

DEVELOPING A TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR THE COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGIST

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Abstract

This article considers the background and need for training programme for the Counselling Psychologist in Nigeria. Nigerians, especially those in the Eastern part of the country, underwent various traumatic conditions since her independence in 1960, the most outstanding being the Nigerian Civil War between 1967 and 1970. The nation's psyche has been battered. The author looked into the effects of bad governance on the individuals, families, and institutions. Furthermore, a cursory evolution of counselling psychology was attempted, thereby concluding the need for the programme in our tertiary institutions. Finally, counselling psychology training programmes are developed from a scientist-practitioner model of education. At a core level, this model prescribes the integration of science base with practice applications and the development of research that is relevant to practice. Recommendations are given.

Background and the Need for Training Programme for Counselling Psychologists

Right from the time of Socrates, people have been making use of counselling in all spheres of life, but the use was limited to those knowledgeable in the “queen of all sciences” i.e. philosophy. Time has changed drastically and each day begins with compounding problems beyond individuals, groups, institutions and corporate organizations.

Since Nigeria's Independence in 1960, the nation is confronted with lots of problems, like ethnicity and quota systems in government institutions, public offices, etc. "Though tribes and tongues may differ, in brotherhood we stand" is a line from Nigeria's first National Anthem. But, do we realize that the strength of any nation lies in its diversity? It was not even half a decade since our independence that Nigerians woke up one morning traumatized with mutiny in the army. Blood of humans flowed on our streets like that of cows flowing in the butchery. The army claimed that they were out to clean the nation of maladministration, only to later prove to be worse than the civilians in government.

Furthermore, the army planted dangerous cankerworms far more stronger than before. This led to the Nigerian-Biafran civil war between 1967 and 1970. Many people, especially from Biafra lost their lives and those who actually fought and survived suffered from posttraumatic stress disorder. Others still suffered from other mental and physical problems of adaptation due to loss of family members, homes, and jobs. Those who owned homes in other parts of Nigeria were dispossessed of them in the name of abandoned property in their fatherland, where "in brotherhood we stand".

The Federal Government, still under the khaki boys, mouthed "No victor-No vanguished". Moreover, the same Government talked of "Reconciliation, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction". All these nice and sweet sounding terms ended up only in the air and newspapers. No healing has been tried on these people till today – those vanguished without reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction, "the wretched of the earth and "the living-deads" walking our streets. The wounds of all these maltreatments may have been healed, but what of the scars, and the mental anguish?

Today, the story is still the same. More of these wounds are being multiplied by the political system in the country. The rich are becoming richer while the poor are becoming poorer. The middle class has vanished. Demagogues are hoisted as presidents of the country, and as a result, we are in the ocean of "democratic un-freedom" under

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benevolent despots. All these lead to the decay in the system and the system needs overhauling. The purpose of this work is to highlight the need for a paradigm shift in school counselling so that it reflects on the curriculum of education in the country.

The family system

The worst hit is the family, which is the nucleus of every society. The Nigerian family life is fast becoming atypical in every sense. Let us consider the following facts and forecasts:

- a) Many marriages made this year will probably end up in divorce;
- b) The number of teenage unwed mothers is on the increase, and equally is the number of unwed mature women, economically self sufficient with a stronger desire for a child than for a husband;
- c) There are many marriageable girls/women who are pining away “still searching” for husbands.

To add salt to injury, let us consider the composition of a family today: There are many female heads, widowed – children; female heads, divorced or separated – children; female heads, single - children; female heads, widowed – no children; female heads, divorced or separated – no children; female heads, single – no children; male heads, previously – children; male heads, single – no children; married couples – five or more children; married couples, two or three children; married couples – one child; married couples - no children.

With the above family configurations, there emerge the following marital dysfunctions – ineffective communication patterns; sex incompatibilities; anxiety over making and/or maintaining a long term commitment; fewer shared activities; reduced exchange of affection; infidelity; lack of sensitivity or indifference to a partner’s feelings or wishes; conflicts over power and control; undeveloped problem solving skills; conflicts over money, independence, in-laws,

or children; physical abuse. Changes in the economy, in religion, in governmental programmes, all can add stress to the family, mental abuse and family violence.

The School System

What do Nigerians expect their educational system to achieve for persons and the society, or simply put, what is education for? One can say that one task of education is to create good and effective citizens. Another could be that education should equip the citizenry to reshape their society so that the flaws and inequities are eliminated. The next task of education is to provide the individuals with the possibility for upward mobility and good jobs. The third task of education is personal development. Through education, the individual can hope to be liberated from the bonds of ignorance and be prepared to maximize his/her intellectual, emotional and social development.

With these points in view, do Nigerians get what education stands for? We get none of the above. Political leaders in Nigeria make policies and decisions during “economic-go-slow in their favours”. An example would be some members of the Legislature – national, state, and local governments, who never crossed secondary education, but receive fat salaries more than a University lecturer with a doctorate degree. Low salaries, inadequate resources and poor working conditions lead some teachers to engage in other businesses to make ends meet. This creates avenue for gangsterism, cultic practices among students. What could be done to checkmate these social and cultural malaises?

Individual

It is believed that today many Nigerians might be suffering from relatively less disabling, albeit equally psychologically distressing, minor mental disorders. Mental health means “having a healthy, good view of yourself; relating well with others; and contributing meaningfully to the society. When one is found wanting in any of these, then, something is going wrong. Nigerians oftentimes appear

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normal and healthy looking, but are just masking their mental illnesses. Lists of early signals of mental disorder noticeable among Nigerians include sleep disorder, worry or unnecessary anxiety, irritability or suspicion of somebody or something being after one's life. These result to seeing strange things and hearing strange voices. When sad, disinterested or becoming weak in the morning, it is a signal that something is going wrong. With the growing economic distress, it becomes clear that many Nigerians have one case of mental disorder than realized. They are ignorant of this fact, but that does not obliterate the fact. Owing to our economic challenges, the populace is bound to be depressed, moody, sad, restless, and anxious.

All of these abound in Nigeria. The army of unemployed qualified citizens is particularly vulnerable to these conditions that ultimately lead to mental breakdown. Those laid off or exposed to shocking traumatic experiences, like armed robbery attacks, assassination attempts and life threatening situations, constitute a highly vulnerable class for mental disorder. Those affected by increasing downsizing and laying off by distressed companies are also highly susceptible just as those who lose something precious or treasurable. The nation's poor road network makes accidents and mishaps a daily occurrence, and this can make people lose their senses. In addition to these are those who believe they are under spiritual attack or surveillance, and this fuels morbid fear and phobias which can spark off mental breakdowns among the people. Based on the aforementioned problems, counselling psychology should be pursued vigorously in our tertiary educational institutions.

Counselling Psychology

Counselling Psychology is a psychological specialty that facilitates personal and interpersonal functioning across the life span with a focus on emotional, social, vocational, educational, health-related, developmental and organizational concerns. Through the integration of theory, research and practice, and with sensitivity to ethnic issues, this specialty encompasses a broad-range of practices that help people

improve their well-being, alleviate distress and maladjustment, resolve crises, and increase their ability to live more highly functioning lives. In this vein, counselling psychologists apply psychological knowledge and skills to problems of human development and adjustment in educational, industrial, mental-health, and medical settings. Therefore, counselling psychologists are trained to help normal and moderately maladjusted persons with problems and developmental needs over life cycles. As a general philosophy, counselling psychology's roles and functioning are intended to facilitate the development of the individuals and families, serving as well as helping to restructure environments that limit positive growth, learning, and health.

Short History of the Evolution of Counselling Psychology

Counselling started with the early Greek philosophers, but the practice was limited to only those knowledgeable in the "queen of all sciences" (philosophers). In the middle ages, the Christian Churches extended their charitable work to the severely mentally disturbed people. St Augustine was the earliest forerunner of psychoanalysis, writing about feelings, mental anguish and human conflict.

Later, it stopped because demonology and superstition had made powerful comeback. By the fourteenth century, the mental ill came to be seen as despised objects of scorn and persecution (Saranson & Saranson, 1980: 27). During the Renaissance, Johann Weyer, a German physician contributed in saving countless mentally ill people from being burned at the stake by vigorously asserting that these people should be treated medically (Saranson & Saranson, 1980). By mid Nineteenth century, there appeared a lot of humanitarian ideas, which led to a broad recognition of the need to reform social institutions.

Wilhelm Wundt in 1879 founded the first psychology laboratory and spearheaded psychology's effort to pattern itself after physics, chemistry and physiology (McMahon & McMahon, 1982). Later, Titchener from Cornell University in America, introduced the term, structuralism, to describe Wundt's psychology, which focused on

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mental structures and introspection. An opposition came from William James, also a psychologist from Harvard University, with his own kind of psychology termed functionalism, since he questioned how consciousness functions.

By 1920, three new schools of thought emerged, namely Behaviorism, Gestalt psychology and Psychoanalysis. With Behaviorism, John B. Watson rebelled against introspection and instituted Stimulus-Response psychology. About the same time behaviorism was surfacing in America, Gestalt psychology was making headway in Germany. Gestalt psychologists rejected introspective psychology and behaviorism. Gestalt believed that “what we see is relative to background to other aspects of the whole. The whole is different from the sum of its parts; the whole consists of parts in relationship” (Atkinson, Atkinson & Hilgard, 1983). This gave rise to cognitive psychology.

Sigmund Freud introduced psychoanalytic psychology, which focuses on the unconscious. Freudian influence has been so wide spread that even persons who know nothing about psychology seem to have a basic familiarity with psychoanalysis. Guidance and Counselling on the professional scene in the early 1900s and new theories of counselling emerged. Emphasis began to shift from studying merely abnormal psychology to normal human growth and development. Thus, a stage was set when Carl Rogers published his work entitled *Counselling and Psychotherapy* in 1942. Subsequently, the Veterans Administration funded the training of counsellors and psychologists, rewrote the specifications for vocational counsellors and coined the term Counselling psychologist (Gladding, 1988).

Summarily, Counselling psychology has grown from a narrow base in clinical psychology and vocational guidance counselling to a broader base which facilitates the development of potential in all persons. In their delineation of counselling psychology, Thompson and Super (1964: 160) noted that “this specialty has made progress in developing a concept of role and function which is broader than vocational guidance, but different from clinical psychology in its

emphasis upon development, assessment, plan and role”. With the foregoing, we can observe that our country is overripe for as many counselling psychologists as possible, and therefore, the need to develop a curriculum for the training.

Masters in Counselling Psychology Programme

Philosophy and Objectives

The Master’s Programme provides training within the context of the scientist – practitioner model. It is accomplished through course work and practicum experience. The model focuses on application of the basic principles of psychology and psychotherapy to:

- provide instruction in the range of scientific and practice activities within counselling psychology;
- aid in the resolution of psychological and social problems essentially normal individuals;
- serve as psychotherapeutic agents for individuals with severe problems in personal adjustment;
- train counselling psychologists in basic research skills.

The master’s programme emphasizes acquisition of counselling skills through exposure to educational and practical experiences.

Counselling Core

The counselling core consists of coursework designed to integrate content and practice. The coursework focuses on introductory counselling theory, assessment, occupational information, psychopathology, life span development, quantitative methods and ethics. The aim is to introduce the students to the fundamental, theoretical approach taken by counselling psychology in the treatment of human psychological problems. An emphasis is placed on

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developmental and intervention issues as they relate to normal and deviant behavior.

Master in Marital and Family Therapy Programme

Marital and Family Therapy programme is a comprehensive two-year programme that combines academic excellence with clinical expertise. Students are taught a systematic, integrative and problem centered approach to psychotherapy. This approach specifically aims to address clients' emotional and interpersonal problems by considering the influences of family and other relationships in a bio-psychosocial context. For example, in this integrative systematic approach, psychodynamics, biology, gender, socio-economics, culture, ethnicity, and family life cycle issues are all actively considered in order to help clients understand and address their problems.

Curriculum – Standard and Two-Plus Curriculum

The Master's Programme in Counselling Psychology is normally designed to prepare professional counsellors, who are capable of understanding and intervening in relation to both individual and socio-system functioning within family, work, learning and community settings. The programme should be committed to a life-course developmental perspective and to a personality and social systems approach to the study of human psychopathology, personal and career growth and adaptation/adjustment. The programme is a two-year terminal practitioner-training programme leading to a specialization in either psychological career/corporate human services or child assessment and interview. The programme should provide general introductory theoretical knowledge and clinical experience in the first year, followed by more advanced and specialized knowledge and clinical experience in the second year. Graduates are prepared to work as professional counsellors in mental health and special service agencies – colleges and university counselling services, hospital and residential treatment facilities and corporate/industrial settings.

Furthermore, rigorous intensive supervised field training is a critical component and hallmark of the programme. Students complete a minimum of two years of field work, including a general introductory experience in the practicum year and a more specialized experience in the externship year. All fieldwork training is accompanied by a concurrent class or seminar focusing on counselling skills, theoretical knowledge, professional issues and ethics and the organization of service delivery systems.

The Two-Plus Curriculum is designed for qualified students entering the counselling field for the first time following a career in another discipline and having minimal academic and experiential background in psychology. This track provides the supplementary course work and experiential needs of such students. Both the Standard Curriculum and Two-Plus Curriculum should satisfy the requirements for licensure as a clinical professional counsellor in Nigeria.

Entry Qualification

Undergraduate majors in psychology and others from an array of different academic and professional backgrounds in social sciences are eligible. Table 1.1 contains the curriculum comparison.

Table 1.1: *Curriculum Comparison*

	Two-Year Standard Curriculum	Three year Two-Plus Curriculum
<i>Minimum Yr in Programme</i>	2	3
<i>Minimum #Courses Required for degree</i>	24	24
<i>Requisite prior for Clinical & Academic Experience</i>	Some psychology course work; some clinical experience	Minimum to no psychology background and/or clinical experience.

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Table 1:2 contains the courses required for all students.

Table 1.2: ***The courses required for all students***

Masters Programme in Counselling Psychology Standard Curriculum Courses Required for all Students

Table 1.3 contains the theoretical foundations, individual and social bases of behaviour.

Theoretical foundations/individual & social bases of behaviour (8 units)

Course Codes	Course Description
<i>COUN PSY – 411 (1)</i>	Individuals & systems Psychodynamic view
<i>COUN PSY – 412 (1)</i>	Group & Organizational Dynamics
<i>COUN PSY – 414 (1)</i> OR <i>COUN PSY – 434 (1)</i>	Adult Development OR Child & Adolescent Development.
<i>COUN PSY – 415 (1)</i>	Psychopathology thro the Adult life course
<i>COUN PSY – 416 (1)</i>	Theories of counselling & psychotherapy
<i>COUN PSY – 422 (1)</i>	Marital & Family Therapy
<i>COUN PSY – 427 (1)</i> <i>COUN PSY – 452 (1)</i>	Career Psychology Substance Abuse.

Clinical Intervention & Assessment (14 Units)
(Plus additional Units for Students in the Two-Plus curriculum)

COUN PSY – 417 (1) OR COUN PSY – 436 (1)	Cognitive Behavioural Therapy OR Child Therapy
COUN PSY – 426 (1) OR COUN PSY – 435 (1)	Assessment of Individual differences OR Child Psychological Assessment
*COUN PSY 479 – 1 (1)	Introduction to Clinical Practice
*COUN PSY 479 – 2 (1)	Introduction to Clinical Practice
*COUN PSY 479 – 3 (1)	Introduction to Clinical Practice
**COUN PSY 480 – 1 (1)	Counselling Methods 1: Interviewing and Assessment
**COUN PSY 480 – 2 (1)	Counselling Methods 11: Intervention
** COUN PSY 480 – 3 (1)	Counselling Methods 111: Special issues
** COUN PSY 481 – 1, 2, 3, (1), (1), (1)	Supervised Practicum in Counselling Psych.
*** COUN PSY 482 - 1 (0 or 1) COUN PSY 482 – 2 (0 or 1) OR COUN PSY 482 – 3 (0 or 1)	Supervised Externship in Counselling Psychology
*** COUN PSY 483 – 1 (1)	Professional Ethics
*** COUN PSY 483 – 2 (1)	Ethnic Diversity
*** COUN PSY 483 – 3 (1)	Professional Issues

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Research

1 Unit

COUN PSY 406 (1)	Data Display
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Recommended Electives

*****COUN PSY 453 - (1)	Treatment of Trauma
*****COUN PSY 418 – (1)	Psychodynamic Psychotherapy

*470 1, 2, 3 are taken by Two-Plus students only and contain concurrent coursework and field training.

** 480 and 481 are taken concurrently and in conjunction with one another.

***482 and 483 are taken concurrently and in conjunction with one another.

**** Students may work with adviser to select a different elective (s).

Recommendations

Despite preponderance of the siege of mental disorder in this country, time has come for the government to wage war against this problem. Our streets are littered with haggard and sometime naked people. In 2006, Neuropsychiatry Hospital, Aro in Abeokuta recorded 50,501 patients, according to Owoeye (2008). Provision of more counselling psychologists is highly needed to fish out the problems before escalating into serious mental disorder.

There is the need for forming a Council of Counselling Psychology training programmes to represent the interests of Counselling Psychology in virtually any forum that might affect training. Furthermore, the Council is to support its members by disseminating training-relevant information and by providing a vehicle to communicate with one another. This Council should liaise with the Ministry of Education and the NUC to create awareness for the programme. The Council should be able to offer licensure after completion of Masters or Doctoral Programmes by organizing State or

National examinations for the professional certificates to practice. The Council should monitor

1. Whether the programme is offered in an institution of higher education accredited by the NUC;
2. Whether the programme is clearly and publicly identified and labeled as a counselling psychology programme as its intent of the preparation of counselling psychologists;
3. Whether the programme includes an integrated, organized plan of study and ensure a breadth of exposure to the field of psychology;
4. Whether the programme includes supervised practicum, internships, and field or laboratory training appropriate to the practice of counselling psychology;
5. Whether there is an identifiable counselling psychology faculty;
6. Whether the programme evidences a deliberate effort to develop students' knowledge and skill relevant to human diversity, (e.g., people with handicapping conditions, different ages, gender, ethnic backgrounds, religions, life styles, and differing social and individual backgrounds);
7. Whether the programme requires instruction in scientific and professional ethics and standards, research design and methodology, statistics, psychological measurement and history and system of psychology;
8. Whether the programme faculty evidences continued involvement in teaching, research, and supervision;
9. Whether the faculty's education and training are in the specialty area of counselling psychology;
10. Whether the faculty evidences an identification with and professional involvement in counselling psychology. Finally, the Council should have accreditation status while the membership should expire after one or two years.

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