

GUIDANCE & COUNSELLING HANDBOOK

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EDITORS

DR. FELICIA N. MODO
DR. KUDIRAT B. SANMI
DR. NNYANGA U. AKPAN

CHAPTER 5

FUNCTIONS AND SERVICES OF THE SCHOOL COUNSELLOR

BY

Gertrude J. Udoh

Introduction

Students face problems during the various phases and levels of school life. The problems may be personal, educational, vocational, and behavioural in nature. An effective guidance programme renders several services geared towards helping students to maximize their potentials, make appropriate career plans, get suitable education, and make satisfactory adjustment in the society. One major aim of guidance service is to enable students to overcome these problems and become self-reliant, self-realized, self-actualized, and self-fulfilled in the future.

Counselling is a talking therapy in which a client discusses freely his/her problems and shares feelings with the counsellor, who helps the client in dealing with the problems. It aims at discussing the personal or socio-psychological issues causing emotional pain or mental instability that makes the client feel uneasy.

The counsellor listens to the problems of the client with empathy and discusses it in a confidential environment. It is not a one-day process, but incorporates many sessions. Counselling helps the client to clearly see the root of the problems and identify the potential solutions to the issues. School counsellors work to maximize student success, promoting access and equity for all students. As vital

members of the school leadership team, school counsellors create a school culture of success for all. School counsellors design and deliver school counselling programs that improve student outcomes.

What is Counselling?

Counselling has different meanings for different people. Counselling is a form of "talk therapy". It is a process where an individual, couple or family meet with a trained professional counsellor to talk about issues and problems that they encounter in their lives. Counselling can provide people with the opportunity to share their views, be heard and gain new perspectives on their situation and experiences. Counselling is used to deal with a broad range of issues and problems that one may be facing. It can help one to deal with stress and provide treatment for anxiety and depression. Counselling can also provide an individual with the opportunity to reassess or set new goals in life and to gain clarity and direction.

Counselling is a process in which the helper expresses care and concern towards the person with a problem, to facilitate that person's personal growth and positive change through self-understanding. Counselling starts from cradle till death. It is the provision of professional assistance and guidance in resolving personal or psychological problems. Counselling is a contracted meeting between a client and a counsellor at a specified date, time, and place with the sole focus to benefit the client. Shertzer and Stone (1981) defined counselling as a wide range of activities designed to aid individuals in solving their problems

Who is a School Counsellor?

School counsellors are trained professionals

employed by individual schools to address issues that affect students' education. These can be emotional/personal, behavioral, academic, institutional, or even related to home life. According to Desire (2019), school counsellors are central part of a productive educational experience. School counsellors provide valuable socio-emotional, academic, post-secondary, and career readiness experience for students and families in the communities they serve. School counsellors are the glue that bind stakeholders together to ensure all students are equipped to become thriving and productive adults in our ever-evolving world. School counsellors design and deliver school counselling programs that improve student outcomes. They lead, advocate, and collaborate to promote equity and access for all students by connecting their school's academic mission and school improvement plan.

Functions of a School Counsellor

The school counsellor serves functions which cannot be provided objectively by the child's parent, family, peers, or teachers (Ogunyemi, 2003). The counsellor can change the viewpoint of the client to help him or her take the right decision or chose a course of action. Counselling tends to be healing, curative or remedial. Counselling tends to change the perspective, to help him/her get the solution by him/herself. Complete secrecy is maintained in counselling. counselling aims at finding problems, working over it, and then resolving it. The duties of a school counsellor vary according to the age of the students. All school counsellors are central in helping students navigate social, educational, and vocational issues. They also help to develop the skills needed to succeed in future.

The school counsellor's functions include:

1. Counselling Students

Counselling students is of course one of the school counsellor's primary responsibilities. This counselling help students overcome behavioural problems, improve their time management and organizational skills, establish academic goals, resolve interpersonal problems with other students, or work through personal problems.

2. Liaise with Teachers and Parents

School counsellors do not work with students alone. It may be necessary at times to involve teachers or parents in the counselling process. An example is counsellors liaising with teachers to develop strategies for assisting a student with learning difficulties.

3. Refer Students to External Agencies

There are times the problems that school counsellors see are too big to deal with at the school level. In such a situation, a school counsellor may refer students to external agencies that are better equipped to deal with the students' concerns. School counsellors are also required by law to report suspected child abuse or neglect to relevant authorities.

4. Participate in Student Welfare and Learning Support Committees

School counsellors are all integral part of a school's student welfare and learning support committees. School counsellors discuss students' issues with other committee members and collect and share information related to student welfare and learning support matters. As part of these committees, school counsellors develop, coordinate, and assess initiatives that promote student welfare and improve learning standards.

5. Evaluate and Improve the Counselling Program

School counsellors should strive to make their school's counselling program the best that it can be. It is a school counsellor's responsibility to look critically at existing counselling practices and try to identify areas that could be improved. School counsellors should take their recommendations up with the school board or principal and campaign for changes that will benefit staff, students, and their family members.

6. Record Keeping

School counsellors are required to maintain records to track the sequence and nature of the services provided within a counselling relationship. Information collected for such records is maintained and controlled in a responsible and efficient manner that is governed by strict rules of confidentiality. It is essential to have these records properly documented to aid transparency and ease in accessing information in the future.

7. Guidance counsellor's responsibilities also include paying attention to cultural or societal differences in dealing with the students

Clients seeking counseling come from an array of backgrounds, requiring counsellors to know and understand the various ways culture impacts the counselling relationship. A lack of sensitivity to a client's unique background and experiences can result in miscommunication, a client's refusal to participate and ultimately, an ineffective counselling relationship. Counsellors should understand that all our clients come with unique needs. Creating a treatment approach that respects the client's cultural identity as well as his/her individual characteristics will meet those needs. Understanding culture helps us to understand how others interpret their environment. Also, understanding culture helps service providers avoid stereotypes and biases that

can undermine their effort.

Other duties of the school counsellor include but not limited to the following:

1. Listen to students concern about academic, emotional, vocational, or social problems.
2. Help students process their problems and plan goals and action.
3. Mediate conflict between students and teachers
4. Improve parent/teacher relationships
5. Help students develop career awareness
6. Organize peer counselling programs
7. Additional duties assigned by the school administrators are equally performed by the counsellors.
8. Counsellor organizes orientation services for new students to enable them to know the environment, history, philosophy, rules and regulations of the new school
9. The school counsellor provides both in-school and out-school placement of the students.

Guidance Services of the School Counsellor

The need for guidance is something that cannot be ignored by anyone. Guidance refers to advice or information provided by a person of experience, to solve a problem or improve something. Guidance refers to the process of helping individuals to discover and develop their potential. Furthermore, guidance helps in the development of educational, vocational, and psychological skills in an individual. Most worthy of note is that guidance would help an individual to achieve an optimal level of happiness and peace in life. Moreover, an individual who receives proper guidance would surely contribute significantly to society.

The concept of guidance is quite democratic in nature. This is because a properly guided individual would be able to shape his destiny.

Guidance is assistance made available by a qualified and adequately trained man or woman to an individual of any age to help him manage his own life actively, develop his own point of view, make his own decisions, and carry out his own burden (Lester and Crow, 1965). It is a service that is universal, not confined to the school or the family. It is found in all phases of life in the home, in business and industry, in government, in social life, in hospitals and in prisons; indeed it is present where there are people who need help and wherever there are people who can help.

Guidance Services help to encourage students' academic, social, emotional, and personal development. To reach this aim, guidance counseling services help students to know themselves better and find effective solutions to their daily problems

According to Shertzer and Stone (1976), guidance services are formalized actions undertaken by the school to help an individual or groups of individuals to understand themselves, their potentials and social problems that they face during the different phases of development. It forms an integral part of school education and is non instructional in nature.

These are: Orientation service, appraisal service, information service, placement service, counselling service, referral service and follow-up service. A guidance programme constitutes various services that are carried out by the counsellor as discussed below:

1. The Orientation Service

Orientation is a guidance service provided to an

individual or group of individuals to familiarize them with the new school, place of work, surroundings, or neighborhood to adapt themselves and make necessary adjustments. Makinde (1993) defines orientation service as a type of service provided to help an individual adjust better in the new circle or environment. The essence of this service is to enable the individual(s) adjust better and effectively within such an environment for which they have little or no knowledge about and to which they are not familiar. Orientation service is useful to a student just entering a new school, be it primary, secondary or higher institution. Orientation service involves processes as familiarization of the students with the administrative setup, the use of school facilities, course registration processes, teaching, and non-teaching staff, etc.

2. Appraisal Service:

An appraisal service involves the collation, organization, arrangement, analysis and interpretation of objective data for the purpose of better understanding of the client/individual. The data or information concerning the client whom the guidance programme is designed to help can be obtained through observation, testing (aptitude, achievement interest, personality and attitude inventories, situational and projective tests) interview and so on. Appraisal service is useful for classification, selection, prediction, diagnosing, placement and identification of gifted, talented, exceptional individuals and those who need remedial measures to help them improve their disabilities. Denga (2019) posited that appraisal data should be regarded in terms of probability and not absolute terms. This is because an individual is a complex whole whose decisions are influenced by series of variables, some of which may be difficult to appraise.

3. Information Service

Information service is an indispensable tool in counselling. This service is designed to facilitate awareness,

knowledge appraisal, decision-making and evaluation. Information service involves the process of collecting and collating facts and figures that are essential for decision-making. The service addresses the individual's need for authentic, reliable, objective, and useable information that will enable him to make adequate and realistic decisions at one time or the other for the actualization of a satisfactory and fulfilled life. It is often said that if you are not informed you are deformed. There are three broad categories of information service which are:

- (a) Educational information
- (b) Vocational information
- (c) Personal social information.

Educational information is the information relating to education which students need with respect to location of available educational institutions, course or subjects offered and entry requirement as well as list of fees and grading system.

Vocational information on the other hand, focuses attention on issues relating to nature of work, working environment, employment prospects, qualifications for entry, fringe benefits such as medical services, recreational facilities, and scholarship opportunities for employees. Lastly, personal – social information are valid and useable data about the opportunities and influence of the human and physical environment which bear on personal and interpersonal relations.

4. Placement Service

Placement is one of the guidance services designed to help an individual in making short- and long-term plan to actualize a particular need or goal. Placement service is designed to aid an individual to achieve admittance into the school of his choice, to get a job or secure treatment for some ailment. Individuals need to be placed in educational or

vocational fields that relate to their interests, abilities and personalities using appraisal tests for determination. For the students to be properly placed, the guidance counsellor should provide relevant information through regular contacts with educational institutions and employers regarding existing opportunities requirements and conditions of the career service for youth and adults.

5. Counselling Service

This service is the most fundamental aspect of the guidance process. Counselling service is the heart of guidance service. The purpose of it is to assist the students/clients in the process of all-round development. Counselling is a talking therapy that involves a trained therapist listening to the client and helping him/her find ways to deal with the challenges of life. It provides an opportunity to the individual to discuss their plans and problems with a professional or counsellor in a helping environment. The process ultimately makes a person capable of self-directing and self-sufficient. The teacher can also provide some assistance because a teacher is the one who spends maximum time working with the students in the classroom. When the teacher comes across any student who exhibits deviant behaviours, he/she can refer the case to a school counsellor. The counselling service includes individual counselling and group counselling. The aim of the counsellor is to promote the growth, development and improve functioning of the client (Walsh, 1975).

6. Referral Service

Referral service is an accepted, recognized, and effective professional service rendered by professional counsellors to resolve problems. Counsellors are not all knowing. Counsellors cannot handle all manners of problems individuals bring to them, some are beyond their competence and scope of services rendered. A referral should be considered when you believe a clients problems go

beyond your own experience and expertise, or when you feel uncomfortable helping a client/student with some issues. Clients may be referred inwards to another counsellor or be referred outwards to another professional helper better suited to helping the client. Making appropriate referrals is part of professional conducts for counsellors in practice. A referral procedure should provide a seamless journey from one professional helper to another.

7. Follow-up Service

The end of counselling session should not be regarded as an end, rather a means to an end. Follow-up services aim at evaluating the placement and other guidance services. It ascertains the changes in occupational interest of students/client and assists them in making adjustments as would be necessary. The aim of the follow-up appraisal is to re-evaluate the effectiveness of therapy; to ensure that there is no relapse and to ensure that the gains of therapy have been used (Akinade, 2016). Follow-up services are also helpful in reorganizing and improving educational programmes.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the roles, functions, and services of school counsellors were highlighted. Counselling is the process of assisting individuals learn more about themselves, their present and future situations to make substantial contribution to the society. The counsellor is regarded as a special kind of a teacher. Counsellors' role is to assist an individual through the counselling relationship. Counsellors provide help to meet the educational, vocational, personal-social as well as psychological needs of individuals. As a helping profession, guidance and counselling cannot be over-emphasized based on the dynamic services rendered by the professionals. Counsellors work with clients of all ages,

groups, couples and families to find solutions to many challenges they face.

The above discussion of functions and guidance services of a school counsellor confirms that these services are aimed at assisting the individual to be self-realized, self-reliant, self-fulfilled and self-actualized.

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