



Need for Further Training in Counselling Techniques and Approaches for Pastoral Counselling Providers in the ELCT - CD

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ABSTRACT

The article addresses the need for proper training in counselling techniques and approaches for pastoral counselling providers. The article is the result of field research conducted by the author in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania Central Diocese (ELCT – CD). It is problematic that most pastoral counselling providers have received little or no training in pastoral counselling, resulting in inadequate therapy when parishioners seek pastoral counselling in times of crisis. It was learned that there were a significant number of pastors who had no pastoral counselling skills. But also a narrow perception of the ministry of pastoral counselling was noted. The article establishes that pastoral counselling providers have little or are missing proper training and approaches in counselling. There is a need for pastoral counselling providers to have additional training for pastors and seminary students. Pastoral counselling providers are compelled to have the necessary skills because their role compels them to help the people they are serving solve the problems that they go through.

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INTRODUCTION

There is a great need for counselling skills for pastoral counselling providers (pastors, evangelists and church elders) when doing their pastoral work. Technical skills in counselling for pastoral counselling providers are important tools for effective service for facilitating the healing and growth of people. In the past, pastoral studies only touched on the issues of the Bible and ecclesiastical services, with a little bit of theology, but as the days go by, the importance of further education for pastors has increased. Various issues require counselling from specialized professionals. Education is a very important resource for the preparation and effectiveness of any service. It is necessary for preparing a person for ministry because it helps in understanding the needs of the service that pastors have been called to render. Education also broadens one's understanding of ministry as well. Hence, as servant leaders, pastors should therefore be aware of many things.

A Christian pastor is a practitioner of the Christian faith in the middle of people's lives. He is a physician who uses the treasure of his knowledge about God and the saving grace of Jesus Christ and Christian teachings to help people (the needy) face and solve their moral and spiritual problems. Unfortunately, pastoral counselling providers seem to be only following cultural norms that have

existed for a long time rather than trying to shape them along the lines that Christ would have supported. The procedure of handling various problems instils scepticism, among the victims, which affects the whole approach to pastoral counselling. The article portrays the need to improve how pastoral counselling providers deal with the moral and ethical issues of their members.

A research carried out on 15 Lutheran pastors in ELCT - CD; 100% of them felt the need to improve how they were dealing with moral and ethical issues. Overall, the research indicated that the majority of Lutheran pastors in the ELCT-CD felt that their skills were not adequate to deal with moral and ethical issues. The research revealed that a significant number of ELCT-CD pastors do not have sufficient training in seminaries and colleges to deal with the situation of its members who develop new challenges every day. The leadership structure creates a gap/problem on how pastoral care should be executed in the sense that, the structure gives *baraza la wazee* (church elders council) the power to deal with spiritual matters that they are not trained for. This is a theological crisis because *wazee* are simply laid Christians who do not receive any theological training and are likely to do their jobs by following "the tradition" than any informed Biblical interpretation.

In crises situations, pastors have assumed the "boss" role and give ordering power to *mabaraza ya wazee* for the work which is responsible for them. Therefore, the Church must be adequately prepared if it is to deal effectively with the dynamic changes of life issues. The pastor must learn as much as possible to offer the best help to his/her people.

Usually and often people who are troubled and disturbed feel free to visit the pastor and meet him or her anywhere and anytime with great hope that he or she will show a compassionate spirit and be a good listener to their problems, and also be ready to help them in a calm, careful and gentle manner.¹ People go to pastors with all kinds of problems with the confidence of being fully helped. Different types of people respect the services of people who offer help such as professionals, community counselors, doctors, nurses, soldiers, etc.

Therefore, it is very appropriate and good for a pastor as a physician, through his or her counselling skills to be ready at all times to receive people and listen to their needs or plan a good and appropriate procedure for them. It is generally acknowledged that pastoral counselling providers in rendering their services are meeting the needs of those within the congregation who are hurting, discouraged, and in need of healing.

Unfortunately, some pastoral counselling providers respond to complex human dilemmas with rigidity and legalism. They often seek to correct people by moralizing, scolding or threatening with divine punishment; thereby doing serious emotional and psychological damage. It is therefore important that pastoral counselling providers be taught how to counsel in a new way. It is not just the usual one where the leader/counselor comes with the Bible and says "I say this then" this method can be helpful for those who are strong in faith, but we can also see that this method makes the person with the problem not have the chance to decide. The education of counselors in the counseling service should be increased through seminars and short courses.

The church is called to serve people in the whole state of life; physical, spiritual, emotional and psychological. Oates, Wayne in his book *The Christian Pastor* writes, "Christian fellowship is a community of caring for one another; it is a society of people where a person's personality is valued and given importance - all his condition in its perfection and a good environment is built. It is a necessary community to build each other in faith and empower each other as we are united with God to be his witnesses and take care of each other."² According to Oates, Counselling is a significant service in all works of a pastor. It is a service whereby faith and hope are manifested.

¹ Clyde Narramore, *The Psychology of Counselling* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1960).

² Wayne Oates, *The Christian Pastor*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1982),1.

Biblical and Theoretical Basis of Pastoral Counselling

The Bible says; "I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you" (Ps. 32:8). This means that the role of counselling belongs to God himself in the lives of Christians. The task of counselling is to make it easier for one to make the right decisions in life.

The main idea of the Bible is about God, people, sin and salvation. Learning about these main ideas would help to better understand the work of the ministry of pastoral care and counseling. The main goal is to help mankind to be free and happy. The Bible says, "It is not good for a man to be alone" (Gen. 2:18). After the creation of animals and their naming, the loneliness of man was still evident. This gives the picture that a person's peace does not come from nor does it depend on just having material things. Because the Bible says in (Gen. 2:20), "but there was no one to help Adam like him." The creation of a woman only helped to temporarily remove Adam's loneliness (Gen. 2:23ff). In Genesis 3 the narrative of the temptation of Adam and his fall caused loneliness and separation (death and suffering). Man and woman who could create and give birth misused their freedom by wanting to be more than they had and the result was fear, (suffering that made them hide and build barriers that separate them from each other and between them and God).³ Since time immemorial, human beings have continued to feel like strangers and slaves of threats; (threats have become the host of human life) they feel like puppets playing on the edge of the rope tied between them and the main evil puppet the devil (Gen. 3). The fall of Adam and Eve is the beginning of the habit of hiding, deception, methods of self-defense, various problems and death: all this continues throughout human history.

Counselling from a Christian point of view is an activity to promote and change the victim's thoughts through the office of a pastor who is the counsellor who uses normal and divine methods to revitalize, heal, develop and relieve a person from his/her burden and to provide the necessary support to face difficult situations.⁴

Pastoral counselling can and has been understood in a variety of ways. Lartey explains, "I have elsewhere presented five distinct understandings that appear in western contexts;

(1) There is a secular usage in educational settings in Britain in which 'pastoral' counselling focuses on the welfare or well-being of students and the personal, social and moral developmental issues faced by pupils in school. Pastoral tutors in schools and colleges seek, through counselling and other means of communication, to facilitate the personal growth and welfare of their students.

(2) There is the exclusive focus of the term upon the counselling work of ordained ministers. Here, pastoral counselling refers only to what the church minister does when they offer guidance or counsel to parishioners or others who seek their help.

(3) Pastoral counselling may also refer to counselling with a broadly religious frame of reference or counselling which unlike other forms does not equate religion with pathology but rather seeks to take into account clients and counselors religious sentiments.

(4) Pastoral counselling is also seen as counselling offered within or by a community of faith. On this view, groups or individuals within or else representing a particular faith community, work with individuals or groups per the beliefs of their community's faith. An example of this would be Christian counselling or counselling which seeks to base its theory and practice exclusively on the Bible and the tenets of evangelical Christianity and may also be described as a form of pastoral counselling.

(5) When counselling focuses on the whole rather than specific aspects of a person's experience (e.g., emotions or cognitive functioning) then the qualifier 'pastoral' in pastoral counselling refers to the whole person. Here the pastoral counsellor is concerned for the total well-being of a person mentally, physically, emotionally, spiritually and socially."⁵ The fifth perspective is what the present study is

³ Ian Jones, *The Counsel of Heaven and Earth: Foundations for Biblical Christian Counselling* (Nashville, TN: B and H Publishing Group, 2006).

⁴ Rodney. J. Hunter, ed., *Dictionary of Pastoral Care & Counselling*. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990).

⁵ Lartey, E. Y.. *In living color: An intercultural approach to pastoral care and counselling* 2nd Ed. London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers 2003..

focusing on. Such a person would not, of course, offer everything on his or her own. They often work alongside others and have recourse to referral as a means of enabling attention to specific needs. Their overall aim is for holistic health that ignores or minimises no aspect of this.

The Need for Pastoral Counselling Service

Counselling service aims to use the wisdom of Jesus Christ and his Word so that people can live well in the middle of this world and solve their spiritual, moral, social and psychological problems. In learning the lesson of care and pastoral counseling, the main focus is on the Christian life and being a student amid a corrupt world. The call given by the Lord Jesus during his ministry invites all people to follow him with great hope (Mt. 11.28).

Pastoral counselling is a service that gives a call to correct the world that is not desirable to live with its bad systems that make people suffer such as hatred and jealousy, use of force, oppression, and violation of rights, isolation, humiliation, and lack of peace, pleasure and happiness. Pastoral care is a service that invites us to a fulfilling life with the value of life. These things create hope and happiness in our hearts, bodies and minds.

The Repertoire of Pastoral Counselling Providers

Pastoring is one of the most important and broader roles than one can think and it is more than preaching, service of healing and development in the church and society in the cycle of this life, and pastoral counseling is one of the internal and very important pastoral roles. In general, there are four major important roles in pastoral activities.

1. HEALING - One of the most important pastoral responsibilities is healing where the pastor works to set goals for his people or clients to overcome various problems through
 - a. Ensuring that one is redeemed in general
 - b. To guide him or her in goals that are beyond his or her initial needs
2. EMPOWERMENT - It is the responsibility of the pastor to help the victim to be able to tolerate and accept the environment even when it seems that there is an impossible situation or where healing is in process or impossible.
3. GUIDING - the pastor will help the victim to make the right decision with confidence
4. RECONCILIATION - It is the responsibility of the pastor to develop a damaged relationship between a person and a person or between a person and God, so when giving pastoral advice, the Pastor will also be doing the work of reconciling the person concerned with God
5. NURTURING - this is empowerment to encourage a person to develop a gift or gift given to him by God.
6. Remember that there are opportunities to do many things related to pastoral services if the position is used more than the positions listed above.⁶

The Need for Pastoral Counselling Skills

Pastoral counselling providers need to be proficient in counselling skills and technique approaches for effective services. Proficiency in counselling skills will help not only to evade causing more problems to the suffering people but also to enrich the management of the problem at hand and empower the symptom bearer toward the restoration or transformation.⁷ There are significant numbers of pastors who have little or no skills in pastoral counselling. Lack of counselling training programmes reckons to be a hindrance to most pastoral counselling providers' proper response to various moral and spiritual problems. Most pastoral counselling providers have a hard time understanding the difference between counselling and telling people what to do.

⁶ Eide Øyvind, *Restoring Life in Christ: Dialogues of Care in Christian Communities; an African Perspective* (Neuendettelsau: Makumira Publications., 2008).

⁷ Howard Clinebell, *Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, 2nd ed. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1984).

Pastoral counselling providers need to develop their abilities in counselling skills and techniques in the areas of active listening and have a responsibility to become highly proficient in skills related to listening, and sympathy and probe for the root causes of the problems facing people based on Scripture and Christian principles. Pastoral counselling providers need to be informed about the spiritual realms of the individual concerns and help them to invigilate and respond to their ills appropriately. A significant number of people are hurt by their very trusted church leaders who do not bother to improve their skills in counselling techniques and approaches and only perform their responsibilities in a “traditional fashion.”⁸ Pastoral counselling providers need to improve the competence and effectiveness of their skills and techniques in order to render a meaningful and effective service. Pastoral counselling providers must make more efforts in learning about how to improve, innovate, explore, and continue to enhance and be empowered for the ministry of counselling. Every church servant, especially a pastor, is a counsellor once he or she has been called to serve God, then at the same time, pastoral counselling providers have engaged in counselling work on that basis their counselling is not a matter of choosing to advise or not to counsel. It would be unfortunate if there is a pastor who will lack those skills a person in need has to enter into a person’s heart of stone because of despair; it is usually only a pastor who has a great soul to enter the heart of a person's personal life and counselling is an important part for meeting such issues.⁹

Are there adequate counsellors available to render counselling to troubled people? Considering this question, the lack of trained counsellors among the persons who are expected to give counselling was noted during the research. During field research, it was learned that there were a significant number of pastors who have no skills in pastoral counselling. But also a narrow-minded perception of the pastoral counselling ministry was noted.

During a recent research project by Kilengi, church leaders were asked whether they have attended any training on pastoral counselling and if they would be interested in taking part in such a programme. During their interview with the researcher, it was learned that there were a significant number of pastors who have no skills in pastoral counselling. Interestingly, all of them have expressed their wish for taking part in such a programme. Several Lutheran pastors expressed the need to improve how they were dealing with unwed mothers and of course some other moral and ethical issues.¹⁰

The leadership structure creates a gap/problem on how pastoral care should be executed in the sense that, the structure gives *baraza la wazee* (church elders council) the power to deal with spiritual matters that they are not trained for. This is a theological crisis because *wazee* are simply the laity who do not receive any theological training and are likely to do their jobs by following “the tradition” than any informed Biblical interpretation. In the same crisis, pastors have assumed the “boss” role and give ordering power to *mabaraza ya wazee* for the work which is responsible for them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that for the Church to minister effectively to the people there is a need to design a training programme for church leaders that emphasizes training its leaders in the field of pastoral counselling. There is also much to be learned from the classical theorists; ministers who do counselling should read widely and attend regular workshops to increase their skills and perceptions.

Moreover, the study found that pastoral counselling is not a specialized discipline but a class in a general curriculum. There is a need for the church in the *Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania* (ELCT) to develop the pastoral counseling skills competence of pastors who minister to the community. The church needs to establish programmes in counselling skills and technique approaches to improve the competence and effectiveness of its church leaders in pastoral ministry services. The

⁸ Lechion Kimilike, “Developing Resources of Hope to Eradicate Violence against Women in African Context,” *African Theological Journal* 31, no. 2 (2008).

⁹ Clinebell, *Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling*.

¹⁰ Kilengi, “Pastoral Counselling Response to Unwed Mothers Among the Nyaturu Ethnic Group as a Cultural and Lutheran Theological Quest.”

strong leaning of members to ministries outside the church underscores the need for pastors to develop new skills to encourage congregational transformation. Contemporary challenges have brought about a scenario in which pastors experience a crisis of confidence about how they can meaningfully minister in today's environment in Africa.¹¹ Based on the importance of building competence in ministry practice, the article suggests that whatever the church does, it must be done to learn more about the kinds of education that encourage innovation, exploration, and continued learning in leadership.

CONCLUSION

The success of almost everything in the world requires a lot of preparation. Better preparation leads to better results. In the same way, bad preparation brings bad results. God himself has made long preparations to better prepare man for his redemption. God could and can take a shortcut to do anything, but he does not do that instead he has spent a lot of time, and things and finally cost his life by his death on the cross to bring about complete redemption. The best service comes from the best employees who are well-prepared. The best employees don't just appear on the street. The best employees must be prepared.

There is a great need to have better counselling skills and techniques for Pastoral counselling providers to be more effective in pastoral ministry. Pastoral counselling providers need to be well-equipped with counselling techniques and skills. The knowledge in counselling skills will enable pastoral counselling providers to act appropriately to the arising challenges that people face. The development of counselling skills and techniques will enhance competency in dealing with the increasing complexities of modern life challenges. Pastoral counselling providers are dealing more with ethics - who is right and who is wrong and this brings about more tension than solving the problem. Therefore, counselling skills are very proper in pastoral ministry.

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