

QUALITY PRIMARY EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE FUTURE: THE ROLE OF COUNSELLOR

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Abstract

The paper focused on quality primary education for sustainable future: the role of counsellor. Since primary school is the foundation as well as the back bone of all levels of formal education in Nigeria, guidance and counselling as well as counsellors in particular are therefore very vital at this stage of the existence of numerous problems and concerns that require guidance and counselling and counsellors interventions. Based on the above fact the paper discusses the concept of sustainable future, concept of counsellor and guidance services needed at primary school, concept of primary education, objectives of primary education such as inculcation of permanent literacy and numeracy, and the ability to communicate effectively. Problems of the primary education in Nigeria such as funding, inspection and supervision etc, some possible solutions to the problems, roles of counsellors in the provision of quality primary education for sustainable future. Some suggestions such as government should engage guidance counsellors in the implementation of educational policies, programs and reforms in Nigeria including that of primary school levels of education.

Education is widely recognized as a veritable tool for addressing issues of poverty, underdevelopment, population, illiteracy, ignorance, gender exclusion, health problems, conflicts and intolerance, human right, sustainability (United Nations System in Nigeria, 1998). That, means, it serves as an agent of change. It provides men and women with knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to lead more satisfying lives and be useful to the society.

It is the process of learning and training; instruction as imparted in schools, colleges and universities, a course or type of instruction; theory and practice of teaching. Education has thus become crucial component of any developmental intervention, including sustainable future (Malcolm, 2011). Education for sustainable future is a dynamic concept that encompasses a new vision of education that seeks to empower people of all ages to assume responsibility of creating and enjoying sustainable future. This must begin with primary education (the mother of all schools).

Since primary school is the foundation as well as backbone of all levels of formal education in Nigeria, guidance and counselling as well as counsellor in particular is therefore very vital at this stage because of the existence of numerous concerns (Ranging from emotional, social, physical as well as learning problems) which require guidance and counselling and counsellor's interventions at this level not only to address these concerns but also to prevent the occurrence for sustainable future (Haliru, 2011).

One of the objectives of Primary Education is to ensure the character and moral development of the young learners and the development of sound attitudes. The inculcation of the right types of attitude and values in the learner right from the primary school goes a long way in bringing sustainable future. Whatever the child learns at his early age's remains in him and he uses it in the future to better the lot of his society. The moral upbringing of the learner right from his Primary Education stages helps to

position him tomorrow when he becomes matured, and it equally brings about sustainable future. Primary Education provides the basic tools for further Educational, Economical, political and social advancement of a society. It is the starting point for any nation's educational advancement, as all the above concepts make up much of what a society needs to attain a sustainable future (Malcolm, 2011).

Concept of Sustainable Future

Sustainable future can simply be defined as a process of maintaining the available resources to solve present and future problems and needs of the society (Yahaya, Yunusa & Mukhtar, 2011). Sustainable future is the process in which the natural resources base is not allowed to be depleted or to deteriorate, because of future uses. Sustainability is considered as paradigm for thinking about a future in the pursuit of development and improved quality of life (Rikoto, 2011). Quality Primary Education for sustainable future includes critical thinking skills, skills to formulate questions, and the ability to analyze issues that confront communities for future sustainability. Sustainable future is the Development that is geared towards meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs (Ibrahim, 2011).

Sustainability is the act of supporting or bearing the weight of some responsibility for a long period of time. Sustainability is to encourage, support or give nourishment to sustain life, it also means to endure, stand, maintain or keep a sound effort or project. Sustainable future connotes the art of supporting, maintaining or keeping the progress or advancement being achieved in educational pursuit for meaningful goals. Quality Primary Education is therefore, described as a vision of Education that seeks to empower people to assume responsibility for creating a sustainable

future. It is also viewed as systematic uninterrupted Qualitative and Quantitative changes in human life in areas like Education, moral, science, technology, administration, economy and politics for the future of society.

Concept of Counsellor and Some Guidance Services Needed at Primary School.

Counsellor can also be referred to as a person who could use the principles of good human relationship in his/her effort to help the other people despite the age, experience, ethnic and status differentials. Nwachuku (2007) mentioned that the school counsellor is all of the following, a helping professional, re-enforcer of achievement, an educational organizer, an activator of positive behaviour, a psychological clinician, a consultant, a student advocate, a facilitator and an encourager. Generally, a counsellor is a professionally trained expert, skilled in the science and art of helping others in solving problems.

Appraisal Services: In Appraisal services counselors make use of data, which they have gathered, organized and interpreted. This may be done through teachers, parents and others of significance through the use of instrument such as testing (Psychological and teacher made test) non-testing (interviews, rating scales, socio-metrics, observations etc).

Counselling Services: The counsellor provides vocational, educational and personal/social counselling. The students are guided in the areas of academic, vocational, personal/social counselling.

Information Services: The counsellor can provide information in services in the primary school. He/she provides information in the personal/social, vocational and Educational areas. The primary school pupils also need information on various aspects of life. Planning, placement and follow up services: the services are also provided in the school system in order to

enable children reaps the benefits of Guidance and Counselling (Haliru, 2011).

Evaluation Services: After specific instructional period the counsellor will evaluate the services rendered to the primary school pupils especially in the area of academic, vocational and personal social services.

Concept of Primary Education

According to National Policy on Education (1989) primary education is referred to as education given in an institution for children between the ages normally 6-11 years. It goes on to argue that since the rest of the education is built upon it, the primary level is the key to the success or failure of the whole system. Primary Education also means a school for children below age eleven; a school for children to the middle basic Primary education also called elementary education provides pupils with basic understanding of various subjects as well as skills which they will use throughout their lives. It also means full time education suited to the requirement of learners up to the age of twelve years (Malcolm, 2011).

Primary education is a vital instrument for development, preparing children for secondary and tertiary education (Haliru, 2011). Since primary school is the foundation as well as the backbone of all levels of formal education in Nigeria. Basic education means the type of education, in quality and content, that is given in the first level of education. This construct changes from country to country. In Nigeria, basic education starts from primary school level of junior secondary school, it is equated with six years of primary school. Universal Basic Education (UBE) is conceived to embrace formal education up to age fourteen (14), as well as adult and non-formal Education including education for marginalized groups within the Nigerian society (Yusuf and Ajere, 2011).

Primary school as a school for very young pupils usually the first grades of elementary school. To new Webster Dictionary of Education, International edition (1995), Primary Education connotes first importance in the educational ladder. Primary school education is the foundation laying process that provides the child with the necessary environment and stimulus for learning how to acquire the knowledge of what he/she needs to cope with life, in proportion with his age, ability and aptitude, in his environment so that he/she can live a good and useful life in the community (Magaji, Bakori and Bello, 2013).

Primary Education therefore, can be regarded as the school for the generality of the public to enable the citizens to learn to live effectively in the society. Its duration, concept and curriculum vary from one society or country to country. Primary Education is therefore, the first stage of formal education which prepares one to take up challenges in the community. It equally prepares others for further educational pursuit. It is therefore, both terminal and transitional. Terminal is for those who join the labour force or trade and transitional to those who proceed to post primary for more professional trades or occupations.

Objectives of Primary Education

Primary education is regarded as the backbone of the Educational System. This being the case, the National Policy on Education outlines the following objectives of primary education.

- i) The inculcation of permanent literacy and numeracy, and the ability to communicate effectively.
- ii) The laying of a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking.
- iii) Citizenship education as the basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society.

- iv) Character and moral development and the development of sound attitudes.
- v) Development in the child, the ability to adapt to his changing environment.
- vi) Giving the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable him function effectively within limits of his capacity.
- vii) Providing basic tools for further educational advancement including preparation for trades and craft of the locality (NPE, 2004).

Problems of Primary Education in Nigeria

The problems of primary education in Nigeria today are numerous but some of them that hamper the sustainable future of Nigeria are mentioned here:-

- a) **Funding** – The funding of Primary Education in Nigeria is very low compared to other levels of Education. Obri (2005) pointed out that; it is not that government is not giving money but there is a gap, between what is available and what is needed in the education sector. The demand is growing higher while the available resources are not keeping pace in term of development.
- b) **Inspection and Supervision** – The Nigerian National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004) has highlighted in precise terms the objectives of education supervision, which is to ensure quality control through regular inspection and continuous supervision of instruction and other Educational Services. Ogunsanya (1985) stated that supervision is perceived as a way of advising, guiding, refreshing, encouraging, stimulating, improving and over-seeing certain groups with the hope of seeking their cooperation in order for the supervisors to be successful in the task of their supervision. Both inspection and supervising focus on the monitoring and

evaluation performance so as to improve performance in order to produce or accelerate development, where regular inspection and supervision are lacking, some teachers may branch off into quick money generating and so on even during school hours. Hence effective teaching and learning will not take place. This will give room for other problems to set in (Malcolm, 2011).

- c) Over-population in the primary school, because of the competition between the other aspects of UBE, which is the broader scheme which encompasses early child care and socialization, education for person aged 15 and above special programmes for nomadic education. Person who left school before acquiring the basic needed skill for lifelong learning, apprenticeship training for adolescent and youths, formal school system from primary school to junior secondary Education (FGN, 2000, in Liman, Tambuwal & Albadau, 2012).
- d) There is poor/or absence of guidance and counselling/personnel and offices/facilities to guide the Nigerian child out of the many problems he faces.
- e) Infrastructural provision and rehabilitation of the existing buildings: a shortage of space currently exists in all the sub-sectors of the educational system, the expansion of the education system, mainly as a result of the introduction of UBE Scheme, has put pressure on Education facilities that did not expand at the same rate as the school population (Liman, Tambuwal & Albadau, 2012). Effective teaching and learning will only take place in conducive atmosphere, if such facilities are not there or they are poorly maintained, the entire facilities will be grounded. What we have in our primary

- schools is either overcrowded classes or pupils sitting under trees (Malcolm, 2011).
- f) Human resource capacity development: The development of human resource capacity for an effective primary education is critical. There are human resources needs for Administration, management, research, guidance and counselling and teaching as well as technical staff.
 - g) Curriculum Relevance – is one of the problems facing primary education in Nigeria today, there is need for the relevance of teacher training programmes for the school curriculum and lack of flexibility to accommodate the changes needed in the school environment. Such as the area of science, technology, social studies and languages effectively.
- c. Government and other non-governmental organizations should aid in providing more schools and class rooms in the existing primary schools, especially in the major cities of the countries as well as the provision of some schools in some rural areas (Liman, Tambuwal and Albadau, 2012)
 - d. Guidance services must be emphasized to deal with current behavioral problems which have plagued the education industry at all levels in Nigeria. (Yusuf and Ajere, 2011) therefore there is need for professional guidance and counselors in all the primary schools as recommended by NPE (2004)
 - e. On the issue of human resources capacity development: Liman Tambuwal and Albadau (2012) stated that the successful implementation of UBE Scheme depends on the availability of man power. Human resources, In educational sector, is interpreted to mean all the people involved directly and indirectly in facilitating teaching and learning especially in primary schools.
 - f. There is need for revising the curriculum of the UBE Scheme so as to make it relevant to the needs and aspirations of Nigerians as well as helped in the attainment of UBE goals mentioned in the National Policy on Education (2004) (revised edition).

Some Possible Solutions to the Problems

The following are some of the possible solutions to the existing problems of primary education in Nigeria.

- a. Adequate funding is required, it is hoped that the federal government will provide adequate funds with the state government assisting sufficiently to ensure that poverty stricken parents contribute minimal funds for this level of education in the new dispensation, it is well known that teachers morale drops with tardiness in payments of salaries. Regular money remittances to the states should be made by federal governments for the payments of teacher's salaries or to the universal basic education board (Yusuf and Ajere, 2011).
- b. On the issue of inspection and supervision, training and re-training of school supervisors should be given due consideration by the authorities, so as to boost their moral on how, where and when to supervise schools especially at rural primary schools.

Roles of Counsellors in the Provision of Quality Primary Education for Sustainable Future

As a trained professional, the counsellor is trained in the art of human relationship; through counsellors qualities like warmth, respect, empathy, love, and genuiness e.t.c are imbibed. A primary school counsellor is an adult

to children and a resource person for parent and teachers, who is shouldered with responsibilities of observing and addressing unacceptable behaviours among pupils starting from the sources of the problem to its current state.

The following are some of the role of primary school counsellors as summarized by Wakili (2010):-

1. Assist pupils with problems that interfere with their learning.
2. Support and enhance the educational, emotional, social, developmental and physical growth of pupils.
3. Receive pupils as individuals, in small groups, and in class room or group guidance.

To Okon (1984) counsellors play the following roles in the primary education for sustainable future:-

- a. Enhance educational, social, emotional and physical developments of pupils from the onset of their educational pursuit so as to give them a clearer picture of education and life in their surrounding environments and the outer world.
- b. In Nigerian primary education (schools) the needs for counselling and guidance services cannot be under estimated as a result of the societal changes, increasing number of both parents, being of the working class leaving the children at the mercies of house helps, nannies and the likes.

In an attempt to identify the role of a school counsellor, Abubakar (2010) enumerated the following:-

1. Helps and develops the programmes and curriculum in relation to the need of individual pupils.
2. Assuming the role of leader and consultant in the school programme of pupils

appraised by co-ordinate, interpret and helping to identify pupils with special abilities or needs.

3. Collects and disseminates information to pupils and their parents about schools offering and opportunity for further education.
4. Conducts and cooperates with others in conducting local researches in relation to pupils needs.
5. Helps the learner to understand himself in terms of self-knowledge, self-concept, self-esteem, self appraisal and self actualization.
6. Helps to appraise, analyze, diagnose and assess the learners' abilities, interests and aptitudes and builds cumulative records.
7. He also provides orientation and guidance that lead to acceptance in the system and effective teaching and learning (Liman, Tambuwal and Albadau, 2012).

At the primary school and junior secondary school levels, Gibson and Mitchell (1986) identified the following: orientation, assessment, appraisal, consultancy, coordination, counselling, career development and placement as the major functions of guidance and counsellors in primary schools.

Malumfashi (2004) outlined the following as what guidance and counseling aims at primary schools;

1. Assist individual students to identify his developmental needs.
2. Assist students to identify his potentialities
3. Assist students in making decisions in his choices of work
4. Assist them to cope with learning disabilities, etc.

Conclusion

It is apparent from the above discussion that guidance and counselling and counsellors in particular play a significant role in the provision of quality primary education for sustainable future in Nigeria. It is also the area that clears the challenges facing the primary education in Nigeria, and can source their solution from guidance and counselling services when effectively rendered. Therefore government, school administrators, teachers, parents and students should regard and respect, the roles of counsellor and counselling services in the schools and beyond for better and successful primary education in Nigeria. It is very clear that provision of quality primary education in Nigeria will promote sustainable future, as the primary education is a vital instrument for development, as well as for preparing pupils for further educational pursuits.

Suggestions

Based on the forgoing discussions on the quality primary education for sustainable future: the role of counselors, the following suggestions are made by the researcher:-

- I. Government should engage guidance counsellors in the implementation of educational reforms in Nigeria including that of primary school level of education and there is the need to incorporate primary schools counselling in Nigeria teacher education programmes in the colleges of education and universities offering education at undergraduate level.
- ii. The new culture must emphasize the egalitarian philosophy in responses to democratic tenets. This is to stress that quality of educational opportunity must be provided for all children regardless of their ethnic and religious affiliation, physical and mental disability and socio-economic background.

- iii. Educational experts should sensitize the governments to become more aware of their services and contribution through regular publication of research findings in their areas of specialization.
- iv. There should be constant on the job training for teachers in primary schools. The Education Trust Fund (ETF) can equally partner with government in carrying out these laudable assignments.

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