

Unit 7: Guidance and Counselling

INTRODUCTION

Guidance and counselling are fairly new concepts in education. They are a necessary tool for preventing and solving problems in a complex school community. The complex situation created by interpersonal relationships and the uncertainties of life can more easily be handled when supervisors have the necessary skills.

This unit will equip you with the necessary skills.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- define guidance and counselling
- explain the rationale of guidance and counselling
- identify circumstances that require guidance and those that require counselling
- develop awareness of the need for counselling skills and develop those skills through further study
- identify societal trends that justify the need for guidance and counselling in the school system
- explain the need for schools to incorporate guidance and counselling in the curriculum.

WHAT IS GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING?

- Guidance is a service provided by someone knowledgeable about the issue/topic raised. Inspectors might provide guidance to headteachers who have asked for information on e.g. administrative procedure or school development planning.
- Counselling is a service provided by one person to enable another to think through or analyse for himself/herself what the causes of a certain problem might be. A counsellor does not offer advice but enables the person being counselled to consider all aspects of a situation and to arrive at alternative solutions and courses of action.

Activity 7a

Cite a situation where an inspector could be required to provide guidance and counselling.

COMMENT

The inspector's job includes guidance and counselling. Heads often require assistance in providing good and effective services to all sorts of situations in the work place. They deal with teachers, pupils, students, officials in authority, parents, local authorities, school committees and communities. These sources may open the inspector to a harsh working environment. Guidance should help both heads and teachers to understand themselves. They should identify their own strengths and limitations regarding their professional and personal life. Counselling should expose heads and teachers to an interactive environment where they make informed decisions and appropriate choices.

JUSTIFICATION FOR GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING

Schools today are faced with a lot of problems affecting both pupils and teachers which need to be checked and solved to ensure effective teaching and learning.

In most countries, guidance and counselling has come up as a solution to problems of HIV/AIDS, drunkenness, drug abuse, sexual promiscuity, environmental degradation and so on. These problems affect teaching and learning both of which are elements in the development of responsible citizenship. It is hoped that the implementation of this programme will help educators to address some of these problems.

Activity 7b

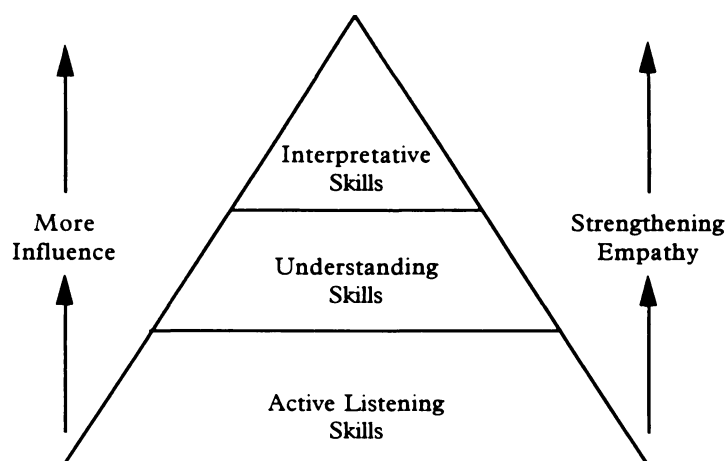
A school is run by a headteacher who cares only about teaching and learning and nothing else. The teachers at the school also care about nothing apart from teaching the pupils. Nobody in the school cares about the feelings and needs of the other. List possible outcomes of such type of leadership.

COMMENT

Where there is guidance and counselling, teaching and learning is more effective and results are improved. This is possible because everyone in the system is sensitive to the needs of the other. This creates a healthy and productive environment.

COUNSELLING SKILLS

Counselling practitioners should develop the requisite skills if their work is to produce results. Proper counselling goes beyond mere advising or giving information. Through counselling skills, a conducive relationship will develop between the practitioner and the client. In an ideal situation, the client will open up to the practitioner and gain a clearer understanding of their own situation, so that they can move forward with more hope and confidence.



The Skills Pyramid

Activity 7c

Imagine you are the practitioner in a counselling situation. List in any order, the skills that you will need to employ.

Attempt to place the skills into the pyramid.

COMMENT

It will be realised that the skills identified in counselling are not used in isolation. The levels cited in the pyramid are not watertight. However, each level is characterised by the dominance of specific skills. At the base of the pyramid are active listening skills, followed by understanding skills and interpretative skills.

As one moves from the basic skills up the pyramid to the interpretative skills, the influence of the practitioner is intensified. On the other hand, empathy is also strengthened.

ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS

“Active listening skills are complex, operating at many levels of awareness and using the eye, ears and awareness of personal feelings in order to determine what the client is really trying to say.” These basic listening skills are essential in establishing empathy. They will lead to a realisation by the client that his/her words and beliefs are valued by the counsellor.

The counsellor actively listens to:

- the content of what is being said
- how it is said
- the possible meaning behind the words
- the feeling expressed
- the nature of the silences which occur.

UNDERSTANDING SKILLS

As the client unfolds his/her story, the practitioner will form impressions or perceptions of the situation. It will be prudent to confirm that the impressions created are the correct ones. The specific skills in use at this stage are restating, paraphrasing, summarising and questioning. These can achieve a number of objectives such as to:

- demonstrate that the advisor is actively listening to what is being said
- convey the essential qualities of caring and understanding
- check on the reality of the adviser's understanding
- encourage the client to go on.

INTERPRETATIVE SKILLS

These are the skills found at the top of the pyramid. The counsellor will convey his/her interpretation of the concepts and scenarios presented by the client. The skills include:

- challenging (e.g. pointing out inconsistencies)
- being specific (e.g. requiring examples)

- immediacy (drawing client's attention to what is happening in the interview to provide fresh insight into their own behaviour)
- provision of information.

GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING SERVICES

A school will institute its own self-contained counselling services that answer to the needs of its population. To equip itself to provide efficient counselling services, the school will put together resource materials to be used by advisors and counsellors. The school would also find it beneficial to involve outside agencies in the provision of vital information on the labour market, vocational training and further academic education.

Inspectors will need to encourage schools to organise careers days on which various employment agencies and practitioners from personnel departments are given an opportunity to give vital information to the school population.

Activity 7d

Draw up a tentative termly regional guidance and counselling programme that could be recommended for adoption by schools in your area. At each stage, show what outside agencies could be involved.

AWARENESS OF SOCIETAL TRENDS

The socio-economic changes in human society raise contemporary issues that require immediate attention. Some current issues are:

- gender sensitivity
- HIV/AIDS
- environmental education
- population education
- human rights

GENDER SENSITIVITY

Cultural beliefs and practices have for a long time created societies which are gender insensitive. The world is full of traditional stereotypes of men's and women's functions and status. This results in gender inequality, inequality of opportunities, and sexist decisions. Guidance and counselling services should provide a clear path of equal opportunities for all those in the work situation, both men and women. Decisions should be based on informed background knowledge, but not on gender.

Activity 7e

Identify stereotypes which encourage discrimination on the basis of gender.

Suggest how such stereotypes can be avoided.

COMMENT

The education system and the school need to avoid all stereotypes in order to overcome discrimination in gender. Some common problems are:

- unequal gender balance in school admission, school leadership, teaching levels etc.
- higher school drop-out rates for girls
- gender stereotyping through historical curriculum structures and vocational guidance
- sexual harassment at work places
- timing of extra school activities which disadvantage working mothers
- inequalities in promotion arrangements.

HIV/AIDS

The world has suddenly found itself in the grip of a rapid increase in the spread of HIV/AIDS. Education cannot overlook its responsibility and should help to introduce the population to preventive measures. As a component in the education practice, guidance and counselling must be used to save human life from this killer disease in all learning centres.

Activity 7f

In the light of the possible controversies surrounding sex education, suggest the content of a school HIV/AIDS awareness programme.

COMMENT

HIV/AIDS is the current leading cause of death amongst young adults and is a major contributor to high infant, child and maternal mortality in the region. The school curriculum should provide both students and teachers with basic information on HIV/AIDS. The basic information should include:

- definition of HIV infection leading to AIDS
- description of HIV and what it does to the body including mode of transmission
- description of common signs and symptoms of HIV infection
- discussion on the management of HIV/AIDS in the work place and the home
- discussion of the attitudes and beliefs of societies towards HIV/AIDS
- discussion of counselling methods for people affected by HIV/AIDS

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Human survival is entirely dependent upon our association with the social and physical environment. It has become increasingly necessary for people to be assisted to develop positive environmental attitudes and a sense of personal responsibility for the environment. The physical environment has become a major concern because of deforestation in areas where the source of income is agriculture, and trees are used for commercial purposes and fuel wood or have been destroyed by fire. Guidance and counselling should promote environmental awareness.

Activity 7g

- (a) In your area of operation, study the environmental issues that need to be addressed.
- (b) Discuss the issues with the school and the community.

COMMENT

Environmental conservation is a major concern in the world today. A carefully utilised environment can contribute to sustainable development. Issues at hand include land degradation, decline in wildlife populations, use of wood as fuel, indiscriminate cutting down of trees, fires that destroy flora and fauna, water pollution and overgrazing.

POPULATION EDUCATION

The planet earth as a home for humanity is not expanding. On the other hand the world population is increasing rapidly. The present population growth rates frustrate the socio-economic development pace. When all this is considered, population planning emerges as an important and integral part of any planning programme. Pupils, as the mothers and fathers of tomorrow, need to be introduced to issues of population growth at an early stage. The inspectors should facilitate the inclusion of guidance and counselling services that address population issues in the school curriculum.

Activity 7h

List population issues that could be dealt with at school level.

COMMENT

High population growth rates outstrip economic capacities in many countries of the world. The world experiences excessive demands on food resources, healthcare services, water supply, infrastructure, education, housing, sanitary services, energy resources and so on. There is high rural to urban migration leading to unemployment crises. The rate of unemployment is increasing each day. In the densely populated centres such as towns and cities, the social amenities are stretched to breaking point. The rural-urban migration negatively impacts on the productivity of rural economies resulting in rampant poverty. Standards of living become poor. The cost of living gets very high for the majority. This may lead to political instability.

GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING AND THE CURRICULUM

When guidance and counselling first became a part of the school curriculum, it seemed that all teachers could participate in it through extensions in their various subject areas. That situation was not easy to monitor and supervisors were left to guess whether or not any activities were going on.

Some Ministries of Education went further and appointed inspectors to monitor the provision of guidance and counselling services in schools. That step necessitated the treatment of guidance and counselling as a subject in its own right rather than a thread running through other subjects in the curriculum.

Activity 7i

In your opinion, are schools giving guidance and counselling the status it deserves? If not, what could be the causes of this situation and what steps should be taken to rectify the situation?

COMMENT

An education system that places a lot of emphasis on examinations is likely to continue to marginalise non-examinable subjects like guidance and counselling. The challenge remains for the supervisors to come up with an approach that will enhance the status of guidance and counselling.

SUMMARY

Now that you have gone through this unit, you should be able to:

- define guidance and counselling
- identify the requisite skills needed in guidance and counselling and nurture them
- identify current societal trends that should form part of the guiding and counselling agenda
- realise the need for schools to have guidance and counselling as an integral part of their curriculum.

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