

L– 4: Mentoring and Counselling of University Students



Contributor

Dr. B. L. Gupta

(Professor, Department of Education, Research and Management)

Editor: Dr. Joshua Earnest, Professor of Electrical Engineering



National Institute of Technical Teachers' Training and Research
Shamla Hills, Bhopal M.P. - INDIA 462002

Lesson – 4

Mentoring and Counselling of University Students

Learning outcomes: At the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

LO 1. Justify the need of counseling and mentoring.

LO 2. Describe the types and levels of counseling

LO 3. Explain the paradigm shift required in counseling.

Contents

1.0	INTRODUCTION	3
2.0	CHARACTERISTICS OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS	3
3.0	CONCEPT OF COUNSELLING AND MENTORING	4
4.0	PURPOSES OF COUNSELLING AND MENTORING	5
5.0	CHARACTERISTICS OF COUNSELLING	7
6.0	PRINCIPLES OF COUNSELLING.....	8
7.0	TYPES OF COUNSELLING	8
8.0	LEVELS OF COUNSELLING.....	9
9.0	TRADITIONAL COUNSELLING	9
10.0	FACTORS AFFECTING COUNSELLING AND MENTORING SERVICES	10
11.0	PARADIGM SHIFT REQUIRED IN COUNSELLING PROCESS.....	10
12.0	SUMMARY	Error! Bookmark not defined.
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	12

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The students from different background take admission in universities. They belong to different social, cultural, geographic, religious and family background. They belong to rural and urban areas having wide difference in living conditions. They belong to poor, middle and rich family. They belong to educated and uneducated family. They join university education with different ambitions and aspirations. Their educational level is different although they achieve almost same marks in the qualifying examinations. Apart from the wide dissimilarity in the background they go tremendous changes biologically, socially, physically, emotionally and spiritually. Their life style changes significantly in the university as compared to school. They come out from the controlled and disciplined environment of the family, schools and society. They experience a fairly good degree of freedom in the world of glamorous life of the city and university. They compare themselves with the fellow students and seniors and want to place themselves in a respectable position. In the light of background of students, it is difficult for them to cope up with the academic and non-academic activities in the university. They are confused and face dilemma about their career, life and future. They face severe problems and fail to take right decisions. Failure on significant fronts creates demotivation, frustrations, anxiety, tension and stress. This lesson is therefore designed to help you to handle counselling and mentoring sessions with university students wisely.

2.0 CHARACTERISTICS OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

The university students of today are quite different than their predecessors so far as learning maturity is concerned. In some areas they are far ahead than their teachers because of access to television, computers and internet connecting the whole world. They have access to all types of latest information within no time. They have wide variety of expectations from teachers and other stakeholders. Some of the indicative characteristics of university students are listed below:

- a) Many students have crafted their vision, ambitions and missions of life. They want to pursue and achieve it.
- b) They are more conscious to their career and want to enjoy the life. They want to learn career related competencies and not outdated theory.
- c) They have passion for innovation, change and development.
- d) They want to explore their potential under the guidance of able teachers.
- e) They have competitive spirit.
- f) They are ready to accept challenges.
- g) They have interest in purposeful learning rather than copy of the old book on Black Board or on Power point.
- h) They want experiential learning through challenging learning projects.

- i) They want to learn learning. They want to have a deeper feel of it.
- j) They want respect and recognition for their achievements.
- k) Their needs of the learning are varied and strong. They want to satisfy learning needs in flexible way.
- l) They are ready to develop competencies of their interest at any time and at any cost. They want an expert who can make them learn joyfully.
- m) They have different styles of learning. So, they want flexibility in learning process and learning methods matching to their learning styles.
- n) They explore opportunities for learning and not for getting bored listening for hours and hours without relevance to their needs.
- o) They want psychological, emotional and social support during the process of learning.
- p) They want to share learning, feelings and learning problems openly with their true friends may be teachers.
- q) They want to spend their precious time for fruitful activities may be learning activities. They want to become mover of the learning process. They want to do concrete and significant things. They do not want to kill their time in irrelevant activities.
- r) They want to develop their personality. They want to develop competencies related to personality, entrepreneurship, communication, leadership, software development.
- s) They want to pursue learning to satisfy hobbies and career needs. They want to develop competencies such as facing competition and crisis.
- t) They learn uniquely. There are differences in individuals that affect the learning process. They want that individual differences should be recognized by the teacher and design the learning process to suit them.
- u) They want to enjoy university life because they will not get same opportunity in their life time.

3.0 CONCEPT OF COUNSELLING AND MENTORING

In the backdrop of the discussion in above points, counselling has a wider and deeper scope for understanding, analyzing and helping the students to solve their problems. The university plays a vital role to prevent, reduce and eliminate anxiety, tension and stress in students. It enables them to take better decisions for the future.

For university students, Gupta (2009) defines counselling as a process of enabling the students to identify, chart and recognize their needs, potential, ambitions, aspirations and vision and articulate the same in terms of professional life. It is a guiding process that helps the students to explore the self, identify the potential and harness it. The trained teachers and counselors help the students in exploring the self. The students select a course of study in order to pursue their vision and satisfy their needs. The universities create all reasonable opportunities for students to pursue variety of visions and immediate goals of life at appropriate cost and time.

Gupta (2009) defines mentoring as a process of development of individuals and teams to their full potential level using collective, collaborative and cooperative learning methods. The traditional counselling services focus on solving behavioural problems of the students whereas mentoring focuses on harnessing potential of students for their development. It is a process of creating learning environment in which students learn with joy, gain energy for learning from the learning process and experience thrill of learning. At the same time, they learn to manage emotions, anxiety, tension and stress. The counselors empower the students to manage their behaviour. The mentoring automatically prevents the behavioural and discipline problems in the university.

The university articulates the vision statement considering the external and internal environment in general and industrial environment in particular. The university creates ample opportunities for students to achieve their vision. At the same time, it guides and shapes the behaviour of the students, staff members, faculty members, and stakeholders to achieve the vision of the university. The culture and climate of the university is aligned to vision reach strategies of the university. The university takes all guiding and controlling measures to shape the behaviour of the students, staff and faculty members. The behaviour of all institutional members is guided through professional counselling and mentoring services. The university appoints professional counselors and mentors to manage and guide counselling and mentoring services. It also develops selected governors, faculty and staff members as counselors and mentors to guide day-to-day behavioural activities of the students and staff. The counselling and mentoring are the processes that contain one or more sub processes considering the requirements of specific situation. The sub processes are awareness building, education about life, exploring self, encouraging the students for achieving goals, helping, guiding, influencing, controlling behavior, problem solving, coaching, training and the like.

4.0 PURPOSES OF COUNSELLING AND MENTORING

The purposes of counselling and mentoring are varied and many. It depends on the type, size, performance, climate, culture, vision, location and level of the university. The right counselling and mentoring opportunity to university students can change their view about the professional and social life. It helps students to select the area of occupation and opt for a particular profession by *design and not by chance*. Defining the purpose of the counselling and mentoring helps the counselors and the students to fix the problem and develop effective strategies for changing the behaviour or fixing the goals for development. There can be one or more than one goals of counselling and mentoring. The counselling and mentoring can focus individuals, groups, whole class and institution. An indicative list of purposes of counselling and mentoring is stated below:

- a) **Identify Potential:** The students are encouraged to draw the profile of their potential, talent, personality and ambitions on various aspects of development. They are guided, helped and assisted by counselors using various tools and techniques to

explore the self. They are helped to draw the profile on various parameters of personality to realize that they can grow and develop in a particular area of their interest or discipline or profession.

- b) **Diagnose the Problems:** The students are motivated to identify the behaviour related problems which are detrimental to their student life and professional life. They are assisted to appreciate their weaknesses coming in way of their development. They are encouraged to identify the problems they are likely to face in near future in their career. The counselors warn the students about their weaknesses and problems and guide them in removing weaknesses and problems using appropriate strategies.
- c) **Craft Vision:** The counselors and mentors help students to craft the vision for the life and professional life. Students analyze their strengths, weaknesses and developmental opportunities available in the environment. They craft the vision for their life on their own under the guidance of the counselors and mentors, which is enduring, challenging, enjoying, compelling, attractive, achievable and credible. The counselors and mentors encourage the students to develop strategies to achieve the vision with minimum barriers and in joyful way.
- d) **Develop Self-image:** Students are encouraged by the counselors and mentors to explore the inner self and self-image in order to develop and increase their confidence for achieving the vision and goals in life. They are encouraged to develop greater level of maturity for the life in decision-making and problem solving. The counselors and mentors develop *can do* attitude in students through counselling process. They encourage students to explore the self-concept and help them to thrive on their strengths. Students are encouraged to explore set of questions such as; who am I? Where I have come from? Where am I going? What is stopping me? How will I get there? What will I need to get there? What will it be like when I get there? The answers of these questions tell them about their inner self. Understanding inner self, they use appropriate methods to improve their self-concept.
- e) **Learn the Secrets of Success:** Students are equipped with tested theories, models and principles to ensure success in their life in long run. They internalize the secrets of the success using variety of modes recommended by the counselors and mentors such as selecting and imitating the role model, designing and observing systematic and scientific approach, dealing with emotions, following principle centered habits and values, taking initiatives, being proactive and the like.
- f) **Observe Norms of the university:** Students are encouraged to observe the norms of the university in order to promote healthy academic culture. The counselors and

mentors take proactive approach to shape the behaviour of the students right from the beginning of their university life to prevent behavioural problems and promote self-discipline. They develop skills in students to appreciate their own limitations. They develop skills to have patience and wait for favorable conditions to remove weaknesses and strive for desired goals.

- g) **Adjust with Culture and New Situations:** There is a big transition in the life of the students when they join university. They undergo tremendous changes physically, socially, intellectually, culturally, emotionally and spiritually. They find themselves in a totally different environment than school environment of caring, supporting, playing and enjoying. They find difficult to adopt, adjust and adapt in entirely difficult environment. They need someone to help and guide them in transition phase of physical, social, academic, cultural and glamorous life.
- h) **Solve Academic Problems:** The main purpose of counselling and mentors for majority of students is to develop competencies to grab best available jobs in national and multinational companies. During the course of study, they find variety of problems related to learning such as non-availability of appropriate literature, relevance of subject matter with the current practices, complex and abstract concepts, repetition of contents, paucity of time, selection of stream of specialization, unawareness of effective method of learning, sources of literature, and so on. Students certainly need guidance in solving their day-to-day problems.
- i) **Observe Exceptionally Undesirable Behaviour:** Students are at the threshold of the turbulent life in the university. The institution is expected to observe the behaviour of the students and identify the students indulged in undesirable, unsocial, unlawful and unethical activities. Their negative behaviour needs to be sincerely diagnosed and modified under the observation of professional counselor otherwise one rotten apple in the basket may spoil the apples of entire basket.
- j) **Opportunities of development:** The institution creates adequate opportunities and flexibilities for the development of the students so that they are placed with high salary in area of their own interest. It means the counselling is directly linked to the needs of industry and students. The university can design need based curricular and co-curricular interventions to help the students to grab the opportunity.

5.0 CHARACTERISTICS OF COUNSELLING

The counselling process of university students is totally different than school students in the sense that they are conscious and clear about their career to a large extent. The students are more interested in latest information about the companies, technology and job trends. To be

effective, the counselling and mentoring process should be interactive, natural, supported by scientific tools and techniques, continuous, unbiased, and empower the students.

6.0 PRINCIPLES OF COUNSELLING

The counselors and mentors use principles of counselling and mentoring to make the counselling and mentoring effective and efficient. These principles are evolved over the years in different contexts and based on various theories, models, concepts and practices. The indicative principles of counselling and mentoring applicable in universities are stated below:

- a) Create adequate opportunities for empowering the students for learning
- b) Promote team learning and collaborative learning
- c) Respect the potential of young students
- d) Unbiased approach in teaching learning and assessment
- e) Encourage best practices
- f) Create learning organization.

7.0 TYPES OF COUNSELLING

The counselling in university has been an area of low concern in the past. The counselling was conducted to maintain the discipline in the university. In most of the counselling situations punitive actions were taken using rules and regulations. Management and teachers who were not trained in counselling techniques did the counselling in past. It was purely reactive approach. It had nothing to do with development of the students and the university. It emphasized on maintaining the status quo in the performance of the students and university.

Now considering the competition and demands of graduates with professional competence there is a dire need to provide counselling and mentoring services at different levels by professional counselors and mentors. There is a need to explore the potential of faculty members, staff members and students and use it for the development of the self and university. There is a need to identify the intelligence, abilities, aptitude, interest, needs and personality of the students. There is a need to have vision of the university and at the same time opportunities for the staff and students to develop up to their self-actualization level through individual vision. This is promoted through mentoring services in the university.

It focuses on the development of one and all in the university as per their needs and desire. It helps the university to plan its services to satisfy the internal and external customers. It provides sense of purpose to the life of individuals and purpose to university functioning. It enables the institution to set benchmarks and achieve them. The counselling and mentoring for students, faculty members and staff members can be classified in two categories viz *reactive and proactive*. Reactive counselling is further classified as solving behavioural and career related problems. Mentoring is further classified as exploring the potential, crafting

the vision, modifying behaviour to achieve vision, developing life skills and achieving vision for the self and institution

8.0 LEVELS OF COUNSELLING

The university campus has wide spectrum of behaviours of students ranging from bright to problematic. The university has a challenge to channelize the energy and synergy of the students for common purpose i.e. their development to all heights to pursue vision. The university requires three types of counselors to provide proactive and reactive counselling to students. The types of counselors are professional counselor, teacher counselor and trained counselors.

The professional counselors are drawn from the education system and trained to assume the full-time role of counselling in institution. Teacher counselors are trained to conduct routine proactive as well as reactive counselling activities in the university. Trained counselors are persons drawn from various positions and trained to conduct counselling services or support counselling services in the university. They offer counselling services which are not related to academic activities of the students but other activities in the campus. The counselling in the campus of institution is carried out by professional and trained counselors at different levels such as individual, small group, whole class, and whole university.

9.0 TRADITIONAL COUNSELLING

Many universities have created services for the development of the students but they have offered the services on adhoc basis. These services may improve the performance of the students in a particular area but may not satisfy varied needs of the students. The universities have experimented a lot to improve the quality of performance of the institution and students. Some of the significant efforts made in universities are placement services, conflict management, incentives and reward giving programmes, activities of professional bodies, educational tours, awareness programmes, complaints handling, problem solving, crisis management, entrepreneurship development programmes, discipline maintenance etc. These services do not focus on roots of development of students and institutions. These services are good for short term results but cannot give long term impact on the performance of the students.

Types of Problems Faced by University Students

University students face variety of problems which are addressed by traditional counselling. Large numbers of universities are involved in reactive counselling and they face variety of problems. Some of the broad problem areas are related to career, occupation, language, communication and presentation, coping skills, professional skills, personality, biological problems, drugs habits, adjustment, harassment, and examination.

10.0 FACTORS AFFECTING COUNSELLING AND MENTORING SERVICES

The effectiveness and efficiency of the counseling and mentoring services depend on numerous facilitating and restraining factors as stated below:

Facilitating Factors

- a) High employment opportunity
- b) Curriculum addresses the current and future needs of the industry and student
- c) Healthy relationship between the counselor and students
- d) Healthy climate and culture of the institution for learning and developing competencies
- e) Presence of hygienic and motivating factors in the institution
- f) Competent and experienced counselors and mentors
- g) Autonomy to work
- h) Active problem solving and grievance handling mechanism in the institution
- i) Expert, experienced and trained teachers
- j) Adequate teachers, staff members, counselors and mentors
- k) Awareness, education and training of faculty members, staff members and students on counselling and mentoring
- l) Mutual trust between counselors and counselee
- m) Adequate physical resources
- n) Institution and students believe in excellence

Restraining Factors

- a) Financial conditions of the students
- b) Adhoc curricular decisions
- c) Content based curriculum
- d) Outdated curriculum
- e) Vague policy and rules of the institute
- f) No policy for counselling at institution level
- g) Favoritism, biased approaches and politics
- h) Formality in the name of counselling and mentoring
- i) Lack of transparency, objectivity, direction, autonomy and systems
- j) Problem solving and crisis management techniques
- k) Lack of focus on academic activities
- l) Too much politics, dominance, buttering and lobbying
- m) Everybody is concerned for short term gains
- n) Unwilling and seasoned faculty and staff members

11.0 PARADIGM SHIFT REQUIRED IN COUNSELLING PROCESS

The universities are facing high level of competition and challenges in their functioning. They need to work professionally without conflict, confrontation and decline in performance. The

students, staff and faculty members should be satisfied in the institution. There should not be any frustration, tension, stress, depression, revelry, quarrel, fight, harassment and crime in the university. At the same time all human beings should get an opportunity to develop up to their self-actualization level. It demands for paradigm shift in counselling services provided by the university for students, staff and faculty members. The significant parameters of counselling and mentoring, current status and paradigm shift are stated in Exhibit 1.

Exhibit 1
Paradigm Shift in Counselling to Mentoring

Parameters	Current Practices	⇒	Paradigm Shift Required
Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solve behavioral problems • Manage conflict • Enforce discipline • Prevent revelry • Remove frustration 	⇒	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping the students, staff and faculty members to explore the self and self-potential • Helping to craft vision for the life • Design and implement behavioural strategies to achieve the vision • Demonstrate behaviour aligned to institutional vision
Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purely reactive • Bureaucratic 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purely proactive • Autonomy
Mechanism	Problem solving		Decision making and development
Focus	Problematic person		Whole institution
Foundation	Punishment		Rewards, growth and development
Resource person	Management	⇒	Professional counselors and trained faculty members
Methods	Controlling		Empowering
Consequences	Problem solved		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture and image of the institution enhanced • Best placement
After counselling	Management feel tension released		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High level of satisfaction • Win - win situation
Long term impact	Discipline maintained	⇒	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture to thrive success and excellence • Graduates do miracle in their life

12.0 SUMMARY

The students in universities join from different and varied social, cultural, religious, educational, spiritual and geographic background. They have a wide range of expectations from universities. They also face variety of academic and non-academic problems. They have

tremendous unexplored potential that can be tapped for their development. They have interest, ambitions, aspirations and vision to achieve. They need guidance and counseling related to their personality, career and future. They want to solve their problems in the university. They are at the age of transition and enter from controlled to uncontrolled environment. This calls for counselling and mentoring. Counselling is a process carried out by trained and professional counselors in order to help the students to craft the vision of their life considering their strengths and limitations. At the same time the counselors enable the students to know their undesirable behaviour and behavioural problems. They help the students to design strategies to modify the behaviour to match with the culture and climate of the institute. They help the students to develop maturity, self-discipline and professionalism in their day-to-day activities. The effective counselling process is carried out following various characteristics such as interactive, natural, use of scientific tools and techniques, unbiased approach, continuous process and empowerment. Considering the need of the situation counselling is carried out at five levels i.e. individual, group, whole class, institution level and outside the campus. There are numerous factors that affect the process of counselling and mentoring. These factors are classified as facilitating factors and restraining factors. There is a need of paradigm shift in current counselling practices which are based on reactive approaches of counselling. The university should create opportunities to develop variety of competencies in students considering their individual preferences to make them satisfied professionals.

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L - 4 DISCUSSION FORUM

Start a discussion on social media on any aspect of counselling and mentoring.