

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION OF THE NIGERIAN SOCIETY THROUGH THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PRIVATE COUNSELLING CLINICS

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Abstract

This paper examines the present moral, economic and social states of the typical Nigerian society in an attempt to emphasize the need for the establishment of private counselling clinics in the Nigerian society. It explains the general functions of Guidance and Counselling services and pioneering attempts of the early 50s in Nigeria. Highlights of the setting up of a clinic are presented. The need for the immediate establishment of private counselling clinics in all nooks and crannies of Nigerian communities, to help in economic and social reconstruction is emphasised.

Introduction

Individuals in the Nigerian society have varying dimensions of problems are diverse and complex because of different home backgrounds, age differentials, stratified cultural traits, inequality in educational opportunity, sex-differentials and unstable government policies. These general

problems could be categorized into:

- a. Personal or psychological problems
- b. Academic problems
- c. Vocational problems.

Some of the problems are inability to bring aspirations into function, lack of knowledge and information, poor performance at school and work, poor job motivation, low productivity, lack of skill, poor capacity for work, unemployment, hatred and rejection.

These problems have been with the Nigerian society from time immemorial. Things are getting worse day in day out. Attempts have been made by the Nigerian educational system, through the National Policy on Education (1981, 1998) to reduce the observable problems by the establishment of guidance and counselling services in secondary schools and the training of professional counsellors. It seems that both the various governments (Federal and State) and individual trained counselors have concentrated their attention only on secondary schools. The other areas of the society-the primary and tertiary school systems, industrial communities, medical settings, armed forces, political organizations, civil service, business organizations/and communal settings-have been neglected. It seems that politically, socially, morally, economically and physically things are not alright with the Nigerian citizenry.

In view of the highlights mentioned above, this paper is an attempt to sensitize every shareholder in the Nigeria economic and social development of the need to establish private counselling clinics in all areas that concerns citizens generally. It is hoped that with trained counselors in the society generally apart from secondary schools, children and adults would be helped to understand themselves and the world around them. They would be able to verify issues, explore themselves and the world around them, to adjust accordingly and be happy and fulfilled individuals.

Origin and Pioneer Attempts of Guidance and Counselling Practices in Nigeria

Pioneering attempts at organized guidance services were first made by some Catholic sisters in 1959 at St. Theresa's College, Ibadan. They felt that there was a need for the graduating students of the year to be informed about the world of work into which they were about entering.

Lectures were given to the girls by officials of the Ministries of Employment on opportunities in the Ministries. The same was organised for subsequent graduating classes through symposia and guidance workshops. Other schools in Ijebu Ode, Ibadan, Abeokuta and Lagos also started similar activities. Thus, Ibadan Careers Council was established in 1962. Its name later changed to Nigeria Careers Council in 1967. On December 17, 1976, the counselling activities led to the creation of an umbrella for all career masters- in different fields. The counselling association of Nigeria (CAN) at the association's second Annual Conference of August 3-6, 1977, it was resolved that CAN be affiliated to APGA or the American Psychological Association (APA) for it to gain strength and support. Other pioneering attempts in the areas of Counselling and Psychotherapy include the Mental

Hygiene Movement, championed by Lambo and Asuni and which helped in the establishment of the Psychiatry Hospital, Abeokuta and the Rehabilitation Centre at Ibadan.

In spite of the Nigerian war of the late 60s which put an end to it, educational guidance and

counselling has come to stay in Nigeria. The place of guidance and counselling in the educational system of Nigeria has been one of great concern to educationalists, psychologists, administrators and curriculum planners. Its presence in the educational system can be likened to the position of Psychology in the U.S. A in the late nineteenth century, Psychology as a discipline was regarded as a branch of philosophy.

After the official launching of C.A.N. in Nigeria on December 11, 1976 and its affiliation to APGA in 1977, guidance and counselling practices were established in schools. However the standard of that in the U.S. A, its place of origin. The Nigerian society becomes more civilized, wiser, sophisticated and technologised day in day out.

In most societies of the world, counselors work in all settings. In the U.S.A. there is virtually no government programme or establishment without counselors. Examples are hospitals, industries, courts, child - clinics, home for the aged, occupations, farming settlements and schools. Some nations weave the programmes of counselling into the social order because such nations have come to realize that everybody needs counselling. Among the concerns individuals, people or societies that make the establishment of guidance and counselling programmes essential are the following: The dynamic nature of the occupational structure, the structure of our educational system, specialised training for modern occupation, the need for a life pattern, rapid social change, anxieties in families, loss of old certainties, scarcity of informal counselling and the growth of technology and industrialization among others.

In view of the above, the counselor is seen as occupying strategic positions in organizations or establishments. The Federal Government is aware of this fact. Hence the emphasis on guidance and counselling in the New National Policy on Education. Although, it is disturbing that some parts of the country still do not have trained counselors in schools. For example, by 1981, only two States out of the nineteen available had counselors according to Onabamiro Implementation Panel (1981). A submission by Oyo State to the same panel indicates that during 1981, fifteen counselors served in the whole of Oyo State.

Things have improved presently. Quite a number of States in Nigeria have trained counselors in their secondary schools. At worst, Schools with no full - time counselors have career masters. All schools in the Southern part of Nigeria have counselors trained in the Universities or career master with Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE), This improvement has been realised because efforts have been geared towards the implementation of the policy statement of the Federal Government of Nigeria on education which states that education and training facilities will be multiplied and made more accessible. This will afford the individual a more diversified and flexible choice and be able to relate education to overall community needs (Section 1,7 (3,6). Also section 9, paragraphs 74 and 75 of the National Policy on Education state that no matter the efficiency of the pre - service training given to teachers, there will necessarily be areas of inadequacies. That, in - service education of teachers in the areas of guidance and counselling among others, will be systematically planned so that attendance at a number of courses at regular intervals will be possible for every teacher. The above policy statements are well stated in view of the concerns of individuals, people or societies as earlier mentioned. It is not strange in Nigeria today to hear of vacation or sandwich courses for teachers in guidance and counselling going on in the various universities. Interested teachers who had been trained in counselling go for training at the degree and higher degree levels during vacations. These have gradually filled up the vacant counselling offices in schools.

The Counselling Association of Nigeria (CAN) has been established in all the states of Nigeria by practicing counselors branches of CAN at the local government, state and national levels meet at regular intervals for workshops and seminars to up - date records, practices etc. CAN ensures that all teachers get registered with her as student counselors or fully - fledged counselors in schools. As much as possible the counsellor conducts the activities of counselling in Nigerian schools. Need for Private Counselling Clinics in Nigeria

Even though, guidance and counselling practices have been established in Nigeria, it is most operative in secondary schools only. There is no doubt that guidance and counselling services have

come to stay in Nigerian secondary schools. On the other hand, their impact is little felt in the tertiary institutions and communities generally in the country, not to talk of hospitals, companies organizations, courts, industries. This is contrary to what operates in the U.S.A. where virtually all government programmes and communities have counselors operating in clinics.

The question then is, should effective or operative counselling be limited to secondary schools alone? With modernization, every social setting is faced with rapid social and economic changes in early adulthood, change in cultural milieu which leads to frustrations and resentment at

being forced into a situation foreign to one's interest and abilities, anxieties within the family, care of children, divorce, extended family members, work-stress, change in philosophies or doctrines also create adjustment problems (Hurlock, 1959). In early adulthood, which is in most cases, a period out of the secondary school, more adjustment problems than had not been faced before face young adults.

They have concerns about life -mate, emotional upset, aspirations which may eventually lead to stress and finally to emotional breakdown. This may create psychological disorders or psychosomatic problems. These young adults would naturally need counselling intervention to enhance personality development and psychological growth towards socialized maturity accordingly (Rogers, 1961). Just as individuals in early adulthood , middle agers and old-agers also need counselling to solve adjustment problems satisfactorily at stages in life. Obviously, there are no private counselling clinics around. Where should they turn to for help since there are no private counselling clinics outside the schools.

Another important factor in the establishment of private counselling clinics is confidentiality. There is no gainsaying the fact that confidentiality matters in a helping relationship towards making an individual to understand himself and the world around him.

Nigeria is ripe for the establishment of private counselling clinics in view of her economic, social and political problems. We need intervention of various forms and at various levels to sanitize our society. Many people go about with psychological disorders, psychosomatic problems. Many people are frustrated and a lot are experiencing emotional breakdown. No level of our social ladder is completely sane. Leaders as well as followers have unrealistic aspirations and consequently, go through emotional upset. Unprofitable and unprogressive decisions led to adjustment problems which abound everywhere (Shelzen and Stone, 1974). No time is more appropriate than now to establish private counselling clinics in Nigeria. Considering the situation of Nigerians, almost every individual needs counselling. There is no doubt that with the crop of counselors already trained in Nigeria and who are available, the establishment of private counselling clinics will go a long way in solving adjustment problems in our marital, social, economic and political lives.

Setting up a Private Counselling Clinic

The setting up of private counselling clinics does not differ from that of secondary schools except that these clinics will be outside the school environment. The personnel, cost, counselor qualities, counselor involvement, office and furniture etc do not differ. They could be set up anywhere.

1. The Counsellor

As for school counselors, private counselors must be well-trained in counselling and human relations. They must possess certain personality qualities that favour interpersonal relations. For instance, they must be empathic in nature, be able to patiently understand people and have a good sense of humour. They must be socially intelligent and have common sense. On the whole, they must have qualities that will gravitate people to them. They must be decent and presentable to the society. They should be a model in their environment.

2. The Location

The location of the clinic should be easily accessible.

3 Counselling Office

The physical outlook of the office is most important because it determines the type of interaction that takes place between the client and counselor. The type and arrangement of the office forms physical and interactional factors. Basically, there must be a good set of the required furniture, at least two comfortable chairs and a table between them. A cabinet is required for filing, files are necessary for the keeping of records on individual basis. The counsellor requires a bookshelf too. Test/instruments are very necessary.

4. Involvement of the Counsellor

A trained private counsellor must be able to provide all the various services involved in counselling viz: information, counselling, co- ordination, consultation, placement, planning follow -up referral services and orientation programmes after initial and finally keep all records. The above mentioned services and programmes specify the roles of the private counsellor.

5. The Employment Opportunity

Since counselling is a "helping relationship" involving a counsellor who has interest in the behaviour of people : living, feeling, attitudes, motives, ideas, responses and needs, he will always be a needed professional in the community. So there is prospect in the profession, as employment opportunity subsequently avails.

6 Viability of Private Counselling Clinics

The setting up and practising of private counselling in Nigeria are capable of developing and surviving without any outside influence. With the present viability of school counselling, one is full of hope that it will be viable in the Nigerian environment. It is hoped that the standard of private counselling in America will be attained with interest and effort on the part of counselors.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Counselling services have come to stay in Nigeria Hitherto; the secondary school system has been a focus in the establishment of the valuable services of guidance and counselors. The larger society too needs the presence of professional expertise of the counsellors in her social, educational and vocational spheres of life. Individuals will be encouraged to understand themselves in attempts to clarify economic and social issues, especially in the world of work. There is no gain saying the fact that counseling service will facilitate personal adjustment to environments and avoidance of unwanted behaviour. Insights into the needed therapy in dealing with behaviour maladjustment behaviour problems will be made available through counseling services in our societies. It is evident that a lot of individuals need counseling intervention outside the learning environment (Ogunsanmi, 1999).

The various stakeholder in the economic and social environments are therefore urged to help in the creation of general awareness or the importance of guidance and counseling services in our communities and organisation. Individual trained counselors should be encouraged to establish private counseling clinics by the provision of funds by the federal, state and local governments in form of loans. Such loans will care for the expenses on office accommodation, furniture and tools needed in the operations of guidance and counseling services. The various governments should continue to encourage training of professional counsellors by providing scholarship awards. Teachers, Civil servants, medical personnel, force men and women, public servants should be encouraged to undergo in-service training in the tertiary institutions. These efforts will go a long way in modeling the Nigerian society economically and socially.

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