

ISSN 1119—636X

**THE  
EXCEPTIONAL  
CHILD**

*The Journal of the National Council for Exceptional Children*

**Volume 4 Numbers 1 & 2, March & July 2000**

**NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN**

# Preparing Rehabilitation Counsellors for Rehabilitation Centre

Gesinde, Abiodun Matthew

Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo.

## Abstract

*Rehabilitation centres are established in order to cater for the social, economic, physical, psychological, counselling, medical, educational and vocational needs of people with handicapping conditions. In an attempt to make such centres realise the purpose for which they were established, a number of personnel are recruited. Such personnel include medical doctors, nurses, special educators, guidance counsellors, teachers, and rehabilitation counsellors among others. Each of these professional has certain preparation to make and diverse duties to perform in the rehabilitation centres. However, the focus of this paper is limited to the necessary preparation a rehabilitation counsellor should make before, during and after the establishment of rehabilitation centres and specific duties to perform in order to make the primary intention of rehabilitation centres attainable. Recommendations were made on how the handicapped, parents, government and non-government organizations could provide enabling environment for both the rehabilitation counsellors and the rehabilitation centre as a whole.*

## Introduction

The prominent use of the term rehabilitation dated back to the second world war when many persons became disabled as a result of injuries sustained during the war. The concept of rehabilitation, according to Ajobiwe (1996) has been misunderstood by a lot of people and often used in restrictive manner. The concept of rehabilitation today is more complex not only in meaning but also in practice (Okediran, 1996). Similarly, Gesinde and Quadri, (1996) submitted that modern day rehabilitation programme is all inclusive and require scientifically oriented approach

## Definition of Rehabilitation and Rehabilitation Centres

Rehabilitation has been defined in various ways both by laymen and scholars in the field. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (1995) edited by Crowther et al refers to rehabilitation as the attempt to help somebody to have a normal life again after he/she has been in prison or hospital or to restore somebody or something to his or its former higher status or position. The Social Development Policy for Nigeria however defines rehabilitation as a process whereby a disabled person is restored to the fullest physical, medical, psychological, social, vocational and economic usefulness of which the individual is capable (FRN, 1989). For the purpose of this paper however, rehabilitation would be conceived as every positive attempt made by individuals or

group of individual to restore people with handicapping conditions or the handicapped to effective state of economic, medical, physical psychological, social, vocational functioning. A rehabilitation centre on the other hand is a designated place where handicapped individuals are kept in order to cater for their economic, medical, physical, psychological, social and vocational needs.

## Objectives of Rehabilitation Centres

There are certain objectives to be attained when rehabilitation centres are established. In the case of Nigeria Rehabilitation Centres the following fundamental and specific objectives are to be attained according to the Social Development Policy for Nigeria (SDP) 1989:

The fundamental objectives are:

To guarantee for the Nigerian handicapped persons conducive environment and opportunities for the total development of their human potentialities. It is particularly aimed at developing capacity to meet the challenges of disability and contemporary living and to ensure the attainment of a satisfactory and overall quality of life which would allow them to make their maximum cooperation towards the development of the nation. (P. 31)

Specifically the Nigerian Rehabilitation Centres are established to:

- (i) ensure effective management of crisis situation of the handicapped;
- (ii) ensure provision of relief materials;
- (iii) ensure an appropriate training for the handicapped in order to reduce dependency;
- (iv) ensure diligent follow-up to facilitate subsequent rehabilitation of the handicapped;
- (v) ensure effective coordination of all the initiatives in the public and private sectors aimed at improving the welfare of disabled persons;
- (vi) make available to every disabled persons in Nigeria adequate physical, social and mental health care facilities;
- (vii) ensure the medical procedure programmes which protect and enhance the image and dignity of the disabled;
- (viii) promote the integration and participation of the disabled in the mainstream of our national life; and
- (ix) ensure adequate income security for the disabled.

#### Rehabilitation Centres and their Management in Nigeria

Several rehabilitation centres have been established in various parts of the world. In Nigeria for instance, there are centres like Rehabilitation Centre for the Disabled, Moniya, Ibadan, Oyo State; The Nigerian Society for the Blind; Vocational Training Centre Oshodi, Lagos State; The Nigeria Farm Craft Centre for the Blind, Ikeja, Lagos State; Enugu Vocational Rehabilitation Centre, Enugu; The Akpodium Rehabilitation Centre for the Blind, Aboh Mbaize, Imo State; The Oji River Rehabilitation Centre for the Disabled, Oji River; The Marist Brothers Rehabilitation Centre, Uturu, Imo State; The Blind Workshop, Pokiskum; The Arts and Crafts Training Centre, Uyo; The Sheltered Workshop for the Blind, Katsina, and The Sheltered Workshop for the Blind, Zaria, Kaduna State.

Relevant literature, however, revealed that the management of these rehabilitation centres listed above is far from satisfactory and therefore there is the need for improvement. For instance, Ojoru (1995) observed that the few rehabilitation centres in Nigeria are not functioning according to international standard. In his opinion they are bedevilled by over crowdedness, lack of qualified personnel, insufficient funds and mismanagement.

In the same vein, Ezera (1995) reported that researchers have identified poor financing of rehabilitation centres; inadequate/lack of vital machines for vocational training; inadequate/lack of materials (especially consumables); teaching staff mostly untrained/unskilled; lack of incentives for staff; poor motivation of clients; lack of employment for trained clients among others as some of the factors responsible for failure of vocational rehabilitation in Nigeria.

#### Special Needs of Handicapped Persons and Helping Professions

As a result of their handicapping conditions which vary from emotional disturbance and social maladjustment, individuals like the mentally retarded, visually impaired, hearing impaired, learning disabled, the crippled, the neurologically impaired persons require special and specific attention when compared with non-handicapped individuals. In other words, they require the services of specific professionals who can assist in catering for their economic, medical, physical, psychological, social and vocational needs. The category of workers needed in this endeavour are those from the helping professions. A "helping" profession, according to Gibson and Mitchell (1986) may be described as one in which the members are especially trained and licensed or certificated to perform a unique and needed service for the fellow human beings of their society. They are regarded as such because of the nature of their work. They assist individual or group of individuals to overcome diverse needs. The professionals in this category include medical doctors, nurses, guidance counsellors, social workers, special educators, and rehabilitation counsellors among others. The preoccupation of this paper, however, centres on the rehabilitation counsellors. Goldenson (1978) cited in Abosi and Ozoji (1986) included counselling services as one of the services to be rendered in rehabilitation centres.

#### Who is a Rehabilitation Counsellor?

A rehabilitation counsellor is somebody who has been professionally trained to combine rehabilitation processes with counselling programmes and skills to restore to normal functioning those who are experiencing sudden disorganization in their lives both physically and mentally. In other words, he applies counselling principle, theories, practice, skills coupled with rehabilitation processes to systematically and orderly restore people with handicapping

conditions or people experiencing sudden disruption of their lives and properties due to accidents, illness, imprisonment etc. to a position that would enable them meet their emotional, psychological, counselling and vocational needs. He performs his professional duties basically in rehabilitation centres.

It must, however, be added that the term rehabilitation counsellor according to Gibson and Mitchell (1986) was not in professional literature until the late 1930s. They added that since that time, rehabilitation counselling has generally come to be recognised as basically psychological counselling that specializes in the rehabilitation of persons with physical as well as social and emotional problems.

The practice of rehabilitation counselling, in the submission of Jacques (1969) has passed through four different models which include:

- (i) Vocational agent, trainer, or worker model
- (ii) Vocational counsellor or coordinator of services model
- (iii) Psychotherapeutic model
- (iv) Community-centred team counsellor model (P. 17).

### **Rehabilitation Counsellor Preparation Towards Meeting the Needs of the Handicapped**

In the process of performing his professional responsibilities a rehabilitation counsellor is expected to undergo appropriate training which would enable him realise the objectives of both rehabilitation counselling and rehabilitation centres. Preparation involves training, planning, consultation and determination to succeed.

#### **Training**

Before an individual would be saddled with the responsibilities of meeting the emotional, psychological, counselling, and vocational needs of handicapped individuals in a rehabilitation centre he must have received adequate training. He must have been exposed to issues, programmes, processes of rehabilitation and various counselling techniques, principles, theories, researches among others. His training must include knowledge of and issues relating to different types of disabilities.

#### **Planning**

This involves identification of specific and fundamental objectives/goals of rehabilitation programmes and counselling services. These goals are to be stated in terms of short or long span of realisation. Goals to be set should be unambiguous

and realisable within the time limit. In addition, strategies for the attainment of these goals must be identified as well as hindrances to the realisation of goals so as to prevent or resolve them.

#### **Consultation**

Apart from the training received in the University, he is expected to consult periodically other experts in the field of rehabilitation counselling and other fields such as medicine, special education, counselling psychology and guidance and counselling. He is expected not only to read recent journals dealing with issues on rehabilitation, special education, rehabilitation counselling, and counselling psychology, (in order to be conversant with the development in the field and similarly identify new discoveries), but also subscribe to them.

#### **Determination to Succeed**

From the onset, the rehabilitation counsellor should be in the right frame of mind. He ought to be confident in himself, his abilities and above all have strong will to excel.

#### **Services Rendered by Rehabilitation Counsellor**

A rehabilitation counsellor is expected to justify his professional responsibilities via the rendering of specific services to the handicapped in the rehabilitation centre. Several services which include organisation and administration services, personal-adjustment services, counselling services, information provision services, career guidance, referral services and follow-up service.

#### **Organization and Administration Services**

Rehabilitation counsellor organises and coordinates the administrative affairs of his area of jurisdiction. These give room for smooth running and effective functioning. Organization and administration involve keeping of appropriate records, files, documents, organizing seminars, talks, symposium, conferences, etc. He sees to it that the physical environment or architectural design of the buildings is suitable and convenient for the handicapped. The physically handicapped should be free to move around the vicinity. For instance, the entrance door to the counselling room should be wide enough to accommodate wheel chairs. The rehabilitation counsellor carries out the organization and administration functions, however with the support or cooperative efforts of other workers such as secretary, receptionists, social worker, cleaner, gardener, driver and above all management board of the rehabilitation centre.

### **Personal-Adjustment Services**

The physically handicapped individual need to adapt and adjust to the reality of his situation. Adjustment refers to an individual's general adaptation to his environment and demands of life. Rehabilitation counsellor, therefore, teaches the handicapped as well as his parents and siblings how to perceive the handicapping condition positively, understand its unique characteristics, and identify problems associated with it. Adjustment strategies that would enable the handicapped cope with this exceptionality are made known.

### **Counselling Services**

This is the major function of the rehabilitation counsellor. He attends to emotional and psychological disturbances generated by disability. He is not limited to counselling the handicapped individuals alone but also counsels parents of the handicapped as well as the non-handicapped in his area of jurisdiction. He applies counselling techniques, principles, skills and exhibit qualities of a good counsellor to the maximum benefit of the handicapped. He counsels the handicapped educationally, socially and vocationally.

### **Information Provision Services**

Rehabilitation counsellor collects relevant and available information on issues relating to the handicapped through textbooks, journals, articles, and researches, etc. He does this in conjunction with other specialists in the field of special education, medicine, counselling psychology etc. He disseminates such information to the general public if need be through various media establishment like newspaper houses, television houses etc. He supplies information to the handicapped on issues relating to their educational development, social development and vocational development which would enlighten them to make a reasonable decision.

### **Career Guidance**

In their attempt to assist the handicapped attain independent productive functioning level through diverse occupations rehabilitation counsellor provides information pertaining to employment opportunities. Specific jobs, that would match their disability are made known to them. The nature of job, salary attached, fringe benefits, hazards, requirements, place or location of the job, mode of retirement, opportunity for training and retraining are some of the revelations that are provided. Rehabilitation counsellor, in addition,

organizes career talks, conferences, seminars on career whereby handicapped individuals who are highly placed in the society despite their disabilities would be invited to give talks on career aspiration of the handicapped. This is, however, not to say that the non-handicapped individuals cannot be invited. Similarly, the rehabilitation counsellor exposes the handicapped through various excursions to industrial establishments and educational institutions.

### **Referral Services**

It is the responsibility of a rehabilitation counsellor to identify problems within his profession. A rehabilitation counsellor cannot assist the handicapped to meet all his needs. As a result problems outside the area of his jurisdiction are referred to specialist in that area. For instance, an handicapped individual with neurological problem would be referred to medical practitioners for appropriate diagnosis, assessment, treatment and evaluation.

### **Follow-Up Services**

This is a service that a rehabilitation counsellor provides after the termination of counselling relationship with the clients. i.e. after a specific solution has been found to the identified need of the handicapped. As the name implies, it is a service designed to monitor whether the handicapped individual continues to maintain the desirable behaviour. If the contrary is the case an attempt is made to rectify problem areas.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

From the foregoing it is evident that the duties of the rehabilitation counsellor are relevant to the realisation of the goals of rehabilitation centres and there is the need to prepare adequately for the task. In order to make their preparation and professional duties fruitful the following recommendations are made:

- Handicapped individuals should realise that rehabilitation centres are specifically designed to meet their diverse needs, hence, they are expected to be part and parcel of rehabilitation programmes rather than mingling with their non-handicapped counterpart where adequate attention would not be given to them.
- Parents of the handicapped should not hesitate to send their handicapped children to rehabilitation centres. This is, however, not to say that their handicapped children should just be dumped there with no attempt at complimenting the efforts of

rehabilitation programmes. In other words, they (handicapped) should not be abandoned in the rehabilitation centre but should also meet their diverse needs within their available means.

- Government in the local, state, and federal levels should intensify efforts in making life more bearable for the handicapped who made themselves available for rehabilitation programmes in the country through the provisions of funds, qualified personnel, hygienic environment among others.
- Non-governmental organizations should extend their philanthropic gestures to all the rehabilitation centres in the country.
- Rehabilitation counsellors should form an umbrella association in the country and ensure that one of the main objectives of the association is to publish journals that would enlighten the general populace on their activities and needs.

**References**

Abosi, C.O. and Ozoji, E. D. (1986). *Educating the Blind: A Descriptive Approach*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited

Ajobiwe, T. (1996). Community Based Vocational Rehabilitation (CBVR) in Practice: An Appraisal of Ibadan Pilot Schemes. *Journal of Research in Special Education*, 1 (1) pages...

Crowther, J; Kawanagh, K; and Asby, M. (Eds)(1995). *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*(5th Edition) New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.

Ezera, I. (1995). Productive Work: A viable strategy in the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons

in Nigeria in E.d. Ozoji, and I. K. Nwazuoke (Eds) *Professionalisation in Special Education in Nigeria*. Jos: National Council for Exceptional Children (NCEC) P. 264-267.

Federal Republic of Nigeria(1989). *Social Development Policy*. Lagos

Gesinde, A. M. and Quadri, K. (1996). Complimentary Efforts of Governmental and Non-Governmental Organizations in the Rehabilitation of the Disabled in T. A. Adedoja, Theo Ajobiwe, and M. A. Alabi (Eds.) *Family School, Community and Government Involvement in Rehabilitation of the Handicapped*. Oyo: Sped Publication Series P. 213-222.

Gibson, R.L. and Mitchell, M.H. (1986). *Introduction to Guidance and Counselling* (2nd Edition). New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.

Jacques, \*M. E. (1969). *Rehabilitation Counselling: Scope and Services* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Ogundare, S.F. (1996). Life long Rehabilitative Strategies for the Disabled in Nigeria: The Role of Parents and the Public in T. A. Adedoja, Theo Ajobiwe, and M. A. Alabi (Eds). *Family, School, Community and Government Involvement in Rehabilitation of the Handicapped*. Oyo: Sped Publication Series. P. 1-16

Ojo, P.E. (1995). Management of rehabilitation Centres in Nigeria in E.D. Ozoji, and I.K. Nwazuoke (Eds). *Professionalism in Special Education in Nigeria*. Jos: NCEC P. 248-252.

Okediran, O.O., (1996). Legislation and Rehabilitation: A call for Action. In T. A. Adedoja, Theo Ajobiwe and M.A. Alabi (Eds). *Family, School, Community, and Government Involvement in Rehabilitation of the Handicapped*. Oyo: Sped Publications Series Pg. 167-174.