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Article · September 2011

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RELEVANCE OF INTERVIEW AND INTERVIEWING SKILLS IN THE PRACTICE OF MULTICULTURAL COUNSELING IN SCHOOL SETTING

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ABSTRACT

This study looked into interview, counseling interviewing skills and multicultural counseling in school setting. The practical research of the study took place in Zaria with one hundred and twenty respondents mainly teachers, career masters/mistresses and school guidance counselor from some selected schools. Their opinions were sought on the goals of counseling interview, relevance of multicultural counseling in school setup and obstacles to effective counseling. The findings revealed that the leading goal of counseling interview is to clear up misunderstanding by clarifying and interpreting client's actions, ideas and desires; the leading relevance of multicultural counseling in school set up is promotion of good/acceptable norms and values that cut across all cultures while the leading obstacle to effective counseling is the inability of counselor to build rapport. Consequently, the study recommends that the school guidance counselor should understand the principle underlying multicultural counseling so that he can be effective in discharging his counseling services without cultural bias.

Introduction

In order for a professional counselor to be effective in discharging his professional services in a school set up, there is need for the counselor to explore and effectively use interview and interviewing skills to make positive impacts in the lives of students (clients) that come for counseling. The counselor must also bear in mind that the culture of clients must be put in place before any positive impact can take place, hence the need for multicultural counseling.

Egbochuku (2008) sees counseling as a process by which a troubled person is helped to feel and behave in a more personally satisfying manner through interactions with an uninvolved person (the counselor) who provides information and reactions that stimulate the client to develop behaviors that enable him to deal more effectively with himself and his environment. Rao (1987)

defines counseling as an interactive process conjoining the counselee who needs assistance and the counselor who is trained and educated to give this assistance. Most definitions of counseling concur with the view that counseling is a process which involved bringing about sequential changes over a period of time leading to a set goal.

Interview is viewed as discussion between two people to achieve a purpose (Fletcher, 1995). An interview is a face to face technique of obtaining information for a variety of purposes and is also known as selection technique. Interview is also employed as a technique of research (for instance, market research and consumer research) (Rao, 1987). The counseling interview differs from ordinary interview in terms of goals and interests. For instance, mere information getting is not the major interest of counseling

interview. Rather counseling interview is a therapeutic device as well as an information obtaining device.

To understand what multicultural counseling is all about there is need to know and understand the term 'culture'. Culture, according to Gambo, Danladi and Halilu (2007) refers to all the ways and patterns in which a particular society or community behave. Ogunniyi, Ehon, Ogbaje and Mohammed (2008) also defined culture as the total life and living patterns of a particular group of people. In other words, culture includes their various ideas, the objects they make or create and the activities which go on among them. Culture consists of everything that a people have learnt to do, believe value and enjoy in their collective lives.

The term multiculturalism embraces a wide range of social variables or differences. For instance, it encompasses gender, sexual reference, ethnicity, religion, moral values, age, social class, etc. Ivey, Ivey and Simok-Morgan (1997) describe multicultural counseling as a metatheoretical approach that recognizes that all helping methods ultimately exist within a cultural context. Furthermore, they argued that multiculturalism

i) Starts with awareness of differences among and within clients

ii) Stresses the importance of family and cultural factors affecting the ways clients view the world Challenges practitioners, theoreticians and researchers to think the meaning of counseling and pay attention to family and cultural concerns.

In the light of this concept, it is clear that for a school guidance counselor to be successful in a school setup, multicultural counseling has to be put in place in order to be able to meet the need of the different and many ethnic groups represented in the school environment.

Research Method

A survey research was carried out among some selected secondary schools in Zaria, Kaduna state. Opinions of one hundred and twenty respondents who are career masters/mistresses and school guidance counselors were randomly sampled through the instrumentality of a self developed closed ended questionnaires structured on a 4-points Likert graphic scale consisting of SD for strongly disagree, D for disagree, A for agree and SA for strongly agree. Raw data have been converted to relative frequency percentages and presented in frequency percentage tables. 50% is adopted as the mean percentage.

Analysis and Discussion of Findings

There are three frequency percentage tables. Analysis of items is presented in the tables which are followed by discussion of the items.

Goals of Counseling Interview

Six items were presented to respondents on the goals of counseling interview. Their responses are shown in table 1.

Table 1: What are the goals of counseling interview?

s/no	Items	SD	D	A	SA
1.	To gather information	3	7	67	23
2.	To provide therapeutic assistance	3	10	54	33
3.	To clear up misunderstanding by clarifying and interpreting client's actions, ideas and desires		3	60	37
4.	To give advice or solve problem	3	3	30	64
5.	To improve client's morale and motivation		7	56	37
6.	To measure client's previous progress	17	27	33	23

Table 1 contains six items on the goals of counseling interviews. The table shows that respondents accept all the six items as the goals of counseling interview because the sum of A and SA for each item is greater than 50%. However, item 3 is the leading goal of counseling interview because it has 97% (60% + 37%) summation of A and SA whereas item 6 is the least leading goal because it has 56% (33% + 23%) summation of A and SA. Therefore, the leading goal of counseling interview is to clear up misunderstanding by clarifying and interpreting client's actions, ideas and desires whereas the least leading goal is to measure client's previous progress.

An understanding of the nature, kinds, conditions and skills required in counseling interview is essential for effective achievement of the goals of counseling interview. Kolo (2009) described counseling interview as a conversation characterized by equality and maturity, immediacy and warm presence, and by emphasis on strength and potentials. Some of the counseling interviewing skills are attending, empathy, minimal responses, awareness of body language, the tone of voice, paraphrasing, reflecting skills, etc (Egbochukwu, 2008). Empathy means reaching out into the psychological world of the client by the counselor (Rao, 1987). It is the ability to feel as if you are the one experiencing what the client is experiencing. Rapport is a vital skill for achieving the goals of counseling interview, especially in school set up. Rapport

means warm, friendly and understanding condition which is essential for an effective relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee. Attentiveness is also crucial in counseling interview. By listening and observing the counselee, the counselor sustains, extends and deepens his knowledge of the counselee (Rao, 1987). Kolo (2009), citing Egan, identified three levels of attending namely the micro skill, non verbal and human presence levels. Micro skill level relates to technique such as sitting pattern, open posture, leaning forward and eye contact; non verbal level has to do with the clues and messages counselors do send consistently through their own bodies as they are in relationship with the clients. Human presence level involves the counselor's total being present with the client. He also classified attending as physical, psychological and self attending.

Moreover, types of interview employed can also determine the extent to which the goals of counseling interview can be achieved. Ifidon and Ifidon (2007) identified three types of interview namely the scheduled structured interview, the focused or non-scheduled structured interview and the non-structured or nondirective interview. These types of interview underscore the importance of planning and preparation as principles that should guide interview. In other words, to achieve one's goals or purposes in an interview, one needs to plan. Singh (2007)

also added subjective method of interview which analyzes the personality of a client based on his responses to questions. Fletcher (1996) stated other forms of interview such as appraisal interview, the reprimand interview, counseling interview and exit interview. In addition, interview can also be oral or written. Adequate understanding and right applications of the nature, types and skills of counseling interview can greatly facilitate the goals of multicultural counseling, especially in school setting.

Relevance of Multicultural Counseling in School Setup

The research also examined the importance or relevance of multicultural counseling in school set up from respondents' perspectives. Their opinions are presented in the following table.

Table 2: What is the relevance of multicultural counseling in school setup?

s/no	Items	SD	D	A	SA
1.	To promote racial or ethnic relationship	10	7	63	20
2.	To promote the uniqueness of each and individual students.		17	60	23
3.	To promote good/acceptable norms and values that cut across all cultures.	3	10	27	60
4.	To promote understanding of other people's culture in counseling		7	60	33
5.	To promote working relationship among counselors and staff members		40	40	20
6.	To enhance counseling competency	3	30	40	27
7.	To promote better understanding of client's goals	7	7	60	26
8.	To promote the development of appropriate counseling techniques	3	10	30	17

Table 2 presents eight items on the relevance of multicultural counseling in school setting. The table shows that respondents accepted all the eight items as the importance of multicultural counseling because each item has summation A and SA greater than 50%. However, item 4 with 93% (60% + 33%) summation of A and SA is the leading relevance of multicultural counseling. Item 5 with 60% (40% + 20%) summation A and SA is the least leading importance of multicultural counseling in school setting. Therefore, the leading importance of multicultural counseling is promotion of understanding of other people's culture in counseling while the least leading relevance is promotion of working relationship among counselors and staff members.

The relevance of multicultural counseling is clearly reflected in the broad definition of multicultural counseling by Pederson (1994) which views multicultural counseling as consisting of "ethnographic variables such as ethnicity, nationality, religion and language, demographic variables such as age, gender and place of residence, status variables such as social, educational and economic, and affiliations including both formal affiliations to family or organization and informal affiliations to ideas and a lifestyle". Multicultural counseling is relevant because, according to Pederson (1994), it emphasize both the way we are different from and similar to other people. Thus, the concept of multiculturalism challenges those who have presumed that differences do not matter and those who have over emphasized differences (that is, those who often perpetuate stereotypes). The relevance of multicultural counseling has made contemporary counselors to understand that a client's culture must be

carefully understood and considered if counseling is to be effective. It has also helped contemporary counselors to discard cultural prejudices because racial and ethnic bias, for instance, can prevent counselors from identifying with client from a different culture. In school setting, the school guidance counselor is the implementer of multicultural counseling. In this regard, the importance of school guidance counselor cannot be over emphasized and should not be undermined. School guidance counselor offers guidance services to pupils, students and staff members who have come from different home or cultural backgrounds. Cultural background is meaningful to a client as well as therapeutic in its effect on the client. Awareness of this fact can foster social or national integration. The role of school guidance counselor has been theorized through a model developed by Atkinson, Thompson and Grant cited in X Day (2004). According to the model, the guidance counselor should, first and foremost, identify the locus of the problem etiology which can be external problem (such as oppressive external situations like job discrimination or harassment) or internal problem (such as phobia). Secondly, the guidance counselor should determine the client's level of acculturation (that is, how much the person and his family have adopted the values and customs of the mainstream culture). Thirdly, the guidance counselor should seek and focus on problem prevention remedies which can help the client.

Obstacles to Fruitful Counseling

However, effective implementation of the contents and goals of multicultural counseling is faced with some obstacles. Some of these obstacles have been identified and submitted to respondents' opinions. Their responses are presented in the following table.

Table 3: What are the obstacles to fruitful counseling?

s/no	Items	SD	D	A	SA
1.	Language barriers	13	10	27	50
2.	Inadequate preparation on the part of counselors	3	7	54	36
3.	Improper self disclosure on the part of clients		3	43	54
4.	Inability to assess the success of previous counseling session	7	13	60	20
5.	Inadequacy of counseling resources		17	60	23
6.	Inability of counselor to build rapport	7	13	44	36
7.	Lack of trust between counselor and client		10	17	73

Table 3 presents seven items on the obstacles to effective counseling. The table reveals that respondents agree that all the seven items are obstacles to fruitful counseling because each item has summation A and SA greater than 50%. However, item 3 with 97% (43% + 54%) summation of A and SA is the leading obstacle to effective counseling while item 1 with 77% (27% + 50%) summation A and SA is the least leading obstacle to effective counseling. In other words, the improper self disclosure on the part of clients is the leading obstacle while language barrier is the least leading obstacle to effective counseling in school set up.

Item 5 namely inadequacy of counseling resources deserves a brief comment. Lack of adequate counseling resources such as funding, human and material resources is a serious obstacle to effective multicultural counseling (Kolo and Adamu, 2009). If a school guidance counselor has no office but shares the general staff room with other

teachers then he/she may have difficulty in discharging effective guidance services to students.

Conditions for effective multicultural counseling must be recognized; otherwise these obstacles to counseling cannot be effectively checked or controlled. Locke (1986) has stated the conditions (indirectly) when he opined that multicultural counseling requires the recognition of the importance of racial or ethnic group membership on the socialization of the client; the importance and uniqueness of the individual; the presence and place of values in the counseling process and the uniqueness of the learning styles; vocational goals and life purposes of clients within the context of principles of democratic social justice. Therefore, the inability of a school guidance counselor to recognize these listed conditions or factors can be a hindrance to effective counseling.

Sue, Arrendondon and McDavis (1995) developed a conceptual framework for cross-cultural competencies which can help in achieving effective practice of multicultural counseling in a school set up. The framework indicates that most cross-cultural skills can either be organized or developed. Corroborating this, Sue and Sue (1995) developed a framework for identifying the competency required by the culturally skilled counselor. The competency entails:

i) Awareness of one's own assumptions, values and biases.
ii) Understanding the worldview of the cultural different client.
iii) Developing appropriate intervention strategies and techniques.

The above are conditions for successful multicultural outcomes. They can help to eliminate the obstacles to effective multicultural counseling. Moreover, Simok-Morgan (1997) has suggested culturally appropriate nonverbal behavior as another condition that can reduce obstacles to multicultural counseling. They advocate that all practicing counselors begin a life time of study of nonverbal communication patterns and their variations. They identified various categories of nonverbal behaviors (such as eye contact, touching, vocal tracking, etc) and some cultural implications for each category.

According to Bayne and Bimrose (1996), another condition for successful multicultural counseling is the need for increasing self awareness on the part of the school guidance counselor. He/she must think about himself/herself and the culture in which he/she practices as a counselor. Through this thought he/she must identify his/her own values, beliefs, opinions and attitudes and those of the culture in which he/she practices as a counselor. He/she must determine the consistencies and inconsistencies between his/her values and those of the culture. He/she must grapple with questions such as 'what do I understand to be the relationship between culture and counseling?'; 'what unique abilities, aspirations, expectations and limitations do I have that might influence my relations with culturally diverse individuals?' That a school guidance counselor begins to find correct answers to these questions is an indication of his/her readiness to follow the path of success in multicultural counseling in a school set up.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed the goals of, relevance of and obstacles to successful multicultural outcomes as well as some of the counseling interviewing skill that can be employed by a counselor such as the rapport, empathy, attentiveness, gaining acceptance, counselor's conduct, etc. It has stated various conditions that can enhance multicultural counseling in school setting. School guidance counselors have to brace up to the possibility

and problems associated with multicultural counseling. The prospects of multicultural counseling far outweigh the challenges confronting its implementations in school set up. Therefore, school guidance counselor should understand the underlying principles of multicultural counseling in order to practice effectively as a counselor.

Recommendations

1) Counseling must be redefined and redesigned in order for the school guidance counselor to make any positive impact in multicultural counseling relationship in school set up.
2) Multicultural counseling should be viewed as tool for social and national unity and integration because of its ability to remove cultural bias.
3) Fund should be made available for the school guidance counselor to function effectively. Adequate fund will boost and promote multicultural counseling in school set up.
4) Counselors should develop and utilized appropriate counseling interviewing skills.
5) Counselors should make research of the predominant culture where he/she practices because his/her understanding of the culture will enhance the effectiveness of multicultural counseling in the school set up.

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