CULTURAL EXPERTISE: IF THE COUNSELLOR IS TO BECOME A TEACHER, TOWARD WHAT SHOULD THAT TEACHING BE DIRECTED?

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Abstract

The psychoeducational movement is presented as an important new challenge to the professional helper. Many, perhaps even most, helpers now find themselves engaged in the teaching of communication skills, decision-making, or any of a wide array of workshops. What is to be the relationship of these new duties to individual counselling? More important, toward what direction should these activities focus? This article presents the concept of "cultural expertise" as a goal construct for both counselling and psychoeducation.

Résumé

On présente le mouvement psychoéducationnel comme un nouveau défi aux conseillers et aux psychologues. L'enseignement de l'art de communiquer et de *prendre des décisions*, la participation à plusieurs ateliers, voilà de nouvelles responsabilités qui leur sont maintenant confiées. Quel rapport y a-t-il entre ces nouvelles fonctions et la consultation individuelle? De plus, dans quelle direction ces activités devraient-elles s'orienter? Cet article présente le concept d' "expertise culturel" comme une idée à réaliser tant pour la consultation que pour la psychoéducation.

Counsellors are becoming teachers. This seems clear. The psychoeducational movement is too powerful, too persuasive, and too effective to ignore any longer. Whether the term is training as treatment (Carkhuff & Berenson, 1976), deliberate psychological education (Sprinthall & Mosher, 1971), psychological-humanistic education (Ivey & Alschuler, 1973; Weinstein & Fantini, 1970), or any of a host of skill training programs (e.g., Alberti & Emmons, 1970; Bessell, 1970; Danish & Hauer, 1973; Egan, 1975; Gazda, 1973; Ivey & Gluckstern, 1974; 1976; Kagan, 1975). *psychoeducation is here to stay.*

Like many terms, *psychoeducation* has the potential of meaning different things to different people. Thus, at this stage in its development, a broad definition of the concept is necessary to allow for an array of alternative programs under the same general rubric. For purposes of this discussion psychoeducation is defined as:

A deliberate and planned effort to *teach* individuals or groups understandings, skills, or competencies in the area of human relations. The psychoeducation model is committed to providing people with the abilities required to manage their own lives in their own way.

The first sentence in the above definition is most crucial for counsellors who wish to consider themselves teachers. It means taking a proactive stance and moving from a reactive remedial model to one of *preventing problems before they* occur. The second sentence illustrates how quickly and easily psychoeducation blurs into effective counselling. The skilled counsellor often finds him/herself acting as a teacher. Moreover, the goals of self-direction are common to both counselling and psychoeducation. The prime distinction between counselling and psychoeducation is in the amount of planned teaching that occurs. Increasingly, it may be anticipated that the professional counsellor will be doing more preventative *teaching* and less remedial counselling. This does not imply an opposition between counselling and psychoeducation. Rather, it implies that counsellors will need to find a new balance in their work efforts.

The central thrust in this paper is to describe the concept of *cultural expertise* (Ivey, 1977) as a central goal for both psychoeducational and counselling processes. While the prime emphasis in this paper is on psychoeducational methods, it is not always possible to delineate where the educational model (psychoeducation) and the remedial model (counselling) are different. Thus, both counselling and psychoeducation will be discussed as they relate to this key construct. Cultural expertise may be defined as the ability to:

1. Generate a maximum number of verbal and nonverbal sentences to communicate with self and others within a given culture.

2. Generate a maximum number of sentences to communicate with a variety of diverse groups within a culture.
3. Formulate plans and act on the many possibilities existing in a culture and reflect on these actions (Ivey, 1977, p. 297).

Why should cultural expertise and this particular definition be considered a central goal construct for counselling and psychoeducation? In considering this question let us begin by noting the following points: 1) there is a vagueness to most of the goals of helping; terms such as self-actualization, etc. are hard to define precisely; 2) most definitions of the goals of helping fail to consider the cultural constraints within which helping operates and this, all too often results in cultural imperialism and insensitivity to cultural differences; and 3) most present definitions of the goals of helping are limited to a single set of theoretical perspectives. By contrast the concept of cultural expertise is more precise and measurable, considers cultural differences, and is broad enough to encompass varying — sometimes even antithetical — views of the goals of helping. Cultural expertise may be considered a meta-goal of the helping process toward which both counselling and psychoeducation are striving. Making this goal more explicit should help to determine the proper balance between psychoeducatiion and traditional approaches. The ensuing discussion will focus on the three aspects of cultural expertise and will illustrate how the psychoeducational model can structure an array of experiences which enable individuals more closely to achieve their potential *and* to live more effectively with one another.

A Meta-goal for Counselling and Psychoeducation

The underlying task of most, perhaps all, counsellors and counselling theory is to free the individual for more creative responding to life situations. Gestalt therapists talk about resolving splits and impasses in order to free the individual to live more in the here and now. Psychoanalysts suggest that resolving unconscious conflicts or blocks is central to the therapeutic process. Rogerians often talk about resolving mixed or ambiguous feelings and bringing self and ideal self concepts closer together. Behaviorists emphasize bringing behavior into accord with goals. In each of the above approaches, the task of the professional helper is to unfreeze the "stuckness" of the helpee. This simple and obvious point is often lost in comparisons of alternative counselling orientatiions . . . *the central point of helping in each of our best known approaches is to assist the client unfreeze him/herself and to generate new meanings, new actions, and new responses for old situations.*

The same meta-goal may be applied to psychoeducation. Moreover, if the goal of psychoeducation programs, like that of individual counselling is to increase the ability of individuals to respond more creatively to whatever situation they may face, then, it becomes possible to compare the effectiveness of psychoeducational approaches with those of counselling. The effectiveness of the values clarification session, the peer counselling workshop, the racism training group, or any other psychoeducation approach may be measured by the same criterion as that applied to the counselling process. We must simply employ the test . . . "which method produces the greatest number of viable alternatives for the helpee?" In some cases it may be anticipated that individual counselling will be the treatment of choice, but in other instances, it is clear that psychoeducation methods will prove more effective and more efficient.

In sum and substance, what is being said here is that psychoeducation and counselling have similar major goals. The question to be asked is which method is more effective with more people . . . and under what circumstances should psychoeducation be the treatment of choice or under what circumstances should counselling be the treatment of choice. This, ultimately, is an empirical research question. Psychoeducation, based on a problem prevention/education model, if well planned and carefully managed, indeed has the potential to effectively reach more people. For the moment, however, both approaches continue to be needed.

Let us now turn to a more specific examination of some of the things which counselling and psychoeducation seek to accomplish in terms of *communication.* The following taxonomy (Ivey, 1977) was designed to provide a framework for considering how a client's communication skills may be examined within a cultural framework. The effective individual must be able to engage in culturally appropriate behavior — to generate appropriate verbal and nonverbal sentences for that particular culture. It also must be emphasized that what is suitable for one individual or group may be less than satisfactory for another. An outline of the basic interpersonal skills which provide cultural expertise follows:

1. *Basic skills:* Within any culture, eye contact, body language, verbalization on appropriate topics, and appropriate vocal tone and speech rate are important.

2. *Communication skills:* The fully functioning individual will use appropriate communication behaviors which include attending skills (e.g., open questions, reflection of feeling, paraphrasing) and influencing skills (e.g., directions, self-disclosure, interpretation).

3. *Qualitative skills:* Verbal and nonverbal sentences which are generated should have qualities of concreteness, respect and warmth, immediacy, confrontation, and genuineness as appropriate to that culture.

4. *Focus skills:* Focus implies that an individual should be able to talk about a variety of topics focusing on self, other individuals, an external topic, a group, or the cultural-environmental-context. A person who has culturally relevant and appropriate skills in all these areas will be able to generate an infinite array of responses and will have the behavioral repertoire for effective communication.

But how does one acquire the basic skills which provide for effective communication? They are, of course, acquired through an aculturation process which includes family life, schooling, and the totality of experience. Unfortunately, some people do not acquire sufficient skills for effective communication and these people become clients or patients. In the past, counselling has sought to free these less skilled individuals for more creative responding through one-to-one training processes termed counselling or psychotherapy.

One can indeed learn the basic skills of a culture indirectly through counselling or psychotherapy. For example, a depressed individual who works with a skilled therapist will eventually maintain appropriate eye contact, body language, vocal tone, and will verbalize on topics appropriate to the environment. However, the psychoeducational route will teach the same skills perhaps more quickly and efficiently. If one carefully examines assertion training (Alberti & Emmons, 1970; Wolpe & Lazarus, 1966), one will note that the prime emphasis is teaching culturally appropriate nonverbal and verbal behavior (or sentences) for specific situations. Video techniques such as microcounselling (Ivey, 1971; Ivey & Authier, in press) and Interpersonal Process Recall (Kagan, 1975) are particularly powerful means through which the basic communication skills of a culture may be imparted. Even the most skilled professionals can learn from examining their own behavior under the microscope of television.

Let us contrast the psychotherapeutic model with that of psychoeducation at this point. Psychotherapy can and will eventually produce individuals who engage in culturally appropriate behaviors. However, the psychoeducational model attacks the problem more immediately. The client is viewed as a person who needs to learn skills and these skills are taught directly, often with impressive changes occurring within a short time. For example, Ivey (1973) working with psychiatric patients used the psychoeducational model to *teach* patients various skills of living and this proved sufficient to move individuals out of the hospital. It is no longer necessary to conduct therapy to produce change; there are now other routes. Skillfully used, it is possible to teach individuals *and* groups the skills and behaviors which can change their lives.

The psychoeducational model has a vast array of approaches for teaching communication skills. They range from parent effectiveness training (Gordon, 1970) to workshops based on transactional analysis (James & Jongward, 1971) to *magic circles for children* (Bessell & Palomares, 1971) to systematic training in helping skills (e.g., Danish & Hauer, 1973; Egan, 1975; Ivey & Gluckstern, 1974; 1976). All these programs seek to accomplish the same communication skill objectives as *traditional* psychotherapy.

The *qualitative conditions* of concreteness, warmth, empathy, and immediacy also can be instilled indirectly through a traditional counselling approach or they may be taught with specificity and power via systematic psychoeducational programs. Here again we find an array of imposing material. Carkhuff's human relations development technology (Carkhuff, 1969a, 1969b), Gazda's (1973) innovate blend of techniques, and the exciting new relationship enhancement program of Guerney (1977) deserve special mention. Interestingly, microtraining technology (Ivey & Gluckstern, 1976), at this time, offers these important dimensions as adjuncts to microtraining workshops, although a more behavioral definition of these constructs is emphasized. Among the above qualitative programs, Guerney's (1977) relationship enhancement is particularly interesting as it is specifically designed to help couples and families *together in relationship* generate new ways of communicating more effectively with one another.

The helping field has done relatively little with the concepts of *focus* or main theme of the sentence. Both the United States and Canada are predominantly "I" focused cultures, and this is manifest in our helping theories. Most of the psychoeducational programs discussed here are oriented to the individual, although a few are oriented to the individual-in-relationship. Attribution theory (Jones & Nisbett, 1972) makes it clear that individuals are not always responsible for what happens to them. Society, culture, and institutions affect the situation as well. Both psychoeducation and traditional counselling may be faulted for an excessive emphasis on the individual as an independent entity.

If the goal of generating an infinite array of verbal and nonverbal sentences is accepted, then it becomes apparent that not only individual and group counselling can accomplish this objective, but also that *direct training in communication skills* via a wide array of programs can achieve the same goal. The taxonomy of communication objectives presented here provides a framework

for examining which treatment or psychoeducational program may be most appropriate at what time with what individual. At the same time, it must be noted that all statements in this section have come from a single cultural frame. Let us now turn to an examination of the second aspect of cultural expertise for an evaluation of what might be missing from most of the above-mentioned programs.

Communication With a Variety of Diverse Groups in a Given Culture

What is appropriate in one culture may be totally inappropriate in another. Anthropologists have been pointing this simple fact out to us for years. Wrenn (1962) in a frequently cited article "The Culturally Encapsulated Counsellor" has emphasized this issue in the counselling profession. However, caveats, admonitions, and warnings provide little in the way of specifics for counsellors who work with diverse groups. Further, little more than lip service to the importance of cultural considerations will be found in traditional counselling texts.

The psychoeducational model can speak directly and clearly to the training of counsellors and those with whom they work regarding *culturally appropriate* communication skills. Workshops on sexism training (Delworth, 1973), racism training (Anderson & Love, 1973; Katz & Ivey, in press), and cross-cultural counselling training (Pedersen, 1974) now exist. Rather than merely telling counsellors, think about cultural differences, the psychoeducational model provides an array of alternatives for teaching people about these differences. Work by Edward Hall (1959, 1976) is particularly helpful in this area as he has organized systematically some dimensions of cultural training which are particularly amenable to direct instruction.

Within broadly-based cultures such as Canada or the United States, one will find varying patterns of communication. Eye contact, for example, is a standard pattern for most middle-socio-economic groups. However, the Canadian Inuit and Dena have widely varying patterns of eye contact. Hall (1976) examined the patterns of walking among Anglo and Native Americans in the Southwest U.S. and found many discernible differences in style. Conville and Ivey (1975) have related the concepts of sociolinguistics to an analysis of counselling and have noted that the very act of speaking English to a French Canadian child has important cultural implications. Differing cultures vary even on the simple basic skill of staying on the topic. What is appropriate verbal following in one group may be considered rude and inappropriate in another.

Beyond basic skills, the issues of which communication skills are appropriate is equally complex. It has been found in pilot work, for example, that blacks and whites in the U.S. in counselling-related tasks use the different helping skills (Ivey, 1977). A reflection of feeling may be an appropriate counselling skill with one group but inappropriate with another. Similarly, qualitative issues of immediacy, warmth, and respect are communicated differently in different cultures.

Counselling and psychoeducation have made only primitive beginnings in cross-cultural training. We seem to have two major alternatives at this time. The first would be to start integrating regular and systematic training into our degree programs; the second would be to develop carefully designed inservice and psychoeducational programs to increase awareness of cultural differences and alternative patterns of communication. Important in this work is the realization that cultural pluralism is a strength rather than a problem. In the United States, the bi-cultural or bilingual individual is considered disadvantaged. Lambert's (1972) work in Montreal, on the other hand, found that bilingual, bi-cultural Canadians had higher intelligence test scores than mono-lingual, mono-cultural individuals.

Counselling with its one-to-one emphasis all too often bypasses critical cultural considerations. Psychoeducation, on the other hand, works with groups of people and must be more "up-front" with its goals and methods. It is suggested that culturally effective psychoeducational programs can in the long run result in more relevant counsellor training. At the same time, it must be recognized that the psychoeducational movement to date has given relatively little attention to this vital area.

Formulating Plans and Acting on These Plans

Many counselling theories are satisfied with providing insight and conflict resolution. Merely talking about the problem is assumed "to break" the impass or stuckness, and to resolve the mixed feelings. The individual is often released from counselling in the hope that new insights will lead to new actions. Fortunately, more and more attention is being given via behavioral approaches to generalizing learned behavior beyond the counselling session. Increasingly counselling has become aware that the interview is not sufficient to develop the behavioral patterns which are necessary to live more effectively.

The psychoeducational movement has much the same problem. All too often the participants have "good experiences" and often break their rigid sets and are free to generate new verbal and nonverbal sentences but their behavior does not change. The generation of new ideas is not enough . , . the important question is whether the person is able to

act on them. There is a real danger that the psychoeducational movement will maintain itself in much the same place as counselling unless systematic efforts to generalize learned behavior are made.

Fortunately, decision making and acting on those decisions is a major component of many psychoeducational programs. Carkhuff (1973) provides a complex model discussing the importance of deciding and acting on that decision. Ellis (1973) and Danish and Hauer (1973) assign "homework" in which their trainees must implement their learning in their daily lives. A recent book on values clarification (Simon & Olds, 1976) shows how parents can move these valuable concepts from the workshop to the dinner table. Microtraining and microcounselling are concerned with the same issue and give extensive attention to systematic behavioral contracting under the rubric "do-use-teach" in which trainees are encouraged to take learned behaviors out of the psychoeducational workshop and apply them to the solution of personal concerns.

Psychoeducational programs which do not consider the importance of generalizing what is learned beyond the workshop are limited at best and dangerous at worst. Much like counselling, psychoeducation has the potential problem of being satisfied with "good" feelings and experiences but failing to see that new ideas are implemented and tested for their effectiveness. This particular problem, of course, is compounded by the relative absence of systematic research in most psychoeducational programs. However, this lack is being rapidly remedied. A recent, review, for example, of microtraining research (Kasdorf & Gustafson, in press) revealed over 130 research pieces on this model alone.

Applying the Concepts of Cultural Expertise in the Northwest Territories: As Illustration

As one illustration of the applicability of these constructs, it may be useful to examine a workshop recently conducted by the author in Yellowknife with social workers of Dena, Inuit, Metis, and white background. This particular workshop focused on microcounselling and helping skills, using the *Basic Attending Skills* and *Basic Influencing Skills* (Ivey & Gluckstern, 1974, 1976) training manuals and videotapes. Most sessions were concerned with *teaching* beginning helpers the basic skills of counselling and communication.

The meta-goal for the workshop was to develop increased response repetoires for the counsellors. The basic skills of the Ivey Taxonomy were taught with microcounselling methods. Beginning helpers learned the importance of attending behavior (eye contact, body language, and verbal following) plus such skills as reflection of feeling and self-disclosure. Video models, training manuals, small group exercises, and practice sessions were all used within a psychoeducation model to *teach* effective communication. Minimal competency levels were stressed in video and audiotape practice sessions.

Special attention was given to the cultural appropriateness of traditional helping skills. For example, it was found that direct questioning with elderly Inuit people may be considered intrusive, and hence, less direct counselling skills are more appropriate. Similarly, eye contact patterns vary greatly among the generations, even in a small settlement. The counsellor who attempts to use basic counselling techniques in the same fashion as they are used in Southern Canada is potentially heading for trouble. Hence, considerable attention was given to the modifications required to make each skill more suitable for culturally different populations. A series of cultural awareness sessions were included to facilitate this process. It appears that counselling or psychoeducation which does not consider basic cultural differences will be ineffective if not potentially dangerous.

The psychoeducational model made it possible to include *training* in cultural issues as well as in counselling skills. However, the major question of assuring that action will follow training remains. In the concluding portion of the four-day workshop, special attention was given to following up on the ideas previously generated and to developing specific action plans for testing these new concepts in several communities of the Northwest Territories. As part of this follow-up, the author visited Coppermine where a task analysis of social work counselling in the settlement was completed. The task analysis revealed that issues of marriage counselling, probation counselling, and employment counselling might be facilitated with adaptations of the microcounselling skills described in this paper. Clearly counselling alone is not enough to solve the problems of a town in rapid cultural change. Hence, a search was made for culturally appropriate psychoeducational techniques which might be helpful in a teen center, with wives whose husbands have left the community for summer construction jobs, and with problems of communication between the generations. While these might eventually become counselling problems, the major issue at this time is to prevent difficulties before they arise. Group counselling and educational programs for both young and old were discussed. The idea of community self-help programs, of course, appears to be in the Inuit tradition of sharing and is currently manifesting itself in the economic cooperatives rapidly developing in the Territories. The psychoeducational model of training as treatment, particularly where groups of people are brought

together to be *taught* how to work on common problems appears to be viable within the traditions of the Inuit culture.

In the long run, however, it is the Inuit, Dena, and Metis people of the Territories who should eventually take over social and counselling services so that helping problems are implemented in the style of each group. Psychoeducational and counselling programs from the south may be useful in early stages, but if our psychoeducational goal of "providing people with the abilities required to manage their own lives in their own way" is to be met, Native Canadians will have to define their own needs and develop their own techniques.

To sum up, the workshop described was: 1) organized to teach specific communication/helping skills; 2) to consider the relevance of these skills in a culture context; and 3) to develop specific plans to implement a psychoeducational program in the Territories. In this case counselling skills were the psychoeducational vehicle. These skills, however, are basic and part of virtually all psychoeducational methods. Special attention was given to the role of the social worker and counsellor as a teacher of life skills. The effective helper of the future will integrate life skill teaching with traditional counselling efforts in a new synthesis for client growth.

Summary and Implications

Helping is for the helpee. It is also for the helper. The psychoeducational movement (with more clearly specified goals and methods), offers new promise for the helpee. It offers an exciting new challenge for the professional and paraprofessional helper in that this is a place where we can "make a difference" in the lives of people.

But, what is to be the direction of that difference? It is possible to use the psychoeducation model to train individuals to complacency and to adapt too readily to societal constraints as Arbuckle (1976) has warned. Concepts such as cultural expertise offer an overview of psychoeducational goals which is readily available for detailed examination by the helpee, the helper, and the profession. Psychoeducation has "arrived", but with that arrival comes important responsibilities and the need for careful examination of where we are heading and the relative effectiveness of efforts.

The temptation for the practicing counsellor will be to maintain past models. Individual counselling activities are enjoyable and rewarding. These should not be given up. However, a broader role awaits the helper of the future. Our skills, our expertise are too important to be kept our private province. It is time to examine the psychoeduca-

tion model and to consider ourselves *teachers of the skills of living effectively.*

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