Coaching, Mentoring and Managing Leadership for Beginning Counselor

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Abstract

This qualitative case study is designed to explore the application of basic counseling skills for beginning counselor (BC). Eleven counseling students participated in this study which comprised of eight second year students as mentees and three third year students as mentors. The objective of this study is to explore the application of basic counseling skills in conducting individual counseling sessions with the client from first year counseling students. Content analysis was used to identify themes from two documents based on transcriptions of counseling sessions and self-reflection journals. The theme emerges from the analysis of data shown the strength and weaknesses of BC applying basic counseling skills. This study has implications for professional development of counseling students including; (1) The role of peer mentor which provides emotional and professional support to BC (2) peer mentoring and coaching project enhance self-efficacy, and (3) continuous development of self-efficacy and competency for BC. Future study suggests an intervention for both mentors and mentee in order to enhance professional competency of counselor. Future studies are recommended to include group counseling which involve first year counseling student as member of the group counseling. Finally, this study proposes to develop module of coaching and mentoring for beginning counselor.

Keyword: self-efficacy; peer mentor; beginning counselor; reflection journal

Introduction

Coaching implies motivation, inspiring and taking people to greater understanding of their own potential and developed competencies. It is a directive process by professional manager while counseling denotes a professional relationship between a trained counselor
and client. The senior counseling student plays the role as a coach and a mentor for the junior student. It is designed to help clients to understand and clarify their views of their life space and to learn to reach their self-determined goals through meaningful, well-informed choices and through resolution of problems of an emotional or interpersonal nature (Burks and Steffire 1979:14).

Ensler and Murphy (2005) mentioned that:

"... power mentoring is about networking and may involve having access to groups or even an entire lineage of mentor, rather than simply being in dyadic relationship." pg. 20.

The statements above inspire the researchers to conduct a qualitative case study research involving third year and second year counseling students. Basically, for students in the counseling program, carrying out counseling session is a compulsory task. Beginning counselors are trained to learn and practice basic counseling skills. In this study, we look at the importance of using basic counseling skills to counseling students or beginning counselor through coaching, mentoring and managing leadership in training counselor.

The common thread uniting all types of coaching and mentoring is that these services offer a vehicle for analysis, reflection and action that ultimately enable the client to achieve success in one more areas of their life or work. Coaching is a process that enables learning and development to occur and thus performance to improve. To be a successful coach requires knowledge and understanding of process as well as the variety of styles, skills and techniques that are appropriate to the context in which the coaching takes place (Parsloe, 1999).

Nelson (2009) in "Introduction to Counseling Skills" simplifies the stage of applying basic counseling skill for beginning counselor. The three stages are: (i) relating stage, (ii) understanding stage, and (iii) changing stage. The basic counseling skills were taught to counseling students and also they have to practice in form of simulation and also role play as counselor during tutorial lesson. This practice is as prerequisite for all beginning counselor in order for them to build confidence before they really face the real client. Counseling is one of the important elements in coaching and mentoring since the approach is more personal. It is to give guidance and facilitate the student to be more comfortable in their relationship. As an example, The Counseling Model for Effective Helping is using the counseling skills to enhance the achievement of students. Egan (2006) describes the three stages of counseling as: (1) identifying and clarifying problem situations and unused opportunities; (2) goal setting with the developing of a more desirable scenario; and (3) action and moving towards the preferred scenario. Integral to the process is the concept of client self-responsibility, which is strengthened by success, modeling, encouragement and
reducing fear or anxiety. Successful counseling will depend on enhancing the ability of the trainee to be self-aware and engage in constructive self-appraisal of his or her practice. Therefore, both, the lecturer, supervisor and peer, should be able to support the student to know and understand their responsibilities in order to ensure their successful relationship. Counseling students must be able to communicate well with their lecturer and report their study progress. Whatever the approach been used, the main objective in coaching or mentoring must be to improve student’s performance towards achieving their goals. As a conclusion, coaching and mentoring approaches could lead the beginning counselor before they were given the real practice during practicum.

Mentoring is an off-line help by one person to another in making significant transitions in knowledge, work or thinking (Clutterbuck & Megginson 1999). The principle of a win-win situation through coaching and mentoring among people working is same professional since to be proven as an effective in training program such as teacher training program (Salhah 2005). Beginning counselors is referring to counseling student from bachelor counseling program in Islamic Science University of Malaysia. Students in second year had taken six subjects which is equivalent of 18 credit subjects in the component of compulsory subject for counseling. The subjects are (1) Ethics and principle of counseling, (2) Introduction to Psychology, (3) Theory, counseling, (4) Psychology for children and adolescence, (5) Counseling in Al-Quran and Sunnah, (6) Technique and Process Counseling.

Second year students attend Individual Counseling Lab class for three credit hours in the fourth semester. They are required to conduct counseling session with minimum of two clients in at least three sessions for each client as one of the individual assignments and also writing reflective journal.

This study will explore the problems that mentees face in handling the counseling session. The mentor plays the role as a peer coach in managing their leadership skills such as how to create intervention that can be used by the mentee to help their mentees in using the basic counseling skills effectively. Relationship between senior and junior in this study created idea of coaching, mentoring and managing leadership for beginning counselor.

**Problem Statement**

Handling of counseling session is a compulsory assignment for every counseling student. Problems that often arise among counseling students are how to apply basic counseling skills effectively in counseling session. Thus, the beginning counselor as novice needs emotional and professional support from expertise. The beginning counselor needs to develop self-efficacy and improvement of knowledge and apply skills. The absence of personal guidance to students in conducting the counseling session could affect the confidence level and discourage beginning counselor to proceed with the assignment.
Difficulties usually encountered with the immediate emotional support by referring to the lecturers who teach the subject. However, the role of peer as mentor is equally important in which both senior as mentor and junior as mentee to collaborate in achieving their goal to be effective counselor. Thus, the peer mentoring and coaching model is important to support beginning counselor.

Objective Of Study

Based on the problem statement, the objectives of this study are:

1) Explore counseling skills used by second year students in the counseling session.
2) Explore the techniques and skills used in handling session correctly.
3) Explore the improvement of intervention to overcome weaknesses in the use of counseling skills with guidance from a mentor.

Methodology

This is a qualitative case study. The data collections were from two main sources of data, transcription of counseling session and reflection journal. Data analysis was using contents analysis and Nvivo was employed to organize the data. Triangulations of data were used to improve the validity of the data.

The first stage of the research involve volunteers from third year students who are willing to be the peer mentors and letter of appointment was assigned to them. The study also involves the participation of second year students who are willing to become the mentee. In this case study, there were three mentors and nine mentee. Each mentor were given three mentee and each mentee were given the choice to choose any one of the clients from junior especially from group of counseling student from first year. These conditions were to make sure the concept of cooperative and collaborative could be effectively implemented.

Result And Discussion

Based on the literature review, it can be concluded that an effective coaching, mentoring and management model for beginning counselor is needed. The model must include the steps identified below: (1) Senior counseling student and junior student should identify, clarify the objective of the project; (2) Student and lecturer must develop interaction and understanding and both should emphasize on personal feelings and interpersonal relation as well as the objectives concerned; (3) Student should discuss her/his progress and the senior as a peer mentor has to give feedback and advice on the student progress using the counseling approach; (4) Peer Mentor and lecturer should use consultation and negotiations and problem-solving method to solve the student's problem and a student should develop new skills; (5) Student must self evaluate her/himself and the mentor and lecturer should encourage student to achieve the objectives within the time available; and (6) both parties
focusing on the continues improvement to achieve the objective and facilitate their client to achieve their goal.

Figure 1: The Peer Mentoring Model

Step one begins with the lecturer identifying and clarifying problems situations and create the need to participate. The objective of this step is to create mutual understanding, sharing of experience and building a win-win situation among counseling students. In maintaining a good relationship, the lecturer, mentor and mentee must have certain goals or objectives and making realistic plans. Antonioni (2000) states that a coach should help to crystallize visions and values clarify and define strategy and coordinate resources to achieve goals. Therefore, the mentor’s/coach’s role is to help learners to achieve their goals by acting as a counselor, a facilitator, an advisor and a guide. It has been focused in mentoring and coaching that helping learners, one should be a good counselor by consulting them in an appropriate manner (Norhusen, 2006).

However, in making the plans realistically the students should expect to work within deadlines (Phillips & Pugh 2000) and to have an action planned and timetable (Frischer & Larsson 2000). Therefore, by having clear goals, both a student and supervisor could move to the next stage smoothly. Peer mentoring need commitment from mentor and mentee as well as lecturer and clients who participated in the project.
Step two of this model proposes that the mentee and mentor develops interaction and understanding and both should emphasize on personal feelings and interpersonal relation as well as the objectives concerned. The relationship built must be on trust, respect, empathy and honest with each other (Ridlehuber 2001). By having a good relationship with the peer mentor and mentee, a student can work in therapeutic and conducive environment. In this situation, both parties comfortable to share ideas or knowledge towards the personal and professional development. Therefore, in having a good relationship, both parties should have regular meeting. In mentoring and coaching, meetings vary widely, in frequency and overall length. At the same time, the frequency of meetings should depend on the urgency of the goals and the level of involvement of the person being guided and can be either once a week to every two or three weeks (Bolch 2001).

Step three of this model proposes that mentor and mentee are to discuss their progress. The mentor and lecturer are supposed to give feedback and advice on the student’s progress using the counseling skills and approach. In mentoring context, Wilkin (1992) highlights that the mentee should report their progress and discuss it with the mentor. In addition, Anttonion (2000) mentions the importance of giving prompt feedback on coaching. An effective mentor will have to access to a range of facilitating, teaching and learning methods. They will be able to adapt to individual personal strength and weaknesses and to provide clear advice to facilitate learning using the counseling approach. Peer coaching and mentoring in training counselor is an important function because it can lead to an improved relationship between the mentor and mentee. This counseling approach may consists of support, feedback, providing counsel, consultation, teaching, evaluation, motivation and the monitoring of professional issues. However, in the under graduate student coaching and mentoring should give advice on direction, completeness, clarity, methodology, topic selection (Spear, 2000) and feedback is given on progress of written work (Russell, 1996).

If counseling student and lecturer, mentor and mentee could play their role effectively, they may have a very effective relationship towards achieving the objectives. Therefore, the next step proposed that student could gain benefits towards the relationship.

Step four of this model proposes that a mentor and mentee is to use negotiations and problem-solving method to solve the student’s problem and a student should develop new skills. As stated in “The Counseling Model for Effective Helping” by Egan (2000), the negotiation and problem-solving is important in sorting out conflict. This model suggested that all parties involved are able to maintain their self-esteem at all stages in the negotiation and at the end student should be able to develop new skills of negotiation (Egan 1991). As mentioned by Seifert (2004) among the skills that learner should gained from coaching are: (1) enhance his self-awareness, learning from mistakes and successes; (2) identify and overcome obstacles; (3) develop new ideas and strategies; (4) build self-confidence and self-reliance; (5) develop and apply new skill; and (6) design action plans, and follow them through in order to advance the career. In mentoring, many authors highlight the new skills
should a student inquire which include analytical skills like interpretation (Fisher 1994) and creative thinking (Brooks & Sikes 1997). As a undergraduate student, one must be diligent, conscientious and hardworking, open to criticism, willing to listen to others and to talk openly (McQuenney 1996; Norhasni 2006). If students could develop new skills, they may achieve a part of their objectives due to their performance that have been improved. Negotiation is important to ensure that the relationship is not an emotional intense. The next step then proposed on checking the effectiveness of the relationship by evaluating the student's performance.

Step five of this model proposes that counseling student should self-evaluate and the lecturer should encourage counseling student both mentor and mentee to achieve the objective within the time available. It has been mentioned that successful coaching mentoring and management model could be defined by reference to evaluation by the mentee. According to Carter and Lewis (1994) that mentor needs to be able to support mentee having regard to his particular strengths and weaknesses in the process of development. Whatever the specific functional or technical skills, at the end of the process or relationship, everyone will probably need to employ some of the following: (1) learning skills; (2) setting goals; (3) identifying own learning needs; (4) planning own learning; (5) listening; (6) accepting help and feedback; and (7) risk taking. However, in the coaching context, Seifert (2004) suggest that if everyone can make self evaluation through effective reflection, they can expect to: (1) enhance self-awareness, learning from mistakes and successes; (2) identify and overcome obstacles; (3) develop new ideas and strategies; (4) build self-confidence and self-reliance; (5) develop and apply new skill; and (6) design action plans, and follow them through in order to advance the career. Therefore, counseling student must be able to make their own judgment on their personal and professional progress and development in order to improve self efficacy and competency to practice counseling skills.

Step six will be the process of consultation and negotiation to apply effective reflection toward their own practice based on analyzing their own transcription of counseling session with their client. Both parties either focusing on the original objective to learn how to learn for continues improvement to achieve goal to become effective counselor. By identifying the mistakes, both parties could check the reason for the failure. Therefore, both could improve the necessary aspects and take it into account in order to improve practice in supervision. Further discussion based on mentee dialog and reflection of beginning counselor:

**Stage 1: Attending skills**

Beginning counselors develop rapport using attending skills in order to build trust by introducing themselves as counselor. Some of the examples from the transcription of the counseling session:
"Oleh, ok. Saya M. selakan konselor K pada hari ini. K datang dengan siapa?
"Sebelum ini, K pernah jumpa mana-mana konselor sebelum ini?"

The attending skill above shows that beginning counselor prepares themselves to become active listener to clients. Neukrug, et al. (2007) suggested assisting counselor ability to hear such as to maintain appropriate eye contact with clients. However, counselor should also be sensitive to the cultural differences. In the case of Muslim clients, beginning counselors are aware of the Islamic thought regarding the limitation of the eye contact. Appropriate body posture will also invite clients to talk.

Most of the beginning counselors are conscious of their verbal and non-verbal sign in order to focus. Focusing could help counselor to improve their empathy towards clients in order to make them "to feel within" (Neukrug et al. 2007). The process of understanding the client's frame of reference, thought and feeling underlying behavior could only be shown by counselor's willingness to feel empathy. Thus, based on beginning counselor reflections, they discuss their difficulty to show empathy and are not very sure how to show their empathy.

However, beginning counselors are facilitated by mentor through sharing of experiences and self-disclosers. When they refer to Nelson-Jones (2005) as to check for the tip of showing empathy, to become more confident since empathy is not just a set of skill that should be mastered by all counselors but counselor should create emotional climates. Beginning counselor began to build confident by referring back to their own transcription when they realize their own practice especially at the primary level. According to Kettle and Brown (2000), the primary level refers to the ability of counselor to interchangeability between the client's statement and the counselor responses.

Infact, in some of the cases, the beginning counselors are able to reach the advance level of empathy when they get involved in doing structuring in a very proper and respectable approached by mentioning the following structuring statement to clients.

Structuring

All counselors structure their sessions in order to manage their session in a proper and professional setting. Some of the structuring examples are shown below:

"...Baiklah, sebelum kita mulakan sesi saya akan terangkan beberapa etika dalam sesi ini. Yang pertama sesi ini akan mengambil masa selama 30 hingga 45 minit. Sedah apa yang dibincangkan dalam bilik ini akan menjadi kerahsiaan antara K dan saya. Sekiranya masalah atau perkara yang dibincangkan tersebut
As Islamic counselors, they realize their role as giving guidance as well as to inculcate Islamic values by reciting *doa*. The examples of short *doa* as shown below are used by the beginning counselors.

**Recite Doa**

As Muslim counselors with Muslim clients, they were advised to recite *doa* before starting the sessions (permission to start the session). Example of the *doa*:

"...Baiklah sebelum kita mulakan sesi ini, eloklah kita mulakan dengan berdoa semoga segala yang kita cuba selesaikan dipermudahkkan oleh Allah SAW. Al-Fatihah (sambil mengangkat tangan dan membaca doa bersama kitaran)... Ya Allah permudahkanlah segala usaha kami untuk mencari penyelaikan keadaan apa yang menjadi kesulitan, mazalah serta tenangkan fikiran dan lapangkan dada kami dalam menghadapi cabaran ini. Sesungguhnya segala yang baik itu datang dari Mu jua ya Allah, maka berikan kami taufik danhidayah Mu agar kami mendapat petunjukkan Mu......

"Then the beginning counselors use permission to talk as the signal to facilitate to begin the sharing of problems or ideas.

"... Baiklah L. apa yang L. nak kongsikan dengan saya...saya sedia mendengarannya......

**Stage 2: Understanding and exploring**

In the second stage, the skills used by the beginning counselors are very schematics. They begin with questioning skills such as close and open questions. At this stage, the counselor tries his/her best to build trust by showing the verbal and non-verbal communication skills in order to convince the client that they are an active listener. Their verbal and non-verbal
communication skills portray their sincerity and congruent with the client expression of feeling.

Paraphrasing

This skill is used to give feedback to client that the counselor really pay attention to what the client had said. Paraphrasing needs a counselor to reward the whole sentences into more meaningful sentences. Examples of paraphrasing used by beginning counselors:

Client:
"...tidak taat lah kalau pendam sama-sama boleh jadi stress walaupun rasa macam nycore juga buta itu..."

Counselor:
"... Kadang-kadang T bimbang kalau dipendamkan walaupun rasa memang kita rasa selamat..."

Asking for Clarification

Asking for clarification is a tool to explore further information from client. For example

"...Ohh jadi boleh tak saya tahu apa maksud barang ni sama ada baju ke?..."

("Erm... sambil mengungkap) "maksudnya dia minta semasa S tadi dalam tali kaya?"

Perception checking

Counselor also use perception checking
"...Mohonya S n jenis orang yang sericau, kena..."

"...Ohh jadi barang yang memang kah kita S tak selera berklangsi ka..."

"...Ooo ok... jadi T rasa ni kesalahan terbesar yang T pernah buat?"

Reflection

"... T rasa macam kecewa ke atas sebab tak dapat pikul tanggungjawab..."

Self reflection is used to relate the mentee’s action:

"...I felt a bit disappointed in my first session because I thought my client will cry but I was not really good in doing reflection of feeling. After my first session, I tried my best to study and practice reflection skills and hope I can improve..."
Feedback

"...Sekarang-karangnya T menunjukkan rasa tanggungjawab T pada masalah tukar. Sekarang ni. Pada pendapat saya lah, macam T sudah agak kurang tertekan daripada sesi pertama dulu. Kurang tension ya... T cubalah buat sesuatu yang T suka sapa dapat keraikan rasa tertekan.

Exploring Alternative to clarifying goals

Client clarify their understanding of the key dimension of their problem situation by finding their own alternatives followed by clarifying the counseling goals. The counseling skills that the students can use are good and active listening skills which are to facilitate their clients in tapping their own resources. This is an act appropriately in problem situation (Nelson 2009).

"...oklah jadi apa yang T nak buat selepas ini, nak beri satu lagi atau nak cari jalan sendiri selesaikan masalah ini...

Summary The Result Of Theme Emerge From Content Analysis

Figure 2 shows Nvivo 8 model summarizing the emerging theme from the content analysis related to basic counseling skill used by the beginning counselor.

*Figure 2 Model themes of basic counseling applied by beginning counselor*
Effective Reflection Journal as Intervention

The reflection journals of beginning counselors were analyzed by the mentor. The result indicated that among the problem in handling counseling sessions such as they were not ready to accept the client because of the lack of confident in handling counseling session. The mentor and mentee consult the lecturer to discuss the intervention which should be introduced to coach the beginning counselor.

The mentor explored and concluded that lack of reflective skill applied by the mentee. The reflection journals written by the mentee also focused on their difficulty of applying the reflection skills. Despite that, the mentee realized their opportunity to use the skills. However, most of the mentee misused it by asking for clarification and perception checking instead of reflection of action and feeling. During consultation with mentor and mentee they admit that sometimes the beginning counselor was not really prepared with deep emotion and mix feeling of clients during the early counseling session.

According to Brookes and Sikes (1997) one of the effective models used in mentoring for beginning teacher is through “The Critical Friend Model”. The task for a mentor of being a critical friend is a difficult one. The new teacher is primarily concerned with survival in both the classroom and the staffroom. As a result, they tend to be self-focused. As this sense of urgency eases, the new teacher is better equipped to focus on effective teaching practice. There is a transition from the new teacher’s concern with their performance to their role as a facilitator of learning. The model incorporating the role of the teacher as a critical friend (Brookes & Sikes, 1997) helps to ease this transition to assist the new teacher in becoming a reflective practitioner in their own right. Mentors suggestion was mentee to apply format of writing reflection journal to promote systematic reflective thinking skills.

This case study suggested a list of reflective journal questions to guide the mentee in writing reflective journal as in Table 1.

Table 1: List of questions in reflective journal

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<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>What did you do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Why did you do that?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>What had happen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>How do you feel?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Is there any other way to do it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>What did you learn?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>What will you do?</td>
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Our discussion has lead to the development of a model entitled “Peer Coaching, Mentoring and Management Model for Beginning Counselor” among third year students as mentor and second year students as mentees. The process of creating this model is based on the transcription of verbatim from the individual counseling sessions conducted by the mentor and also from the journals reflecting their experience in handling the counseling session.

Conclusion

The model which has been designed in this research and several aspects of this article will contribute significantly to the development of learning and teaching of counseling skills in the counseling arena especially in higher institution levels. This model can be useful to those involved in the training and managing novice in other fields in order for them to play their role effectively. Mentoring coaching and managing beginner could be very meaningful to be adapted to the higher institution students.

References


