Spirituality: The New Frontier for Counselor Education and Training

Akbar Husain*

ABSTRACT

The role of spirituality in counselor education and training is emphasised in this article. Counseling can be a rewarding profession, if we incorporate the content of spirituality in the counselor education and training programs. Focusing on the spiritual life, spiritual discipline and experience of counselor can be a more creative outlook for his as well as client’s well-being. The cultivation of spiritual values into the counselor education and training programs can be something more constructive and creative to remain optimistic for the counselor role. Spirituality can help to the counselor to become more understanding of him and can help him change things that he does not like or that adversely affect his relationship with his clients and others. In the area of counseling the integration of spirituality seems to be more meaningful which needs to be understood.

Key Words: Spirituality, Education and Training

Counseling is spreading very fast. There is too much emphasis on counseling, training program and offering too many theoretical courses. A number of subfields or specialisations are emerging such as spiritual counseling, workplace counseling, HIV/AIDS counseling, multicultural counseling, trauma counseling, etc. All these specialisations are seemed to be justified. A related issue here is whether or not in the common education program i.e., courses offered to the counselors should be the same or different in developing specialist knowledge.

Counselor training program with particular reference to developing skills and expertise in working with particular groups of people or with particular problems need experts with specialist knowledge. Many counselors’ education...
and training programs do not offer specialised academic courses. Hence many counselors do not have specialist knowledge or experience. The clients are left to counselors.

Counseling consists of a general set of values, attitudes and relationship skills that can benefit all people, no matter what the ‘presenting problem’. This argument has some merit in respect of introducing the concept of spirituality in counselor education and training program. A counselor who is able to maintain spiritual life and spiritual discipline in terms of discipline of the body, mind, heart, and enduring personal relationship, and possesses spiritual values such as humility, serenity, reliance on God, gratitude, truthfulness, patience, compassion, generosity, etc., can be effective in dealing with across a whole range of groups of people (adolescents, children with disabilities, elderly and with particular problems drug addiction, HIV/AIDS, sexual abuse). These values what I believe that related to personal qualities of the counselor are necessary for counseling.

**Spirituality: A Brief Outline**

Throughout history, spirituality has been a major divine force in all religions of the world, cultures and traditions, spiritual psychology, has of course, quietly influenced the Eastern culture and traditions over many centuries in the form of spiritual healing and practices. Spirituality is one of the most important sources of strength and direction in people’s lives. Spirituality is a human phenomenon which exists in almost all persons. But in recent years, there is mounting evidence of its relevance not only for society but the discipline of psychology which can traverse new and meaningful path taking spirituality as focus.

Spirituality has, since 1990s become a science largely about treatment (Miller, 1999). The aim of spirituality in respect of counselor education and training is to highlight its role as a catalyst to increase their well-being and also building positive values or qualities. The phenomenon of spirituality should be looked within the counseling and provide the subject matter for the inquiries into the domain of education and training.

At present we are not playing in the comfortable ground. I believe that there are many aspects of counselor education and training, such as yoga, meditation are not related in the past to the phenomenon of spirituality which are concerned with optimising human health and have shaped the ways of developing spiritual personality.
Counselor Education and Training

It contains three elements: personal, practical and academic. The competence and personal qualities of the counselor is more to do than his or her knowledge of theory and research. Counseling has been becoming more and more ‘professional’ in the last few years. There should be more emphasis on the development of positive attitudes and values. The education program for the counselor should focus more on the self-awareness and working through positive emotions and feelings because these contribute to greater competence as a counselor. Mental purgation may be a necessary strategy for personal development in counselor training.

Faculty of education, university of Malaya has been offering a number of core and elective courses for the Master of Counseling students. They are: theories of counseling, counseling techniques, using tests in counseling, career guidance and counseling, group guidance and counseling, multicultural counseling, professional standards and ethics of counseling, guidance and counseling in schools, counseling in higher institution of education, agency counseling, marriage and family counseling. A number of other relevant courses such as personality assessment, developmental psychology, applied social psychology, theories of personality, abnormal psychology etc. can be offered in the counselor education program. These courses may help the students to develop academic skill, and to evaluate the model and theory objectively.

In the early 1990s the Association of Spiritual, Ethical and Religious Values in Counseling was one of the American Counseling Association’s fastest growing division. There has been renewed emphasis on the counselor as a spiritual person (Goud, 1990; Kottler, 1986) and the use of client’s religious or spiritual values to aid progress in counseling (Aust, 1990; Goldberg, 1994). The integration of the spirituality in personal development and incorporating training to the counselor is of paramount importance in terms of its relevance to the counselor’s and counselee’s well-being. It is believed that it seems to be meaningful.

New Directions

In recent years counseling has emerged as one of the most significant direction and evidence-based practice. Many counselors are now obliged to evaluate and justify their practice using psychological research instruments. Cognitive-behavioural and pessimistic oriented counselors have felt the evidence-based successes in the 1990s. But during 2000s this is not necessarily
the most significant area. As pointed out by Feltham (1999) “we have failed to demonstrate quite what the application is at all to counseling practice. A future area for counselor training would be empirical comparisons of spiritually-oriented trained counselors and psychologically trained counselors. Counselors must benefit from the phenomenon of “spirituality” and to put forward research-based challenges about training. There is ample scope and need for a new form of counseling technique.

Husain (2007) has emphasised that “health caregivers need to change their pattern of practice rapidly if they are to help alleviate human sufferings. What he believes that ‘spiritual care training’ to the health caregivers would make a great difference in their general practice and in their application of treatment strategies.” The same may be applicable in the case of counselors. That is, counselors can strengthen the process of counseling and caring their counselee through adoption of spirituality.

Spiritual values can occupy the crucial importance in the role of counselor. Husain (2002) has suggested a number of spiritual values which are most important in order to facilitate the role of therapist. They are: autonomy, compassion, gentleness of speech, humility, love and relatedness, patience, selflessness, self-reliant, sincerity, trustworthiness, wisdom, responsibility and determination. The cultivation of these values is needed in the counselor education and training program.

**Conclusion**

I believe that counseling psychologists by studying the phenomenon of spirituality through scientific methodologies can contribute immensely to much of counselor education and training. The present article will provide a guideline to counselors on how spirituality may develop in a future changing world, and what broader implications of spirituality are associated with its high ideals of service to mankind in order to promote client’s growth and spiritual well-being. Spiritual development of the counselor through education and training is meaningful not only for the well-being of self but also related to the welfare of other people and their problems.

**REFERENCES**


