

REPOSITIONING GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING PRACTICES FOR WORLD CLASS TERTIARY EDUCATION

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Abstract

This paper discussed the need to reposition guidance and counselling practices in Nigeria tertiary institutions in order for the institutions to meet up with global best practices in higher education delivery. It observed that the challenges facing learners and tertiary institution workers are capable of truncating the effectiveness of tertiary education if not professionally handled. It examined the meaning and nature of Guidance and Counselling profession, characteristics of world class tertiary education, the need for counselling services and the challenges facing counselling practices in tertiary institutions. Counsellors and the management of tertiary institutions have arduous roles to play in repositioning guidance and counselling practices to enable a globally competitive tertiary education delivery. It is concluded that counselling could enable tertiary institutions in the country to deliver globally compliant tertiary education if properly positioned.

The Meaning and Nature of Guidance and Counselling

Guidance and counselling are dual aspects of the helping profession. Ordinarily, guidance means to lead, to direct, to give information and directive. This is what parents, friends, teachers and other significant ones often do, and it can take place anywhere. Professionally, guidance is more than just giving advice or directive, it is a kind of assistance based on systematic appraisal that makes the client decide after an exercise of self-awareness. In guidance, individuals and corporate bodies are assisted to explore their environments, discover their strength, weakness, talent and skills, so as to determine their needs, set personal realistic goals, and adjust suitably to achieve them in harmony with their environments. Counselling is a professional practice done by an individual who is professionally trained

in the act and theories of counselling. While guidance is the body of the psychotherapeutic helping profession, counselling is the soul of it. Counselling is an empathic one to one relationship between the counsellor and the client whose situation needs professional intervention. Counselling could be on group or individual basis, but it usually takes place on appointment and in a professionally prepared and psychologically conducive environment. A professional counsellor is a counsellor who is fully registered as such under the Counselling Practitioners of Nigeria Act, 2022.

Guidance and counselling as a helping profession aims at making life meaningful. Guidance counsellors guide people away from troubles and help those already trapped in challenges to find ways out. Life, human experiences and the environment are such that are surrounded

with mammoth challenges. When the challenges are accurately resolved the individual is happy and feels fulfilled to continue life activities unhindered, otherwise the person becomes confused and may be maladjusted. These challenges, some individuals can face and overcome on their own with little or no external assistance. However, when the situation goes beyond what personal experience or ability could cope with, the person may be overwhelmed and the need for counsellor's help becomes essential for proper decision making and adjustment.

A counsellor works with a client mostly for the benefits of the client. For a school counsellor, there is no higher responsibility rather than improving the lives of their students academically, psychologically and socially. He does this through an enlightened process of helping people to help in facilitating growth, development and positive change through an exercise of self-understanding. Central to the expected role of a counsellor is self-assessment and accountability. Counsellors must have ways of analysing their effectiveness and adjusting their methodologies to maximise their job delivery within the scope of their professional boundary.

Practicing counsellors should bear in mind the following established facts by the founding fathers of the helping profession which are also confirmed by its age-long practice:

- i. Counselling is a helping relationship.
- ii. The help is an enabling act.
- iii. The relationship is a sometimes complex one.
- iv. The relationship is voluntary, the client is not forced or coerced.
- v. Various variables such as the counsellor, the community, the physical environment and the nature of the client would affect the

counselling process and its effectiveness.

- vi. The helping process involves systematic approaches of information collection, analysis and interpretation.
- vii. Counsellors believe that people can change, grow and improve.
- viii. Counselling is a learning process. It involves learning of congenial principles and behaviours and unlearning uncongenial ones.
- ix. Counselling is a continuous process.
- x. Counselling is people oriented.
- xi. Counselling respects people's dignity and worth, clients are treated as persons with equal rights.
- xii. Research advances the course of counselling.
- xiii. Counselling can be directive or nondirective.
- xiv. The final decision for action is the responsibility of the client, no decision is imposed on a client, clients are responsible for their choice of actions.
- xv. Counselling has been confirmed to be effective in solving varying human problems, however, it should be noted that counselling cannot solve all problems. There are cases that could warrant referral if beyond the professional scope of counselling. Referral can also occur between counsellors based on personal competence in practice.
- xvi. Confidentiality is the hallmark of a counsellor's conscience and professional practice.

World Class Tertiary Education.

Tertiary education is a global practice and the operations are supposed to be universal. The characteristics of leading world class universities could be summarized as follows (Tayeb, 2015; Olofintoye, 2018; Naik, 2019):

- A functional environment for networks, collaborations alliances, and interdisciplinary approaches
- Students-centred education
- Creativity education
- Entrepreneurial education
- Technology driven education
- Tutors/students demonstration of talents
- Culture of excellence and quality
- Leadership team work
- Public partnership in education
- Financial resources
- Infrastructure and facilities

For a tertiary institution to meet up with the above, the impact of professional counselling cannot be underrated in the face of economic crises, personality maladjustments, social crises and insecurity in the country.

The Need for Guidance and Counselling Practices in Tertiary Institutions.

The need for guidance and counselling services in tertiary institutions is justified by the following, (Ukwueze, A. C. 2015; Olofintoye, 2018).

- Transition between secondary and tertiary education: this involves changes in life style, fitting into the new environment, avoiding predators, time management, feeding, financial management
- Academic and vocational related issues: these are matters relating to lectures, time tabling, academic freedom, lecture attendance, note taking, reading habit, continuous and cumulative assessment (C. G. P. A), examinations and regulations, examination malpractices, academic culture, change of programme/ University, internship, National Youth Service Scheme, employment after graduation.

- Personality adjustment: of concern are self-esteem, quest for early acquisition of wealth, drug abuse, worries, anxiety, depression, suicide, coping strategies.
- Social adjustment: peer influence, students/staff relationship, physical appearances, students' unionism, thuggery, rioting, vandalism, prostitution, sexual harassment.
- Behavioural disorders: sexual orientation, cultism, cyber abuse/ crime, and general misconducts.
- Open and distance learning programme: counselling needs of students in this online dominated higher education is peculiar. They require learner support counselling and family counselling, in addition to the services for conventional undergraduates.
- Alumni relations and involvement: contacting the alumni body and searching for influential alumni members and convincing them to be involved in the life of students and partnering with the university.
- Institutional efficiency. Working towards job efficiency by the university staff. Olabimtanamao-kehinde (2021) recommended the following activities for tertiary education counsellors:
 - Training managers in some basic counselling skills
 - Organising training on emotional intelligence
 - Training on core competences of employees
 - Creating a culture of synergy in organizational learning and development
 - Helping employees increase their self-awareness regarding their thinking and behavioural patterns which will in turn enhance their job delivery

- Using counselling to help workers manage personal and work challenges
- Making workers happier with their work in order to achieve better work life balance

Challenges Facing Guidance and Counselling Practices in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

Issues currently affecting the practice of guidance and counselling in some Nigerian tertiary institutions include attitudinal issues such as the feeling that guidance and counselling is for only unserious students, thinking that any staff can be a counsellor, submerging the counselling centre, lack of facilities, lack of time for clients to visit counsellors during working hours, poor consultation, high ratio of students/counsellors on campus, insufficient manpower, obsolete counselling techniques, and lack of ICT facilities. Arijesuyo (2012) reported that effective implementation of counselling and human development programme in the universities in South Western Nigeria is faced with inadequate personnel, deficiencies in the provision of required personnel, and materials necessary to facilitate and promote effective counselling programme. Unless counselling practice is refocused in tertiary institutions, meeting up with world best practices in higher education could be a mirage.

Practicing Guidance and Counselling to Promote World Class Tertiary Education.

No doubt, classroom instruction alone cannot structure students' life to produce the expected characteristics of a world class tertiary education and neither can work rules and regulations make all workers compliant. While some students and staff members could meet up with the requirements, some would need training and intervention to develop themselves and contribute constructively to campus life experiences.

Properly focused guidance and counselling would lead to student centred education, creativity education, entrepreneurial education, technology driven education, tutor/student concentration of talents, culture of excellence, leadership team work, public partnership in education and quality assurance that depict global best outputs in higher education. To achieve this, professional practicing counsellors and the counselling community has significant roles to play in repositioning the profession of counselling for better tertiary education that can compete globally.

A. Expectations from Counsellors:

i. *The counsellors' personality*

Quality of Guidance and Counselling staff is of great concern to the counselling practice. A practicing counsellor must be a congruent person and of high integrity. He or she must work in a way that would protect the sanctity of human dignity and respect professional ethics. In addition to adequate certification by a higher institution of adjudged competence, section 7 number 2 of the *Counselling Practitioners Council of Nigeria Act, 2022*, a candidate for registration as a professional counsellor shall be of good character and one who has not been convicted in Nigeria or elsewhere of an offence involving fraud and dishonesty. The counsellor is expected to be of enviable character and a role model.

ii. *Counselling skills.*

Counsellors must update their skills to provide services relevant to the current and modern needs of their clients. They must be current in approach and practice. For the counsellor to be relevant in the 21st century, he or she must be able to deal with new forms of behaviours among youths, especially cyber behaviours/misbehaviours, cohabitation, drug abuse, depression and suicide.

For the counsellors to be relevant he or she must be ICT compliant and digital friendly. Students and even workers now prefer to interact online due to lack of time. This can, at least, compliment physical interaction. The guidance counsellor must be able to personally provide online information to sustain confidentiality. Counsellors must learn to update their practicing skills.

iii. Regular research

There must be regular investigations into students, staff and institutional challenges and needs. Human nature is dynamic and there is the need for investigation into the current situations of our clients and their community.

iv. Construction and use of Test Batteries.

For systematic diagnosis of clients' problems there could be the need for test batteries. Where the needed ones are not available efforts should be made to construct relevant ones and be used as appropriate.

v. Publicity.

Regular publication and circulation of counselling bulletin, hard and soft copies and awareness campaign must be done.

vi. Counsellors should be proactive.

Counsellors should be active to prevent problems instead of waiting for problems to occur for them to resolve. Students should be frequently guided against breaching their Matriculation Oaths through examination malpractices, cultism, cybercrime, and various misconducts. Staff/students' relations should be monitored.

vii. Ability for entrepreneurial counselling.

There is the need for entrepreneurial counselling to practically fight vocational indecision, unemployment, underemployment, retrenchments, poor remunerations, underdevelopment, inflation, economic recession, problems with salary, and scarcity of essential goods and services.

Entrepreneurial counselling will assist in training of clients on the development of

skills or attributes leading to the realisation of opportunities to:

- make money (everyone should know how to engage in business for legitimate profit)
- be an employer of labour
- reduce the rate of unemployment
- enhance personal and national development
- reduce the rate of youths' involvement in crimes (thuggery, armed robbery, kidnapping, insurgency, cybercrimes, and so on).
- promote creativity

Entrepreneurial guidance and counselling could be organised for large or small groups and individuals.

viii. Ability to mobilize functional alumni relations and services.

Guidance counsellors should be able to mobilise the alumni to partner with their alma mater by providing basic amenities for the system and assisting indigent students. Low cost students' hostels, soft loan, scholarships, and bursary could be provided by the alumni. They also assist the institution on infrastructure and linkages.

ix. Collaboration with other professionals and workers

Guidance counsellors must know that they can not always function in isolation. Depending on the work setting and the matter for guidance and/or counselling there may be the need to seek information or help from other professionals, staff or significant others relevant to the matter under consideration. The psychologist, sociologist, social worker, psychiatrist, medical doctor, registrar, course lecturer, administrative staff, the Head of Department, student level coordinator, hall warding, the Chief Security Officer and the Student Union officers are good working partners in the tertiary education counselling exercise.

x. Ability for retirement counselling

One of the ways of playing relevancy in the life of the work force is retirement guidance and counselling. Many workers work for thirty-five year or there about without preparing for retirement. Some are unaware of the official requirements or preparation for retirement, some are not ready financially, psychologically, and even socially for retirement, but either one is prepared or not, when retirement comes it must be honoured. The more one is prepared the better. Guidance counsellors will do well if they function in this regard.

xi. Registration as professional counsellors

The professionalism of guidance and counselling was legalized by the approval of the 'Counselling Practitioners Council of Nigeria Act, 2022'. This is an act that established the counselling practitioners' council of Nigeria charged with the responsibility of advancing the study, training and practice of counselling profession; and for related matters (27th day of June, 2022) enacted by 90 national assembly of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The Council shall - (a) determine the standard of knowledge and skill, to be attained by persons seeking to become registered members of the Counselling Profession (in this Act referred to as "the Profession") and review the standard as circumstances may require; (b) establish and maintain, in accordance with the provisions of this Act, a register of certified members of the Profession and the publication of the list of such members; (c) promote the highest standard of competence, practice and conduct among members of the Profession ; (d) organise and conduct seminars, workshops, conferences and researches in all aspects of counselling management and administration ; (e) provide professional training for persons aspiring to qualify and practice as chartered counsellors in Nigeria ; (f) secure the professional status and do all such things as may be necessary to promote the interest of

its members and the advancement of the art and science of counselling knowledge and efficiency in counselling management and administration in the public and private sectors of the Nigerian economy. Counselling Practitioners Council of Nigeria Act, 2022. 2022, No. 22

It is therefore expected of qualified practicing guidance counsellors to register with and follow the programme of the Council for professional recognition and opportunities.

xii. Pursuit of excellence

By the nature of tertiary institutions, for a request to be attended to, it must be presented in writing, routed and followed up as appropriate. The institutional recommendations to be presented next need to be prioritised and be formally pursued by the staff of the counselling unit in order to be result oriented.

B. Expectations from the Counselling Community.

The counselling community hereby refers to the university management, the various organs and units of administration, and individuals in the university. They are expected to support counselling in the following ways to make the services of international standard.

i. Positive attitude.

This is about reacting to counselling with the right attitude to promote relationship enhancement. There is the need to rebrand dispositions towards guidance and counselling. The university community must recognise counselling as a professional practice. When a matter for counselling is discovered, the individual should be referred to professional guidance counsellors instead of giving pieces of unprofessional advice. In recognition of counselling effectiveness, not all cases should be made to face disciplinary panels. Students or those in need of counselling should believe that the Guidance

Counsellors function to deliver the best professional services.

ii. Provision of adequate counsellors.

There should be sufficiency of qualified counsellors to handle Guidance and Counselling services in each Faculty and section of the institution. At least, a counsellor should be attached to a Faculty. The counsellor's qualification matters. Also, since the job requirement as at the time of training drastically changes at the time of practice, the need to upgrade knowledge is paramount. The emerging field of counselling requires comprehensive education before employment and constant in-service training. A professional counsellor should make the Doctorate degree a priority. Conferences, seminars and workshops are expected to be sponsored regularly.

iii. Establishment of a centre for counselling and human development.

There is the need to project guidance and counselling services professionally by housing the operations in an independent Directorate or Centre for Counselling and Human Development as recommended by the National Universities Commission. The directorate or centre should have a dedicated building with sufficient office spaces for: The Director, Deputy Directors, Counsellors and other workers. There should be counselling consulting rooms, conveniences and halls, ICT facilities and e-library. Other facilities are chairs, psychological test instruments, books, filing cabinet in each room, career reference materials and books, bookshelves, notice board, tape recorder, cupboards for storing filmstrips, internet access, index card system for keeping student past records, fans and/or air conditioners in working rooms and offices. Others are labelling kits, loud speaker, telephones and intercoms, refrigerators, televisions, videos, radio and video cassettes, photocopying, typing paper and cardboard papers and other types of stationery, recycling chair, audio visual aids,

two-way mirrors, files and filing system, laminating and binding machines, generating sets, computers and printers, gum and binding gum and stickers, and at least, a bus and one official car for the director (NUC, 2010).

iv. Provision and maintenance of e-counselling facilities.

There are complaints from guidance counsellors particularly at the tertiary level that students or relevant clients are visiting counselling facilities or visit at odd hours. This is probably due to ignorance about what the counsellors are up to, lack of time, timidity and reluctance at disclosing personal matters. One way of getting closer to prospective and ongoing clients is by reaching them online. The university Website should accommodate the directorate appropriately to the extent that information about guidance and counselling could be accessed by clients at will. Various social media platforms should be available for students use. The institution's network should be available for counsellors use and operational data should be provided because counselling work is not limited to working hours only. Providing an online interactive space for the directorate of counselling on the university Website is the best. Official digital devices such as phones, tabs and laptops are needed.

v. Provision of functional budget for counselling.

There is the need for annual budget for the operations of counselling. This is one of the benefits of running a Directorate of Counselling and Human Development.

Conclusion

Classroom instructions could lead to the production of best brains but not necessarily best personalities and societies. The introduction of counselling as an educational support programme in tertiary institutions was for all round development of

students and particularly personality and social aspects of education. However, the way the profession is being placed and practiced in some tertiary institutions currently is far from the ideal. If the institutions must get the best out of their students and workforce there is the need to position Guidance and Counselling strategically for it to be professionally practiced and to help in the delivery of universally relevant higher education.

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