

MODULE 3 COUNSELLING IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

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UNIT 1 THE COUNSELLING PROCESS IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will get to know about the counselling process in elementary school. Counselling in the primary school is different from counselling in the other stages of school system. The clients that the counsellor deals with at the primary school level are younger than those in the higher levels of the educational system. Many of them are between the ages of six and twelve years. It requires the counsellor to create supportive environment that is based on a positive relationship of trust between the counsellor and the clients.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- discuss why child counselling is unique;
- enumerate basic principles of child counseling; and
- discuss the approaches to child counselling.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Uniqueness of Child Counselling

Counselling children differs in various aspects from counselling adults. Children are still in a process of developing and therefore their therapeutic needs will be addressed differently. Counselling at the primary school level is unique because of the following:

- The primary school child is not frequently a volunteer for counselling. Even when he is referred to the counsellor by a teacher or his parents, he may not really understand why he requires counselling.
- The pupil in the primary school tends to assume less responsibility during counselling session. Child clients at this level may require more verbal activities on the part of the counsellor.
- Whereas adults may struggle to express their emotional worlds in words, many children easily do so through playing. The child client may express feelings in role play or playing with dolls or puppets. Play is an essential process of child counselling. Through imaginative play or media such as paints, clay, sand and water, children express themselves figuratively and symbolically.
- Language needs to be age-appropriate and should reflect the child's own words-usage. For example, children may have their own words for body parts.

Parents consent is usually necessary to work with children under the age of 16. A younger child may be happier to have their parent present but there may be situations when this would not be advisable (e.g. parent abuser). An older child or young person would probably be seen alone but limits of confidentiality should be explained. He/She is free to discuss the sessions with anyone. This approach is important as it helps children to differentiate between confidentiality and secrecy.

One of the main aspects of working with children that is different from adult work is their use of non-verbal means of communication. Children sometimes lack vocabularies to express their feelings and therefore resort to communicate non-verbally.

In counselling children, limits are set from the onset of counselling. Counsellors set limits in counselling to protect children, materials and themselves and to communicate the boundaries of acceptable behaviour. Although many child counsellors share the goal in limit setting, some accomplish it by helping children to generate their own alternative behaviours. Setting limits is fundamental in counselling with child clients.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

“Counselling children differs in various aspects from counselling adults”. Discuss.

3.2 The Basic Principles of Child Counselling

Counselling helps children cope better with emotions and feelings, and to make positive choices and decisions. Doing this involves the following principles:

- establishing a helping relationship with the child
- helping the child to tell his/her story
- listening attentively to children
- providing correct and appropriate information
- helping the child to make informed decisions
- helping the child to recognise and build on his/her strengths
- helping the child to develop a positive attitude to life.

It does not involve:

- making decisions for the child
- judging, interrogating, blaming, preaching, lecturing or arguing with the child
- making promises to the child that you cannot keep
- imposing beliefs on the child.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Outline the basic principles involved in child counselling.

3.3 Approaches to Child Counselling

In counselling children, caution has to be taken concerning the counselling theories and strategies to be used. This is because some of the counselling theories may not be adequate for counselling the primary school child. For example, the client centered therapy, which is a non-directive therapy may not be very adequate for the primary school child who needs a directive approach. The same holds for other counselling theories.

Many child-counsellors prefer the multimodal approach which is the eclectic approach to counselling and as well as play therapy. Play therapy is the medium through which children communicate. Play is the child’s natural mode of communication. It provides him/her with a symbolic way of expressing internal thoughts or feelings. Eclectic

approach involves procedures or techniques selected from different theories and utilised in treatment without necessarily subscribing to the theories that spurned them.

Play therapy should not be used alone as a diagnostic tool to place the child. The counsellor is advised to be eclectic before making judgment on the effective state of the child.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

In your own view, why do you think the counsellor should adopt a multimodal approach in counselling children?

4.0 CONCLUSION

The main goal of counselling children as with adults is for them to learn to cope with the issues they are facing. Children need to be given a chance to be heard. They need to learn that they have strengths and be able to build upon them. Child counselling timed appropriately can mitigate problems later in life. Primary school counselling requires a different approach from the ones needed for other levels of education. Whatever counselling approach employed by the counsellor must be such that will meet the needs of the primary school children.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit dealt with the uniqueness of child counselling and the basic principles involved in child counselling. The approaches to child counselling were also discussed.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Why do you think that counselling children is quite different from counselling adults?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 2 GROUP COUNSELLING

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Groups provide the structure on which communities and the larger society are built. This is because people are born into a group, grow as part of a group, develop through a group, create as a member of a group and in death leave the group. Group counselling therefore is used to help members cope with their day-to-day adjustment and developmental problems.

In this unit, we will be looking at the definition of group counselling, the need for group counselling and the nature of group counselling.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- define group counseling;
- discuss the need for group counselling in the school; and
- describe the nature of group counselling.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Definition of Group Counselling

Group counselling is a process in which a counsellor is involved in a relationship with a number of counselees at the same time. The maximum number of counselees is usually between eight and twelve. Group counselling is usually concerned with developmental problems and situational concerns of members. It is designed to help resolve interpersonal conflict and promote greater self awareness and insight.

The members of the group counselling are usually people who have similar problems.

Group counselling is different from individual counselling. Although both are aimed at helping the counselees achieve self-integration, self-direction and responsibility. Individual counselling on the other hand can be defined as one-to-one, face-to-face relationship marked by rapport between the counsellor and the counsellee. Individual counselling is private in nature. This is the more common of the two types of counselling.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Distinguish between individual and group counselling.

3.2 The Need for Group Counselling

Group counselling is full of values not always attainable through individual counselling. The following are the need for group counselling:

- to provide opportunity for learning for self-direction with respect to educational, vocational and personal- social aspects of life
- to provide the opportunity for security, especially to people who might otherwise experience anxiety in a one-to-one relationship. Such people feel safer within the group and thus are less threatened by the presence of the counsellor
- to help individuals come to a fuller realisation and acceptance of self and others.
- to help facilitate group problem solving as it is concerned with helping to solve individual personal and emotional problems
- to help an individual express and explore feelings that might otherwise be withheld. In discussing personal problems, he finds support from his peers as well as from the counsellor.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Why should a counsellor use group counselling in the school setting?

3.3 The Nature of Group Counselling

Group counselling is not simply individual counselling applied to groups, nor it is merely an economical use of counsellor's time. It is sometimes successful with clients who have not responded well to individual counselling. The interaction which takes place in a group counselling offers the student/pupil a means of gaining insight and

understanding into his own problems through listening to other students/pupils discussing their difficulties. The primary goal of group counselling is the creation of inter-personal helping climate (counselling atmosphere) which will help each individual to develop insights into himself and to achieve healthier personal adjustments.

Group counselling is essentially preventive in nature, hoping to prevent problems from growing to the point where the individual needs special help to cope with them. In group counselling, the counselees not only receive help, but also help others. A group relationship also helps the members to feel closer to others to understand and accept others. It fosters healthy personality adjustment because the different members of the group have the opportunity to share with others their experiences, problems and issues. By this sharing, the group member who is currently experiencing such a problem becomes relieved. At least, he is assured that such a problem is not peculiar to him/her alone.

Leadership is provided by an elected member of the group with the counsellor acting as coordinator. Emphasis is on the normal development and adjustment of group members. Group counselling focuses attention on each member. Each member has a sense of belonging.

4.0 CONCLUSION

A unique feature of group counselling is that each member of the group becomes a co-counsellor or co-facilitator who extends help to other members. Group counselling is not simply individual counselling applied to groups but a relatively new way of working to help people. It entails creating and fostering an effective working group, the therapeutic agent of change in groups. It is highly important to practicing and would-be counsellor to have basic knowledge of group work practice. This is because the counsellor's skills and confidence are the keys to successful group counselling.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have been able to define group counselling as a process in which a counsellor is involved in a relationship with a number of counselees at the same time. The need for group counselling such as provision of opportunity of learning for self-direction and security as well as the nature of group counselling were also discussed.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Distinguish between individual and group counselling.
2. With what justification would you recommend that a school counsellor should practice group counselling.
3. Outline the characteristics of group counselling.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 3 THE TEACHER AND DEVELOPMENTAL GROUP COUNSELLING

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- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit, you learnt about group counselling in its totality. In this unit, we will talk about listening skills. Listening seems like a simple process and yet so many of us are more eager to talk than to listen. A teacher needs to be a good listener. By listening to students, a teacher builds the relationship of trust and caring which is essential to student's motivation to learn.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- define listening;
- discuss the importance of listening skills for teacher;
- outline and explain the techniques of listening skills; and
- define who a good listener is.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Definition of Listening

Listening is the process of receiving, constructing meaning from responding to spoken and or non verbal messages. It could also be seen as making effort to hear something, hearing something with thoughtful attention, paying attention to what is said.

Listening is an act. Listening, however, is more than just being able to hear and understand what someone else says. Listening skills involves

etiquette, asking for clarification, showing empathy and providing appropriate response.

The best way to be a great communicator is to be a really good listener. Good listening skills include using body language that empowers the speaker. A good listener maintains an eye contact with the speaker. People who have good listening skills show respect to the speaker by not interrupting him while he is talking. Even if the speaker stutters or is slow to speak or selects his words, being patient and retraining yourself from finishing his sentence is a mark of a good listener.

Good listening skills depend on good comprehension. Demonstrate that you understand by restating what you think you have heard. Then ask if you in fact did hear correctly. Ask questions that request specific clarification on points that you are unsure about.

Good listening skills are measured by the response of the listener. When the message is being adequately delivered and received, the result should be an action or statement that demonstrates that there has been a transaction between the speaker and the listener.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

What is listening? With examples, define who a good listener is.

3.1.1 Importance of Listening Skills for Teachers

Do teachers need to have good listening skills? Good listening skills help to forge a healthy relationship between the teacher and the pupils. Being patient and attentive goes a long way in making the pupils feel that they are being listened to and heard.

Listening skills are incredible important skills for teachers. It is difficult for a teacher to know what needs to be taught unless he can hear what is missing, what needs clarification and what is understood. If a class of any age feels the teacher does not hear them, their needs or their concerns, then the learning will suffer whether the teacher knows it or not.

A teacher needs to have good listening skills to be able to establish a relationship with the pupils. Good listening skills are an important instructional practice. Teachers must have patience and compassion, the ability to inspire and good listening skills.

A teacher's dependence on communication is very high. In fact, communication is a pillar of the profession. In the zeal to pass information and knowledge to the learners, the teacher should not forget

that communication is a two way process. It involves a give and take relationship with the learners. Teachers are not only transmitting the messages, but they are supposed to receive the messages that the students are passing to them. A teacher's effective listening skills motivate students to participate better in the teaching and the learning process.

It is important for teachers to actively listen to the class in a sincere and meaningful way. During instruction the teacher who uses open dialogue should listen to each student's contribution intently. This promotes participation and helps the students feel secure while learning in the classroom. Also, if the teacher asks questions after teaching, he should be sure to listen to student's replies without having a prepared response to an assumed answer. Although a teacher may multitask when actively listening, listening must be the priority.

Many times students approach their teachers with problems which fall outside the scope of academics. In such a situation, a teacher cannot refuse to help and may be required to act as a counsellor. It is important for teachers to have a positive rapport with students. For a teacher to be able to deliver in his role of counsellor, a teacher needs to have good communication skills, needs to be a good listener, needs to have a lot of information, an empathetic attitude, a good rapport with the students and needs to be good motivator. The learner has to be approached in a very engaging manner.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Why do you think that listening skills are important to a teacher?

3.2 Techniques of Listening Skills

Active listening is a communication technique that requires the listener to understand, interpret and evaluate what he/she hears. Here are some tips:

- Stay present – Do not let your mind wander
- Make eye contact – Let the speaker see your interest by regularly making eye contact
- Ask questions for clarification – This is not your time to respond. Get really clear about what is being said. If you don't understand, ask questions in an open non-charged manner
- Acknowledge feelings – If the speaker is telling you something about his/her feelings, acknowledge them. You don't have to agree to show that you see the speaker is upset or happy about something

- Restate or paragraph – Make sure you are getting the information the speaker is presenting by periodically repeating what you hear the speaker says in different words. For example “Let me see if I have got it so far”.
- seek first to understand and then to be understood – before you state your thoughts and ideas, make sure you totally understand and acknowledge the speaker’s thought
- give non verbal feedback – while the speaker is speaking, be sure to smile, nod, shrug your shoulders, or raise your eyebrows – whatever is appropriate
- silence – do not be afraid of this. Periods of total quiet will allow you and the speaker to think about what was said. When you are sure the speaker has completed his/her thoughts on the subject, it will be time for you to comment.
- take in all the information both verbal and non verbal- focus on the meaning of what is being said and also what is not being said
- get permission – sometimes people just want to be heard. At other times they are seeking advice. Give advice only when requested and only after the person has had a chance to give you the whole story. If you are not sure, ask if the person is looking for your input.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Briefly discuss how you can show that you are listening to a student who is engaged in a discussion with you.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Listening to students is critical to students/teacher relationship. When the students know that their teachers are interested in what they are saying, it makes them feel cared for and emotionally connected to school. Listening is as important as speaking in communication.

Every teacher wants his/her students to listen to him/her. No teacher enjoys a non-responsive classroom. To create and establish a relationship with students, it is important for a teacher to be a GOOD LISTENER.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit we have looked at definition of listening skills, who a good listener is, the importance of listening skills for teachers and also listening techniques. To be attentive to students is the most important thing while listening to them. Teacher’s attention motivates them to

speak and express themselves. Nobody enjoys a listener who is listening to him/her half-heartedly.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Define listening
2. Why do you think listening skills are important for teachers?
3. Discuss the characteristics of a good listener.
4. Identify and discuss the techniques of listening.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 4 THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL COUNSELLOR

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

An elementary school counsellor is the teacher/specialist in guidance counselling, posted to the primary school to give guidance to the children of primary school age when they need guidance. In this unit, we shall discuss who a counsellor is and their functions in schools.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- describe an elementary school counselor;
- identify the functions of a school counselor; and
- enumerate the characteristics of a counsellor.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 The Elementary School Guidance

Late 1960s, the role of the school counsellor began to take its current shape. Presently, guidance has grown to include counselling, planning, placement, referral, and consultation (Schmidt, 1993). At the same time, guidance at the elementary school was being developed and implemented. Along with the development of elementary guidance came the emphasis on prevention, intervention, and coordination (Muro & Kottman, 1995).

As the field of developmental guidance has grown, so has the emphasis educators placed on coordination and cooperation. In a well functioning school environment, cooperation exists between all school staff

members. For a comprehensive guidance programme to flourish, cooperation between school counsellors and teachers is paramount.

According to Nugent (1990), next to counsellors, teachers are the most important component in implementing a successful comprehensive guidance programme. By and large, teachers are the key and adult figures in the average pupil's school day. They are the most influential figures, be it positive or negative, to the average student. This is particularly true at the elementary level, where children spend the majority of their day in one classroom.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Who are the agents of guidance programme in our schools today?

3.2 Functions of a School Counsellor

School counsellors have traditionally been expected to play diverse and often conflicting roles. They have been called to act in the capacities of confidants, disciplinarians, consultants, schedulers, politicians, administrators, psychologists and academic helpers. The ambiguity about counsellor's roles and expectations has created confusion among teachers, support staff, parents, and students (Ettinger, Lambert & Rudolf, 1994).

In addition, facilities and resources for planning and implementation career guidance and counselling programmes are sadly lacking. The student to counsellor ratio in most schools limit the services that counsellor can deliver. The following list of tasks is limited, yet typical (Gysbers & Henderson, 1994):

- Counsellors register and schedule all new students.
- Counsellors are responsible for administering tests.
- Counsellors teach classes when teachers are not there.
- Counsellors send students home that are inappropriately dressed.
- Counsellors assist with duties in principal's office.
- Counsellors compute grade point averages.
- Counsellors are in charge of student records.
- Counsellors are assigned lunchroom duty and supervise study halls.

The function of a counsellor is not easily defined. Myrick (2003) suggested that function definition was dependent upon the group of people creating the definition. For example, students may see the function of guidance counsellor much different than administrators, who

may view their functions much differently than do counsellors themselves.

Other variables come to play when trying to determine the function of school counsellors. For instance, the function a counsellor performs at the secondary school level may differ greatly from the functions of an elementary counsellor. Additionally, an established and veteran counsellor may very well perform different functions than a first-year counsellor. Other factors such as age and gender may influence function definition as well.

The American School Counselling Association (ASCA) has devised a description that helps define the function of a school counsellor. The definition views guidance counselling as consulting agents, coordinators, and counsellors (ASCA, 1997). Other models exist that attempt to explain various counsellor functions. Myrick (2003) grouped counsellor functions into six categories that focus mainly on the development of the student. The categories are as follows:

- Individual counselling with at risk or high priority students
- Small group counselling, preferably with four to five members that meet a minimum of once per week
- Large group classroom guidance
- Peer facilitator programmes
- Consultation, with teachers, administration, school personnel, and parents
- Coordination of guidance services, including testing, career information, educational placement, and orientation.
- Gysbers and Henderson (2000) developed a comprehensive guidance model that placed functions into four components:
 - Guidance curriculum
 - Responsive services
 - Individual planning
 - System support.

The guidance curriculum component covers the delivery of classroom lesson plans to all students in the school, as well as consultation with teachers and other school personnel so that they can provide additional guidance lessons. Responsive services cover critical incidents and crisis intervention. Individual planning covers future and career planning for each student. The system support component refers to the supporting role a guidance counsellor plays within a complete school system. (Hannah & Bemak, 1997).

Gibson and Mitchell (2003) defined counsellor's functions as guidance activities, and comprised a list of ten activities that serve as a guideline for the overall function of guidance counsellors:

- Individual assessment
- Individual counselling
- Group counselling and guidance
- Career assistance
- Placement and follow-up
- Referral
- Consultation
- Research
- Evaluation and accountability
- Prevention.

Bradley and Stone, (1994) stated that the function of guidance counsellors varied, depending on the grade and emotion and emotional level of the students involved. These authors devised separate guidance principles for both primary and secondary guidance counsellors. The function of primary counsellors was perceived to be activity driven with pupils, teachers, and parents. The function of secondary counsellor was thought to be less activity driven and more cognitively directed.

The American School Counsellors Association (ASCA) viewed counsellors as student academic developers. This association recognise that counsellors utilise a variety of strategies, activities, methods and resources to promote students development by giving:

- Counselling
- Consultation
- Coordination
- Case management
- Programme evaluation and development
- Guidance delivery
- Programme delivery.

Cuskey (1996) perceived that counsellor roles were paramount to the effectiveness of a developmental guidance programme in elementary schools. The author devised a study in which teacher perceptions regarding school counsellors' functions and effectiveness in public elementary schools were examined. The research found out that the most commonly perceived counsellor roles by teachers were:

- planning appropriate classroom activities
- contributing constructive ideas and suggestion in support of classroom teachers

- assisting teachers in helping students
- providing classroom presentations that reinforced skills and attitudes and
- including classroom guidance activities that were effective in making children more aware of their own behaviour and feelings were effective with parents, and provided the school with the positive climate

In addition, school counsellors were seen as the most competent in the area of consultation, followed by delivery of classroom guidance. Counsellors were viewed as less effective in the area of individual and small group counselling. The elementary teachers who participated in the study felt the most valuable services offered by their counsellors were consultation and support for teachers, individual counselling and developmental/classroom guidance activities. Counsellors were not perceived as being available for individual counselling at the level desired (Cuskey, 1996).

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

What are the guidelines for the function of a guidance counsellor?

3.3 Characteristics of a Counsellor

The question is who should be a counsellor in the school system? What are his characteristics? For anyone to be able to provide any meaningful counselling in the primary school, he should have the following characteristics:

- empathy
- genuineness
- patient understanding
- ability to maintain good appearance
- sound moral character; and
- ability to maintain confidentiality.

The counsellor is a helping professional who is trained in human behaviour. He interprets human behaviour. Guidance counsellor seeks to help individual of all ages and sex in their bid to solve their problems. He is always out to treat individuals with dignity and respect. The counsellor empathises with individuals and confidentiality is his watchword. He keeps his counselees secret. He is a career educator, who ensures that individuals are properly guided in their choice of careers. Indeed, the counsellor is an adviser, a helper, a teacher, a parent, a confidant and a friend to the child.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Would you agree with me that a counsellor is a different specie?

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, you have learnt many important things about a counsellor. You should now be able to explain what developmental guidance is, and identify the functions of a school counsellor. More importantly, you should be able to describe the characteristics of a counsellor.

5.0 SUMMARY

You have just learnt in this unit that guidance counselling in school took place as far back as in the '60s. You have equally learnt that counselling took the form of prevention, and coordination. You also learnt various functions of a school counsellor; ranging from scheduling of students to administration of tests, to supervision of pupils in the classroom, and guidance of students in schools. You were also taught the characteristics of a school counsellor.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Enumerate the growth of developmental counselling in school.
2. Identify ten functions of a school counsellor.
3. Describe the characteristics of a school counsellor.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 5 CONSULTATION WITH PARENTS

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit, we learnt how the school and counsellor could work together in a collaborative relationship in order to reach the goals of each school and bring positive influence on the future of the school. In this unit, we are going to learn how the home and school could work together to bring about positive changes in children.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- state the importance of parents relating with school;
- list some parents expectations of their children; and
- list some methods of parents involvement in their children education.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Rationale for Parents Consultation and Parents Education

Schools today are far removed from what it used to be in the 1950s. Now, parents and teachers mostly do not live in the same environment or neighbourhood, and they may not share the same common experiences. Most mothers and fathers are employed outside their homes; it is increasingly difficult to arrange for contacts between parents and teachers. Yet the need to involve parents in the education of their children is essential. We know that a child's learning is greatly enhanced

when there is an understanding of the parental, community and the school in the child's life (Rosenthal & Sawyers, 1996).

Children's interest and stage of development determine what is meaningful for them, and the stimuli and experiences that result in learning come from many forces within each child's life. When we are considering who is responsible for children education, we must consider who has the child's time and who is closer to his mind and interests. We must consider all the forces giving him information and experience for example; a definite curriculum of the home exists, although we do not label it so. It starts at birth and continues to be dominated by primary caregivers for children's earliest years. The community begins to affect children by the time they are toddlers, these stimuli increase dramatically through early childhood (Barbour & Barbour, 1997).

The trained teachers of early Childhood Education have always recognised the home and the school linkage and found danger in not involving the parents. As a result of this, these educators have designed several methods to build a strong school-home relationship. These are based on the understanding that:

- parents have expectations for the school
- parents are busy, whether their family is traditional, single – parent or blended
- teachers and parents share a love and concern for the child.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Why should parents relate with the school?

3.2 Objectives of Parent Consultation and Parent Education

Teachers are regarded as the authority figures for both children and parents. No matter how young the teacher may be, since he/she has had courses in psychology and learning, he/she is expected to be in charge of the child and has to have answers for all questions and concerns. The teachers have to be sympathetic with the parents' worries on their children and have to guide them rightly. Books could be lent to parents as guide or the teacher can organise for experts to talk to parents in a meeting. It is the duty of teacher to promote parents cooperation by asking for their opinions and acting on them, complimenting the achievements of their children and showing genuine respect for the family (Rosenthal & Sawyer, 1996). Teachers should be a good resource to parents of the children with special needs. Information that could guide them, for treatment, fund, special classes for English lesson etc., could be posted on the parents' bulletin board. Where videotapes are available to help the parents on their children, these should be released

for parents' use (Brantlinger, 1991). Parents are concerned about their children's progress. The teacher is expected to tell them their children's weaknesses and where parents could work on to improve their children since parents are so concerned about their children's achievements, the teacher can show them how they can reinforce the school work at home. The teacher can encourage them to play games and provide them books to borrow, or could send home ideas that parents can use to help their children practice special skills. These don't have to be formal homework/assignments but ways parents can informally teach their children at home. You might let them know how allowing children to help put away groceries could help in the knowledge of classification or letting them weigh vegetables or fruits at the supermarket provides experiences with measurement and numbers.

Parents at times want to know how their wards socialise with peers in school. The teacher also should be able to state the school's expectations and values and explain the rationale for them. The teacher should build support and trust by sharing with parents the similarities and the differences of their expectations and that of the school.

Parents expect confidentiality in the information given to the teachers about their families. Parents expect the teachers to be secretive about information given them. Keeping parents' secrets would amount to respect and they would be ready to work with the teacher, to share their hopes and disappointments, their joys and tribulations for their children. The teacher must not discuss their children's background, achievement or failure with anyone else. This sounds like common sense, but it is an area where professionalism can break down.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

How can parents reinforce the school work?

3.3 Teacher and Counsellor Functions in Parent Consultation

Communication among teachers, parents and the counsellor is important in helping to ensure that the needs of students are being met. The counsellor should be there to meet the needs of parents and teachers over their wards. The counsellor could use Student Assistance Programme (SAP) to collaborate with parents and teachers.

In parent and teacher consultations, it is best to set an appointment with the counsellor. In this meeting, the parties come together to plan and implement strategies to help students to be successful in the education system. The counsellor as a consultant primarily helps parents and teachers think through problems and concerns, acquire more knowledge and skills and become more objective and self confident. This

intervention can take place in individual or group conferences, through staff development activities, or parent educational workshops. The consultation provides information and skills to parents/guardians, teachers and community to assist them in helping students in academic, career, and personal/social development.

What the Counsellor has to know in consultation programme is to identify the problem by listening attentively to the pupil/client. The next step is to clarify the pupil's situation by giving attention to the following: (i) Feeling- pupil's and client's. (ii) Specific behaviours of client and the pupil. (iii) Pupil's expectations in the situation. (iv) What the pupil has done so far. (v) What are the positive attitudes and behaviour of the pupils?

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

What are the things to watch out for on the client during consultation by the counsellor?

3.4 The Teacher-Parent Conference

Schools work best when parents are involved. There are many formal and informal ways to involve parents in the school programmes (Barbour & Barbour, 1997), it is important for the teacher to have many methods of working with the parents. Successful teachers use a variety of methods to involve parents for example, parents may restrict involvement to their own child's development progress, others may be actively involved in tutoring a number of children, working on fund raising events, or in school campaigns. In a few schools, parents assist in staff hiring and grant writing successful programme depend on how the principal and staff welcome parents and respond to their needs (Bloom, 1992 & Rich, 1992). Let us understand that the best education comes from partnership.

Conference meeting is another traditional way of parental involvement in their children's education. There, parents can be informed of their children's progress and performance in relation to the schools expectations.

The teacher must consider and plan the time, place, general purpose, materials and agenda for conference. Teacher must start and end the conference on a good note. He/she must prepare a written agenda that can be used to discuss the child's progress. He/she must give the parents a copy so that they can follow the discussion. There should be ready samples of children's work to document their development. The teacher must stretch areas of growth and progress and be frank about the areas in which the child needs improvement.

The head teacher and management team have a principal role in taking account of the views of parents and communicating the school's aims and expectations to them. With the wider staff team, they involve parents in activities. They often take the lead in liaising with parents where problems affect a pupil's progress of behaviour at school. Where there were conflicting values between a parent and the school, for example in relation to acceptable behaviour, the skills of the management team were crucial in establishing an agreed programme of action which had the support of the school and the parent.

Lawani (2004) corroborates this idea by positing that parents are stakeholders in education and they need to play active role by getting themselves involved in Parent Teacher Association (P.T.A.) to solve any problem confronting the school and their wards.

Home Visits

This is the teacher going to homes of pre-scholars and primary grade children. This was an established practice a generation ago but the practice is still valuable. The practice is much more limited in recent years. Earlier plans focused on health needs, whereas more recently visiting is focused on enhancing cognitive and social development. Home visit is recommended for the trained home tutors. Home visits are for various reasons some programmes are designed to provide children and parents with educational experiences that focus on children intellectual, social, physical and nutritional needs. The class tutors do not usually go on home visit, it is done by trained home tutors. Home visits, is once or twice in a year. The initial visit is to acquaint parents with programme and for the tutor to get a clearer understanding of developmental level of the children who will be attending the programme. Home visit is done by establishing good communication links between school and home. Home visit can be threatening to both teachers and parents. Parents fear that teachers are snooping, while teachers fear door being slammed at their face. During every home visit, the home tutor should be himself/herself and follow his/her instincts and style. There is need to do the following during home visit:

- call ahead of the visit to fix time
- state the purpose of your visit
- bring some toys that children can play with and some other items for the parents (ice breaker)
- be punctual and leave close to the time you said you would leave
- encourage parents to let the child stay for the visit
- discuss the positive aspect of the child's school behaviour
- try to be an active listener as parents discuss concerns or satisfactions with the child's schooling.

Informal Contact

Informal Contact is another way of home–school interactions. Where parents are busy and could not attend a formal school meeting with the teacher, the teacher can do an informal contact with the parent when parent drop their children or pick them back home. It is usually snappy. The aim of this contact is to build effective home-school relationship. Where this form of contact is not possible, the teacher can write note to communicate his/her intention to the parents.

Parents in the Classroom

Another home-school relationship is having parents in the classroom. Keeping parents informed is vital, but involving them as active partners in the classroom provides an even stronger base of support for school and families. If parents are on site, they benefit by getting first hand information about the school's functioning and the teacher's interactions with the children.

In most government funded school programmes; parents are often hired as classroom aides or ask to serve as volunteer. Parents have to be used in the ways that capitalise on their skills. Guideline handwritten could be given to parents involve in classroom activities. Daily review of parents work in the classroom is essential. The regular volunteer teachers, orientation is necessary so volunteers may understand their roles in the classroom, how the programme functions and developmental level of the children.

Parents, who cannot volunteer regularly, can render help in other ways. Parents can share their special talents or occupations at school functions and classes. A concert pianist, basket weaver, male and female nurse, police officer are just a few examples of adults who visited one school on a "career week". Making materials for the class to reinforce, kindergarten stories, helping out on trips, providing refreshments or coming to school to read a special story are other ways parents can be involved in the school activities.

Parents that are actively involved in the classroom programmes feel fulfilled because as they see children grow and recognising their contributions to their growth brings satisfaction.

Lawani (2004), in her study of parents' involvement in children's school work came out with these findings:

Children whose parents are involved in children's formal education have greater academic achievement especially in English Language and Mathematics. Parents therefore are to take active part in their children's education by getting actively involved in their children's homework and providing learning materials for their wards.

Furthermore, she emphasised the pre-eminent role the home plays in shaping the lives of school children. Parents should go out of their way to make the home a source of inspiration and not inhibition to the child's learning ability through adequate care, provision and attention.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Why should teachers involve the parents in the education of their children?

4.0 CONCLUSION

You have been exposed to home–school interaction. You have learnt how parents can relate with the school, what are parents' expectations of their wards and various ways of getting parents involved in their children's education.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt the importance of home working together with the school to bring about understanding, trust and positive change of children in schools. You have also known that parents could contribute to the development of the child at home and also in school.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. “He who has the child's time and interests is closer to his mind”. How close is the parent's mind to their children?
2. What are Parents' expectations of the teacher?
3. Mention some methods of home-school partnership.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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