

**PEER COUNSELLOR UTILISATION IN SOUTH AFRICAN  
TERTIARY EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

**By**

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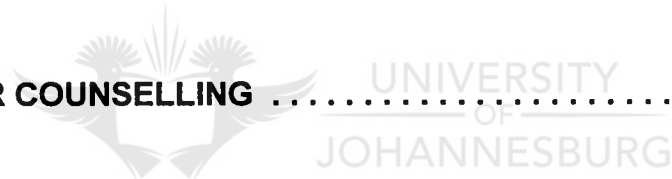
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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my late colleague, friend and sister Rosemary Imbali Ngoza. We had such dreams for the department and such visions for the peer helping programme but unfortunately you have been taken away from me and thus will not share in our dreams. It's the vision we shared that kept me going and helped towards the completion of this dissertation.

Your memory will live with me forever. God bless your soul.



(iii)

## OPSOMMING

Tersiêre inrigtings in Suid-Afrika (universiteite en teknikons) het studentevoorligting sentrums tot stand gebring om te voorsien in die geestesgesondheidsbehoefte van hul kampus gemeenskappe. Hierdie studente voorligtingssentrums dien 'n veelvoudige rol. Sommige van die dienste wat gelewer word in sodanige studente voorligtingssentrums sluit in:

- (9) Persoonlike voorligting.
- (10) Akademiese leiding wat hulp met vakkeuses insluit.
- (11) Loopbaanvoorligting.
- (12) Hulp met die wesksoekproses.
- (13) Opleiding in lewensvaardighede.
- (14) Finansiële beplanning en voorligting.

Van die probleme wat studente na voorligtingssentrums bring, vereis bloot algemene leiding en voorligting terwyl ander probleme meer in diepte terapie vereis.

Navorsing toon dat baie van hierdie studentevoorligtingssentrums 'n tekort aan opgeleide professionele personeel het. Gevolglik is dit dikwels moeilik vir studentevoorligters en sielkundiges om te voorsien in al die behoeftes van die studente wat hulp nodig het. Dit is om hierdie rede dat voorligtingssentrums dikwels gebruik maak van studentehulp.

Studentehulp word gevorm deur mede studente wat geselekteer en opgelei word in sekere hulp- en voorligtings vaardighede om hulle in staat te stel om mede studente wat hulp nodig het, te kan raad en leiding gee. Die rol van studentehulp is om as 'n uitbreiding van die dienste van 'n studentevoorligtingssentrum te dien. Dit is juis sodanige studentehulpprogram wat verskeie tersiêre inrigtings in staat stel om meer uigebruide dienste aan te bied op hul kampusse. Studentehulp programme bevorder die ontwikkeling en sielkundige groei van die studente wat aan hierdie programme deelneem. Dit verlaag ook die getal studente wat hul studies staak omdat hulle gemotiveerd is om op 'n meer positiewe wyse betrokke te raak by hul mede studente.



(iv)

Die doel van hierdie studie was om vas te tel tot watter mate tersiêre inrigtings in Suid-Afrika van studentehulp gebruik maak. Voorts het die studie ook ten doel gehad die verkryging van inligting aangaande die selektering, opleiding en gebruik van studentehulp op die verskeie kampusse wat betrek is by die studie. Hierdie inligting is gebruik word om aanbevelings te maak rakende die bruikbaarheid, effektiwiteit en koste voordele aan sulke programme.

Die bevindinge is dat ongeveer 60% van tersiêre inrigtings in Suid-Afrika van studentehulp gebruik maak. Verskeie modelle en teorieë ten opsigte van selektering en opleiding van studentehelpers word aangewend. Studentehulpgroepe het 'n verskeidenheid van funksies en gebruike op die verskillende kampusse. 'n Funksie wat almal tog in gemeen het hou verband met persoonsvoorligting vir persoonlike en sosiale probleme vir hul mede studente. 'n Ander belangrike bevinding was dat weining supervisie of supervisie strukture bestaan vir studentehulp groepe. Die gebrek aan supervisie mag moontlik die suksesse van sodanige programme kan ondermyn. Die meeste tersiêre inrigtings het wel aangedui hul die studentehulpprogramme van groot nut is en dat dit behoue moet bly; aangesien dit tot voordeel strek vir studentehulp groepe self, die breë studente gemeenskappe asook die inrigting as geheel.

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## CHAPTER 1

### ORIENTATION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Campus life in the 1990s is characterised by a concern among both students and academics about alcohol abuse, crime and the breakdown of civility on campus (Boyer, 1990). There is also an increase of deeply rooted prejudices and social tension at some campuses.

Students come to tertiary institutions with many personal problems that can work against their full participation at the institution. The problems affecting society have an impact on the institutions as these are embedded in society and are a microcosm of society (Nkomo, 1984). There is a great diversity among students who come to institutions of higher learning. This diversity includes age, gender, experience, motivation for studying and the times of study, either part time or full time. There is an increase in the number of older students at campuses. These students return to college to update job-related skills or to find new directions for their lives. The tendency is to attend part time or attend a class or two per week (Boyer, 1990).

The diversity of problems that a student faces, encroach on the student's ability to succeed and to maximise educational goals. According to Foster (1992), education is a process of broadening the whole mind and whole body to assure that horizons are limitless. Education is an opportunity to explore social, intellectual, emotional, moral and psychological aspects to enable one to attain a personal code of ethics upon which daily life can be based. Furthermore, Foster defines education as the joining of thoughts and ideas to form concepts and principles from which judgement and wise decisions can be made (Foster, 1992).

The diversity of students and institutions has meant that the student community is no longer a community characterised by homogeneity. There are fewer common bonds

among students and less of a common culture, due to ethnic divisions and political differences among students (Levine, 1993).

Universities and technikons have responded to this diversity by creating departments of student affairs or student services. These services include counselling, financial aid, residence supervisors, sports and recreation, health facilities, and the establishment of student unions. The various officers all attempt to make the life of the student and the institution easier in order to promote the students' educational goals.

The department of student development and counselling is the cornerstone of student services (Gillmore, 1987). In order to understand the challenges facing student counselling and development units at institutions of higher education, there is a need to define and briefly discuss the following terms and concepts: student development, student counselling and peer counselling.

## **1.2 ANALYSIS OF TERMS**

### **1.2.1 Student development**



Van Hersteren and Ivey (1990) describe counselling and development as concerned with human change. The positive change may occur in negotiating the developmental tasks faced in daily life. Counselling and development seems to be focussed on both the individual and the system within which the individual lives, and thus it is also about systemic change.

Student development refers to a process of change or transformation that is evident in education. There is an increase in the capacity of the student from an inward looking, self-obsessed model of reality to where the existence of other sets of ideas is highly organised (Caul, 1993).

Higher education promotes student development by transforming self image, equipping the individual with more skills, building on the basis the individual had before and changing attitudes and assumptions.

It is the role of tertiary education to transform the raw material in the individual into a civilised mind (Caul, 1993). This is a mind with taste, discrimination and sound judgements, and capable of certain skills and competences in the evaluation of evidence and assessment of arguments. In South African institutions, student development has focussed on academic development and student counselling which essentially targeted the historically disadvantaged students (Sello, Smith & Manchico, 1997). The student development programs include orientation, counselling services, mentoring, peer support programmes and study skills programmes. Mitchell, Haupt and Stephenson (1993) found that students seeking help have four main problems: these are academic skills (including study skills), academic administration (which includes course selection), non-academic psycho-social problems such as depression and adjustment, and non-academic problems which include accommodation and funding. The highest percentage of help was in the psycho-social field (38,8%), whereas academic problems accounted for 37,4% of cases. Behr (1986) suggests that student counselling in South African universities should focus on student development and academic support.

It is therefore apparent that student development is tied to student counselling.

### **1.2.2 Student counselling**

Counselling can be defined as an activity in which a trained professional engages in a particular relationship with a person who is experiencing personal or emotional difficulties (Cowie & Sharp, 1996).

Student counselling refers to a service established in institutions to provide psycho-social support, emotional development, academic development and personal development for the students (Foster-Harrison, 1995). In many institutions the tasks of the student counselling division include the following:

- to act as specialist sources of help or referral for students experiencing learning, social, relationship and developmental, as well as more severe psychological problems (Sello *et al.*, 1997; Woolfe, 1996; Nicholas, 1996; Motsabi & Mandewo, 1995);

- to provide consultation and training for academic administrative and residential staff; and
- to be a channel between the lived experience of the institution's students and staff and the policy-makers, with particular reference to institutional practice and staff training.

These functions involve the student counsellor in three roles: remedial, preventative and developmental (Woolfe, 1996).

The purpose of counselling is to facilitate wise choices of the sort on which the student's later development depends. In South African institutions, Anderson, (1994) found that the following services were offered:

- personal counselling, crisis intervention, marriage and family counselling addressing fears and anxieties related to academic work;
- group counselling, life skills courses;
- psychological testing;
- graduate recruitment programmes;
- liaison with parents, liaison with schools and liaison with student government;
- academic advice, career information, job-seeking skills;
- bursary information;
- study skills improvement through workshops in reading skills, writing skills and effective library skills; and

- life-skills workshops that train students in the following: decision-making, problem solving, assertiveness, writing and curriculum vitae and job search skills.

Motsabi and Mandewo (1995) summarised the job descriptions of student counsellors at Vista University into five categories, as described in Bodibe (1993). These categories are common amongst student counsellors in tertiary institutions (Sello *et al.*, 1997).

- **Academic intervention**

This includes providing course choice and advice; advising students with regard to their work load; developing and conducting individual and group developmental programmes, e.g. study skills; liaison with staff on behalf of students; organising and co-ordinating orientation programmes and administering of tests .

- **Personal issues**

Responsibilities include: personal counselling on problems that do not require psychotherapy; having a referral system; handling relationship problems and other problems the student experiences.

- **Administrative duties**

These include:

- dealing with letters and telephone inquiries from prospective students and registered students;
- writing progress reports to sponsors;
- keeping records; and
- liaison with academic faculty with regard to students' progress.



- **Student government**

This means developing a good working relationship with the Student Representative Council (SRC), and organising life-skills and leadership training programmes for the SRC and other student organisations on campus.

- **Developmental functions**

Organising life-skills training for students in areas such as job search skills, assertiveness, interview skills, leadership training and other skills.

- **Community involvement**

It is expected of the student counsellor to be involved in the community in which the university/campus is situated, e.g. seeking accommodation for students; establishing a working relationship with key services in the community, such as school principals, medical practitioners, clinics, youth programmes and other community structures.

The expectations placed on counselling units at tertiary institutions are overwhelming, demanding time and resources which are often unavailable. It is in the attempt to provide a viable service and to allow professionals to concentrate on therapeutic and professional work that has led to the establishment of peer counselling or peer helping in the tertiary institutions.

Peer counselling is thus embedded in student counselling and development. The student counsellors become responsible for the selection, training and supervision of the peer counsellors.

### **1.2.3 Peer counselling**

Peer counselling is a relatively new field in South Africa. In the United States it has been referred to as a quiet revolution (de Rosenroll & Dey, 1990) which began in the 1960s and early 1970s (Morey, Miller, Rosen and Fulton, 1993). The increasing use

of peer counselling on higher education campuses is part of the overall movement towards prevention, rather than intervention of mental health concerns (Nassar & Collins-Eaglin, 1994). de Rosenroll (1992) believes that although peer counselling has only a brief past, it has an active current existence and a potentially strong future if supported by adequate research.

Peer counselling is a process in which trained and supervised students perform interpersonal helping tasks that qualify as counselling functions with clients of similar age who either have referred themselves or have been referred by others (de Rosenroll, 1992). Carr (1987) defines peer counsellors as students who learn additional skills to help their friends. Through such programmes students learn specific skills such as how to fully understand the thoughts and feelings of others and how to communicate that understanding through empathy, attending and listening. A common trend in the definition is that young people avail themselves to help their peers in problem solving through the provision of support, listening and problem-solving skills. These young people are trained and thus are readily available to offer counselling services.

Authors have referred to these helpers differently. Some prefer to call them peer helpers, peer counsellors or peer facilitators (Carr, 1992; de Rosenroll, 1992; & Phillips & Sturkie, 1991). The peer counselling programme helps to augment the professional services, which then allows the professional to be more time efficient. It enables the professional counsellor to provide professional guidance and counselling and focus on therapy. It also requires of the professional to act as a consultant.

Peer helpers usually do not get monetary rewards but are given systematic training to make them efficient in what they do.

Letsebe (1988) states that young people have positive strengths, which if harnessed and nurtured, can produce positive outcomes for themselves and their communities. Peer groups have the strongest influence over the values, attitudes and behaviours of most young people. In a study conducted by Stokes et al, (1988) it was found that fear, distrust and suspiciousness of the intentions of white mental health professionals has

led minority students to avoid counselling services.

It is in this spirit that peer counselling is offered, as it enables students who would not usually receive needed guidance and counselling due to limited resources to be reached. This is done through the use of the most abundant source of assistance and influence on any campus - its student body.

### **1.3 PURPOSE OF STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to gather information about the prevalence and use of peer helping programmes in tertiary institutions in South Africa. A survey instrument will be developed to gather information about the prevalence of peer helping programmes, the model of training used to prepare peer helpers, the roles that the peer helpers are supposed to fulfil, the nature of the supervision provided, the kind of remuneration (if any) and the acceptability of the programme on campus. It is necessary to do such a study because of the shortage of professional counsellors at higher education institutions. The diverse student population with a variety of needs, makes it imperative for the existing counsellors to train students as lay counsellors.

### **1.4 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS**

Chapter 2 will focus on the literature on student development and students at higher education institutions. In Chapter 3, peer counselling programmes will be discussed, as well as the nature, history and the benefits of such programmes on campuses. In Chapter 4 the research methodology will be discussed and Chapter 5 will focus on the findings of the study. The last two chapters will look at analysis of the results and the recommendations based on findings of the study.

### **1.5 CONCLUSION**

Research has indicated that the peer help programme has been successful in helping young people deal with alcohol and drugs (Yaccarino, 1995; Black & Tobler, 1998) and suicide (Lewis & Lewis, 1996). It has also been used in conflict management through

peer mediation (Lupton-Smith *et al.*, 1996) and has historically been helpful in academic assistance (Foster, 1992). There are numerous advantages to this programme and its use at institutions of higher learning will not only benefit the peer helpers themselves (Letsebe, 1988; Carr, 1987), but also the general student population (Myrick & Ernay, 1985; Cowie & Sharp, 1996).



## CHAPTER 2

# UNDERSTANDING THE STUDENT AT A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study is on peer helping in higher education institutions. These institutions include universities, technikons and colleges. Students who come to higher education institutions are mostly post-matric students. The challenges that face the students are diverse in terms of general development, career development and student development. University life also has its own unique pressures and challenges for the students. In order to understand the role of the unit of student development or student counselling, one needs to understand the student.

Developmental theories of Erickson, Labouvie-Vief and Havinghurst are discussed and the student development theories of Chickering and Heath will also be discussed as foundations for the understanding of the higher education student. Further discussion will elaborate on the challenges facing higher education students within universities and technikons.

## 2.2 TRANSITION FROM ADOLESCENCE TO EARLY ADULTHOOD

The post-teenage years (19-24 years) are often spent at higher education institutions. These include technical colleges, technikons, universities and colleges where students acquire specialised skills, educational experiences and professional training needed to face the complex world of work. For many students this creates an extended period of "temporariness" (Santrock, 1986).

Some developmental theorists refer to this stage of early adulthood as youth (Santrock, 1986). The youth stage differs from the adolescent stage in that in youth there is a struggle between developing an autonomous sense of self and becoming

socially involved, whereas the struggle of self-definition represents the core conflict in adolescence (Santrock, 1986; Craig, 1992; Garbarino, 1985). The questions that remain undefined for the youth are those concerning the relationship between individual and society: vocation, lifestyle, commitments and roles (Garbarino, 1985). During the stage of youth, the individual may still be trying out many different roles, exploring alternative careers and thinking about a variety of lifestyles. Physically and mentally these young people are adults, but society does not view them as adults (Garbarino, 1985). Developmental theorists define this stage on the basis of various physical, psychological and cognitive challenges.

### **2.2.1 Erickson's theory**

Erickson (1968) conceives of human development as an epigenetic process, in which there is a ground plan, and out of this ground plan the parts arise, each part having its special ascendancy, until all parts have arisen to form a functional whole. At certain times of development certain issues arise as crises, which have to be resolved in order for development and growth to occur.

The higher education student is at the stage of late adolescence and early adulthood. It is a period of a psychological moratorium (Hjelle & Ziegler, 1986) in which the young person explores a number of different social and occupational roles before deciding what to do. According to Erickson, the student has to resolve the issues of identity and the formation of intimacy. For the older student who is a mid-life adult, the tasks involve finding a path through which to contribute to and nurture one's society. If the individual is able to manage the many demands, he experiences himself and acts as a person who (a) has a consistent, stable identity that is valuable and valid; (b) is able to love without loss of autonomy; and (c) is able to invest in and care for the broader society through some productive activity (Widick, Knepelkamp & Parker, 1987). If the individual is unable to negotiate the above developmental stages successfully, he fails to thrive and this is seen in a confused, inconsistent and scattered identity; the inability to care deeply and freely for another; and an inability to contribute meaningfully to society.

The higher education institution helps the student to develop and negotiate the various crises by creating opportunities for the student to experiment with various roles and lifestyles. It enables the student to experience the freedom to choose activities and experience the consequences of those choices, creates opportunities for the student to be involved in what can be seen as meaningful achievement, and lastly gives the student a chance to reflect and introspect. For the above tasks to be successfully achieved, student counselling and development has a role to play in creating some of these opportunities.

Student services programmes and policies need to address and reflect those central issues. This necessitates creating experiences for coping with the tasks of young adulthood: role experimentation, meaningful achievement, the experiencing of choice, and time and encouragement for reflection.

### **2.2.2 Labouvie-Vief cognitive development theory**

According to Labouvie-Vief, as students go through college years, the absolute nature of adolescent logic begins to diminish. A new integration of thought takes place, namely the pragmatic constraints of adulthood have to be accepted and this adaptive strategy means that the adult will rely less on the logical certainty in solving problems (Santrock, 1986). Labouvie-Vief suggests the possibility of a fifth cognitive stage after the formal operational stage of Piaget. This fifth stage encompasses relativistic, pragmatic and contextual thinking. The characteristics of this stage begin to appear in the youth stage when students gradually begin to adopt relativistic and contextual thinking.

### **2.2.3 Havighurst's developmental agenda**

Havighurst has proposed the following objectives for youth as an agenda for development (Garbarino, 1985).

### **2.2.3.1 Self development**

- Cognitive and non-cognitive skills necessary for economic independence and for occupational competence.
- Capability for effective management of one's own affairs.
- Capability to engage in an intense concentrated involvement in an activity.
- Capability as a consumer, not only of goods but more significantly of the cultural riches of civilisation.

### **2.2.3.2 Social relations**

- Experience with persons differing in social class, subculture and age.
- Experience of having other dependent on one's actions.
- Experience of interdependent activities directed towards collective goals.

### **2.2.4 Chickering's theory of student development**

Chickering (1969, in Widick, et al; 1987) proposed a model of student developmental sources of influence. He postulated seven vectors that comprise identity in young adulthood. This development involves the student in a process of differentiating and integrating thought and behaviour in each of these vectors. These seven vectors are:

- Developing competency, which includes intellectual skills, physical and manual skills and social and interpersonal skills.
- Managing emotions, that is, being aware of one's emotions and then control, manage and integrate them.



- Developing autonomy, which includes emotional and instrumental independence and the recognition of interdependencies.
- Establishing identity, which is defined as the solid sense of self that assumes form as the developmental task is undertaken with some success.
- Freeing interpersonal relationships which enables a student to be tolerant of the wider range of individual and ideological differences.
- Clarifying purpose.
- Developing integrity.

Chickering (1969) reports the following conclusion about student development according to the vectors. Most common was for first and second year students to be dealing with the first three vectors and for the third and fourth year students to be dealing with the latter four vectors. His theory of student development presupposes that there are specific issues that a student can master if development is to continue. These vectors serve to guide the content of training programmes.

Douglas Heath's work centres on the idea of maturity (Widick, *et al.*, 1987). He emerges with a matrix that represents the domain of maturity. This involves four self systems and five growth dimensions. The self systems include intellect, values, self concepts and interpersonal relationships, whilst the growth dimensions are:

- becoming more able to represent experiences symbolically;
- becoming allocentric or other-centred;
- becoming integrated;
- becoming stable; and

- becoming autonomous.

Heath's approach to understanding student development enables the student services professional to realise how at the end the student should be and thus plan strategies that will enable the student to move towards characteristics of maturity.

### **2.3 THE HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENT**

Higher education institutions in the 1990's have a diverse student population. This diversity includes, age, gender, physical ability, attendance of classes and many others. Not all students are in the category of youth, many are sharing their study time with family and jobs, whilst others are returning after a long break. The needs of the student population are different and vast. Units such as student affairs, student counselling, student health, student development, programme development and student governance or student unions have been created to cater for the students' needs.

Students themselves have begun to establish stronger student unions which provide many activities for the students. The role of the student union has increased dramatically. In some institutions there are elected sabbatical officers (students paid by the student union for their full time work for the year) and permanent staff members. These officials provide service with regard to welfare, residence rights, sponsorships, legal and financial advice, training for committee representations and many more. Some student unions also operate shops, e.g. bookshops and bars (Silver & Silver, 1997).

Student services unions provide other services, particularly in the field of welfare. For example, one university advertised its service as follows:

“University can sometimes be an isolating experience and welfare is here to make sure that all students have someone to talk to and offer practical advices. Please, please, please if there is something bothering you pop up and see us ... Nobody gets through university without some

kind of hassles” (S.A. student diary, 1994-1995).

Although there are professionals in some instances that assist the students, the majority of the service providers are students themselves.

Silver and Silver (1997) quote the Penn State magazine Student Life, 1993-1994, with regard to its mission statement. At the Penn State university, the mission statement for student life is “to assist with the transition through college and to offer diverse opportunities which support and challenge students to achieve their educational, personal, and career goals. This is accomplished through the provision of programs which increase the involvement of students in leadership and community activities. Experiential learning opportunities are also provided”(p61). In order to be able to provide a suitable service and to make student counselling and development relevant, it is important to understand the diversity of students in higher education institutions.

### **2.3.1 Diversity in terms of age, gender and disability**

Traditionally universities and technikons catered for students between 19 years and 24 years of age. Presently there is an increase in the number of older students. Some are first generation graduates and others are taking a second opportunity at a higher education qualification. Some students have left jobs and families to work towards gaining their degrees, diplomas or certificates. These older students often have considerably different needs, orientations and interests to the traditional college student. They are often not full-time students and thus do not participate as actively in campus life. They tend to be more career orientated than their younger comperees (Levine, 1993). Some of these older students are returning for retraining after their first careers have become redundant or their children have grown up (Silver & Silver, 1997; Milan & Johnston, 1992; Parnell, 1990 & Barnett, 1994).

There has also been an increase in the number of female students. Whereas previously there were particular courses for women, now women are returning in great numbers and some are entering courses that were male dominated previously. These courses include engineering, architecture and construction (Barnett, 1994).

The diversity of students has also forced tertiary institutions to cater for disabled

students. Institutions have had to develop non-discriminatory policies, offer remedial and enrichment services and provide culturally diverse programmes (Milan & Johnston, 1990). The physical structures have had to be structured in such a way that they are friendly to the disabled student. The diversity of students has led to the diversity of programmes and support services offered to students.

Students' services have also responded to the greater diversity. The responses to different issues or problems brought to the service has changed from advice giving to counselling which empowers the students to take responsibility for themselves (Earwaker, 1992). Tertiary institutions have also had to respond positively to the racial differences on campus.

### **2.3.2 Ethnic differences and problems of racism**

Universities and technikons are embedded in society and there is a reciprocal influence on each other. These institutions are part of a community and therefore they are not immune to the major forces impacting on the society. This is why there has been an increase in the admission of culturally, and racially different students to the various institutions of higher education. Overt and covert racism has become an issue which in some institutions had led to the involvement of student unions (Silver & Silver, 1997; Ware & Millard, 1987).

Universities and technikons have become a melting pot of cultures, and in some institutions this has created problems for both students and staff. Instances of racism, prejudice, and discrimination have been reported. In some instances this has led to violent encounters between the student body and management (Nkomo, 1984). Tension and controversy have been engendered through policies of increasing enrollment of other racial groups (Levine, 1993).

Other factors that contribute to the racial and ethnic differences at these institutions are the socio-economic and cultural background of the students. Presently there has been a greater democratisation of institutions. There has been an increase in the enrolment of students from low socio-economic origins who are poorly prepared for higher education. The socio-economic heterogeneity, in an intellectually oriented environment, sharpens the awareness of disparities in society (Nkomo, 1984). In a survey conducted in the United States of America it was found that one in four university principals

complained about racial tension being the most troublesome issue on campus (Boyer, 1990). The same can be said of South African institutions of higher learning. Social class tends to increase or decrease awareness especially racial differences in South Africa which tend to influence the socio-economic status of students (Nkomo, 1984).

Campuses have tried to build loyalties within a diverse student population and often have not been successful. These are not the only issues facing tertiary students, other issues that they have to grapple with are financial issues, academic issues, accommodation, the nature of the institutions, peer pressure (including alcohol, drug and sexual issues) and student activism.

### **2.3.3 Accommodation pressures facing students**

Traditional universities provided their students with highly serviced accommodation, providing cleaning, linen and catering services (Blakey, in Haselgrove, 1994). Various means of accommodation are provided for presently. There has been an increase in privatised accommodation and in the changing of university residences to self-catering flatlets. Servicing has been reduced to mostly communal areas as the cost of accommodation has increased. Like many other non-teaching functions, accommodation services have been separated from the academic side of the institution. Students have to pay separately for residents' fees and most institutions state that acceptance to an academic programme does not guarantee acceptance at residences.

There has been an increase in the number of students who live off campus, either at home or in privately hired accommodation. Although this can help reduce the financial obligation of students, it does not alleviate it completely. There has been an increase in co-residential living in residence halls, recently which has given students the opportunity to live with members of the opposite sex. This type of arrangement has not led to peaceful co-existence as there have been reports of crime and rape.

This is especially true for younger students who are still naive, and are seen as soft targets (Silver & Silver, 1997).

The institution creates a range of responsibilities for students according to the services it provides. The students' responsibilities include payment of tuition and accommodation fees, not misbehaving, repaying loans and the like.

#### **2.3.4 Financial position of students**

In earlier times, students at higher education institutions were well subsidised financially and institutions were able to offer their students grants, bursaries and loans. Presently an increased share of the cost of higher education is being shifted to the individual. As the cost of higher education is increased, access is more limited (Levine, 1993).

Presently many students have financial problems and are desperate for financial support. Some students hold part-time jobs in order to make ends meet. These jobs often interfere with their studies and the ability to meet their academic obligations. At times, student poverty is hidden from the institution authorities and can be underestimated by the student himself. Debt is usually disclosed when the student reaches a personal crisis. This can lead to a student seeking help or the student dropping out of the institution. Many students incorrectly believe they will be able to meet their financial obligations until it is too late to take remedial action. This can result to students not returning to the institution.

The South African government has presently established a formal loan bursary scheme that is administrated by the Tertiary Education Fund of South Africa (TEFSA). Not all students qualify for this scheme and the manner in which this is advertised on campuses, usually leaves most first year students ignorant of its existence. This then leads to a huge debt. Deacon (1994) states that students' lifestyles are influenced by debt. When a student has to choose between buying a textbook or a meal it is obvious which comes first. It is a common practice for students to devote their spare time to seeking a job instead of studying books.

Johnson (1994) believes that institutions have to begin to come to terms with the culture of debt and the effects of student poverty, which enhances the gap between rich

and poor students, and influences academic performances and educational opportunities. High levels of part-time employment among full-time students has increased dramatically. Some universities or student unions in the 1990s began to establish part-time job experiences on campuses (Silver & Silver, 1997). Research showed that there has been a 35% growth in the employment rate of the students from 1972 to 1998 (McCartan, 1988).

Students' financial position and the wide gap that tend to exist between the wealthy and the poor, usually becomes a fertile ground for student activism.

### **2.3.5 Student activism**

The nature of student culture is oppositional (Levine, 1993). It tends to question authority and look for alternative perspectives on a range of issues, such as policies, social and interpersonal issues. Students are part of an international youth culture which affects their values, attitudes and lifestyle. It is therefore common to find students involved in activities that oppose the running of institutions. These activities may include strikes, stayaways, boycotts of classes and destruction of property.

Students' predilection towards an oppositional perspective and broad liberal or radical views can be fertile ground for activist politics, and if conditions are conducive, they can lead to significant social unrest (Nkomo, 1984). Students' activism is generally sporadic. If it is anticipated, it can be controlled.

The activist culture is usually carried out through organisations. Some of these organisations are funded by the institutions through student fees or other means. In a large and often impersonal institutional environment, such extracurricular groups provide an anchor for student allegiance. These student organisations have a more significant influence on student values and attitudes.

Student activism can be promoted or restricted by the institutional ethos, for example, the bureaucratic nature of the administration, the interaction of administration staff with students and the manner in which statutory mandates are executed (Nkomo, 1984).

This activism has the potential of creating significant social dislocation quickly as students are generally easy to mobilise. If this activism is not properly managed, it can lead to considerable disruption as student movements tend to align themselves with political parties. Due to the institution's embeddedness in society it will tend to reflect what is happening in the broader societies.

Challenges facing students at tertiary institutions are significant if the challenge of academic work and adjustment is not dealt with.

### **2.3.6 Academic pressures**

Students are central to the academic enterprise. Along with the professors, they are at the core of the educational equation. They play a profoundly important role in shaping the ethos, culture and orientation of universities and colleges everywhere. For centuries universities existed to teach students (Altbach, in Levine, 1993). Students are the defining characteristics of higher education, without them institutions will be research institutions and faculty clubs.

Universities serve as a focus of new ideas, and intellectual concepts. These institutions have sought to translate these abstract concepts into concrete actions that can impact positively on the human condition. Scott (in Nkomo, 1984) found that campus unrest is an expression of intellectual restlessness which prompts the search for truth.

Institutions of higher learning are committed to learning, the protection of freedom of thought and expression, justice and respect for difference (Barnette, 1994). They are viewed as pluralistic communities which are characterised by open, value driven, and empowering values. This may not be true of present institutions as there are also a number of pressures facing them.

With the reduction in funding of institutions, and the call on academics to generate their own income, there has been an increase in competition instead of collegiality (Barnette, 1994). Learning and teaching, which is the central function of the institution, is being underscored by the pursuit of other objectives.



In a study conducted by the Carnegie Foundation (Boyer, 1990), the following findings were made:

- Sixty five percent of faculties stated that they were teaching undergraduates basic skills that they could have learnt at school.
- Students are less willing to work hard in their studies.
- There is a deficiency in the preparedness of students in language and mathematical skills.
- A majority of students are grossly under prepared for coping with college level academic work.

These findings also apply in the South African situation, as numbers of first-year students entering higher education institutions are poorly prepared and without a vision of their vocational choice. Academic work becomes difficult and some of the students tend to drop out.



Higgins (1994) states that it is a waste of student time if they are admitted into courses to which they are not suited. These students join the non-completion statistic. He further expresses disappointment about the fact that 22% of students in second year of higher education are still uncertain of whether they have made the right choice (Haselgrove, 1994).

As more students have crowded into higher education, the conditions of academic work have deteriorated. It is thus expected of a student to widen his horizons to the extent that he is able to make informed choices between cognitive options (Barnette, 1994).

It is the function of the student to learn. Learning is intricately intertwined with the varied purposes of personal development, social development, cognitive development and the development of skills for self-sufficiency (Duke, 1992). To acquire these purposes, it is expected of students to gain personal and social self-confidence and responsibilities. Students have to learn to think critically and develop marketable professional skills.

## 2.4 THE ROLE OF STUDENTS' UNIONS AND STUDENT ORGANISATIONS

The first-year student is the most vulnerable in the given scenario as there are high expectations placed on performance. With the growth of institutions of higher learning in size and population, there is a risk that the student with particular needs and difficulties will disappear. It will take a community spirit to unearth and identify that student.

A modern college or university should be a place where every individual feels affirmed (Boyer, 1990). Human beings have an absolute need for social bonding from the first to the last moments of life. Clarke (1990) states that "social embeddedness is the essence of human nature." It is in this sense that the undergraduate student has even a higher need to belong, and to feel valued and learn that someone cares.



When first-year students join institutions of higher learning, they seek out others like them. It is easy to find them making friendships on the basis of race, awkwardness, former schools, and chosen courses. The student affairs staff in particular, understand the importance of students' need for support, especially students on the margin.

Student structures themselves have taken the responsibility of making the new student feel welcome. Student unions, student representative councils, societies and fraternities organise activities that will ease the transition for the undergraduate students. These organisations can at times create a sense of isolation and create friction on campus as they have a tendency of isolating themselves from other student structures.

The student union promotes involvement in its programmes and operations. It strives to maximise opportunities for personal development and self-discovery through self-directed activities. It emphasises the constructive use of leisure time. It is through participation in student union activities that students develop a sense of community. This development presupposes a partnership between academic and out-of-class aspects of campus life which educates the total person (Milan & Johnson, 1992).

The spirit of community must be measured by the quality of caring and support students get on campus. The students can feel part of the campus community if there is a supportive climate in the classroom, are treated with dignity by administrative officers and if the office hours are arranged to serve the needs of students, not the system.

The goal of educators should be to help students to see that they are not only individuals but also members of the community. There is a need to reach out to others within and without the institution. Students should be brought in touch with those who are genuinely in need, through field experiences (Boyer, 1990).

## 2.5 CONCLUSION

The student population is becoming more variegated, complex and diverse. Racial, gender and age variations have increased. The majority of higher education institutions in South Africa have not seen major outbreaks of racial prejudice, although a sense of tension has been growing on many campuses.

Institutions of higher learning have become mass institutions with the student population coming from urban areas, working class communities, rural areas, disadvantaged communities and middle class communities. These differences can tend to highlight and increase student activism. This has necessitated the strengthening and expansion of student services. These include the recruitment of counsellors, financial aid officers, residence hall supervisors and the like.

It is in this context that student counselling services are provided at universities. It is one of the support services that ensures that learners receive effective guidance and support in order to achieve their full academic potential (Rives in Wisker & Brown, 1996). According to Nassar and Collins-Eaglin (1994), counselling centres at university or college campuses are responsible for the mental health of the student population. This is an overwhelming task, demanding time and resources which are often unavailable. In order to meet these demands on the campus, student para-professionals, often referred to, as peer counsellors, have been trained to provide counselling services.

The increase in the use of peer counsellors on campus is part of the overall movement towards prevention, rather than intervention of mental health concerns (McLeon, Tercek & Wisbey, 1985; Pyle & Snyder, 1971). Peer counsellors therefore are an extension of the student counselling unit. They have to be trained, supervised and managed through that unit.

## CHAPTER 3

### PEER COUNSELLING

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The term "peer counselling" is defined as a process in which non-certificated, trained and supervised individuals offer listening, support, alternatives and other verbal and nonverbal interactions to peer group members seeking assistance. A peer counsellor, therefore, is a para-professional, a person without extensive professional training, who is specifically selected, trained, and provided with ongoing supervision to perform designated tasks, usually carried out by a counselling professional (Carr, 1991).

The demand for mental health professionals will always exceed supply. The shortage of professional mental health workers has led to an increasing use of lay counsellors to provide health services to the millions who need it (Tan Siang-Yang, 1991). An example of this need can be seen in the growth of self-help movements as seen in Alcoholic Anonymous, gay associations, Weight Watchers and other self-help groups. It is believed that people tend to seek out those similar to themselves or probably those who might have had the potential to be in the same plight as them (De Rosenroll & Day, 1990).

Within the past two decades, there has been an intensified awareness that the need for mental health care far outweighs the service the mental health professional has been equipped to provide (Hahn & Le Captaine, 1993). Accordingly, the number of people seeking help reaches far beyond the number of mental health services and the personnel who can provide it.

It is argued that in order to reach a larger clientele, mental health workers or psychologists should not only assume the role of experts by trying to be the only practitioners of mental health, but there is a need to give it away, to train lay people who will be more accessible, reachable and achieve better understanding to practise it. This "philosophy of giving psychology away" focuses upon teaching psychology to non-professionals who, in turn, will help others (Hahn & Captaine, 1993).

It is the combination of this shortage of professionals and the increase in the need for the service that has led to the training of para-professionals or non-professionals to undertake many of the helping functions once exclusively performed by professional counsellors.

The practice of giving away psychology and training non-professionals has not been related to clinical studies alone. The market has been flooded by popular psychology books in which professionals share their psychological knowledge and expertise. These include books such as *Women are from Mars and Men are from Venus* (Gray, 1996), *The Heart of Parenting* (Gottman, 1997) and *The Six Pillars of Self-Esteem* (Branden, 1995). There has also been an increase in training manuals and handbooks meant for the training of lay counsellors and peer helpers (Egan, 1996; Briegman, 1990; Nelson-Jones, 1995; Letsele, 1988).

The consequences of the "mental health supply and demand dilemma" have not been isolated within the general population alone. A growing number of educators and psychologists at schools, colleges, universities and technikons have also recognised an ever increasing demand for counselling services and the incapacity of the available professionals to meet these needs. The growing need of students for guidance and counselling services has outstripped the supply of counsellors available to meet the needs (Robinson *et al.*, 1991). In many instances this has led to the identification and training of other students as non-professional counsellors.

This strategy makes the counsellor or psychologist an educational consultant and it enables the psychologist to spread the service provision. The use of students in schools and colleges to take up responsibility for others has also been found to lead to maturity.

Much of the early research on peer counselling has focussed on the college students who have been used primarily to assist other students as mentors and tutors (Morey *et al.*, 1993). Students have further shown that peer counsellor contact improves the probability of retaining high-risk students in counselling (Froman, 1972 in Morey *et al.*, 1989).

Carr (1991) reported that students are more likely to seek out the services of a peer when they have a problem. Students perceive peer counsellors as being more personal and easier to access physically and emotionally than professional counsellors.

There has been a growth of people helping people. The growth of peer counselling in colleges and schools has been referred to as a quiet revolution (Carrol & King, 1985). Peer acceptance and peer approval are considered to be crucial elements in the development of adolescents and adults. There has been, and continues to be, a belief that peers are an important source of influence and support for each other (Robinson, Morrow, Kiggin & Cindman, 1991).

Undergraduate students have complained of feeling anonymous in a college or university system that does not respond to their needs (Ware & Millard, 1987). Students need advice on careers, establishing a general sense of direction, adjusting to the institution, and other information that may be shared with peers. Quality advising not only aids students in adapting to university life and preparing for a career, but it also helps institutions meet their goals for providing a relevant educational experience and retaining students (Ware & Millard, 1987).

This suggests that in order to provide a quality service, the professional should be able to delegate the simple information dissemination tasks to peer helpers and then focus and concentrate on more professional counselling needed by the students. This does not only profit the professional but also the peer helper and the students in general.

Kuh, Schuh and Associates (1991) in their book *Involving Colleges* found that the best way to adjust to college was to get involved. Students who got involved in campus activities performed better academically. The effectiveness of the undergraduate experience relates to the quality of campus life and is directly linked to the time the students spend on campus and the quality of their involvement in activities.

Research has found that in order for students to develop satisfaction, physical and psychological well-being, there is a need to experience personal development (Kuh, Schuh & Associates, 1991).

This personal development includes those attitudes, skills and values that enable one to:

- understand and reflect one's thoughts
- recognise and appreciate the difference between one and others
- manage one's personal affairs successfully
- care for those less fortunate
- determine socially and personally acceptable responses in various situations
- relate meaningfully with others through friendships, marriage, civil and political entities
- be economically self sufficient (Kuh, Schuh & Associates, 1991).



University environments have to promote rather than hinder this personal development of students both in and out of the classroom. Out-of-the-classroom activities such as participation in orientation programmes, helping others in residence halls, sports activities and organising other student functions, positively influences both social integration and institutional commitment. Students involved in out-of-class activities are more positive about their university experience, are more satisfied with their social life, living environment and academic major, and are more likely to graduate.



Gardener (1990) believe that involvement in out-of-class activities leads to the development of leadership skills, decision making, team work and planning abilities. Other benefits include improved self-esteem and assertiveness.

### 3.2 STUDENT COUNSELLING

The practice of counselling differs from one institution to another, depending on the nature of the institutional environment, the student population and the professionals who are represented in the staff complement (Van der Merwe, 1997).

Counselling is not a luxury that can be added to tuition services if resources allow. It is as central to learner support as tuition. Counselling should not be viewed as reactionary, only addressing student distress on a one-to-one basis. There has to be a pro-active approach to counselling in order to reach the maximum number of students on campus (Van der Merwe, 1997). The student numbers, the plethora of problems facing the students and the demands for the service, make it impossible to keep to the reactive model where students have to initiate consultation.

There is no simple type of counselling centre, as counselling centres are embedded in different kinds of institutions and have greatly varying local histories. Whitey *et al.* (1987) identified five types of centres. These are:

- the macro centres which offer a broad range of services including personal and career counselling, testing, placement and special functions such as training, consultation and limited advising. These centres view their tasks as both developmental and counselling
- the career planning and career centre which offers a career orientation service with minimal counselling and other functions
- the counselling orientation which has similar functions to the macro centre but to a limited extent
- the general level service which is headed by the dean of students offering a

variety of services to students not limited to counselling

- the minimal service centres which are characterised by providing minimal services in all areas.

An institution should cater for the “whole” person, and focus on the total development of its students. According to Brown (1987), in order to be effective, student development should involve:

- the development of the personal identity of the student, which involves a value system and a vocational purpose
- interpersonal development, which includes communication skills, the ability to understand and empathise with others
- the development of intellectual and academic skills which permit the individual to engage in lifelong learning
- the development of both aesthetic and physical recreation appreciation and participation.

In order to achieve this, the department of student counselling has to take an active role, especially in the out-of-class activities. It also has to enable students to either make the right choices, reduce confusion or lead students towards change.

When a student who seeks counselling is not viewed as sick, and the purpose of counselling is not to heal the sickness but to enable the student to make choices, then counselling ought to be viewed as normal, natural and appropriate (Gillmore, 1987).

Given the fact that counselling centres are experiencing an increase of students with psychological problems (Stone & Archer, 1990) the professional will have to focus on pathology whilst the trained non-professionals will assist in the developmental and preventative realm.

In institutions there has been an increase in students' problems relating to substance abuse, eating disorders, sexual abuse and violence, sexual harassment, HIV and AIDS, and dysfunctional family relationships, e.g. alcohol abuse and divorce (Stone & Archer, 1990). This role still has to be carried out by trained psychologists in the counselling centre.

Further demands placed on the counselling centres are those of consultation, reaching out to an increasing number of non-traditional students such as older people and other racial groups not initially catered for (Boyer, 1990).

It is therefore necessary for the counselling centre to ensure that it provides an effective service, given the various challenges. In order to do this, it has to train students as peer helpers who can serve in the outreach programmes, alleviate minor counselling needs, provide information and act as referral agents. The counselling centre can also establish self-help groups within campuses which could be facilitated by the peer helpers.



### **3.3 REASONS FOR PEER COUNSELLING**

Peer counselling refers to the aid that students offer to age mates or younger children in solving personal or social problems (Diver Stamnes, 1991). Peer counselling is a way for students to care about others and put their caring into practice (Carr, 1992). It is an effective way to organise and use students' abilities to help one another (Morey, Dean-Miller *et al.*, 1993).

The counselling programme formalises the natural helping tendencies and skills that are apparent in many students. It is a programme consisting of a structured set of activities that involves professional helpers, peer counsellors and a target environment.

Delwoth, Hansen and Associates (1987) refer to para-professionals as "persons without extended professional training who are specifically selected, trained and given ongoing supervision to perform some designated tasks usually performed by professionals." This definition fits in well with college, university, school and technikon peer counsellors, as these students are chosen, trained and supervised by professionals to

perform certain tasks. Delworth further believes that these para-professionals should be part of an indigenous population that is being served. It is important to note that peer counsellors are not professional counsellors or therapists, but are students who provide supervised assistance to other students to help think through and reflect on concerns they might be experiencing (Carr, 1992).

Peer counselling is a deliberate and systematic form of psychological education (Carr, 1992). It is a strategy to provide students with skills to help others and to empower those being helped. The effectiveness and growth of the peer counselling programme can be ascribed to various reasons, such as proper selection, training and supervision.

Peer counsellor training empowers the trainee to be able to deal with his own problems. It contributes to psychological maturity as it enables the trainee to acquire skills such as decision making, assertiveness, problem solving and also to be self aware of one's own strengths and weakness, which lead to an improved self-esteem and self confidence.



It is a known fact that students, when experiencing some kind of personal concern, rely primarily on their friends as sources of help (Carr, 1992; Morey *et al.*, 1993; Diver-Stamnes, 1991). Students perceive peer counsellors as being more personal and easier to access physically and emotionally than professional counsellors (De Rosenroll & Day, 1990).

The nearness of the peer in terms of gender, age, social status, and probability of being exposed to the same conditions, makes it easier for a peer counsellor to teach another student and for the other students to learn things that are unique and cannot be taught by parents. It is easier for students to learn from others or talk to others about AIDS, relationship problems, and even problems relating to sexual orientation. There is an expectation that as a peer the individual will be able to listen non-judgementally.

Zimbardo and Lerppe (1991) state that when people are uncertain about their own opinions, people seek guidance from those who hold similar opinions or who are similar in other dimensions, and the opinions of similar others are expected to hold more sway than dissimilar others. Furthermore Bandura (1992) suggests that adolescents will be

more likely to enact modelled behaviour when they perceive the models as similar to themselves in terms of gender, ethnicity and age.

In order for counselling to reach the maximum target of people, there is a need to engage in preventative counselling. It is then easier to engage in preventative programmes with the help of peer counsellors at a college or university. Prevention programmes have two levels; the first level is the need to strengthen students against harmful influences, for and example programme against alcohol and drug abuse, education on safe sex to prevent HIV/AIDS and on the second level, reduce the incidence of psychological destructive factors within the environment.

Peer helping is a success story as seen in the self-help groups such as Weight Watchers, Alcoholic Anonymous, gay and lesbian groups and many others. These groups enable members to adjust, to accept and to change if need be.

Students are also best suited to be peer helpers because they are at the stage where they need independence, whether it is helping school children who are undergoing a process of "who am I" or college and university students who are young adults, who are also seeking direction of "where am I going".

According to Erickson, (Hjelle & Ziegler, 1986) the university student is at the age of young adulthood. This period extends from late adolescence until early adulthood (age 20-24). During this time, young adults usually orient themselves towards enriching vocations. Erickson refers to this stage as **intimacy versus isolation**. This intimacy not only refers to sexual relationships but includes the deep relationship between friends and in a broader sense a commitment to one's fellow human beings.

A healthy resolution of the intimacy versus isolation crises produces the psycho-social strength of love. In addition to its romantic and erotic qualities, Erickson regards love as the ability to commit oneself to others and abide by such commitments, even though they may require self-denial and compromise. This type of love is expressed when a person shows an attitude of care, respect and responsibility towards the other. The ability of students to establish the capacity of mature, intimate relationships is positively related to participation in activities such as peer helping (Kuh, Schuh *et al.*, 1991).

A student's peer group exerts considerable pressure and influence on how a student spends discretionary time and thus how much time is dedicated to study and other educational activities. Once a person identifies with a group, that group becomes an anchor and a reference point. The values and behaviours approved by the group provide a background for developing individual attitudes and behaviours (Chickering in Astin, 1984).

Peer counselling is a training ground for students as it is a way of encouraging students to learn from one another and to take care of one another. Research has shown that a successful student is the one who gets involved in at least one of the numerous activities at college. This involvement enables one to successfully cope, later in life, in the world of work with ambiguous and complex work tasks. It also prepares the individual to interact with co-workers and clients who are increasingly diverse in terms of background and culture. Peer counselling exposes the student to work with different types of people through active interaction. Skills gained through this exercise enhance one's later quality of life and success. Some students also reported gains in intellectual and personal development by engaging in peer helping relationships during their college years (Astin, 1984).

The purpose of peer counselling can be said to be to:

- provide counselling to students who cannot be reached through existing services
- enhance the self-esteem and self-confidence of both the helpers and the helpees

- act as referral agents for students who might be reluctant to go for professional service problems need professional assistance
- be available, accessible and supportive to the students experiencing problems
- promote personal development for both peer counsellor and their clients
- organise and use students' abilities to help one another.

Lastly, in these times when institutions have financial constraints, the use of peer counsellors seems an appropriate method of reaching as many students as possible for the time and money expended, in addition to being an invaluable educational experience for the peer counsellors themselves.

In order for the peer counselling programme to be effective, proper selection, training and supervision has to be provided.

#### **3.4 RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PROCEDURES**

For the programme to be effective, certain criteria have to be used in the selection of peer counsellors. Academic performance is an important determinant in the selection of peer counsellors. The students are initially at the institution to pursue an academic programme and to pursue a particular career programme. The student should be able to succeed in his studies so that peer counselling is not used as an excuse for failure. Students who are chosen as peer counsellors should be those who have completed either a semester or a year at the institution (Diver-Stamnes, 1991). Successful students make responsible peer counsellors as these students are able to manage their time effectively between serving other students and attending to their own academic work.

Initially in recruiting students, different strategies can be utilised. It is common to invite students to apply, making their own recommendations on why they would like to be chosen as peer counsellors (Stokes *et al*, 1988; Hill, 1990; Diver-Stamnes, 1991). In their applications, students may have to indicate their grade point for the previous year

or semester, the number of credits or courses enrolled for and references. This is done in order to ensure that the students are not overloaded with work and thus become inefficient.

Another way of selecting peer counsellors is through referrals by faculty or peers. These methods have been used in many institutions where students are asked to select students that they would go to if they experienced a problem (Morey, 1993; Devault & Atienza, 1990).

Jackson (1986) asked students to select peers who would make the best counsellors, whereas Robinson, Marrow and Kigin (1991) asked students to indicate names of two students and two staff members they would go to if students had a personal problem. The names were then tallied to identify natural helpers in the school environment.

Students can also select peer counsellors according to the school network theory which state that members of a teenager's peer group, especially those regarded as "cool" members, are the ones with credibility and power to shift other adolescents' perceptions of peer counsellors (Ozer *et al.*, 1997).

Other researchers explore with the group the characteristics of good helpers, and then allow students to indicate names of students who meet a particular number of characteristics (Tsengiwe, 1998; Down *et al.*, 1986; Miller, 1989). Generally the criteria used is based on the Rogerian model of a good counsellor. These are criteria such as genuineness, unconditional positive regard, warmth, empathy, openness, non-judgmental attitude (Rogers, 1986). Characteristics such as warmth, approachability, genuineness, trustworthiness, love for fellow human beings are also observed in students who are selected as peer counsellors.

Interviews and psychometric tests also play an important role in the selection of peer helpers. Interviews are used in order to determine the ethnic sensitivity, campus activity involvement, previous training, experience and student interest (Stokes *et al.*, 1988). Other characteristics that counsellors look for include altruism, interest in activities, seriousness about the programme and the ability to handle a dual role (Diver-Stamnes, 1991).



Peer counsellors should be students who already are familiar with the institution and its setting. These students should also be familiar with the rules and regulations and the expectation of faculty from the students at large. This then presupposes that peer counsellors should be students who are alert, understanding, open-minded and may have held leadership positions in other areas or are regarded with confidence by other students. These characteristics make it easier for them to lead various tasks and to participate in orientation programmes.

Various psychometric tools have been utilised in the selection of peer counsellors. Carr (1992) refers to an inventory developed by Dunn and Dunn; Jackson (1986) refers to the Kagan Affective Sensitivity Scale (KASS). The Kagan Affective Sensitivity Scale is used to determine counselling potential among peer helpers. It was meant to discriminate between students with high potential for counselling and those with low counselling potential (Jackson, 1986).

### 3.5 TRAINING OF PEER COUNSELLORS

Literature does not indicate a systematic way of training the peer counsellors. Various models, the training period and the actual people who do the training vary from one institution to the other.

De Vault and Altieza (1992) in the training of peer counsellors in a high-risk drug abuse programme, designed a two-level training. Basic peer counselling emphasised assessment for high risk, confidentiality, self-knowledge, prevention strategies, locus of self-control and independence versus regression. In the advanced peer counselling course, the programme is meant for use with individuals who wish to assist in the training of peer counsellors. It seeks to add theory in relation to counselling and to focus on holistic health care emphasising trans-personal psychology.

Peer counsellors' training, needs to be focussed and not too long, especially if it is not part of the curriculum. Robinson *et al.* (1991) states that a three day camp for training of beginning counsellors helps to make them confident in the skills they gain. Peer counsellors are trained in communication skills with special emphasis on listening, ability to empathise, ability to generate change and to help with relationship problems.

Training, which was both didactic and experiential, stressed personal growth, acceptance of diversity, self-assessment, micro-counselling skills, crisis management, referrals and limit setting.

Models of counselling that are generally used, are taken from the Rogerian approach (Lifeline, 1994, Morey *et al.*, 1989; Morey *et al.* 1993). The Rogerian skills emphasise active listening, empathy, reflection, summarising and not giving advice to students. One other training model that has proven useful in the training of peer helpers is the problem management approach (Egan, 1990).

According to Egan (1990) the problem management approach helps beginner helpers on:

- what to do to help clients facing problems of living
- how to help clients develop unused resources
- what communication skills are needed to help clients
- what specific stages and steps make up the helping process
- what techniques and skills are needed.

These steps help the counsellor to be focussed and to enable the client to reach his own solutions. The problem-solving model involves the following broad categories:

- identify and clarifying problem situations and unused opportunities
- developing a preferred scenario

- formulating strategies and plans.

It is important to remember that when training peer counsellors one is not training psychologists but equipping these students with skills that would enable them to help their peers. Marmachev (1989) found that trainers emphasise the following objectives:

- Good listening skills
- Greater awareness of verbal and nonverbal behaviours on the part of self and others
- Strategies for establishing a nonthreatening environment
- Ways of responding, such as feedback and classification, to encourage the client's self-growth
- Recognition of signs when professional counselling is needed
- Resources for referrals or general information (educational, personal-social, or occupational).

Knowledge and skills needed by peer counsellors include the development of a support system among themselves, awareness of administrative policies and procedures, and interpretational relationship or job-specific skills. Commonly utilised techniques follow a basic sequence: identifying a particular skill, breaking it down into small steps, explaining its goals and objectives, demonstrating, having the trainee role-play it, giving feedback, and then repeating the practice feedback process until minimum performance is demonstrated by the trainees. Specific procedures involve the use of videotapes, role-playing, group discussions, decision-making models, value clarifications exercises, basic counselling skill training, micro-counselling and lecture or didactic presentations.

Trainers have spent varying amounts of time for training their peer helpers from 10 hours (Solovey & D'Andrea, 1984), to 30 hours (De Rosenroll & Day, 1990) and 40

hours (Nasser, 1994). The spread of these hours differs from institution to institution as others have been able to incorporate training into the curriculum (Nasser, 1994; More & Miller *et al.*, 1989 & 1993; Divers-Stammes, 1991). Some have also used either summer or winter vacations for the purpose of training (Brown & Bunker, 1984; Holly, 1987) and still others have utilised weekend training (Robinson, Morrow *et al.*, 1991; Motsabi & Mandewo, 1996).

The various models of training incorporate both experiential learning through roleplaying which are meant to develop skills and deductive approaches (Lupton-Smith *et al.*, 1996; Rosenroll & Day, 1990; Carr, 1986).

In the South African context the nature of tertiary institutions has changed. It has become multicultural, multiracial and multilingual. The student population is diverse and there has been a growing need to cater for the various population groups at the counselling centres. The same issue in the United States has been catered for through a major focus on training peer helpers from minority groups (Mack, 1989; Bell, 1994; Stokes *et al.*, 1988). These groups could either be Hispanic or Blacks. A concerted effort has been put into ensuring that the needs of these groups are catered for (Mack, 1989).

The traditional training models which focussed on “knowing” instead of learning “how” (McCrae & Johnson, 1991) have become obsolete. There has been a need to train culturally sensitive counsellors (Day-Vinnes *et al.*, 1996) and thus Hafegea (1996) proposed a model that would incorporate the following:

- self awareness which refers to the ability to recognise one’s own values, assumptions, needs and limitations
- culture reading, that is, the ability to find logic in each culture
- having a multiple perspective, the ability to suspend judgement and to see through the eyes of the other.

These dimensions of multi-cultural counselling competence are illustrated by McCrae

and Johnson (1991) as follows:

## DIMENSIONS OF COMPETENCE IN CROSS-CULTURAL COUNSELLING

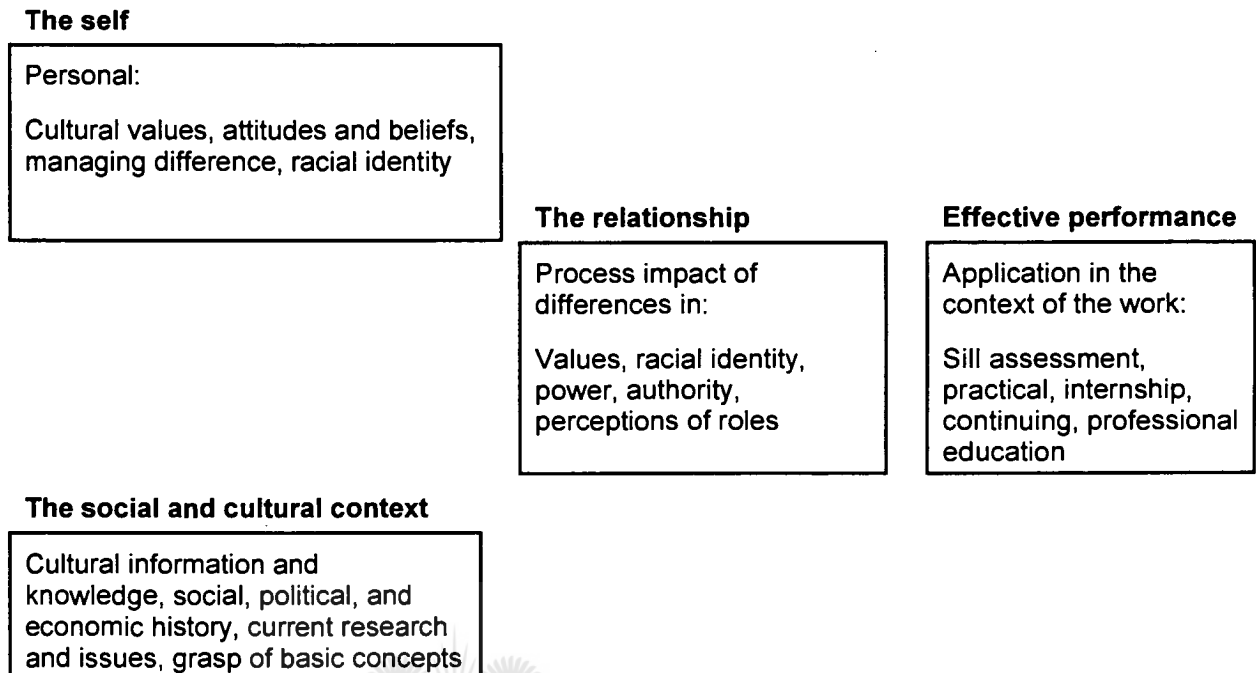


Figure 3.1: *Dimensions of competence in multicultural counselling*

In most instances, training is done by institutional personnel either from the student counselling division or psychologists within. Robinson *et al.* (1991) found that the usage of internal staff promotes the continuity of the programme and makes it easier for supervision to take place.

According to him, supervision should be part of the ongoing support and training that the peer helpers receive.

### 3.6 FUNCTIONS AND ROLES PERFORMED BY THE PEER COUNSELLORS

Peer counsellors at tertiary institutions may be used in a variety of settings and to perform a variety of functions. Duties assigned to them depend on the institutional need, the number of student counsellors available and the financial resources available.

Brown and Zunker (1984) found that in colleges peer counsellors were used in the

following places:

- residence halls
- institutional departments
- study habits clinic
- student social centre
- testing and guidance centre and during orientation week only.

At the beginning of the year, the major function of the peer counsellors is to help first-year students to adjust to the institution. This is done through the orientation programme where new students are helped to become full members of the community of learning. Peer counsellors also are involved in the development and execution of life-skills training workshops. Stokes and Gonzales (1998) utilised peer helpers to conduct workshops for housing, run the summer education programme and the university preparation programme.

Some institutions utilise peer counsellors to assist in the running of tutorials and to give academic support to their peers. This is done in conjunction with the academic departments. In doing this the programme becomes visible and user friendly (Morey *et al.*, 1989).

Peer counselling is there to provide a safety net for the general student population in dealing with various problems encountered that can hinder success. It is in this capacity that peer counsellors provide counselling to the student body. This is usually done in individual consultation or in groups (Marmachev, 1984).

Properly trained and supervised peer counsellors also act as good referral agents for the counselling centre (Stokes *et al.*, 1998; De Vault & Atiezza, 1992; Morey *et al.*, 1989). It also improves the probability of retaining high-risk students as these are identified early and referred for professional assistance. The peer counsellors can

defuse minor issues before they become a crisis and refer help seekers to appropriate resources. It is important that peer counsellors are knowledgeable about the college system and its available resources so that they are able to provide information to students who are uncertain of rules and regulations pertaining to their studies.

They can provide support and information to their clients who might be experiencing normal developmental stresses. Peer counsellors have been utilised in providing counselling, training, information and assistance in the following areas (Robinson *et al.*, 1991).

### **3.6.1 Direct helping relationships**

#### **3.6.1.1 Individual interviewing**

- Securing limited, factual information through a semi-structured or structured interview.
- Giving information prepared in advance and approved by the professional counsellor for its appropriateness, with an emphasis on facts rather than interpretation.
- Explaining in practical lay terms the purpose and procedures involved in the counselling process.
- Engaging the counselee in informal, casual discussion to put him/her at ease and establish an openness to counselling, particularly when the counselee appears hostile towards or apprehensive about counselling.

### **3.6.1.2 Small group interviewing or discussion**

- Guiding discussion as a leader in a largely pre-planned programme.
- Describing staff and materials as an information resource person or telling how and where to acquire needed resources.
- Acting as a recorder during the group session, under the supervision of a professional counsellor.
- Observing verbal and non-verbal interactions in groups, following predetermined cues and procedures for making observations.
- Participating in informal conversations with members of a small group to help put members at ease and to initiate helping relationships that may be provided by subsequent counselling.
- Giving information and support to outreach activities of the counselling service/programme.

### **3.6.2 Indirect helping relationships**

#### **3.6.2.1 Information gathering and processing**

- Administering, scoring, and profiling non-clinical standardized tests and appraisal instruments.
- Obtaining and maintaining information on the scope and outlook of the world of work and employment trends, in accordance with instruction from the professional counsellor.
- Contacting various sources for records and information relevant to the counselling service/programme.



- Searching for new sources of information about the clients and/or environment, under the direction of the professional counsellor.
- Preparing educational, occupational, and personal-social information for visual or audio-visual presentation or transmittal, in accordance with instructions from the professional counsellor.
- Identifying new client referral sources under the professional counsellor's supervision.
- Securing specific information about former counselees upon request and under the supervision of a professional counsellor.
- Operating audio/audiovisual equipment as directed by the professional counsellor.

### **3.6.3 Referrals of clients**



- (a) Initiating contacts with specific referral agencies.
- (b) Aiding counselees to make contact with appropriate referral agencies.

### **3.6.4 Placement and routine follow-up**

- Establishing and maintaining working relationships with organised community/education placement agencies.
- Developing specific placement opportunities for individual cases under the supervision of professional counsellors.
- Maintaining ongoing surveys of placement conditions and trends as requested by the professional counsellor.
- Searching for new placement resources useful to clients.

- Securing routine follow-up information as directed by professional counsellor.

### **3.6.5 Programme planning and management**

- Performing routine data collection and analysis as a research assistant.
- Procuring and/or preparing materials for the professional counsellor.
- Preparing standardised reports of contacts with clients, potential clients, referral sources, and placement agencies.
- Maintaining appropriate personnel and information records for the professional counsellor.
- Supervising and coordinating the activities of clerical personnel under the general supervision of the professional counsellor.

In general, the roles and functions of the professional counsellor and the peer counsellor differ in the following ways:

8. Professional counsellors perform counselling functions described in professional policy statements, while peer counsellors perform activities that contribute to the overall counselling service.
9. The work of professional counsellors involves synthesis and integration of the interrelated parts of the entire counselling service. The work of peer counsellors focuses on fewer, particular tasks and becomes an integral part of the larger whole only under the direction and leadership of the professional counsellor(s).
10. Professional counsellors base their performance on the use of theory, authoritative knowledge of effective procedures, and evaluation of the entire counselling process. Peer counsellor functions are characterized by more limited theoretical backgrounds and training and specialisation in one or more supportive activities:

- facilitate assertiveness training groups
- act as small group leaders
- operate hot-lines
- provide outreach programmes outside the institutions peer helpers have been involved in (Diver-Stamnes, 1991)
- work with high school students in special education classes
- work in the health clinic
- make lunches for the homeless
- work in infant care centres
- present workshops on chosen topics.



At the college/university level, peer counselling is viewed as a complement to instructional efforts, in both the classroom and such areas as student government and students' personnel services. Responding to the developmental needs and concerns of college students is a major focus of many peer counselling programmes. Peer counselling centres offer information, counselling, referrals and crisis intervention. Peer counsellors are used as academic advisors to increase the probability of academic and social survival of students identified in need of assistance. Academic coping concentrates on improving each student's self-direction through the development of meaning and realistic goals, providing academic survival information, recommending support services, and serving as a clearinghouse for specific academic information like course descriptions, requirements, schedules, and registration. Peer academic advising programmes recognise the critical balance between academic achievement and the self-actualisation process.

College students are also effective peer counsellors in the following areas:

- financial aid
- teaching
- admission recruiting
- career planning and replacement
- housing
- disadvantaged student programmes
- veterans services
- black students services
- health or mental health centres
- commuter student services
- foreign student services.



Peer counselling is often an integral part of services offered to nontraditional students and re-entry women as well as specific courses in the academic discipline of counsellor education and teacher education (Marmachev, 1984). These student-to-student programmes are examples of co-operative ventures among administrative/faculty/student personnel worker skills and student skills and empathy, designed to meet student needs more effectively and efficiently.

Clearly, significant student involvement in the design and implementation of programmes for other students can be a worthwhile institutional activity. Peer counsellors work with other populations and in non-academic environments.

Programmes in drug education, anti-smoking and human sexuality, use peer counsellors for information dissemination, counselling and referrals. Telephone counselling “hot lines” employ peer counsellors in crisis intervention situations. Various populations are served by peer counselling services, including the disabled, single parents, exceptional elementary/secondary students, delinquents, mothers, prisoners and women. Individuals in need of grief counselling often find that peer counsellors’ life experiences and insights are useful in their own decision making.

Older adults may be under served by helping professionals who differ in age, social background and values. Professionals may also hold negative attitudes towards the aged and be reluctant to develop programmes for them. Older adults, for their part, often stress individual responsibilities for problems and feel ashamed of their “condition”. Trained peer counsellors, because they are more readily accepted by older clients, help bridge this gap in service delivery. Programmes exist for consumer education, coping with interpersonal problems, mental health services, and communication skills.



Peer counsellors operate in a variety of settings and client populations. Their use in such a broad array of programmes suggests a strong belief in their value for the overall success of counselling services.

In order to ensure that the programme is effective and properly utilised, there is a need to evaluate it.

### **3.7 EVALUATION AND EFFECTIVENESS**

Evaluation of a peer counselling programme is an ongoing process built into the initial design of the programme, not merely added as an afterthought. The goals of the evaluation are to increase credibility of the programme, provide performance feedback, determine if goals were obtained, and decide which programme components should be continued and/or altered. Evaluation must take into account the effect of the peer counselling programme on both the client population and peer counsellors.

In evaluating the peer help programme, many researchers have focussed on the

benefits of the programme for the peer helper.

Diver-Stamnes (1991) mentions four ways through which the peer counselling programme was evaluated. Firstly, a group of students was pretested and post-tested to see if a change had occurred in the students' knowledge state at the onset and completion of the programme. Secondly, the students evaluated the programme themselves. The peer counsellors kept a log book for one year as to the type and frequency of the problems brought forward.

Other studies have evaluated the programme, especially the training, using a variety of psychological tools. Morey *et al.* (1993) made use of the Peer Counselling Consumer Satisfaction Questionnaire (PCCSQ) and the Peer Counselling Helping Style Questionnaire (PCHSQ). The findings indicated a high level of satisfaction from the clients, especially those who came voluntarily, as compared to those who were referred by teachers and counsellors. Variables that contributed to the satisfaction with the service included empathy, problem solving and preparedness of the peer counsellors.

The use of evaluation questionnaires using the latest scale seems to have been used extensively especially after training (Nasser, 1994; Mack, 1989; Carr, 1986). Other studies further indicate that the programme does not only benefit the student body at large but helps the peer counsellors themselves. Puchkoff and Font-Pedron (1990), in their study to determine the vocational application of skills that graduates of an undergraduate peer counselling programme ascertained through their involvement and work as peer counsellors, found that:

- Involvement in the programme influenced the students' choice of career and current job.

- The skills learnt in the programme were helpful to the students (peer counsellors) in terms of their personal development and job related skills.
- The skills gained contributed to the securing of placement either in graduate school or in securing employment.

Areas of personal growth most affected were greater insights into self, improved interpersonal relationships, intellectual growth and acceptance of self.

Peer counsellor training enhances self-esteem, self-confidence and improves problem solving skills of the peer counsellors themselves. Diver-Stamnes (1991) found that the peer counsellors believed that being involved in the programme changed their lives and helped them to be more understanding with their parents or friends.

In summary the programme evaluation has produced the following advantages and disadvantages.



### **3.7.1 Advantages of the programme**

- Equal effectiveness and greater client acceptance than professional counsellors
- Economical means for service delivery
- Availability for “after-hours” locations
- Ability, with training, to make referrals to professionals
- Ability to identify and empathise with their peers
- Benefits of personal development from the counselling experience.

### **3.7.2 Disadvantages of the programme**

- Lack of continuity among the peer counselling staff
- Demands on professional staff time to train, supervise, and evaluate
- Potential problem of role balance for the peer counsellor (counsellor vs peer)
- Accountability in terms of providing the best possible help for client's welfare
- Difficulty of placing the peer counselling programme into a larger counselling programme to maintain organisational goals and objectives.

These disadvantages, however, can be dealt with effectively through careful attention to selection, training, and supervision.

The effects of the peer counselling programme cannot be underestimated. It is therefore, necessary to ask how this programme can be sustained. How is it funded and are any material benefits to the peer counsellors?

### **3.8 FUNDING OF THE PROGRAMME**

The roles and functions assumed by peer counsellors constitute the overall counselling services in a unique manner. It is seen as a viable strategy to maximise the use of professional staff training and experience, to offer more effective services through special skills and to relieve professional staff of routine responsibilities which do not require their level of expertise.

The above therefore presupposes that this valuable service has to be properly funded. The institution has to have a budget which guarantees the provision of the service. This fund can be used to keep structures in place that ensure that the service continues.

The time needed by the peer counsellors to carry out their duties makes it imperative



that the peer counsellors are remunerated for the service provided. This remuneration could be in the form of cash or in kind.

One can argue that since institutions are cash strapped, the peer counsellors could benefit indirectly by way of skills training. The skills that the peer counsellors gain during their training, put them in a good stead in job seeking and in their careers.

### **3.9 SUPERVISION**

The students who are peer counsellors are also under the same types of pressures and stresses that other students are. Supervisors need to look not only at openly troubled students but at how the peer counsellors are coping with their own lives. Supervision and training should be part of their structured week.

Robinson *et al.* (1991) state that in order to provide structures and flexibility in supervision, specific tasks and projects can be identified and carried out. In the literature there seems to be no structured form of supervision either in individual sessions or group sessions.

In a study conducted by Robinson *et al.* (1991) two follow-up sessions were held with the peer counsellors which were facilitated by doctoral students to assess the impact of their training on their everyday contacts with their peers and family members.

Various reasons can be put forward for the lack of supervision. The training period may be too long and as a result, part of the training also becomes part of supervision. New aspects are discussed as students may raise inadequacies of skills previously taught. There could also be the fact that not many students utilise peer counsellors on a counselling role and thus there is no need for supervision as most tasks performed are not counselling tasks. It could also be that, peer counsellors themselves are unable to identify areas for supervision. The use of peer counsellors further presupposes that counsellors do not have sufficient time, although they are meant to act as consultants, but due to time constraints are unable to meet all their obligations.

Tsengiwe (1998) states that at her institution supervision sessions are held once per

month with four or five peer helpers where they share in the nature of concerns facing students. This also indicates that the counsellor may meet each peer helper once in three months if there are more than ten peer counsellors.

Supervision encourages the peer helpers to refer clients to the professional and helps the student counsellor to realise problems and the needs of the general student population. In this way it also contributes towards the development of preventative life skills programmes. Robinson (1991) found that peer counsellors reported that supervision enables them to handle problems that would have been difficult to handle before.

### **3.10 CONCLUSION**

Peer counselling has been proved to provide the support needed for new students in colleges and institutions of higher learning. A modern university is a place where every individual feels affirmed and where activity of the community in human caring is the key. The institution should strive to create the spirit of community for its students. This spirit of community must be measured by the quality of caring and the supportive climate created (Boyer, 1990).

The goal of education should be to help students see that they are not only autonomous individuals but also members of a larger community to which they are accountable. There is a need that all students reach out to others and assist those who are genuinely in need. From the above research, it seems peer counselling is a developing concept and growing. It is thus necessary to investigate the extent to which South African institutions of higher education are utilising the programme.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the method used to collect the data.

#### **4.2 THE GOALS OF THE STUDY**

The goal of this study is to obtain a global view of the extent to which technikon and university counselling centres make use of peer counselling programmes. It aims to yield data that would give a picture of the number of institutions that are using peer counselling as a means of reaching a maximum number of students.

Further objectives of the study are to obtain the following information:

- The selection criteria and recruitment strategies used to attract and choose the peer counsellors.
- The training strategies and techniques utilised and the period of training. It also aims to determine the nature of the training models utilised.
- The functions performed by peer helpers on campus and the extent to which the student body makes use of them.
- The supervision models or strategies which will enable the student counsellor to assist peer helpers in the execution of the tasks given to them.
- The perceived effectiveness of peer counselling programmes.
- To ascertain if student counsellors would recommend the use of peer helpers in other institutions.

- Lastly, to make recommendations from the data on whether or not it is useful to select, train and use peer helpers as lay counsellors on tertiary education campuses.

### **4.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

A survey research study was undertaken. This method was used because it enables the researcher to see beyond the superficial observation (Leedy, 1993). The descriptive survey is conducted to make descriptive assertions about a particular population (Babbie, 1990). This method is useful in this study as the researcher was not concerned with why the distribution exists, but merely what the distribution of the use of the peer helpers was.

A survey design provides a numerical description of some fraction of the population or sample, through data collection processes of asking questions of people (Fowler, 1988). The data collected enables the researcher to generalise the findings from the sample of responses to the general population (Cresswell, 1994).

### **4.4 POPULATION**

The target population are the counselling units/bureaus in both technikons and universities in South Africa. This population has been chosen because it is the student counsellors who provide counselling in institutions of higher learning and it is they who will be interested in reaching the maximum number of students or who would wish to attract more students to the counselling units. Universities and technikons that are members of the Society for Student Counsellors in South Africa (SSCSA) were targeted.

### **4.5 CONFIDENTIALITY**

The names of institutions were not reflected on the questionnaire to ensure that data collected is handled confidentially. In the letter sent to the respondents, the respondents were assured of confidentiality.

## **4.6 INSTRUMENTATION**

A self-designed instrument, based on the goals and objectives of the research was used (see , annexure A). The respondents had to select categories of responses from a given list. A variety of selections were given per question. (Zunker & Brown,1968). The questionnaire was simple, easy to understand and brief as recommended by Leedy (1993). It would take at least fifteen minutes of the respondent's time to complete. It was set out in a checklist format.

The questionnaire was made self-explanatory and questions were made to be uniformly understood by the respondents. The variables in the study included selection criteria, recruitment strategies, training models and training methods.

### **4.6.1 Structure of the questionnaire**

The questionnaire was structured into parts that dealt with specific information. The first part dealt with biographical information of the institution. The second part dealt with the selection criteria and the number of peer helpers selected. Part three concentrated on training, the time spent in training, the trainer, the training model and the method of training. Part four focussed on supervision, including the time spent on supervision. The utilisation of peer counsellors, the activities in which they are involved, places where peer counselling takes place and the number of students they consult was dealt with, in part five of the questionnaire. In part six, the questionnaire focussed on the type of remuneration the peer helpers received. The last part focussed on the evaluation of the programme and its acceptability to the campus community.

## **4.7 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE**

The questionnaire and a letter requesting participation (annexure B) were sent to the campuses of 21 universities and 14 technikons in South Africa. The questionnaire was sent to a total of 46 campuses. Only two institutions which were not members of the Society for Student Counsellors were not sent the questionnaire. This means that the entire target population was sent a questionnaire.

In March 1999, a peer help train-the-trainer workshop was held at Port Elizabeth technikon. Student counsellors who represented various tertiary institutions attended. The first batch of questionnaires was administered at the workshop to the representatives of each institution. All those questionnaires were collected. This method is recommended by Babbie (1998) because it tends to yield a high response rate. The remaining questionnaires were mailed to those institutions whose counsellors did not attend the workshop. A list of all institutions who are affiliates of the Society for Student Counsellors of South Africa (SSCSA) was used.

Initially, 28 responses were received (this included the questionnaires completed at the Port Elizabeth workshop and the questionnaires received through the mail). A follow-up through the telephone and e-mail was done. Five respondents indicated that there is no peer counselling programme in their institutions. Eleven questionnaires and a letter of reminder (annexure C) were re-posted to the institutions that had not responded after four weeks. Of the remaining respondents, nine sent back their responses and in total 37 of the 46 (80%) institutions surveyed responded. This response rate can be considered as very satisfactory (Babbie, 1998).

#### **4.8 CONCLUSION**

The methodology chosen for this study, namely survey research, has yielded a high percentage of responses. Through follow-up mailings the response rate increased. The high response rate, namely 80%, minimised the chances of response bias.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE RESEARCH RESULTS

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study aimed at exploring the extent to which tertiary institutions utilise peer helping programmes. If the programme is in place, the researcher wanted to find out how the students were selected as peer helpers. The training and functions of the peer helpers also had to be reported. At the end, the researcher aimed at drawing conclusions on whether tertiary institutions made use of this available resource, and then make recommendations on whether there were advantages in the usage of peer helpers.

#### 5.2 THE FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

Of the 14 technikon campuses that were approached, 11 responded (78,5%). Of the 32 university campuses that were approached, 26 replied (81,3 %). Not all responding institutions had peer counselling programmes. Twenty nine (78%) of the campuses indicated that they have peer counselling programmes. Of these nine are technikons and 20 are universities.

### 5.2.1 Biographical information

Table 1 reflects the characteristics of the participating institutions.

*Table 1. Biographical information*

	Universities	Technikons
<i>Number of registered students</i>		
1 000 to 5 000	9	1
5 000 to 10 000	2	7
10 000 to 15 000	3	3
15 000 and more	6	0
<i>Residential status of campus</i>		
Residential	9	11
Non-residential	10	0
Both	1	0
<i>Number of campuses</i>		
1	4	47
2	5	0
3 and more	11	0
<i>Number of students on own campus</i>		
500 to 1 000	1	0
1 000 to 3 000	6	1
3 000 to 5 000	4	0
5 000 and more	9	10



### 5.2.2 Selection criteria

Table 2 indicates the criteria used by both types of tertiary institutions for the selection of peer counsellors. Eleven ways of how peer counsellors could be selected were identified. As there is no single criteria for selection, the respondents had to fill in as many methods of selection that they used from the given list and to add other methods that may have been omitted.



Table 2. Selection criteria

	Technikons		Universities		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Academic performance	5	56	9	45	14	48
Students with leadership skills	4	44	12	60	16	55
Recommended by staff	3	33	4	20	7	24
Recommended by administration	3	33	5	25	8	28
Recommended by other students	2	22	5	25	7	24
Screening interviews	6	66	13	65	19	66
First-year students	0	0	0	0	0	0
Senior pre-graduate students	7	78	13	65	20	69
Honours students	1	11	2	10	11	10
Masters students	0	0	0	0	0	0
Volunteers	0	0	15	75	15	51
Psychometric testing	1	11	1	5	2	6
Completed pre-training	1	11	0	0	1	3
Involved students	1	11	1	5	2	6

The above results indicate that 20 out of the 29 campuses (69%) utilised senior pre-graduate students who have performed well in their studies the previous year. These students have leadership skills as indicated by 16 campuses (55%) and generally a high percentage of campuses (66%) also utilised screening interviews to select. Some of these interviews were held together with the existing group of peer counsellors. Seventy five percent of university helpers chose to come to the programme voluntarily whereas few were referred by either faculty, administrative staff, wardens or by other students. Only a small percentage of campuses (6%) utilised psychometric testing as a means of selection.

### 5.2.3 Number of peer helpers

Each campus had a different number of peer helpers per year. These differed according to the volunteers and according to the number of students per campus. The campuses also stated that there was no fixed number of helpers. Each year had a different number. The figures given below in Table 3 are for 1998-1999. The results show that most campuses employ at least 15 peer counsellors.

*Table 3: Number of peer helpers*

	Technikon		University		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Less than 5	0	0	1	5	1	3
5 to 10	1	11	1	5	2	3
11 to 15	1	11	6	30	7	24
16 to 20	3	33	1	5	4	16
21 to 25	2	22	4	20	6	21
26 to 30	0	0	3	15	3	10
30 and more	2	22	4	20	6	21

#### 5.2.4 Training

After peer counsellors have been selected, they are usually trained. In this section, the researcher wanted to investigate four important issues pertaining to the training of peer counsellors. These are (a) the hours or time spent in training the students, (b) the people who do the training, (c) the methods used for training and (d) the theoretical training model that are utilised. Tables 4 to 7 outline the findings.

*Table 4: Hours spent on training*

	Technikons		University		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1 to 3 hours	0	0	0	0	0	0
4 to 6 hours	0	0	2	10	2	7
7 to 10 hours	0	0	4	20	4	14
11 to 20 hours	3	33	7	35	10	34
20 hours or more	6	67	6	30	12	41
no systematic training	0	0	1	5	1	3
	(9)		(20)			

Table 5: People who conduct the training

	Technikons		Universities		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Director of student union	1	11	0	0	1	3
Director of residence hall/warden	0	0	1	5	1	3
Lecturer in Education	0	0	0	0	2	7
Lecturer in Psychology	0	0	2	10	2	7
Student counsellors	9	100	19	95	28	97
Professionals outside the institution	1	11	2	10	3	10
Senior students/masters students	0	0	2	10	2	7
Psychologists	2	22	1	5	3	10
Lecturers in social work	0	0	1	5	1	3
Student liaison officer	0	0	1	5	1	3
Academic development staff	0	0	1	5	1	3

Table 6: Methods of training

	Technikons		Universities		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Lectures	5	56	12	60	17	59
Demonstrations	6	67	10	50	16	55
Reading assignments	0	0	4	20	4	14
Group discussion	9	100	13	65	22	76
Experiential learning	9	100	18	90	27	93
Role playing	5	56	19	95	24	83
Practical exercises	0	0	11	55	11	35
Others :- Workshop	0	0	2	10	2	7
Videos	1	11	0	0	1	3

*Table 7: Theoretical base of the training model*

	Technikons		Universities		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Client-centered approach	4	44,4	12	60	16	55
Experiential learning "Ray Carr Model"	2	22	3	15	5	17
Eclectic model	1	11	1	5	2	7
Problem solving	1	11	1	5	2	7
Developmental approach	1	11	0	0	1	3
No response	0	0	2	10	2	7
Cognitive and behavioural principles	0	0	1	5	1	3
Holistic wellness	0	0	1	5	1	3

Table 4 reveals that most campuses spend 11 or more hours on the training of peer counsellors.

Table 5 shows that on most campuses (99%) training of peer counsellors is done by student counsellors. Non-counsellors are used to a very limited extent.

Table 6 reveals that group discussions (76%) role playing (83%) experiential learning are (93%) the most important modalities of training used.

In terms of theoretical models, most campuses make use of the client-centered model (55%) and the experiential learning model of Ray Carr (17%) (see Table 7)

### 5.2.5 Supervision

The peer helping programme is designed for peer helpers to help their peers in various situations - these include individual counselling, dealing with minor academic problems or any problems that the students may bring to their peers.

In carrying out these functions, peer counsellors have to be supervised on a regular basis. This supervision is provided in order to help develop them further, to debrief them and to support them. Tables 8 and 9 indicates the regularity of supervision and the time spent in supervision.

*Table 8: The regularity of supervision*

	Technikon		University		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Once per week	4	44	1	10	5	27
Once per month	3	33	9	45	12	41
Fortnightly	1	11	4	20	5	27
Once per quarter	0	0	1	5	1	3
No supervision	0	0	4	20	4	14
Other: based on student needs	1	11	0	0	1	5

*Table 9: Time spent on supervision*

	Technikon	University
As (i) Individuals	2 hours	1 hour
(ii) As a group	2 hours	2 hours
NO supervision	-	4 hours
Per request	-	-

The question aimed at eliciting information on the hours spent in supervision. There seems to be no clear guideline as to how long supervision should be. The average hours spent with individual peer helpers is one hour and with the group of peer counsellors is two hours. Some student counsellors stated that hours spent vary depending on the need and requests by the individuals or group. Other campuses have no supervision structures in place, hence no supervision is provided.

### 5.2.6 Utilisation of peer helpers

The student counselling centre appears to be the place mainly used for peer counsellor activities. In residential institutions, the residence halls or dormitories also serve as places where counselling takes place (see Table 10).

Table 11 indicates the activities in which peer helpers are involved on the various campuses. The student counsellors had to indicate from a list of eleven identified activities and to add to the list if any activities were not included.

Table 10: Places where peer counsellors are used

	Technikon		University		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Residence halls	5	56	5	25	10	34
Academic departments	5	56	4	20	9	31
Student counselling centre	4	44	10	50	14	48
Other: Peer help office	0	0	2	10	2	7
Health clinic	1	11	0	0	1	3
Student centre	1	11	2	10	3	10
Campus wide	0	0	1	5	1	3

Table 11: Activities in which peer helpers are involved individually

	Technikon		University		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Helping new students during orientation	7	78	16	80	23	79
Study skills counselling	5	56	13	65	18	62
Supervising in dormitories	1	11	3	15	4	14
Serving as house committee members	2	22	5	25	7	24
Helping new students with subject choices	2	22	12	60	14	48
Interpreting standardised tests	0	0	1	5	1	3
Helping students master contents of academic work	1	11	11	55	12	41
Religious counselling	0	0	2	10	2	7
Counselling for social and personal problems	7	78	14	70	21	72
HIV/Aids counselling	4	44	4	20	21	72
Other: Life-skills training	2	22	8	40	8	28
Sexual harassment	1	11	0	0	10	34
Outreach programmes	0	0	3	15	1	10

From the above table it seems that peer counsellors serve mainly during the orientation period. This accounts for 23 campuses (79%). Another popular area is counselling for social and personal problems which is in 21 campuses and the study skills counselling seems to be important as indicated by 62% the respondents. The area in which they are least utilised is in interpreting psychometric tests and in religious counselling.

Generally peer counsellors seem to have a good spread of activities in which they are involved.

### 5.2.7 The number of students counselled by peer helpers

Table 12 deals with the number of students seen by peer counsellors on a routine basis. There seems to be an indication that counselling takes place more frequently on a one-to-one basis and in small groups of two to six people.

*Table 12: Size of the peer counsellor group - how counselling is accomplished*

	Technikon		University		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Individual students	8	89	14	70	22	76
Small groups of 2 to 6	2	22	8	40	10	34
Intermediate groups of 7 to15	0	0	5	25	5	17
Large groups of 15 or more	0	0	3	15	3	10

### 5.2.8 Remuneration of peer helpers

Research indicates that certain institutions compensate peer helpers for rendering a service. Table 13 indicates that in 18 campuses, the peer helpers are not remunerated. The technikons seem more inclined to compensate based on the hours worked whereas universities do not remunerate peer counsellors. Other campuses use other forms of remuneration.

*Table 13: Ways of remuneration*

	Technikons		Universities		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
*Based on the number of hours worked	5	56	4	40	9	31
*Tuition scholarship	0	0	0	0	0	0
Honorarium at the end of semester	0	0	2	20	2	7
Reduction in tuition fees	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other: transport allowance	0	0	2	20	2	7
No remuneration	3	33	15	65	18	62
No response	1	11	0	0	0	0

### 5.2.9 Evaluation of the programme

The last section of the questionnaire dealt with the evaluation of the programme on campus by the student counsellors. It also focussed on the acceptance of the programme by major student structures or organised groups.

Table 14 summarises the respondents' answers to six questions designed to evaluate the acceptability and productivity of the peer help program. Table 15 indicates the acceptance of the peer help programme by student structures and organisations on campuses.

The survey yielded the following results, and it is necessary to analyse these in order to conclude whether or not peer counselling is used effectively in South African institutions. One technikon campus did not respond at all to this section of the questionnaire.

**Table 14:** Evaluation of the effectiveness of the programme

	Technikon		University		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
<i>Do you feel that the peer helpers make an effective contribution to your institution's total counselling programme</i>						
YES	8	100	15	75	23	82
NO	0	0	1	5	1	43
UNCERTAIN	0	0	4	20	4	14
<i>Do you plan to continue the use of peer counselling in your institution?</i>						
YES	8	100	19	95	27	96
NO	0	0			0	0
UNCERTAIN	0	0			1	4
<i>Do you feel that the guidance and counselling activities of your P/C should be expanded beyond those they perform now?</i>						
YES	6	67	16	80	22	79
NO	2	22	1	5	3	11



70

UNCERTAIN	0	0	3	15	3	11
<i>Do faculty members react negatively to the use of peer counsellors?</i>						
YES	0	0	0	0		
NO	7	78	20	100	27	96
UNCERTAIN	1	11	0	0	1	4
<i>Do other staff members, administration, library etc. react negatively to the use of peer counsellors?</i>						
YES	0	0	0	0		
NO	6	67	16	80	22	79
UNCERTAIN	2	22			6	21

Table 15: Name of structure

	Technikon		University		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
<i>Student Representative Council</i>						
YES	6	67	16	80	28	79
NO	0	0	1	5	1	4
UNCERTAIN	2	22	3	15	5	18
<i>Sports clubs</i>						
YES	2	22	8	40	10	36
NO	0	0	2	10	2	7
UNCERTAIN	6	67	8	40	14	50
NO RESPONSE	0	0	2	10	2	7
<i>Cultural clubs</i>						
YES	3	33	9	45	12	43
NO	0	0	2	10	2	7
UNCERTAIN	5	56	7	35	12	43
NO RESPONSE	0	0	2	10	2	7
<i>Religious clubs</i>						
YES	4	44	11	55	15	54
NO	0	0	1	5	1	4
UNCERTAIN	4	44	6	30	10	36
NO RESPONSE	0	0	2	10	2	10

*Student political structures such as:*

*South African Student Congress (SASCO)*

*Pan Africanist Student Movement (PASMA)*

<i>etc.</i>	1	11	10	50	11	39
YES	0	0	1	5	1	4
NO	7	78	8	40	15	40
UNCERTAIN	0	0	1	5	1	4
NO RESPONSE						

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The responses indicate that the peer helper programme is well accepted by the student structures and the campus personnel, both academic staff and non-academic staff. The student counsellors also indicate a level of uncertainty as to how the program is being received by the other student bodies such as political structures and sports clubs.

It is evident that the peer helping programme will remain in force in these campuses and that it adds value to the campus life of the general student body and to the peer counsellors themselves.



### 5.3. CONCLUSION

The survey yielded the above results, and it is necessary to analyse these in order to conclude whether or not peer counselling is used effectively in South African institution.

**THE UTILISATION OF PEER HELPERS  
IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS**

**6.1 INTRODUCTION**

The peer helping programme is based on a number of theoretical foundations. Firstly it has been found that most students, when experiencing some kind of personal concern, rely primarily on their friends as a source for help. Prediger, Roth and Noeth (1974) have demonstrated that friends remain the number one resource for students considering personal decisions and job placements.

The peer helping programme does not only enable the peer helper to help other students, but also enhances the peer helper's own development and personal growth. Muller (1989) developed a peer helper programme to break cross-cultural boundaries and enable the students to realise cultural obstacles underlying classroom miscommunication.

Loneliness is another factor that has been indicated by research as a major concern for new students at a tertiary institution (Carr, 1992). Thus peer helping assists in the adjustment process of new students in the institution. It is likely that peers teach and learn from each other things that are unique and cannot be taught by parents or educators. It is easier to turn to one's peers who will neither approve or disapprove but accept and understand. This presupposes that the students who will be involved in the above, need to be trained in reflective responding in order to teach others.

The peer helper programme further emphasises primary prevention (Carr, 1992). These programmes are meant to strengthen or immunise students against harmful influences by providing skills in problem resolution, building self-esteem and developing competency.

The findings of the survey will be discussed in this chapter.

## 6.2 HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

As indicated in Chapter 4, 48 questionnaires were distributed to both technikon and university campuses in South Africa. From the 14 technikon campuses surveyed, nine of them indicated a strong peer help programme. The universities had 20 campuses utilising a peer help programme. This shows that technikons make more use of peer counselling programmes than do universities. The reason could be that some universities have professional training programmes in human services and make use of internship students whilst others utilise honours students in psychology, education and social work. Even though this is so, this indicates that 62% of the surveyed institutions have a peer helping programme.

## 6.3 METHODS OF SELECTION

In the selection of peer helpers, senior students who have passed their first year well are often utilised. This ensures that the selected students are well versed in the functioning of the institution and that they will be able to handle both their studies and the peer help responsibilities. Most institutions make use of volunteer students and students recommended by either faculty, or other students. These mostly have to be approved by a screening committee. These findings are similar to those of Miller (1989), Downe, Althmann & Nysetvold (1986), Stokes, *et al.* (1988). Leadership qualities are also taken into consideration as well as the students' involvement in other structures. This supports the view that leaders among the students themselves are good models for their peers (Ozer, *et al.*, 1997). The common factor amongst institutions is that they all do not select first-year students as peer helpers.

In the selection of peer helpers, there seems to be no fixed number that is chosen. Each year a different number appears to be chosen. This is in agreement with the fact that success in previous studies and the spirit of volunteering play a predominant role in the selection process.

## 6.4 TRAINING

Training, forms the foundation of the peer helping programme. The peer helpers have to be trained in order to carry out their functions effectively. It seems most institutions emphasise training, as more than ten hours of training is given to the peer helpers.

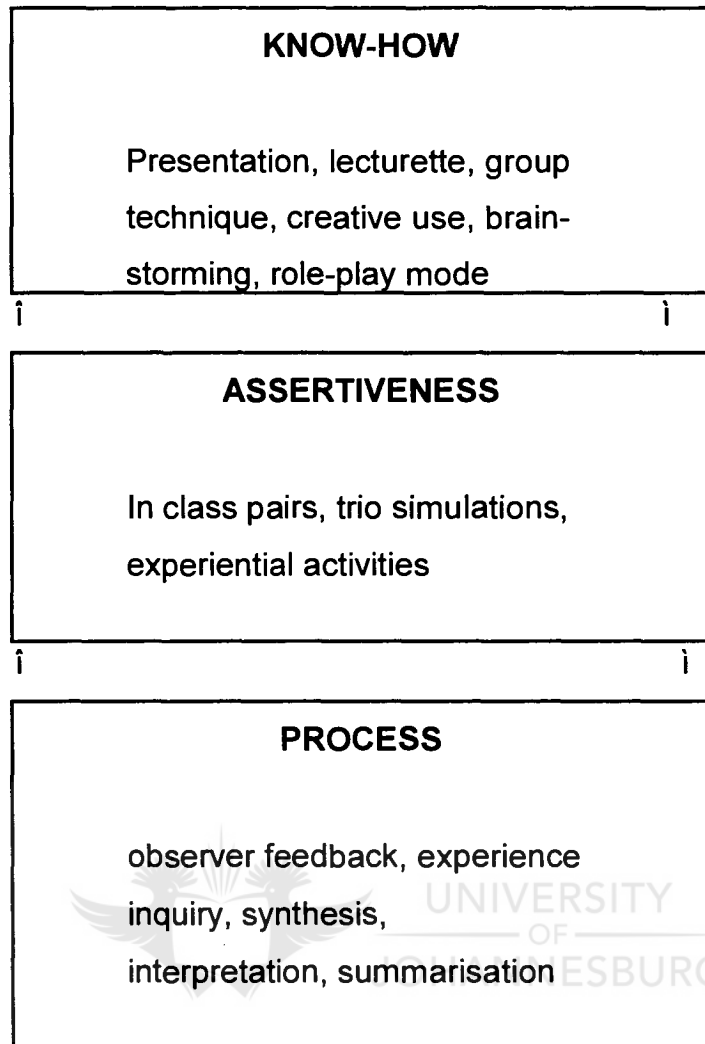
No one training method or model is adopted. The majority of institutions make use of the client centred approach and the model developed by Ray Carr. The latter model emphasises experiential learning through role plays and life skills such as self-awareness, communication and assertiveness skills.

The Carr model requires 12 to 16 training sessions. Each session begins with continuity where old business is discussed, followed by an awareness position in which students declare the need for a topic and how it fits in with the rest of the programme. This is followed by the skills portion where demonstrations, lectures and group techniques are utilised. The assertiveness process is the stage where the students get the opportunity to practice the skills in trios or in pairs. Feedback is given and the process reviewed as to the experiences of the students. This enables the trainer to synthesise, integrate and summarise the new knowledge.

Carr (1992) indicates the model as follows:

### TRAINING PROCESS

<b>CONTINUITY</b>	Old business, concerns, sharing and caring, homework discussion.
<b>AWARENESS</b>	Description/direction, rationale/purpose self calibration, declaration of need, ability, personal frame of reference.

**PRACTICE**

Homework aspects

Figure 6.1: *Training*

The above technique/model has been taught to most student counsellors through various workshops (De Jager, 1995), hence all the technician respondents and 95% of the university respondents indicated that training is done by student counsellors. This is confirmed in the studies conducted by Salovey and D'Andrea (1984) and Carr (1986).

The model emphasises the acquisition of counselling skills whilst it also develops the confidence of the peer helper. It focuses mainly on communication skills such as attending skills, roadblocks to communication, and empathic listening skills. The programme further develops the peer helpers' skills of reflection, questioning and summarising. It is a useful model for beginners as it encourages non-judgemental behaviour. It is a suitable

programme for those students who are assertive and have positive self esteem. If the helpers are uncertain, self awareness, self esteem and assertiveness skills would be a good starting point.

## 6.5 SUPERVISION

The research findings indicate that there is no systematic form of supervision provided for the peer helpers. In the literature review, there also seems to be very little supervision provided for the peer helpers. This lack of supervision undermines the counselling process. The peer counsellor does not get the necessary debriefing and support necessary for the work done. There is a need to provide supervision of peer helpers as provided for professional and intern psychologists. Remley *et al.* (1987) believe that an effective method of improving counselling skills is to evaluate the counsellor's practice on a regular basis. Counsellors benefit from consultation and feedback. Remley proposes a clinical supervision model in order to ensure that counsellors are supervised, whether by their own peers or by seasoned supervisors.

The idea of a structured peer consultation model for counsellors is supported by Bernshoff and Paisley (1996), where several counsellors have supervision by their own peers, to encourage expertise and to get feedback. Supervision will ensure that the services provided by the peer helpers are maintained at an appropriate level. It will also help the peer helpers by providing further training as new skills could be imparted during supervision. The peer helpers also learn to share the problems encountered when helping peers with personal or social problems and thus unload the baggage which may hinder their own progress. Supervision also serves as a form of debriefing for the peer helpers and reinforces the idea of referring problem areas. The tendency to act beyond personal competency will be reduced through supervision. Supervisors need to look not only at openly troubled students, but at how the peer counsellors are coping with their own lives (Robinson *et al.*, 1991). Supervision should occur at least once per month (Remley *et al.*, 1987).

## 6.6 ROLES OF THE PEER HELPERS

The research results indicate that most institutions use peer helpers during the orientation period. This supports the notion that peer helpers help to welcome new students and serve as friends for the new students. During orientation the peer helpers may provide information prepared in advance and approved by the professional counsellor for its appropriateness (Mamacherv, 1984). The orientation period allows the new students to adapt to the institution and to acquaint themselves with the new environment.

The other major area in which most peer counsellors are utilised is in dealing with personal and social problems. Seventy eight percent of the technikon campuses and 70% of university campuses indicated this as a role performed by peer counsellors. In other studies (Quarby, 1993; Salovey & D'Andrea, 1984) it is reported that peer helpers help with personal and social problems that include the following problems: alcohol abuse, financial aid, housing, pregnancy, emotional problems, bereavement, contraception and abortion, residence hall advice, relationship counselling and others. The above indicate that there are various problems encountered by students and with the presence of peer helpers it is easier for a student to get support and information.

Academic advising and study skills counselling are a third major area in which peer helpers are utilised. Nasser (1994) reported that, peer helpers were involved in the facilitation of presentations. Mitchell, Haupt and Stephenson (1993) found that 55% of first-year students were concerned about academic matters - especially students from the former Department of Education and Training (DET). In such cases senior students act as mentors to provide learning skills and facilitate interpretation. Bell and Drakeford (1993) designed a black student peer programme with the objectives that include establishing academic excellence and co-curricular development.



Research indicates that, peer counsellors are used as academic advisors to increase the probability of academic and social survival of students identified in need of assistance.

The counselling activities seem to be commonly used throughout the campus in different areas. The residence halls, the student counselling centre, academic departments and a peer counsellor's office seem to be the most common areas where counselling services are performed. This indicates that these areas are easily accessible for the students and the helpers. As counselling is not restricted to a particular venue, this indicates that whenever a student needs service, it is accessible.

## **6.7 REMUNERATION**

The findings indicate that in general there is no common policy on remuneration for peer counsellors. Technikons are more inclined to remunerate than the universities. Two possible reasons can be attributed for this state of affairs. Firstly some institutions do not remunerate because peer helpers are utilised because of financial considerations. The institutions cannot afford to pay professional staff and thus resort to the peer helpers. The belt tightening exercise that the institutions are faced with, make it difficult for the institutions to provide remuneration for the peer helpers. Secondly, it is the promotion of volunteerism and the encouragement of student involvement (Kuh, Schunh, Whit & Ass, 1991).

In order to attract the right kind of students who want to help others, the peer helpers should not be remunerated. The helpers should benefit from the skills gained through training. By organising and planning various student activities, further growth and development will occur.

## 6.8 EVALUATION OF THE PEER HELP PROGRAMME

In this section (see 5.2.9), the student counsellors had to give an indication on whether or not the peer counselling programmes at their institutions were successful according to their observations. All the student counsellors who make use of a peer help programme, reported that it is successful and needs to be retained. Their evaluation is that academic and administrative staff, value the contribution of the peer helpers. This could be due to the training provided, the leadership skills and the availability of peer helpers to assist in times of need.

Students begin to trust the peer helpers and it is this trust that leads to acceptability (Morey, Muller *et al.*, 1993). The general student structures, especially the Student Representative Council, which is generally very influential in tertiary institutions, seem to accept the role of the peer helpers. The counsellors seem to be uncertain of the relationship of peer helpers with other structures. This is more common among the bigger institutions with five thousand plus students per campus. Many other organisations exist and thus the presence of this structure is accepted.

## 6.9 CONCLUSION

As the study focussed on the student counsellors, there is no information from the peer helpers themselves on their experience of the programme and of the study body at large. The results indicate the student counsellors' experiences, observations and perceptions.

## **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

The concept of peer counselling programmes is still relatively new in South African tertiary institutions. It offers some definite benefits for the institutions. The development of an effective peer counselling programme provides the institution with a cost-effective vehicle for broadening the range and variety of helping formats. Peer helping is an example of prevention and intervention programmes designed around development principles. It is a deliberate psychological education which purposefully focuses on the psychological development of young people.

### **7.2 SUMMARY**



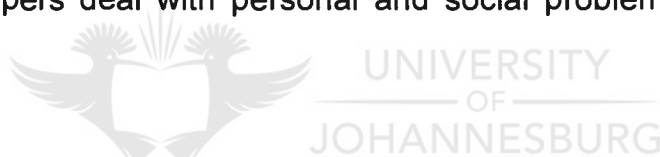
In order for the peer helping programme to benefit the youth, proper selection and training has to take place. A proper training model which covers the major aspects of counselling has to be adopted. Most counsellors make use of the client centred model. There is no clear consensus on the adoption of the experiential model by Ray Carr in which most student counsellors who belong to the Society of Student Counsellors of South Africa (SSCSA) have been trained.

The student counsellors' own theoretical model usually forms the basis of the training model adopted for peer counsellors. Tanaka and Reid (1997) emphasise the following aspects of training: helping skills, including listening skills, paraphrasing, and questioning skills. Included in their list is the ability to express support and to show empathy. Marmachev (1984) found that training should include:

- (1) listening skills
- (2) greater awareness of verbal and non-verbal behaviours
- (3) strategies of establishing a non-threatening environment
- (4) ways of responding, such as feedback clarification
- (5) recognition of signs when professional help is needed
- (6) knowledge of resources of referrals or general information.

Training should include all the above skills but the skills could be learned through repetition, demonstration, lectures, role-play and decision-making scenarios. The focus on the training should be to make peer helpers confident in the skills attained and also able to recognise areas in which there is lack of competency.

The results suggest that there is a great need for supervision. Student counsellors should invest time and energy in supervising the peer helpers. This is made necessary by the fact that most peer helpers deal with personal and social problems in a counselling relationship.



The institutions should provide funding for the peer help programme. In order to produce all rounded graduates, tertiary institutions should encourage involvement. Financial support should not be dedicated only to structures such as the Student Representative Council but also to the peer help programme. The savings achieved through not employing more qualified counsellors, should be used to bolster the peer help programme.

The results show that peer helpers are involved in a variety of activities, but there appears to be no specialisation among them. There seems to be an expectation that peer helpers should be involved in even more activities. In order to enable the peer helpers to meet the needs of the students and their own needs, a balance needs to be attained. Functions given to the peer helpers should encourage specialisation, for example some peer helpers can focus on academic problems, others on social and personal problems whilst others concentrate on career related issues. This will enable them to also focus on their studies.

Research has indicated that peer counselling offers several advantages and disadvantages. The advantages include the following (Mamacherv, 1984):

- equal effectiveness and greater client acceptance
- economical means of service delivery
- availability of after hours location
- ability to make referrals to professionals
- ability to identify and empathise with their peers
- benefits of personal development from the counselling experience.

On the other hand, as with any innovative programme, there are a number of disadvantages such as:

- lack of continuity among the peer counselling group
- demands on professional staff time to train, supervise and evaluate
- potential problem of role balance for the peer helper
- accountability
- difficulty in placing the peer counselling programme into the larger counselling programme to maintain organisational goals and objectives.

These disadvantages can be dealt with effectively through careful attention to selection, training and supervision.

### **7.3 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The peer help programme should be adopted in all South African institutions. There are still areas of improvement that are needed in order to make the service more effective. The ethical issues have not been discussed in this research. There is a further need to

research peer helping as a strategy in institutions and the extent to which it benefits the general student body. More research has to be conducted with specific concerns in the peer helping programme such as the effectiveness of the programme as seen by the helpers themselves and the general population on campus, and the attributes of students who are drawn to peer helping programmes.

The specialisation areas in which peer helpers can be engaged include HIV/Aids counselling, drug and substance abuse counselling, relationship counselling and many others.



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# ANNEXURE A

## QUESTIONNAIRE

The following questionnaire is a survey of existing peer counselling programmes at tertiary institutions (universities and technikons) in South Africa:

### 1. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Please make a tick in the appropriate box:

Type of institution

University	<input type="checkbox"/>
Technikon	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teachers Training Colleges	<input type="checkbox"/>

Number of students

1 000- 5 000	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 000-10 000	<input type="checkbox"/>
10 000-15 000	<input type="checkbox"/>
15 000+	<input type="checkbox"/>

Is the institution residential or non-residential?

Residential	<input type="checkbox"/>
Non-residential	<input type="checkbox"/>

How many campuses do you have?

1	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	<input type="checkbox"/>
3+	<input type="checkbox"/>

How many students at your own campus?	500-1 000	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1 000-3 000	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3 000-5 000	<input type="checkbox"/>
	5 000+	<input type="checkbox"/>

The following questions pertain to your peer counselling/helping/buddy programme.

**2. SELECTION PROCEDURE**

**2.1 What are the criteria for selection of peer counsellors/helpers at your institution?**  
(More than one box may be ticked)

Students who have performed well in their studies the previous year	
Students who have leadership skills	
Students who are recommended by staff members (faculty)	
Students who are referred by other staff members e.g. warden, administrative staff	
Students who are recommended by other students	
Students who do well in the screening interviews	
First year students	
Senior pre-graduate students i.e. second year of study upwards	
Honours students	
Masters students	
Students who volunteered	
Other methods of selection please specify below:	

**2.2 How many peer counsellors do you select per year?**

Less than 5 students	
5-10 students	
11-15 students	
16 -20 students	
21-25 students	
26 -30 students	
30+ students	

**3. TRAINING**

**3.1 How many hours of training do they receive?**

1-3 hours	
4-6 hours	
7-10 hours	
11-20 hours	
20 + more	
no systematic training	


**3.2 Who conducts training for the peer counsellors/helpers?**  
(more than one box may be ticked)

Director of student union	
Directors of residence hall/warden	
Lecturers in Education	
Lecturers in Psychology	
Student counsellors	
Professionals outside the institution e.g. Famsa, Lifeline, Sanca etc.	
Senior students e.g. Masters students	
Other (specify)	

**3.3 Which methods are used for training peer helpers/peer counsellors**  
(you can tick more than one box)

Lectures	
Demonstrations	
Reading assignments	
Group discussions	
Experiential learning	
Role playing	
Practical exercise	
Other (specify)	

**3.4 Please briefly explain the theoretical base of the peer counselling training model that you use?**  
(e.g. client centred counselling)

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**4. SUPERVISION**

**4.1 How regular are your peer counsellors supervised?**

Once a week	
Once a month	
Fortnightly	
Once per quarter	
No supervision	
Other (specify)	



**4.2 How many hours of supervision do they receive per month?**  
(fill in the number of hours)

as individual	
as a group	

**5. UTILISATION OF PEER COUNSELLORS/HELPERS**

**5.1 In which place are the "peer" counsellors systematically used?**  
(You can tick more than one)

Residence halls	
Academic departments (e.g. History, Mathematics, Psychology)	
Student counselling centre or testing and guidance centre	
Other (specify)	

**5.2 In which counselling activities are the peer counsellors involved?**  
(You can tick more than one)

Helping new students during orientation week	
Study skills counselling	
Supervising in dormitories	
Serving as house committee members	
Helping new students with subject choices	
Interpreting standardised tests regarding interests, abilities etc.	
Helping students master the contents of their academic work	
Religious counselling	
Counselling for social and personal problems	
HIV - Aids counselling	
Life skills training	

**5.3 How many students do the peer counsellors routinely counsel?**

Individual students	
Small groups of two to six students	
Intermediate groups of seven to fifteen students	
Large groups of 15 or more students	

**6. REMUNERATION OF PEER COUNSELLORS/HELPERS**

**6.1 How are peer counsellors remunerated?**

Based on the number of hours worked	
Tuition scholarship	
Honorarium at the end of the semester	
Reduction in tuition fees	
Other method (specify)	
No remuneration	

**7. EVALUATION OF PEER COUNSELLORS/HELPERS**

Tick the appropriate block (Y - yes; N - no and UN - uncertain)

- 7.1 Do you feel that the peer counsellors make an effective contribution to your institution's total counselling programme? [Y] [N] [UN]
- 7.2 Do you plan to continue the use of peer counselling at your institution? [Y] [N] [UN]
- 7.3 Do you feel that the guidance and counselling activities of your peer counsellor should be expanded beyond those they now performs? [Y] [N] [UN]
- 7.4 Do faculty members react negatively to the use of peer counsellors/helpers? [Y] [N] [UN]
- 7.5 Do other staff members (e.g. administration, library, residence staff and other non-teaching members) react negatively to the use of peer counsellors/helpers? [Y] [N] [UN]

7.6	Does the peer counselling/helping programme at your institution have the support of the following student structures?	[Y] [N] [UN]
	Students' Representative Council	[Y] [N] [UN]
	Sport clubs	[Y] [N] [UN]
	Cultural clubs	[Y] [N] [UN]
	Religious groups/clubs	[Y] [N] [UN]
	Students political groups (e.g. SASCO, PASMA, PASO)	[Y] [N] [UN]



## **ANNEXURE B**

I am a Master of Arts student in Counselling Psychology at the Rand Afrikaans University. I am presently employed at Vista University as a student counsellor. I am doing a survey about the existence and utilisation of peer counsellors in tertiary institutions.

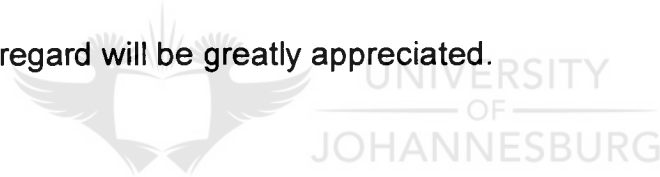
The aim of the study is to find out the extent to which peer counsellors are being used, the training provided and the modes of supervision. This study will benefit the student counselling fraternity as it will enable us to realise the similarities and differences that exist in the programme. This will also highlight the contributory factors to these similarities and differences.

I am therefore asking you to complete the attached questionnaire and return it to me as soon as possible. A self addressed, stamped envelope is enclosed to make it easy for you to send it back. This questionnaire will take about 15 minutes of your time.

Your assistance in this regard will be greatly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

S.C. Motsabi (Mrs).



## ANNEXURE C

The Department of Student Counselling

Dear Sir/ Madam

In February/ March, I mailed a questionnaire to complete. Unfortunately, I did not receive a response from your institution. These could be any number of reasons for why this has happened including the fact that it could have gotten lost in the mail. I however, would like to apologise for any factor that I may have contributed to.

Find herein enclosed a copy of the questionnaire. It will take only 10 minutes of your time to complete it. It may be that you do not have the peer counselling programme at your institution, or that it takes on a different feature not covered by my questionnaire. I would nevertheless, appreciate it if you could complete the questionnaire with a note reflecting that.

For your convenience, I have enclosed a self-addressed, self-stamped envelope in which to mail the questionnaire.

Yours Sincerely

---

Soraya C Motsabi  
(Senior Student Counsellor)

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