Counsellor roles on students’ lifelong learning understanding (A psychological study based on ecological system theory)

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Abstract
Lifelong learning concepts are needed to fulfill learning needs and educational needs in human life. This implication changes the educational paradigm that learning occurs not only in childhood, youth and adulthood but will last for lifelong as long as they live until sixth feet under. The learning includes formal and non-formal education. The paradigm changes include four pillars of education, such as learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be. Counsellors are in strategic positions, as mentioned in micro system circles in ecological system theory by Urie Bronfenbener. In this circle, interactions, in which the individual is involved and those between significant other, such quality of marital relationship can affect and be affected by individual. This positions show counsellors to be those who are head to head to individuals or students who also embed lifelong learning principles. The open chances can lead students to gain knowledge together, build understandings about learning to live autonomously, actualise self potentials, and learn to live with the society.

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1. Introduction

Human beings experience changes in their lives, in terms of experiences, knowledge, and interest. On top of that, the knowledge acquired is dynamically changes as time goes by and so are their particular needs. In relation to that, there is a process named education which goes along human lives where they are conscious about its existence in a particular circumstance. In accordance to the matter, lifelong education concept is important for human lives in terms of fulfilling learning needs and educational needs. This gives clues on the importance of lifelong learning.

There is no other approach in improving a nation’s quality, but through educational quality improvement. Based on the idea, United Nations (UN) through UNESCO (United Nations, Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation) proclaims that there are four pillars of education not only for the time being but also for the future: (1) learning to know, (2) learning to do (3) learning to be, and (4) learning to live together. This educational continuum; which as broad as life and the whole society life; can then be mentioned as the lifelong learning. Ever since there is the admittance of validation in lifelong learning in Europe, there are also improvements in consciousness on lifelong
learning. It is supported by most of countries joining APEC in its conference in China which maintain their needs toward the importance of lifelong learning since learning as a need emerges as it will stimulate the lifelong learning. The implications of lifelong learning not only changes educational paradigm that human time of education not only occurs in childhood, youth, and adulthood, but will last as long as they live. The changes include four pillars of education, for instance learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be (Hatton, 1977).

2. Counsellor Roles in Lifelong Learning Understanding as Viewed from Ecological System Theory

There are several motivating research developed from the point of view of Ecological System Theory which states that human development always involves mutual accommodation among active and developed humans with changing personalities in various ecological settings in their lives (Izzaty, 2008). Urie Bronfenbenner, in some of his studies, elaborates a theory which helps in understanding developing individuals in layers of environment uniqueness or ecology. This theory generally helps on how culture and various social experiences build individual development. Bronfenbenner argues that developing individuals are viewed as active participants in learning processes. The term “ecological” here refers to individual contexts which provide various relationship patterns or social interactions, rules and social agreements beneficial for building behaviours (Guerra, Boxer, Kim, 2005, in Izzaty, 2008).

Bronfenbenner (1979) in his book entitled “The Ecology of Human Development” argues that there are three important things which become the conceptual frameworks on human development ecology (Izzaty, 2008). Firstly, growing human beings are not only viewed as impacting tabular senses, but also dynamically growing entities which move inside and restructure the environment where they live. Secondly, since the environment also has influence on them, human beings need mutual accommodation, two-way interactions between individuals and the environment, so that reciprocity is characterised. Thirdly, the environment is clarified as a place where individual development processes are not limited to singular and close setting, but broadened to form relationships among environment settings and also external influence which comes from the vast nearby environment. In other words, various environment settings, not only close but further ones are directly related to individual development processes (Bronfenbenner, 1989).

The ecological system theory depicts that individuals are in various close and far environments in the interactions with character building. Krause (2007) elaborates as follows:

1. **Microsystem**, describes interactions in the child’s immediate environment. Interactions in which the individual is involved (parent-child, child-teacher, and peer or sibling interaction) and those between significant other, such quality of marital relationship can affect and be affected by individual. This is where a counsellor role could deliver lifelong learning understanding to the students. There is authority in mobilisation for a counsellor in or outside the classroom in embedding meaningful learning values for the students.

However, the school has its own role in building individual personalities. Hurlock (in Yusuf, 2007) maintains that school is a crucial factor in children’s personality development (students) in thinking, having manners, or behaving. It is the second place for students and the substitution of families and parents. Santrock (2006) states that the school has a role or responsibility in helping the students achieve their development tasks. Therefore, a school where conducive conditions exist (i.e. conditions which facilitate students to achieve their development tasks) is needed.

Gettinger findings (2001) show that curriculum in education should reflect educational understanding on how learners learn and ways to give meaningful learning experience to stimulate their physical growth and
psychological development. This is what experts in education, such as John Dewy, Montessori, Vygotsky, Erikson, and Piaget (Mooney, 2003, in Izzaty, 2008) reveal that education should focuses on the learners, which contains active and interactive learning processes, also contributes to their inside and outside world. “To be active” means that the applied teaching and learning program should stimulate learners to keep learning through experiences at school. “To be interactive” means that they are involved in every teaching and learning programme also the mutual communication between the educator and the learners, and vice versa. At the end, this learning process is expected to stimulate physical growth and psychological development of the learners optimally and aimed at the ability of the students to adapt well and bringing acceptable social values. Bennet, Elliot and Peters (2005) (in Izzaty, 2008) maintain that classes and schools provide organised structures and positive learning experiences which cover the learners from pressure and factors affecting problematic behaviours.

2. **Mesosystem, involves connections between setting.** The relationship between home and school are an important example. As an example, parents and teacher who interact in school system. In Walker, Sieber, Ramsey & O’Neil (in Bosman, 2004 and in Izzaty, 2008) findings, the lack of parents involvement in school system and in extracurricular activities become determination in children’s problematic or deviant behaviour.

3. **Exosystem, describes settings in which the child is not directly involved, but which nonetheless affect that child.** Parents’ work can affect children in terms of the amount of time and energy it leaves for parenting, and shaping the goals parents hold for their children. Experiences in social setting in which an individual does not have an active role but which nevertheless influence experience in an immediate context, such as parents’ stress on their jobs which affects their family life, mass media, and televisions.

4. **Macrosystem, attitudes/ideologies of the culture in which individuals live.** Concern societal and cultural practices and norms that have an impact on children’s development by setting expectations for parent and child behaviour and by shaping the other settings. Some macrosystem influences are described in the discussion of ethnicity and culture that follow this section.

5. **Chronosystem, the patterning of environmental events and transitions over the life course; effects created by time or critical periods in development, and socio-historical conditions.** It is the time dimension which leads every level of micro and macro system. According to Bronfenbenner, this system relates to various happenings occur in individuals which can affect behavioural changes (Krause, 2007).

In the picture above, counsellors in the microsystem circles have a strong influence on the students. The services are: basic services, responsive services, individual planning services and the system support is arranged
strategically to emphasize on lifelong learning building as a step of their own lifelong learning. A counsellor is in an important position where he directly face his students in which he can accompany them to gain meaningful knowledge and beneficial for their lives. Counsellors are also demanded to take double roles as a friend to converse in order to develop students learning mastery (learning to know). They then providing the students with competences so that they produce meaningful matters, actualise their skills, talents, and interests. In the end, they are exposed to be able to solve problems (learning to do).

Counsellors guide students to learn to become autonomous, to become a responsible person to achieve goals. Leaning and skills mastery is a part of becoming somebody (learning to be). Becoming somebody can be meant as a process to understand needs and dignity. Learning to behave as the norm and rules in the society, learning to become successful ones, is actually a process of achieving self actualisation, and counsellors along with students are learning together in understanding and appreciating people, their history, and religion values. By the abilities they are having, as a result of educational processes, it can provide them provisions to be able to take roles in the environment where they are in, and at the same time able to put themselves based on their roles. The understanding on self and other roles in learning groups is a foothold in socialising in the society (learning to live together).

3. CONCLUSION

The function of lifelong learning is giving motivational strength toward learners so that they are able to learn based on the motivation inside of them with their own thinking ways and behaving inside and outside of their worlds. Therefore, motivations inside someone to learn for the rest of his/her life are the essentials of lifelong learning (lifelong education). In the whole affecting aspects toward individuals, there is a counsellor at school. This chance can be used by them to build understanding on lifelong learning toward the students.

It should be considered more broadly that excellent development and learning opportunities for children, young people and adults should strengthen personal development, employment and active participation in society of the individual. Everyone should be challenged in a learning process that develops inventiveness and pleasure in being able to improve oneself continuously. This is crucial for raising the level of education and strengthening competitiveness and cohesion.

References