

Counselling as a Helping Relationship: Implications for Meaningful Living in the Society.

K. I. Ibrahim,

Department Of Science Education, Federal University Of Technology, Minna, Niger State

Abstract: "Counselling" like the terms "Education" and "Teaching" has acquired different shades of meaning. This diversity is associated with the popular understanding of the term and the technical and professional meanings of it. This paper attempts to bring to focus the definitions of counseling. Counselling as a helping relationship has adequately been stressed. Recommendations have been proffered for meaningful living in the society i.e. by setting up guidance and counselling programmes right from pre - primary schools to higher institutions of learning.

KEY WORDS
Counselling, Advising, Helping, Relationship, Assistance, Counsellee

Introduction:

It is evident that from time immemorial man has turned to his fellow beings for advice, encouragement, sympathy, warmth, comfort and understanding. Man has been able to survive his unfavourable and disastrous environment only because of the innate concern of his fellow species for him.

The principal goal of counselling is to help individuals overcome many of their present and future problems. Recently the geometric social change caused by industrialization and urbanization has led to lots of varied and perplexing problems. People are of the view that the pace at which these changes are evolving is simply too fast and thus creating or giving birth to serious problems of adjustment. This calls for the need that counselling should start early in schools and should be continuous so that individuals will meet vocational and personal problems of adjustment in later life. Counselling has a lot to offer in educational, vocational, marital, parental and personal problems.

Individuals and corporate groups give counselling. However their purposes, methods, and training vary enormously. Some give advice and supply information. Some help the individual to understand himself and his environment, to meet his pressing needs and to deal with his problems

effectively. Some are trained counsellors, others have had no iota of training. However, all of them are concerned with helping people solve their various problems confronting them in life. Counselling is not selective but applicable to all irrespective of level, status, age etc, vis-à-vis problems that could arise at any time in life.

The major aim of all counselling exercises is to help individuals overcome their problems and become self-sufficient, self - dependent, self-directed, self-reliant and to adjust themselves efficiently to the demands of a better and meaningful life ahead.

Counselling services are preventive, developmental and therapeutic in nature because they provide assistance on the aspect of individuals personal social, emotional and intellectual development. In order to assist the clients, the counsellor must understand their needs, motives, perceptions, defenses etc. In this respect, counseling could be defined as a therapeutic experience for otherwise reasonably healthy persons faced with problems.

According to Rogers (1942) Effective counseling consists of a definitely structured permissive relationship which allows the client to gain an understanding of himself to a degree which enables him to take positive steps in the light of his new orientation.

Definitions of Counselling

A popular definition of counselling is counselling is an interactive process connecting the counsellee who needs assistance and the counsellor who is trained and educated to give this assistance. (Perez, 1965). The counsellor thus can initiate, facilitate, and sustain the interactive process if he communicates feelings of spontaneity and warmth, tolerance, respect, and sincerity.

Halm and Mac Lean (1955), define counselling as a process which takes place in a one - to - one relationship between an individual beset by problems with which he can not cope alone and a professional worker whose training and experience have qualified him to help others reach solutions to various types of personal difficulties.

(Smith, in Narayana 1981) p.3, defines counselling as a process in which the counsellor assists the counsellee to make interpretations of facts relating to a choice, plan or adjustments, which he needs to make.

(Pepinsky and Pepinsky, in Narayana 1954) p.3, state that counselling is the interaction which (1) occurs between two individuals called counsellor and client, (2) takes place in a professional setting, and (3) is initiated and maintained to facilitate changes in the behaviour of a client.

Patterson (1959), characterized it as the process involving interpersonal relationship between a counselor and one or more clients by which the former employs psychological methods based on systematic knowledge of human personality in attempting to improve the mental health of the latter.

Blocher (1996), explains it as helping an individual become aware of himself and the ways in which he is reacting to the behavioural influences of his environment. It further helps him to

establish some personal meaning for this behaviours and develop and clarify a set of goals and values for future behaviour.

Rogers (1952), describes counselling as the process by which the structure of the self is relaxed in the safety of the clients relationship with the therapist, and previously denied experience are perceived and then integrated into an altered self.

(Gestad, in Narayana, 1953) p.3 defines it as a learning oriented process, carried on in a simple, one - to - one social environment in which the counsellor, who is professionally competent in relevant psychological skills and knowledge, seeks to assist the client, by methods appropriate to the latter's needs and within the context of the total personal programme, to learn how to put such understanding into effect in relation to more clearly perceived, realistically defined goals to the end that the client may become a happier and more productive member of society.

In the light of the above definitions, it could be deduced that emphasis placed on the various aspects of counselling by different authors is not the same.

Practically, all the definitions above agree with the view that counselling is a process which involves bringing about sequential changes over a period of time leading to a set goal. They also stress that the counsellor- counsellee relationship is not casual as a matter of fact and business like but, it is characterized by warmth responsiveness and understanding.

There are quite a few serious misconceptions regarding counselling. It would be necessary here to state what counselling is not to help clarify our conception of it.

Counseling is not:-

- Giving information though information may be given in counseling.

- Giving advice, making suggestions and recommendations.
- Influencing the clients values, attitudes, beliefs, interests, decisions etc, with or without any threat or admonition.

Counselling, therefore is concerned with bringing about voluntary change in the client. The counsellor provides facilities to help achieve the desired change or make the suitable choice. The client alone is responsible for the wise decisions of the choices he/she makes, though the counsellor may assist in this process by his warmth and understanding relationship.

Counselling As a Helping Relationship

Undoubtedly, counselling is a "helping relationship". All human beings are prone to satisfy their personal needs which are unlimited. In trying to gratify these needs, we find ourselves in conflicting situations or cross roads in which our interests clash with those of others. But through the process of socialization in childhood, and later through education people learn to moderate their desires such that there is no open clash. However, opportunity cost comes in when the forgone need do not necessarily infringe on our happiness.

In addition to human suffering brought about by physical handicaps and clash of interests, a major source of suffering is to be found in one's own personality. Often a sense of personal inadequacy and inferiority leads to lack of self - confidence, withdrawal and lack of desire for achievement. Even if the individual has the desire or motivation, he is hindered by subjective and environmental factors. The psychological conflicts; namely, those of goals, values, interests and the like cause an ebbing of human estheticism and zest for living. The counseling psychologist alleviates this suffering by establishing a

helping relationship. According to Rogers, a helping relationship is one in which one of the participants intends that there should come about, in one or both parties more appreciation, more expression of, more functional use of the latent inner resources of the individual. The commonly observed relationships are those between teacher and pupil, husband and wife, mother and child, counsellor and counsellee; all these could be considered as helping relationships.

According to Shertzer and Stone (1968), the helping relationship is characterized by these features:

- It is meaningful because it is personal and intimate
- It is effective in nature involving mild to strong emotional relationships.
- Involves the integrity of the helper and the helped or helpee and is sustained voluntarily.
- Involves the mutual consent of the counsellor and the counsellee either explicitly stated or implicitly to be inferred.
- Takes place because the individual to be helped is aware of his own limitations and inadequacies.
- Involves confidence reposed in the helper.
- Is often achieved and maintained through communication and interaction; It involves give and take, that is, it is not a one - way process.
- Involves a certain amount of "structure". The situation is either vaguely or clearly defined.
- It is marketed by desire for change in the existing condition of the client, that is, it is concerned with the improvement of the client.
- In the light of the above, helping has become professional in nature.

According to (McCully in Narayana, 1996), a helping profession is defined as one

which, based upon its specialized knowledge, applies an intellectual technique to the existential affairs of others toward the end of enabling them to cope more effectively with the dilemmas and paradoxes that characterize the human condition.

Counselling Service

This is the service rendered to (individuals) who may be pupils / students/learners, their parents and other members of the school society, by a trained counsellor for the purpose of helping students know themselves (self – realization). It is when these groups of people are aware of their capabilities and weaknesses, that they are able to take far reaching decisions that affect their lives especially as they relate to their educational / academic, vocational decisions etc.

Ipaye (1983) aptly put it, (counselling) is essentially “a helping relationship” and he believe that:-
.....if it were possible for an individual to have all the necessary items of information he requires and needs in his day – to – day, and that if an individual could easily make the choices and easily interpret, and handle all the alternatives facing him in life, then he probably needs no guidance. In a similar vein, if an individual can make the decisions that need to be made in his life concerning daily interactions at home, at work and at play, and needs what so ever in any sphere of life, because he has no problems in any of these, then such an individual probably needs no counseling. P.1

From the above, it is a basic necessity that everybody at any point in time needs some counselling. Counselling is therefore most desirable at the early stages of development

Implications:

Mogbo (1999), opined that, despite the technological breakthroughs man's

essential and perennial problems still remain such as who am I?. How did I become the way I am ? Am I normal? What is good? What is reality? Of what value is life? How can I be more productive and more alive etc. He added that man's dreams, concerns, drives are quite observable in a variety of behavioural abnormalities in man. Man often feels distressed, be wildered, anxious, disturbed, informed, ineffective etc. Man seeks assistance in coping with these crisis and emotional feelings by complaining to others for help in understanding his behaviours, other people's behaviours, his relationship with others, his decisions, his choices, his goals, his situation and most of all information about his being. (P.7)

From the foregoing, it is true that everybody at any point in time, need some counselling, especially the parents who want their childrer to become, engineers, doctors, university professors, accountants etc. so that the status of their family members could be elevated to a higher economic and social rungs of the societal ladder, which of course is not always possible for some children to meet their parents expectations.

In consequence, there are often frustrations on the part of both the child, who could not meet his parent's expectations and the parent, who may feel his ward is a disappointment. These cases abound in Nigeria, and this calls for intensive counselling services and appraisal services to furnish the parents with the abilities and capabilities of their children to prevent maladjustments in the society.

Recommendations

The paper recommends the followings for effective living in the society:

- That counselling services should start at the pre-primary level up to tertiary level, which will provide basic information about career and vocational opportunities to pupils.

That the government as a matter of urgency should develop and equip counselling units in all the Local Governments of the Federation to render services to teeming populace.

That the government should intensify the need for regular local research into students' developmental problems in all groups and at all levels of the educational system.

Finally, that the government should train personnel who will provide these services in all spheres of human endeavour.

Conclusion

Having examined the background and definitions of counselling, it is pertinent to note that the establishment of counselling service centers in all nooks and crannies of the society will go an extra mile to alleviate the problems of maladjustments of individuals in the society resulting from the inadequate information about careers and other services provided by the counselling units. Government is therefore encouraged to explore avenues for correction of these anomalies.

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