Chapter 11
Equipping the Online Counsellors-in-Training: Between Theory and Practice

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ABSTRACT
In accordance with the rapid industrial and technological growth in this nuclear age, it is not a surprise that counselling has gone nuclear. Online counselling has been predicted to increase in the future, and it is important for counselling psychologists to continue to become involved in shaping and developing guidelines for the training, supervision, and practice of online counselling. This chapter addresses the training aspects of equipping the counsellor in training for online counselling. The chapter will explore understanding of online counselling, discovering personal theory, supervision, available and accessible technology, ethics, and competency issues. Within this, the authors discuss online counselling’s challenges to its advancement and present suggestions for the furtherance of the counselling process.

INTRODUCTION
In accordance with the rapid industrial and technological growth in this nuclear age, it is not a surprise that counselling has gone nuclear. That is, as the world is fast becoming a global village with observed developmental and technological changes, counselling has since become technologized to meet the increasing demands of the world’s teeming population. Consequently, the need to have a well-developed training package for training the online counsellors and overcoming idealistically irreconcilable approaches cannot be overemphasized. As the availability of online technology rises, the number of people seeking and providing online counselling via the Internet
is increasing by the day (King et al., 2006; Oravec, 2000). Nevertheless, while this new technology has attracted many users for counselling purposes, there is extremely a dearth in our knowledge base on how to impact the training on counsellors in training. This poses a problem in relation to gaps in counsellor knowledge, understanding, and experience in relation to the use of new technologies, the application of these technologies to counselling and the practices and processes of counselling as a useful and effective intervention through the use of new media.

In an attempt to resolve the problem, Riemer-Reiss (2000) acknowledged that the novelty of online counselling does not excuse it from traditional standards of the counselling practice. It is therefore implied that the quid pro quo to effectuate a potent on-counselling based programme particularly directed towards equipping the counsellor-in-training and practicing counsellors in the Nigerian education context is the necessity of an effective and workable contextual model emanating the traditional training of counsellors. This is the argument that that this chapter proposes.

OBJECTIVES OF THE CHAPTER

It is a known fact that the bridge between theory and practice is the practicum experience (Vreugdenhil, 2005; Adeyemo, 2002) and counselling practice in the field in the form of internships and placements. The practicum experience exposes the counsellor-in-training to the a range of issues in relation to real worlds counselling practice, for example, relationship building, difficulties in communication, issues of trust, and other intricacies of the intervention in relation to applying theory to practice. Moreover, studies have shown that practicum training has been found to contribute to an increase in counsellor self-efficacy during practicum and pre-practicum (Melchert, Hays, Wilijnen, & Koloeck, 1996; Sharpley & Ridgway, 1993) for both beginning and advanced counsellor trainees. However, with the convolutions and complexities of the many counselling theories that impugn on the sensitivity of counsellors-in-training the result is sadly a reduction in favourable counselling. Therefore, in order to equip the counsellor-in-training for working in an effective way with clients, it would be useful to reposition potential paradigm transformation in bridging the gap between theory and practice. Therefore, the following concepts would be explored:

• Understanding online counselling
• Discovering A personal theory
• Pivotal skills in online counselling
• The role of the supervisor
• Equipment and materials useful for training the online counsellor
• Ethics of online counselling.
• Challenges of training the online counsellor

UNDERSTANDING ONLINE COUNSELLING

The term counselling has attracted several definitions and meanings over the years. It has been described as sets of interventions (Orlan, 1996), number of practices (Bakare, 1996), or a therapeutic relationship (Stevens, Dinoff, & Donnenworth, 1998). However, consistent in all definitions is the focus of counselling, which is geared at helping people alleviate distressing situations, adjust to life and maximize their potentials. As noted by Adeyemo (2002) the helping relationship is usually between two parties: one an expert in human psychological functioning and behavioural change, the other is a problem or troubled person. Once contact is established and the problem understood, the working process would involve establishment of rapport between the two parties until a feasible resolution is found. Hence, this form of counselling is also known as face-to-face counselling.

Many people may not be able to or will not see a therapist in person. Online counselling is under-