

Counselling and Effective Learning

Shehu Yahaya

Department of Education
Umaru Musa 'Yar Adua University, Katsina.
sheikhtsagem@gmail.com

Abstract

The paper attempts a definition of counselling from the general perspective and then from the educational perspective. Aims of counselling in learning, key guidance services that will ensure effective learning and reasons for needing counselling in schools are all presented looking at their immense contributions to the idea of counselling in schools. Major areas for counselling students are discussed in order to show how they are directly influential to effective learning. Target points for counselling are presented in order to provide a direct focal point that will ensure adequate impact for learning. Last but by no means the least, tips for easy counselling of students are presented for non professionals in order to have smooth working relations when the counsellor is not needed immediately.

Introduction

An attempt to understand how counselling is will be inadequate without first of all realizing that counselling is usually viewed as one part of guidance services; a major component of the guidance programme. Bakare as cited in Hassan and Ewumi (2004) defined guidance and counselling as a number of processes used in assisting an individual having problems in many facets of life, so that he can be more effective, satisfied and useful to the society in which he lives.

Guidance may be seen as a process of helping someone to achieve self-direction necessary to make the maximum adjustment to school, home and the community (Anwana, 1997). Guidance is also referred to as an umbrella that covers all the means whereby an institution identifies and responds to the individual needs of pupils or students no matter the nature of the need and no matter its source; thereby helping the child to develop to his maximum

potential (Ipaye, 1983). While counselling is seen as an interaction process that facilitates meaningful understanding of self and environment and results in the establishment and/or clarification of goals and values for future behaviour (Shertzer and Stone, 1980). Makinde (1983) sees educational counselling as a process of rendering services to pupils who need assistance in making decisions about certain important aspect of their education such as choice of courses and studies, decision on interest and ability, choices of college and high school. Educational counselling increases pupil's knowledge of educational opportunities.

Learning is a phenomenon in which experiences are brought together to form an intellectual forum that develops and improves the mental state of an organism in such a way that in his activities in a given environment modifications and improvements are featured. Learning needs a certain degree of proficiency, from the part of the teachers, to be effective. For learning to take place, problems like how do people learn, why a person has learned while another has not and what makes people learn should be addressed (Maitafsir, 2001).

Aims of Counselling in Learning

Depending mostly upon the situation, the environment and the type of training, aims of counselling are broad. But in an educational setting the following are a synopsis of basic aims of any counselling process as considered by many researchers like Ipaye (1983); Hassan and Ewumi (2004); & Omideyi and Olagunju (1998):

- ✓ To help students understand the self in terms of their personal ability, interest, motivation and potentials.
- ✓ To help students gain insight into the origins and development of emotional difficulties, leading to an increased capacity to take rational control over their feelings and actions.

- ✓ To alter maladaptive behaviours.
- ✓ To assist students in moving towards the direction of fulfilling their potentials or in achieving an integration of previously conflicting parts of themselves.
- ✓ To provide students with skills, awareness and knowledge that will enable them to confront social inadequacies.
- ✓ To help students gain some insight into the world of work, the realities therein and the relationships to their education and specialisation.
- ✓ To help students develop decision making skills.

Key Guidance Services for Effective Learning

The following are key guidance services that will enhance the realization of effective learning in educational set-up as proposed by Anwana (1997).

- a) ***Counselling Service.*** This is designed to facilitate self-understanding and self-direction. It is directed towards the enhancement of self-image. With this service, the student is set to understand himself and his complex motivations, the consequences of his behaviour and to correct those techniques which produce the responses he does not wish to achieve.
- b) ***Information Service.*** This is design to provide the client with a greater knowledge of educational, vocational, personal and social opportunities in order to enable him make well informed choices and take decisions in a society which is increasingly becoming more complex.
- c) ***Test and Appraisal Service.*** This is designed to collect, analyse and use a variety of objective (and at times subjective) personal psychological and social data about the

student in order to facilitate a better understanding of him, as well as helping him to understand his potentials the more.

- d) ***Planning, Placement and Follow-up Service.*** The focus of this service is to enhance the vocational aspirations and the development of the individual. It is designed to help him in selecting and utilizing job opportunities within and outside the school, including the labour market.
- e) ***Referral Service.*** The counsellor occasionally makes and coordinates referrals to other specialists within the student personal services or the public or private agencies within the community. He does this as need arises, recognizing his personal limitations to provide total services. For instance, he can assist pupils and parents who need a specialised service to be aware of and accept referral to other specialists in or outside the school set-up.
- f) ***Evaluation Service.*** This service may be referred to as an objective account of the “goodness” or “effectiveness” of the guidance programme. This service tends to direct a search light on the entire programme to ascertain if it is functioning effectively in terms of the caliber of personnel, counsellor/student ratio, maintenance of essential records, availability and use of informational materials , and so on.

Why the Need for Counselling in Learning?

Writers like Hassan and Ewumi (2004); Eweniyi, Olowe and Olagunju (2002), outlined the following as reasons for needing counselling in Schools:

- *Economic/Technological Changes.*
- *Educational Changes (in Primary, JSS, SSS and the Tertiary Institutions).*
- *Socio-cultural Changes.*

- *Psychological and Personal Needs of Youth.*
- *Need To Adjust to Social Changes Affecting the Family.*
- *Acquisition of Skills.*
- *Gender Issue.*
- *Manpower Needs.*
- *Other Problems.*

What to counsel for?

Almost all issues can be taken care of by counselling. For an effective learning, counselling targeted some major areas that are considered to be success important. These areas are summarily presented in the following three categories.

Educational guidance and counselling

This aspect of counselling should concern itself with assisting the students in their curriculum and school life choices. Students need assistance in subject choice and planning for the courses that they take at institutions of higher learning. All lecturers could be involved in this without any need for specialised training in counselling.

Vocational guidance and counselling

This aspect of counselling addresses the learners' problems as regards to vocational choices. Again here the lecturers are best placed to give relevant advice to learners since they know their academic strengths and weaknesses in areas that may pertain to specific vocations, occupations or jobs. The fact that the lecturers know the interests and aptitudes of most of their

students makes them the best persons to assist their students in areas that are related to their vocations.

Personal and social guidance and counselling

This aspect of counselling refers to the very personal problems that students meet. These problems may range from financial needs to interpersonal relationships. Although the lecturers may help to reduce these pressures, there is need for more specialised assistance from professionally trained hands. The fact that the lecturers may have an upper hand in interaction with the students only goes to show how crucial it is that they should get involved. As role models to the majority of students it is important the lectures are made aware of their crucial role in social guidance.

When Best to Target Students for Counselling?

Though counselling is done whenever the need arises, there are points at which it can best be beneficial for students in order to realize effective learning. These are summed-up into three as follows.

Counselling at Point of Entry. Where students were targeted for

- ❑ Self understanding.
- ❑ Individual counselling.
- ❑ Understanding others including lecturers and significant others in the institution.
- ❑ Group counselling in the three areas of academic, personal-social, career.

Counseling During the Course /Programme. Where students are counsel on

- ❑ Relationships between courses/programmes subject selection and future plans.
- ❑ Academic counselling in various forms.

- ❑ Stabilizing inter-personal relationships etc.
- ❑ The ethics of examinations.

Counselling on Exit. Where students are prepared for

- ❑ Life as a young graduate.
- ❑ The realities of the world of work.
- ❑ Frustrations of seeking for employment.
- ❑ Coping with the labour market; Alternatives to paid employment etc.

Tips on Counselling Students for Non-professional Counsellors

Some problems may not require the immediate attention of a professional counsellor due to a host of reasons. Because of all that, the followings are presented so as to help other teachers to attend to their students as they may come to them for one thing or the other in order to have an effective learning.

- Assist the student to make adjustment to life in the university, polytechnic, or college of education.
- Encourage the student to participate in appropriate college/university activities with a view toward increasing his or her effectiveness in personal and social activities.
- Show concern for and assist in the planning of the student's educational, career, personal, and social development.
- Aid the student in self-evaluation, self-understanding, and self-direction, enabling him or her to make decisions consistent with immediate and long-range goals to higher education opportunity granted him or her.
- Assist the student in developing healthy and positive attitudes and values.

- Help the student to acquire a better understanding of the world of work through the acquisition of skills and attitudes and/or participation in work-related programmes.
- Encourage the student to plan and utilise leisure time activities well.
- Assists the student in understanding his strengths, weakness, interest, values, potentialities and limitations.

Conclusion

Some of the prominent indicators of internal efficiency are the success rates in the transition of students from one level to another, repetition rate, dropout rate and graduate output. There are several factors which can positively influence internal efficiency. One of these is guidance and counselling. If repetition and dropout are indicators, guidance and counselling, therefore, have booster roles to play. Through proper guidance and counselling, students who would have otherwise dropped out are retained and have success stories to tell. It is not only the fresh entrants and the seniors that need and could benefit from guidance and counselling; those students who are about to graduate need job and career guidance. Guidance and counselling are needed to reduce and possibly eliminate anti-social activities on our campuses. If the tempo of dialogue and counselling is increased, there is little doubt that the tempo of crises in our campuses will drop.

Reference

- Anwana, U. I. (Ed.) (1997). Guidance and Counselling. In *Guidance and Counselling: An Information Handbook for Students, Teachers, Parents and Professional Helpers, 2nd Edition*, (pp. 3-19). Enugu: Academic Publishing Company.
- Eweniyi, G. B., Olowe, D. T. & Olagunju, M. K. O. (2002). *Essentials of Guidance and Counselling*. Ijebu-Ode: Fembol Integra Nigeria Limited.
- Hassan, E. M. & Ewumi, A. M. (2004). *A Basic Text In Guidance and Counselling*. Ogun: lucky Odoni (Nig.) Enterprises.

- Ipaye, T. (1983). *Guidance and Counselling Practices*. Ife: University of Ife Press Ltd.
- Maitafsir, M. G. (2001). *Child Development and Learning in Psychology*. Sokoto: Milestone Information and Publishing House.
- Makinde, O. (1983). *Fundamentals of Guidance and Counselling*. London: Macmillan publishers.
- Omideyi, Z. A. A. & Olagunju, M. K. O. (1998). *The Place and Strategies for Guidance and Counselling in the Primary School System*. Paper delivered at the first National colloquium on the Future of Primary Education in Nigeria, held in Lagos State College of Primary Education between 9th-13th November, 1998.
- Shertzer, B. & Stone, C. (1980). *Fundamentals of Counselling*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.