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Diversity And Social Justice Issues In Counselling

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Abstract: Increasing concern regarding the ethical and effective treatment of diverse populations requires that counsellors begin to consider the effects of culture and society dynamics on counselling process. The increasing diversity of the Indian population is often mentioned in the rationale for giving increased attention to the impact of social cultural differences on counselling process. Human diversity affects nearly every aspect of counselling process, therefore counsellors need to use new framework to understand themselves and diverse the clients and to guide them in counselling process.

Keyword: Diversity , Social Justice , effective treatment , mentioned.

A.INTRODUCTION:

Counselling is a shared process between counsellor and client. The major responsibility in creating this relationship resets initially with the counsellor, demands for clients involvement and commitment increase over time. It will develop and flourish only through shared efforts. Development evolves in stages that take the relationship from initiation to closure. Eagan (2002), stated that the helping relationship has three phages: relationship building, challenging the client to find ways to change and facilitating positive client action. The goal in the first phase is to build a foundation of mutual trust and client understanding. In the second phase, the counsellor challenges the client to "try on" new ways of thinking, feeling and behaving. In the third phase, the counsellor aids the client in facilitating actions that lead towards change and growth in the client's life outside the counselling relationship.

Increasing concern regarding the ethical and effective treatment of diverse populations requires that counsellors begin to consider the effects of culture and society dynamics on counselling process. The purpose of this paper are to 1) introduce the background of multicultural and social justice movements in counselling , 2) outline of variety of frameworks for understanding diverse clients , and 3) explore the implications of diversity on counselling process.

Human diversity affects nearly every aspect of counselling process, therefore counsellors need to use new framework to understand themselves and diverse the clients and to guide them in counselling process.

Issues of diversity, multiculturalism and social justice are often confusing and frustrating to discuss. Part of difficulty is the lack of clear, common language and meanings with which to communicate important ideas. Use of the terms multiculturalism and diversity interchangeably when discussing group and individual differences may cause confusion (Arredondo et al, 1999).The term diversity is used to describe group and individual differences. The dimensions of differences commonly used include race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, disability status, age and spirituality (Adams et al, 1996).

Discussions about counselling diverse clients often refer to cultural differences. Culture is the "characteristic values, behaviours, products, and worldviews of a group of people with a distinct sociohistorical context" (Sue & Sue, 2003). Cultural differences may be readily observable as differences in clothing, foods, customs or traditions, languages, parenting beliefs family structure, social hierarchy, gender role expectations, communication style and relationship to time and space. Discussing diversity also requires the use of terms to describe social and cultural groups that are numerically superior or hold more power and status versus groups that have fewer numbers or less power and status. The terms majority, dominant culture, and agent refer to groups and members of groups who are more numerous or hold more power. The terms minority, non dominant culture, underrepresented, and target refer to groups and members of groups who have fewer numbers, less power or both (Sue & Sue, 2003).

The social justice counselling perspective has at its core the goal of full and equal participation of all groups in society. Goodman (2001) described social justice as a process of seeking dignity, self determination and safety for all people by addressing issues of equity, power and oppression. Thus social justice oriented counsellors facilitate client well- being by seeking to establish a more equal distribution of power and resources in society through micro level intervention (Goodman, 2001).

DIVERSITY IN TODAY'S SOCIETY

The increasing diversity of the Indian population is often mentioned in the rationale for giving increased attention to the impact of social cultural differences on counselling process. In the 2004 census, persons over age of 65 accounted for nearly 16% of the population and 27% of the population was identified as having a disability.

Diversity has potential to strengthen the society, but it may also contribute to misunderstanding, conflict and

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oppression. Although the counselling profession is often cited as a resource for promoting the well being of diverse people, it has often failed in this capacity because, adhering to culturally determined definitions of normal behaviour and language, which can impede communication between counsellor and client, minimizing or ignoring the impact of clients group sociopolitical history; and underutilizing client support systems and systematic interventions (Sue & Sue, 2003). The goal of addressing such limitations to provide competent counselling to diverse clients continues to be the focus of the both the multicultural and social justice counselling perspectives. Both multicultural and social justice counselling perspectives share core assumptions:
Counselors must consider client's social and cultural context during the counselling process.
Oppression significantly affects the lives of many diverse clients.
Counsellors must go outside the boundaries of traditional counselling theory and techniques to serve these clients.

Constantine (2001) concluded that the ability to understand diverse clients and their concerns in terms of sociocultural and systematic factors is necessary for counsellors to adequately treat them.

SKILLS AND INTERVENTIONS
Therapy is a process of interpersonal interaction and social influence that relies on effective communication (Sue & Sue, 2003).Both counsellor and client must communicate adequately, in both verbal and nonverbal realms, for effective therapy to take place. Empowerment is a commonly mentioned goal of counselling particularly with diverse clients who may have experienced oppression (Lee, 1997, McWhirter, 1991, Slattery, 2004).For empowerment to occur; counsellors need to use empowering interventions throughout the counselling process. Empowering interventions may be used early in counselling. Slattery (2004), suggested that the counselling process will be most empowering if clients are offered the least restrictive effective treatment possible and are given choices about receiving treatment. Clients should be educated about the rationale for treatment and interventions during informed consent, and clients should be aware that counselling is as much about learning to solve problems as it solving problems. Empowerment continues through the phase of problem identification (Slattery, 2004). To maximize empowerment during this phase, counsellors should listen to and respect client views of problems and desired outcomes. Empowering conceptualizations (1) take into account the social, political and economic context, (2) resist blaming the client for things beyond their control, and (3) clearly differentiate between responsibilities for the problem which is the client's. Ineffective or problem behaviour should be viewed as best attempts to cope with the situation (Slattery, 2004). Helping clients become aware of personal resources is also critical to empowerment. Identification of problem-free times and areas of life is essential to empowerment. Counsellors should recognize and validate client's strength such as support networks. Education is one of the most empowering interventions and it can be used throughout the counselling process. Exposing the client to the power dynamics that surround them empowers them in three ways (1) by making overt the external influences that have hindered them, (2) by helping them see themselves as less damaged, (3) by encouraging more active and effective problem solving. Within the counselling session, clients should be taught and encouraged to identify their own patterns and environment barriers rather than relying on the counsellor. Helping clients to become assertive and to gain decision making skills and social skills is also empowering, although it is important to consider the impact of these skills on other parts of the client's life (Slattery, 2004).Both the multicultural and social justice counselling literature have called on counsellors to include advocacy is not an intervention that has been a focus in counselling education or training programs.

Human diversity affects nearly every aspect of the counselling process, therefore counsellors need to use new frameworks to understand themselves and diverse the clients and to guide them in the counselling process. The counselling process is affected by diversity through the counselling relationship, counselling goals and the appropriateness of interventions and strategies for diverse clients. Developing trust and empathy may be challenging nevertheless the initial challenges can be overcome with sufficient knowledge of client worldview and appropriate communication. One of the most important ways that diversity affects the counselling process is through skills and interventions. The skills and interventions used should reflect diverse clients communication styles, values, beliefs and life experiences. Although traditional techniques and strategies may be effective with diverse clients, adaptation or incorporation of culturally based methods may be necessary. In addition, systematic interventions such as advocacy may be necessary to full address the issues of diverse clients. Finally, continuing practitioner development is an absolute must to attain diversity competence. Attaining necessary self awareness, knowledge and skills goes beyond reading. Counsellors will not able to adequately work with diverse clients until they fully understand themselves as social, cultural and political beings.

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