TRANSITIONAL PROBLEMS OF STUDENTS IN TERT: .... COUNSELLING IMPLICATION

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Abstract

Movement from one place to another, especially for students requires that a one actively participates in school activities with the goal of succeeding. A newly admitted student in tertiary institution experiences some transitional problems of various kinds ranging from not knowing where to start his/her registration to where he/she will sleep for the night. Other problems include fears of getting along with other new and even old students, conflicting values, control of self and even failure in studies. This paper discusses transitional problems of students in tertiary institutions. Counselling intervention strategies were outlined along with recommendations to make transition smooth and easy for students.

Introduction

Education is the process of imparting learning and gaining skills, knowledge, morals and behavior based on preventive and palliative measures. It enables one to realize his/her full potential to think, ask questions, judge independently, make wise decisions, develop a sense of belonging by learning to respect, love one another and become a useful member of the society (Uruemu, 2012). This is what tertiary education seeks to make out of the numerous students she admits year in, year out. Seeking and gaining admission is a crucial thing of joy for every individual. It serves as the peak of joy for of an admitted person into tertiary institutions.

Coming to a tertiary institution, goes with a lot of responsibilities and problems on the shoulder of a student. Most of the students before they were admitted, were sheltered by their parents and guardians, relations and boarding house. Transition from secondary school to tertiary institutions would now require the individual

student to learn to organize and discipline him/herself without anyone to checkmate him/her. Also, the student is going to meet a number of other new and old students whom he/she must interact with in one way or the other. In the process of interacting with others, problems are encountered which add to the difficulties which already are being felt.

From counselling observations, the common problems which transitional students encounter include, not knowing where to turn to for help to trace possibly where to obtain, sign or return completed forms. Problems are also encountered in registration of courses as to which ones are core, elective and not knowing where to see and select such courses and problem of effective study skills. Furthermore, the transitional students are vulnerable to a lot of danger on the campus in the areas of being exploited in charges for services required and rendered, to seeking for where to sleep until accommodation are sought and gotten. Other problems revolve around unsatisfactory relationship like courtship, marital
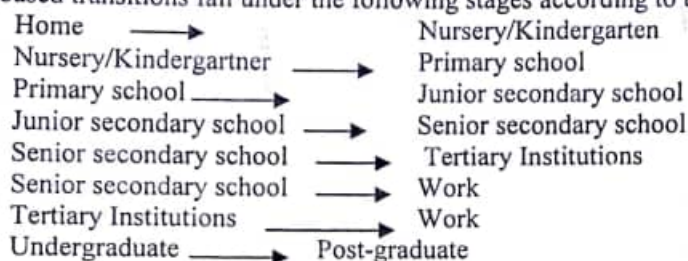
problems, drug problems, intimidation and sexual harassment to mention a few. This paper therefore attempts to discuss concept of transition, stages of transition, problems of transition in tertiary institutions and counselling intervention for transitional problems. Recommendations were also outlined.

Concept of Transition

Transition means passing from one stage to another. The term 'transition' according to Oxford Dictionary (2005) means the process or a

period of change from one state or condition to another. Lombardi (1992) describes it as "a period of time that falls between two different types of activities'. Transition in education involves moving from one school to another even at the same level. It also means changing class each school year and changing activity within school, moving from the classroom to either the Library or Laboratory or one lesson to another. Even returning to the hostel after lectures is another transition. Indeed, changes at whatever level or type influences the stages of educational transition.

School based transitions fall under the following stages according to the Nigeria education system (2004).

Home $\longrightarrow$ Nursery/Kindergarten
Nursery/Kindergartner $\longrightarrow$ Primary school
Primary school $\longrightarrow$ Junior secondary school
Junior secondary school $\longrightarrow$ Senior secondary school
Senior secondary school $\longrightarrow$ Tertiary Institutions
Senior secondary school $\longrightarrow$ Work
Tertiary Institutions $\longrightarrow$ Work
Undergraduate $\longrightarrow$ Post-graduate

Each of these stages has it's transitional attendant problems which needs to be identified and be remedied. To understand the nature of transition, one needs to understand the major changes that occur at a specific stage. The transitional stage that concerns this paper is the **Senior Secondary School to Tertiary Institutions** which deals with ages 18 years and above. This stage represents a life transition from adolescent to adulthood which is challenging and stressful in every way (Hirsch and Dubois, 1992).

Transitional Problems of Tertiary Institutions

Each transitional stage comes with its attendant problems. transition from secondary school to tertiary institution within the school system, is the last major transition and it involves a lot of changes ranging from education social, emotional, physical, intellectual to changes in ways of life. A student leaving secondary school for tertiary education needs to meet the academic, social and emotional demands of campus life. The student on the campus is on his/her own and is no longer regulated by the ringing of bells but is control by his/her mental mind.

As such, he/she is expected to set his/her goals, stay motivated, relaxed even when stressed. The student is required to balance study time with time for socialization. In addition, the student is

expected to acquire academic skills, self and time management and inter-personal skills that help him/her analyse course materials and plan effective study time, take notes, study actively, make notes, write assignments, test, place management and be open, respectful, and relate with others who hold different values and views. The student should know how, where, when to seek help among several other things. To a new comer, this is overwhelming and so need self discipline, self-confidence and self-knowledge to succeed. Adopting and adjusting to these situations is always difficult.

Pace University (2004) have listed common problems, which is also applicable to Nigerian University students' transition problems to include:

> Increased freedom and independence
> Increased responsibilities
> Struggling for balance between social and other demands
> Preparing and taking exams
> Living with room-mates.
> Making new friends.
> Wondering if you are in the right place at all.
> Fitting into the school system.
> Management of funds/money
> Floating anxiety
> Managing toilet needs

➤ Lack of interest in studies
➤ Keeping away from cultism
➤ Feelings of depression, isolation, helplessness, etc.
➤ Rejecting all forms of examination practice.
➤ Eating balanced diets
➤ Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
➤ Sharing personal things/properties with others, etc.

Thus, Elias (2001) reports that transition tends to destabilize many students requiring then to re-establish a sense of their identity in a more mature and demanding environment. Similarly, research studies by Barone, Aguiree, Deandreiss and Trickett (1991); Blyth, Simmons and Carton Ford (1983) and Felner, Primavera and Cauce (1981) all reported that different negative effects of transitions such as decreased in Grade Point Average (GPA), attendance, self-concept, participating in curricular activities, decreased adjustment associated with life stress are capable of generating so many problems.

Counselling Intervention for Transitional Problems

Providing appropriate intervention strategies for handling transitional problems is not only important but necessary for meaningful adjustment to school and learning process. The following interventions are outlined for cousellors to use when managing transitional difficulties of new students.

Strategy for effective transition intervention

Transition counselling developed by a counsellor should aim at reducing sensitivities to the anxieties that accompany a move to a new school system. It should equip students with information and skills of coping in their new school. And also sensitize other students and school administration to the needs and problems of the new students. In addition, Schumacher (2000) opined that any programme for transition should build up sense of humanity and belonging in the students, respond to their needs, concerns and provide appropriate approaches to facilitate the transition processes.

The focus of transition counselling programmes as outlined by Mizieller (1999) include the following:

1. Activities or programmes that provide information
2. Activities or programmes that provide social support
3. Activities or programmes that centre on teachers
4. Activities or programmes that involve school management staff
5. Effective orientation programme.

The activities or programmes listed above are mostly preventive in nature. When they are effectively carried out, fewer students will be requiring other intervention. These programmes of activities can be organized under the umbrella of orientation service which involves group guidance and counselling for new students.

Techniques

When problems develop from not transiting well, it is the individual that suffers. Problem manifestation may differ from person to person. A lot of individual work needs be done to help such a person to resolve the difficulties he/she is experiencing. Some of the most common techniques that will help to handle some of the common transition problems in tertiary institutions include individual counselling for dealing with cases and referral should be done for severed cases.

Failure management technique

The counsellor need to according to Obidoa (2004) ask why did the non-learning occur using the following outline for examination:

➤ The student's learning processes and styles
➤ The student's learning strengths
➤ The student's weaknesses
➤ The student's skill's deficits
➤ The student's test-taking skills
➤ The student's motivation and interest
➤ The health and comfort in general
➤ The teaching style
➤ The curriculum material
➤ The testing mode and style
➤ The system of marking, etc.

The following intervention techniques are recommended by Obidoa (2004) for managing failure:

1. Learning styles preferences
2. Effective study skills training
3. Time and place management
4. Teaching students recall techniques
5. Remedial work, and

6.   Self-concept enhancement

Stress Management Technique

Stress management according to Ezeilo (1995) requires that counsellors give information about the stressor which is coming to school. Allow time for: relaxation, rest, physical exercise – play, eating-during break periods, and resolve conflicts as they occur and make the students to be friends again.

Phobia Management Technique

To treat phobia according to Schefer and Millman (1977) the counsellor needs to:

➤ Establish all the facilitative conditions for counselling including accepting the child's fears even if they seem irrational.

➤ Have the student talk about the fear in order to identify its source. Then use relaxation exercises and systematic desensitization technique

➤ Use a variety of behavior modification techniques such as positive reinforcement and negative reinforcement.

➤ Give the student some duties or responsibilities to perform

➤ Do not allow the student to leave school at will or without express permission.

➤ Attempts made to stay in school should be rewarded

➤ Involve the home and in severe release of information.

Other Techniques include:

Design brochure about the institutions and release it for distribution to other places.

a. Stimulate healthy competitive spirit among students through provision of reward such as scholarship, plaques, etc.

b. Students should learn to pause at notice boards and have a glance at pasted notice.

c. Create interactive forum for staff-students to meet and share concerns, interest and relief tension between the two.

d. Design and provide students with handbooks which contains every information they need to know about schooling in the institution.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made to make transition and schooling in tertiary institutions meaningful. The government, philanthropist, and school management should:

1. Provide well equip library
2. Provide relaxation and recreational outfits or facilities
3. Create avenues h\where new students get to know and develop positive relationship with older students such as clubs, societies, sports, etc.
4. Establish a functioning counselling unit in the halls of residence, faculties or school directorate in addition to the counselling centre which coordinates the hall and faculties or school directorate activities.
5. Organized orientation programmes or activities for all in-coming new students yearly and in good time before old students corrupt them.
6. Provide notice boards for display of information
7. Create news bulletin for periodic release of vital information.
8. Properly label registration points such as signing rooms of forms, and display of courses to be offered for new students to identify and patronize them.

Conclusion

Transition to any level comes with it's own type of difficulties. It is therefore necessary that every participant in the educational system becomes aware of it and provide help to individuals who would need such assistance from them. This would go along way to make transition easier and smooth for the new comer. For all of us were once new comers in our environment.

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