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GLOBALIZATION OF COUNSELLING PROFESSION IN NIGERIA AS IT IMPACTS ON COLLABORATIVE WORK WITH SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATORS

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Abstract

Counselling, as a profession, makes greater impacts on the life of clients when the counsellors collaborate with other professionals. Counselling maximum effectiveness would be jeopardized in the absence of referral services. In this era of globalization, counsellors are expected to externalize their collaborative activities with other professionals, most especially with special needs educators. This paper therefore examines issues relating to globalization of counselling and provides hints that would improve the collaborative work with special needs educator.

Introduction

It is an undeniable fact that so many professions exist in the world today of which counselling psychologist occupies high-flying position. The American Psychological Association (1985) defines counselling psychology as a speciality in the field of psychology whose practitioner, help people improve their well-being, alleviate their distress, resolve their crises, and increase their ability to solve problems and make decisions. They employ scientific approaches in their development of solutions to the variety of human problems resulting from interactions of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and environmental forces. The description of a counselling psychologist further reveals that they conduct research, apply interventions, and evaluate services in order to stimulate personal and group development, and prevent and remedy developmental, educational, social and or vocational problems and adheres to strict standards and ethics.

Counselling, as a discipline of study is more than giving ordinary advice as it is clearly portrayed in this all embracing definition. Counselling psychologist satisfactorily fit into Wikipedia (2010)'s description of a professional. It refers to a professional as a member of a vocation founded upon specialized education with such main characteristics such as academic qualifications, expert and specialized knowledge in field which one is practising, excellent manual/practical and literary skills in relation to the profession, and high quality work. Others include a high standard of professional ethics/behaviour, reasonable work moral and motivation, participation for gain or

livelihood, appropriate treatment and relationship with colleagues, and professional attire. There are unique features of professional association most of which are consciously evident in counselling profession. These, according to Hoyle (1974) in Njoku (2007), include skills and expertise, ethical values, commitment to public services, legitimized authority, proper education, and independence.

Consequently, counsellor is expected to be trained in institution of higher learning for a number of years depending on degree of interest. The training will earn him a certificate of qualification to practice before embarking on professional practice. As a practising counsellor he/she is expected to adhere strictly to the ethical codes governing the profession such as not diagnosing or treating problems outside counselling domain but refer such case to other qualified professional; not receiving clients who are being attended to by another counsellor; and seeking clients' permission before their case is discussed with others. Of equal significance is the ability of the counsellor to promote the profession outside the locality of operation. It is of minimal benefit if the professional conduct is localised and not globalised. The world via technology advancement is now a global village wherein only globalized profession makes meaningful impacts. Consequently, this paper examines the concept of globalization as it relates to counselling profession and the benefits derivable from globalization of counselling profession. It also discusses components of globalization, proofs of globalization of counselling profession and impacts of globalization of counselling profession on special needs education.

The Concept of Globalization and Counselling Profession

The term "globalization" is not a new phenomenon because the Oxford Dictionary of English reports that the word was first employed in a publication entitled '*Towards New Education*' in 1930, to mean a holistic view of human experience in education (Wikipedia, 2011). The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia remarks that the usage of the term slowed down during the First World War and picked up during the third quarter of the twentieth century because of the inward-looking policies pursued by a number of countries in order to protect their respective industries (Wikipedia, 2010).

Globalization as a term might be difficult to define because it is an abstract concept that affects all facets of human endeavour (Covadia & Hadingham, 2005). Globalization, in the conception of Akindele, Gidado, & Olaopa (2002), is the process of intensification of economic, political, social and cultural relations across international boundaries. It has been positively viewed as the emergence of new global cultural forms, media and technologies which shape the relations of affiliation, identity, and interaction within and across local cultural setting while it is negatively perceived as a set of changes used by state policy makers to inspire support for and suppress opposition to changes (Burbules & Torres, 2000). The positive and negative perception notwithstanding, Friedman (1999) posited that globalization is becoming a significant trend in schools up to the point of

comparing students' performance in terms of their performance across the country line as against their classmates.

Different types of globalization have been identified. These include economic, social/cultural, and political globalization (Blurtit, n.d). Economic and technological globalization occurs when goods and services are made available by large corporations utilizing resources in countries where they are more economically viable as well as moving raw materials to where they can be transformed into saleable goods. Cultural globalization on the other hand occurs when more developed countries take advantage of markets the developing country. Political globalization occurs when institutions like the United Nations influences how individual nation states act and supposedly do it from the point of view of the good of the whole.

The advantages of globalization are numerous. These include the following (Cheng, 2000; Brown, 1999; Waters, 1995 in Cheng, 2002):

- Global sharing of knowledge, skills, and intellectual assets that are necessary to multiple developments at different levels;
- Mutual support, supplement and benefit to produce synergy for various developments of countries, communities, and individuals;
- Creating values and enhancing efficiency through the above global sharing and mutual support to serving local needs and growth;
- Promoting international understanding, collaboration, harmony and acceptance to cultural diversity across countries and regions; and
- Facilitating multi-way communications and interactions, and encouraging multi-cultural contributions at different levels among countries.

Globalization of a profession from the explanation above could be equated with expansion of that profession into the international marketplace (Clawson & Jordan, 2001). Globalization of counselling psychology profession, therefore, focuses on creating a distinctiveness that embraces international recognition. It is designed to help establish a comprehensive counsellor education curriculum with a global component (Hoskins & Thompson, 2009). The gains derivable from globalising counselling profession are limitless. Some of these, as observed by Hoskins & Thompson (2009) include ensuring that potentials clients have a clear understanding of the role of a professional counsellor as well as create opportunities to build strong collaborations, conduct meaningful research, and provide training with helping professional around the world.

Proofs of Globalizing Counselling Profession

Quite a number of evidences abound to confirm the globalization of counselling practice locally and internationally. At the home front, the Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON), an umbrella association of all counsellors in Nigeria organized an international conference in August, 2010 for the very first time. Most universities in Nigeria such as Covenant University, Ota; Universities of Ibadan, Ilorin; Lagos where counselling programmes are studied have adopted the policy of publishing in foreign

(off-shore) journal before promotion is earned. This creates an avenue whereby counselling theory and practice in Nigeria is internationalized to the level of theorizing, modifying, experimenting, hypothesizing, and evaluating counselling profession from Nigeria frame of operation. These universities also release their faculty and accept faculty from other countries for sabbatical leave experience.

On the foreign frontage, Gilbert (2006) observed that counselling is now almost universally accepted in Western cultures as effective and appropriate for emotional healing because it is being offered to and experience by people whose cultural background are very dissimilar from the culture where counselling originally developed. Counselling has been described as the new religion exported as part of international aid programmes to numerous countries in the world (Gibert, 20000 and Williams & Irving, 2001). Hwang (2009) asserts that counselling has a long history of interest and involvement in globalization. This is because the Counselling Psychologist journal has published a number of articles on related topics in its international forum since the mid 1980. The journal has recently dedicated January 2000 and July 2003 issues of the journal to topics on the globalization and internalization of counselling psychology.

Component of Globalization of Counselling

Globalization of counselling psychology, just like any other profession, comprises of certain elements which are germane to its effectiveness. Hoskins and Thompson (2009) enumerated this to include collaboration, research, and training. Collaboration aims at establishing and maintaining strong relationship with a specific country they have opportunity to visit while research aims at carrying out researches that address international counselling involving exploration, replication and development of evidence-based practices.

Training is meant to provide training and supervision in counselling that are geared towards meeting the unique needs of those in specific country. These three components are applicable to counselling psychology practice in both developed and developing nations of the world. In Nigeria, for instance, professionals from diverse fields of study often collaborate to improve service delivery and even form professional or academic associations. Most institutions of learning also encourage their faculty to embark on interdisciplinary researches.

Hints for Effective Counselling Psychologists and Special Educators Collaboration

Ikuji & Kanu (2003) opined that professional collaboration generally occurs when different people with diverse areas of expertise come together with a view to finding a solution that will creatively fit with a problem solution. Collaboration in education programme, on the other hand, in the view of Westwood (1997), occurs when two or more individual with useful knowledge work together to devise a master plan for school and classroom intervention. Premised on the fact that the needs of children with special needs are numerous, Nwachukwu (2004) and Liman (2007) concur that no single

professional group could cater for their numerous needs. This justifies the need professional partnership between special educators and others professional such as counselling psychologists.

When collaboration method is adopted for meeting the needs of children with special needs, Eni-Olorunda (2005) enumerates the following as some of the gains:

- helps early intervention thereby reducing the stress parents would normally go through when intervention is delayed;
- gives direction to the exact needs of the child;
- helps exerts to acquire more knowledge from other professionals working with the child thereby enlarging his/her scope in their management of the child;
- makes the work of specialists become easier as parents supply the necessary information that would be useful in the planning of the management of the child;
- helps parents and professionals to gain necessary experience that would be useful in helping the child with special needs at home and in the school.

Similarly, Njoku (2007) asserted that when team work approach is employed by professionals the benefits would not exclude multiply results; better chance of accuracy of decision; monitoring of team members; friendship to develop. Others include the fact that it decreases the loneliness of leadership and increases the authority of the leader as well as releases the talents and strengths of the team members.

For counselling psychologists who are professionally collaborating with special needs educators a number of precautions have to be observed if the collaboration is to be meaningful, effective and promote globalization agenda of counselling profession. Counselling psychologists should ensure that a collaborative effort is goal directed. The objectives to be attained must be clearly written in short and long terms and must be acceptable to parties involved. It is also expected that they are conscious of cultural values and international diplomacy and politics which are capable of derailing the attainment of set objectives of the collaboration. Due to the fact that there are international standards for conducting research it is expected that they adhere strictly to international standards of conducting research in order for the findings to gain global acceptance and recognition. It is also imperative to generate data on the local and international needs of collaborating professions. Unhealthy rivalry and mutual suspicion should be avoided while periodical evaluation of the progress of the relationship is indispensable. For the purpose of continuity there is the need to employ follow-up strategies for some projects/ clients already attended to.

Conclusion

This discourse has amply demonstrated the practicability of professional working partnership between counselling psychologists and special needs children educators. This professional partnership as evident from this paper is capable of improving the general well-being of persons with and without special education needs. It would also

enlarge the scope of counselling practice in Nigeria and at the same time fulfil the globalization agenda if certain precautions and ethical codes are strictly adhered to.

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