skills | 4.4 | .74 |
| 4.4 | .69 | Identify students' support system | 4.2 | .79 |
| 4.0 | 1.09 | Plan and conduct classroom guidance | 4.0 | 1.18 |
| 3.9 | 1.00 | Evaluate students' educational skills | 3.9 | 1.10 |
| 3.8 | 1.21 | Implement planned sequential program of large and small group and individual activities | 3.6 | 1.30 |
| 3.8 | 1.06 | Assess students' educational preparation | 3.9 | 1.19 |
| 3.7 | 1.10 | Assist students in understanding test results | 3.5 | 1.29 |
| 3.7 | 1.15 | Provide career education for students | 3.6 | 1.28 |
| 3.6 | 1.18 | Provide career and vocational education | 3.6 | 1.26 |
| 3.5 | 1.41 | Counsel students about postgraduation plans | 3.2 | 1.60 |
| 3.5 | 1.32 | Provide career counseling for students | 3.3 | 1.48 |
| 3.5 | 1.18 | Use occupational information in school counseling | 3.4 | 1.27 |
| 3.5 | 1.08 | Use test results for student decision making | 3.5 | 1.24 |
| 3.3 | 1.28 | Provide career counseling for students with disabilities | 2.7 | 1.38 |
| 3.3 | 1.22 | Administer and interpret interest inventories | 3.2 | 1.30 |
| 3.2 | 1.20 | Use career resource libraries | 3.0 | 1.31 |
| 3.1 | 1.29 | Use computerized career counseling resources | 2.8 | 1.45 |
| 3.0 | 1.29 | Evaluate students' occupational skills | 2.7 | 1.38 |
| 3.0 | 1.28 | Use the Internet in career counseling | 2.7 | 1.47 |
| 2.9 | 1.41 | Facilitate students' development of job search skills | 2.9 | 1.41 |

Importance and Frequency of School Counselors' Work Activities Promoting Students' Career Development

Importance and frequency mean ratings as well as standard deviations are presented in Table 2 for the 20 work behaviors that were subsequently classified by the expert panelists into the career development content area of the NSSCP. Three work activities— facilitating students' development of decision-making skills, identifying

students' support system, and planning and conducting classroom guidance lessons—were rated by the participants as very important and frequently performed work activities. The mean scores ranged from 4.0 to 4.4 for these three items for both importance and frequency. Facilitating students' development of decision-making skills and identifying students' support system reflected the highest mean rating (greater than 4.2). The lowest standard deviations (less than .79) occurred for these two items, indicating the most consensus among the participants' responses.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Work Activities of Professional School Counselors That Highly Promote Personal/Social Development of Students

| Importance | | Work Activity | Frequency | |
|------------|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
| 4.5 | .77 | Provide general school counseling | 4.6 | .80 |
| 4.4 | .74 | Facilitate students' development of decision-making skills | 4.4 | .74 |
| 4.4 | .69 | Identify students' support system | 4.2 | .79 |
| 4.3 | .95 | Counsel students concerning physical abuse | 3.3 | 1.05 |
| 4.2 | .92 | Conduct prevention activities | 3.9 | 1.11 |
| 4.2 | .89 | Promote healthy lifestyle choices | 4.1 | .99 |
| 4.1 | 1.04 | Facilitate group member conflict resolution | 3.8 | 1.18 |
| 4.1 | 1.02 | Facilitate group process | 3.8 | 1.18 |
| 4.1 | 1.02 | Counsel students concerning sexual trauma | 2.9 | 1.08 |
| 4.1 | .94 | Counsel students concerning divorce in the family | 3.8 | 1.04 |
| 4.0 | 1.09 | Plan and conduct classroom guidance | 4.0 | 1.18 |
| 3.9 | 1.06 | Counsel students concerning substance abuse and dependence | 3.2 | 1.13 |
| 3.9 | 1.04 | Collaborate with teachers on development of academic goals | 3.9 | 1.11 |
| 3.8 | 1.21 | Implement planned sequential program of large and small group and individual activities | 3.6 | 1.30 |
| 3.8 | 1.09 | Collaborate with teachers on instructional strategies | 3.7 | 1.14 |
| 3.8 | 1.06 | Assess students' educational preparation | 3.9 | 1.19 |
| 3.6 | 1.15 | Facilitate family conflict resolution strategies | 3.1 | 1.15 |
| 3.5 | 1.41 | Counsel students about postgraduation plans | 3.2 | 1.60 |
| 3.5 | 1.12 | Educate students about different types of addictions | 3.0 | 1.14 |
| 3.5 | 1.08 | Use tests results for student decision making | 3.5 | 1.24 |
| 3.4 | 1.20 | Evaluate violence prevention program effectiveness | 2.6 | 1.31 |
| 3.4 | 1.16 | Counsel students concerning sexuality | 2.7 | 1.11 |
| 3.4 | 1.10 | Counsel students about sexual behavior | 2.8 | 1.12 |
| 3.2 | 1.22 | Evaluate substance abuse prevention program effectiveness | 2.5 | 1.28 |
| 3.2 | .78 | Counsel concerning family change | 3.4 | 1.13 |

Importance mean scores for 16 work activities ranged from 3.0 to 3.9, indicating the participants rated these items as moderately important. Frequency mean scores for several work activities also ranged from 3.0 to 3.9, indicating the participants rated these items as occasionally performed work activities. The importance item mean rating for the remaining work activity—facilitating students' development of job search skills—was reported as 2.9, indicating the respondents rated this item as only somewhat important in their ability to effectively perform this work activity. Likewise, the frequency item mean rating for facilitating students' development of job search skills was reported as 2.9, indicating the respondents in this study rated this item as a rarely performed work activity. Some other activities were rated by respondents as rarely performed work

activities. Standard deviations for importance and frequency for the 17 work activities ranged from 1.00 to 1.60, indicating greater variability among the participants' responses.

Importance and Frequency of School Counselors' Work Activities Promoting Students' Personal/ Social Development

Importance and frequency mean ratings as well as standard deviations are presented in Table 3 for the 25 work behaviors that were classified by the expert panelists into the personal/social development content area of the NSSCP. Of these 25 work activities, importance item mean scores for 11 items ranged from 4.0 to 4.5, indicating the respondents rated these items as very important. These 11 work items are providing general school counseling, facilitating students' development of decision-making skills, identifying students' support system, counseling students concerning physical abuse, conducting prevention activities, promoting healthy lifestyle choices, facilitating group member conflict resolution, facilitating group process, counseling students concerning sexual trauma, counseling students concerning divorce in the family, and planning and conducting classroom guidance.

The frequency mean ratings for these work activities ranged from 2.9 to 4.6. The lowest frequency mean score (2.9) was reported for counseling students concerning sexual trauma, indicating the respondents rated this item as a rarely performed work activity. Frequency mean scores for five work activities—counseling students concerning physical abuse, conducting prevention activities, facilitating group member conflict resolution, facilitating group process, and counseling students concerning divorce in the family—ranged from 3.3 to 3.9, indicating the respondents rated these work activities as occasionally performed activities. The frequency mean scores for the remaining five work activities—providing general school counseling, facilitating students' development of decision-making skills, identifying students' support system, promoting healthy lifestyle choices, and planning and conducting classroom guidance—ranged from 4.0 to 4.6, indicating the respondents rated these work activities as frequently performed work activities.

Importance mean scores for the remaining 14 work activities ranged from 3.2 to 3.9, indicating the respondents rated their ability to perform these work activities effectively in their work as a school counselor as moderately important. Standard deviations for these 14 work activities in the importance scale ranged from .78 to 1.41. In the personal/ social content development area of the NSSCP, one student competency, "Students will identify and recognize changing family roles," has been identified as an important and needed student skill. Based on the results from this study, the respondents in this study rated this item (counseling concerning family change) as only moderately important and only an occasionally performed work activity, although the student competency of recognizing family change has been identified as a benchmark in the personal/social content development area of the NSSCP.

Frequency mean scores for these 14 work activities ranged from 2.5 to 3.9, indicating the respondents rated the performance of these items as occasionally to rarely performed work activities. Standard deviations for these items ranged from 1.11 to 1.60 in the frequency scale. The highest standard deviation (1.60) occurred for one work activity—counseling students about postgraduation plans—indicating greater variability among the participants' responses for this particular work activity. There is not a specific benchmark in the personal/social development area of the NSSCP addressing post-graduation plans; however, one student competency listed is the "identification of long- and short-term goals." The respondents rated this item as moderately important and occasionally performed.

DISCUSSION

This study investigated the work activities currently being performed by school counselors. The findings from this study have significant implications for several critical issues currently facing professional school counselors.

Academic Development

From an examination of the results for work activities of this particular group of respondents, it appears that the respondents' work activities are congruent with the work activities deemed by the expert panelists as highly promoting students' academic development. Five of the 14 work activities selected by the expert panelists were rated as very important and frequently performed work activities by this group of respondents. The five work activities included providing general school counseling (comprehensive school counseling curricula [NBCC, personal communication, 2004]); facilitating students' development of decision-making skills; identifying students' support system; promoting healthy lifestyle choices; and planning and conducting classroom guidance lessons. The remaining nine work activities deemed by the expert panelists as highly promoting students' academic development were rated moderately important and occasionally performed work activities. Results from this study indicate that the educational needs of students are being addressed through school counselors' work activities that promote students' academic development. However, a cautious interpretation of the results must be considered due to the limitations of self-report survey research.

Career Development

Examination of the results for work activities of this particular group of respondents appears to be incongruent with the expert panelists' opinions regarding work behaviors highly promoting students' career development. This group of respondents reported only three work activities as very important and frequently performed work activities promoting students' career development, yet the expert panelists classified 20 work activities as highly promoting students' career development. The item mean scores reported for work activities promoting students' career development are rated as only moderately important to these school counselors' ability to perform these behaviors effectively in their work and are reported as occasionally performed work activities by this particular group of school counselors.

A review of the career development content area of the NSSCP reveals the importance placed on students' career development. Standard A states that students will gain skills to investigate the world of work in relation to self-knowledge and the ability to make informed career decisions. Standard B states that students will learn how to employ strategies to achieve future career goals, successfully and with satisfaction. Standard C states that students will gain an understanding of the relationship between personal qualities, education, training, and the world of work.

Facilitating students' development of job search skills was rated as only somewhat important and a rarely performed work activity. This finding indicates some incongruence between school counselors' work activities promoting students' career development and student competencies outlined in Standard B of the NSSCP. Although the three standards in the career development content area of the NSSCP articulate student competencies, the importance of the school counselor's role in students' career development is clear. The expert panelists rated 20 items as highly promoting students' career development based on their expertise and knowledge of the NSSCP. However, the results from this study indicate (for this particular group of school counselors) that inconsistency exists between the school counselors' work activities and the opinion of experts in the school counseling field. The results indicated that only three work activities were rated as very important and frequently performed. Based on the responses of the participants in this study, the majority of the items rated by the experts as highly promoting students' career development were rated from somewhat important to rarely performed work activities.

Personal/Social Development

The personal/social content area of the NSSCP guides school counselors to provide a foundation for personal and social growth of students and to help their students progress from school into adulthood. Standard A states that students will acquire attitudes, knowledge, and interpersonal skills to understand and respect self and others. Standard B states that students will make decisions, set goals, and take necessary action to achieve goals. Standard C states that students will understand safety and survival skills.

The importance mean ratings of the 25 work activities classified by the expert panel into the personal/social content area of the NSSCP indicate that these 25 work activities are important to this group of school counselors in their ability to effectively promote students' personal/social development. The frequency mean ratings for the 25 work activities classified by the expert panel into the personal/social content area of the NSSCP reflect that although rated from moderately to very important, the frequency of performing these activities ranges from rarely to frequently.

Five work activities—counseling students concerning sexual trauma, counseling students concerning sexuality, counseling students about sexual behavior, evaluating violence prevention program effectiveness, and evaluating substance abuse prevention program effectiveness—although classified by the experts as highly promoting students' personal/social development, appear to be work activities that are rarely performed. It should be considered that some work activities may be performed infrequently due to the irregularity of reported student behaviors or the rarity of situations requiring the work activities listed. The JAS did not include any interpretations of the listed work activities and therefore the results of self-reported surveys may be influenced by the perceptions of the respondents.

Student competencies outlined in the personal/ social development area of the NSSCP contain such items as teaching students about personal safety, physical contact, and personal boundaries. Student competencies such as these could possibly be addressed through school counselors' work activities such as counseling students concerning sexual trauma or counseling students about sexual behaviors. According to the respondents in this study, these items are rarely performed work activities. A cautious interpretation of these results should be considered because the rarity of performing these activities may be influenced by the infrequency of the behaviors or situations.

Two other work activities—evaluating violence prevention program effectiveness and evaluating substance abuse prevention program effectiveness— were rated as rarely performed work activities yet rated as moderately important to students' personal/social development. The relevance of these two items to the work of school counselors may be addressed through the National Model for School Counseling Programs, as evaluation and accountability are major components of the National Model (Bowers & Hatch, 2002). Prevention activities as well as substance abuse education are incorporated into the preventive design of school counseling programs (Bowers & Hatch). Additionally, evaluation of school counseling programming links the school counseling program to students' success. Based on the frequency mean scores for these two work activities, it appears that for this particular group of respondents, evaluation and accountability of work activities in relation to violence prevention programming and substance abuse prevention programming may still be lacking.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELORS

ASCA has adopted the NSSCP and endorsed the use of these standards as a way to define job responsibilities for school counselors (Campbell & Dahir, 1997). Results from this study indicate that there were many work activities that were rated closely, and sometimes identically, in terms of importance and frequency. These results seem to indicate that school counselors are defining job responsibilities by performing work activities that highly promote students' academic, career, and personal/social development in accordance with the NSSCP. These results also might indicate that school counselors consider their work activities important in promoting students' academic, career, and personal/social development as defined by the NSSCP.

Hatch (2002) suggested that the NSSCP would result in a reduction of noncounseling activities and an increase in work activities deemed to be counseling related. Therefore, it is recommended that school counselors examine their daily work activities to determine if they are engaging in those activities that promote students' academic, career, and personal/social development on a regular and consistent basis as opposed to noncounseling-related activities. Additional research investigating the daily work activities of school counselors can be designed to discover what types of noncounseling work activities prevent school counselors from performing work activities that promote students' development in the content areas of the NSSCP.

This study also has implications for the school counseling profession. The professional organization, ASCA, has endorsed the NSSCP as a programmatic approach to address what students should know and do as a result of participating in a school counseling program. Further, the NSSCP also was designed to address concerns regarding the role and function of school counselors (Bowers & Hatch, 2002; Campbell & Dahir, 1997; Dahir, 2001). This research, although limited in scope, indicates that school counselors are performing work activities that highly promote students' academic, career, and personal/social development as defined by the NSSCP and, therefore, this group of respondents is defining its role and function through the NSSCP. It appears that the NSSCP is impacting the school counseling profession and that a connection exists between what is recommended by the NSSCP and what is being done by school counselors. The profession needs to conduct research to determine the extent to which implementation of the National Model enhances students' development in these three content areas.

LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

Although this study was nationwide in scope, limitations may exist. Respondents to the NBCC job analysis survey were school counselors who hold the credential of National Certified Counselor (NCC) and therefore do not necessarily represent all school counselors. NCCs generally are recognized as having specialized knowledge, training, or experience and therefore represent those who should be best informed about school counselors' actual functioning (NBCC, 2000; Remley, 1995). Another limitation to the generalizability of the results from this study is that the respondents represent only those NCCs who were willing to complete an extensive survey online, which included those school counselors with access to the Internet. Future studies should include noncredentialed school counselors and use research methods that result in a larger return rate and a more diversified sample.

Methodological limitations of this study include the following. The response rate for the JAS conducted by NBCC was only 17% and therefore it is not known how nonrespondents' frequency and importance ratings would differ from those of respondents. Furthermore, the number of items on the JAS was relatively large and some respondents may not have attended fully to the complete task. Finally, the data reported in this study were limited for publication purposes due to the principal author's agreement with NBCC. However, the scope of the study was not affected by the limited publishable work activities.

FUTURE RESEARCH

While this research indicates that this sample of school counselors is performing work activities that may promote student development in the three content areas of the NSSCP, future research might compare school districts that have fully implemented the NSSCP with those districts that have not implemented the NSSCP. A comparison of school districts with a fully implemented National Standards-based program and school districts that do not utilize the NSSCP may yield evidence to validate whether the NSSCP is significantly improving students' academic, career, and personal/social development.

Although the NSSCP is ASCA's attempt to clarify and define the role of professional school counselors, the NSSCP, developed in response to national educational reform efforts, does not provide competencies for school counselors but focuses on what students should know and be able to do as a result of participating in a school counseling program. School counselor competencies have yet to be defined. Future research should work toward the development of measurable school counselor competencies to promote excellence within the school counseling profession. Continued investigation of noncounseling-related duties, and the amount of time spent on duties that prevent school counselors from addressing the NSSCP, is warranted. Future research can continue to investigate the work activities of school counselors in relation to the NSSCP, examine differences in work activities of school counselors based on variables such as credentialing, and continue to investigate role ambiguity and role definition of school counselors.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this descriptive statistical research study was to investigate the work activities of school counselors. Specifically, this study examined how importantly school counselors rated their ability to effectively perform work activities that are likely to promote student development in the three content areas of the NSSCP and how frequently school counselors actually performed these important work activities. The major findings of this study are that school counselors are providing interventions in accordance with the NSSCP. Not only did school counselors rate their work activities as important in addressing the NSSCP, they also reported frequently providing interventions promoting students' academic, career, and personal/social development.

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