

ROLE OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING IN THE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION SYSTEM

Daniel O Avwenagha

Abstract

The paper examined the role of guidance and counseling in the Universal Basic Education System. It sought to outline the role of guidance and counseling for the proper and effective implementation of the Universal Basic Education. It opined that guidance and counseling will improve the quality of instruction and act as a catalyst for the success of the Universal Basic Education. It also made recommendations for a way forward.

Universal Basic Education is not new to the Nigerian educational scene? Access to education has been a major focus for Nigeria since the introduction of the University Primary Education (UPE) scheme in the mid 1970s. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme is a follow up programmes adopted by the government as part of her effort to make education affordable to the ordinary man. Since the goal of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme is to universalize access to basic education, engenders a conducive learning environment especially now that the programme has been reviewed from primary to secondary.

It is a known fact that one of the greatest problems in the implementation of the universal primary education (UPE) in the 1970s is laying emphasis on irrelevant and dysfunctional education. Education is expected to prepare man to face the challenges of life; it prepares man for worthwhile living. Until recently and still to some extent today, the Nigeria educational programme has been theoretical and academic starting from primary school to the tertiary level.

The current trends in education seem to point to the fact that quality of education has been on the decline. The rate of failures and drop - out at the lower levels of education has been on the upsurge. This development has been attributed to so many factors working in combinations, which may be socio - cultural, psychological, economic pedagogical and so on. In the search for ways of ameliorating the problems, guidance and counseling has been identified as one powerful tool that could help in improving the quality of academic performances and by implication the Universal Basis Education (UBE). It is in light of this that the federal government in the 6-3-3-4 system of education prescribes that institutions of learning must establish effective and Functional Guidance and Counseling Centres or units (CFRN, 2004). In line with the goal of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme to Universalize access education engenders a conducive learning environment especially now that the programme has been reviewed from primary to junior secondary.

With guidance and counseling in place, it will enable pupils in the primary and students in the Junior Secondary Schools choose the right course (s) compatible to their innate potentials, attributes, characteristics, motivations and interests, also to ensure that square pegs are not out in round holes (Iroegbu 2006). The Universal Basic Education (UBE) needs guidance and counseling services to achieve these goals. The guidance counselor needs to go the extra mile of creating the awareness and soliciting the assistance of class teachers for referrals "

Theoretical Framework

The guidance services in the school system are essentially to stabilize the pupils/students and staff in order to position them to gain maximally from what the educational system has to offer, and also to enable them contribute maximally to the society what the educational system has imparted on them. Hence Odebunmi (1992), Buadi (2003), pointed out that the society has become so complex that decision about important matters in ones life can not be left to trial and error or to chance. Students with their limited experience about life and the problem of youthful exuberance often need someone to support them and assist them to appraise matters before they can arrive at more meaningful decision. The potency of guidance and counseling in the individual child's life direction requires that the guidance programme should reach all the students in the school. Aquino and Alviar (1980) cited by Buadi (2003) argued that the guidance and counseling programme in schools in not only for children with more obvious problems but for all students as different students have different needs which could be scio - psychological, educational or vocational. Adegoke (1983), Oniyama and Oniyama (2005) noted that lack of planning, lack of commitment on the part of government and lack of patriotism of planning, lack of commitment on the part of government and lack of patriotism of businessmen cause unemployment of women and men alike leading to their poor economic condition. This is so because guidance and counseling being one given a place during formative education period. Vocational counseling being one of the services of guidance and counseling according to Vaughan (1970) is the help given to people to enable them choose work in which they will be reasonable contented and successful within the limits of their abilities. Ipaye (1986) observed that most basic role of vocational guidance in

school is to encourage students to grow and realize their full potentials that is why, Obanya (2002) stated that we must consider thee problems of education beyond classroom grooming of the young, certification through examination, the development of person through conventional subject disciplines and the inculcation and re-tooling of the nations potentially economically active citizenry. Cited by Madumere. Obike (2006). Education is expected to be a means to ones ultimate objectives in life. Its major concern is to make a man to live and function in the society. In line with Nwoye (1990) as cited by Anene and Nwankwo (1999), guidance donates the utilization of a point of view in order to help an individual. This means that it is to direct, lead, assist, inform, advice, teach, help, pilot, show, give instruction and control an individual towards decision making.

The Universal Basic Education should avail herself, of these opportunities provided by the counseling service in order to realize her goals. The importance of guidance and counseling in the child's education has been highlighted by authorities in the field of psychology and guidance. A student who is suffering any mental health problem is not likely to succeed in his academic pursuit until the psychological imbalance has been put right. Many academic backwardness problems are actually traceable to psychological problem (Buadi, 2003). The guidance programme in the school therefore covers a wide spectrum of student services. Since guidance programme in the school supports, strengthens, and adds meaning to what the child learn at school, the efficient use of the counseling service will enable the government achieve the goals and objectives of the University Basic Education (UBE).

The Goals and Objectives of UBE

The goals of the UBE scheme according to the proposed blue print are to universalize access to basic education, the articulation of formal, non-formal and informal education to consolidate literacy, acquisition of basic life and exploiting one's environment for one's survival. Other objectives are developing in the entire population a strong interest in education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion. In specific terms, it aims at the following:

- Provision of free, compulsory, universal basic education for nine years
- Drastically reducing dropout rate from formal school system through improved relevance and efficiency
- Care for dropouts and out-of-school children (adolescents) through various forms of complementary approaches to the acquisition and promotion of basic education.
- Ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative and life skills needed for laying the foundation for life-long learning. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) implementation guideline as released by the Federal Government (2000) targeted on some of the following:
 - The formal school system from the beginning of primary education to the end of the Junior Secondary School
 - Non-formal skill and apprentices training for adolescents and youth who have not had the benefit of formal education
 - Special programme for nomadic populations.

Ayayi (2000) cited by Osobonye (2004) sees the UBE programme launched by the federal government (1999) as a re-launch of the UPE scheme but this time in a wider scope to involve a nine years programme of free and compulsory formal education as well as out of school non-formal programme for adults.

The guidance services in the school system are essentially to stabilize the students and staff in order to position them to gain maximally from what the educational system had imparted on them. Alao (2005) says that guidance is given a Cinderella status in the 6-3-3-4 system of education, an important and neglected member of the education household. Consequently, achievements of the 6-3-3-4 system of education have been greatly affected. For instance, the role of the counselor in achieving the philosophy and goals of education in Nigeria (the whole of section 1 of NPE 2004) cannot be over emphasized but because recognition has not been accorded to the roles of the counselor in the system, the authorities in the secondary schools as well as the public (parents and guardians) have refused to recognize and yield to the counseling service prompting on the educational placement of students based on their abilities and interest (as stated in section d) and consequently, students inability to acquire competencies necessary for self reliance. After the J S S 111 examination, students are expected to proceed to be placed into the educational setting where their potential academic abilities and vocational skills could be perfect to the maximum benefit of the individual and the society at large. This suggests that some students (about 60% of total number of students that sat for the examination) are expected to proceed to the senior secondary school, while about 20% to be placed on apprenticeship with government approved vocational skill training centers? This however is not found to be so. According to Alao (2005) parents, students and guardians still prefer

the old system of all students writing the school certificate examination. This has negated the objective of the 6-3-3-4 system. Even when the student does not possess the potential abilities for the academic rigours of the senior secondary school option. Consequently, placement in technical colleges and apprenticeship is so detested and believed to be meant for the never-do-well students. Therefore, over the years, the notion has witnessed a lot of disheartening events and monumental vices like:

- Poor performance of students in all subjects, in the senior secondary certificate examination every successive year.
- Increase in examination malpractice by the year as a result of students academic incompetence and desperation for paper certificate.
- Lack of appropriate choice of subject combinations due to unavailability of guidance of guidance counselors in school to give appropriate and adequate guidance to students.
- Lack of moral and academic values among students.
- Lack of academic direction
- Lack of self confidence in the students.
- Lack of proper human and academic development.
- Cultism in primary, secondary and higher institutions.

According to Alao (2005) these are just a few of the national embarrassments being contended with partly as a result of non-effective use of guidance and counseling services in the schools.

In view of the above and some other lapses in Nigeria's education system, the federal government came up with the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) in which is included the

reform on education. Anikweze (2004) cited by Alao (2005) stated that the NEEDS is a multi-sectional reform representing the compendium of strategies for forms is all sectors of Nigeria society. The pivot for all these reforms still is education. Consequently, Ministry of Education came up with its reform manual - strategic National Education Plan (SNEP) which aims at nurturing a system that guarantee the total development of the individual and offers every Nigeria child and citizen the best of physical, intellectual, moral spiritual development (Alao, 2005). This is in line with the objectives and goals of the Universal Basic Education (UBE).

In the SNEP sector plan 2004 - 2007, S/N 1:5, 6 for the eradication of examination malpractice in all institutions (1.5) and the eradication of cultism in secondary and tertiary institutions, the reinforcement of guidance and counseling services in the schools as one of the implementation strategies. Other packaged policies failed partly because the guidance service was inadequate and give a Cinderella status such as the universal primary education UPE and presently the 9-3-4 system. What then should be the role of the guidance and counseling under the UBE scheme?

The Role of the Guidance and Counseling in the Implementation of the UBE

The need to re-orientate functional education which is geared towards developing the individual to his full potential is one of the basic function of the rebranded policy of the UBE in recent times, the world is moving into advance technology, it is necessary that we change towards a more functional education, so that the beneficiaries of our education can develop into being self actualized. Consequently, understanding of phenomena is the basic ingredient for meaningful exploit, but no understanding can take place without genuine authentic and realistic

information. Guidance and counseling is all about fostering, understanding of the self and the world, making realistic decisions and ensuring meaningful progress. In our education institutions, students often exhibit self-defeating patterns, (truancy, indiscipline, laziness, lack of seriousness at studies, vandalism, drug abuse and immoral sexual acts, to mention a few) and it is the responsibility of the school counselor to inculcate more positive and adaptive behaviors. The relationship between the UBE and counseling should be that of 'married couples'. The 'marriage' should be for better for worst. UBE being the husband prepares the ground and enabling environment while counseling service use its instrument such as vocational guidance, academic counseling and psycho-social and personal guidance to systematically development Through search for gifted and talented pupils early enough to plan for their educational progress. Similarly, vocational counseling should provide pupils with their particular abilities, aptitudes and interest. With this in place, the pupils can gain insight to choose a realistic goal, the attainment of which is well within his reach.

To meet the objectives of the UBE that will eventually move the country into advanced technology world, it is necessary that we change towards a more functional education so that beneficiaries of the UBE can develop into being self actualized.

Madumere - Obike (2004) is of opinion that for countries to succeed in staying abreast with competitors in the economic field, they need to succeed in maintaining standards, be conversant with technological development, adapt to changes required in the world of work and finally be able to build skilled workers. In the late fifties, America wanted to meet up with Soviet Union shot sputnik I into space through technological innovation. In 1959, a National Defense Education act where passed and ordered the government to make fund

available for the training of more counselors to be enlisted in the school system. This was to re-orientate and re-brand the American educational system to meet its objectives goals.

Guidance and counseling are all about fostering understanding of the self and the world, .making realistic decisions and ensuring meaningful progress. Wherever these are lacking, meaningful development and progress will remain elusive. If students, staff, and general public are not well psychologically prepared through guidance, the effective acceptance and utilization of educational materials and programmes may not be profitably achieved (Alao 2005). Guidance will prevent implements to effective implementation of the Universal Basic Education Scheme (UBE) in every respect. Therefore, guidance should provide services to help teachers in the UBE scheme gain acquaintance with their pupil's as unique, distinct and dynamic individuals. This counselor should assist any teacher to evaluate his pupil's progress, give improved instruction, point out students who need remedial instruction and help in administer aptitude achievement and diagnostic tests according to the needs of each students.

Guidance service is more affective and person oriented. It is bound to be extremely useful in meeting the objectives and goals of the Universal Basic Education (UBE). If Guidance and counseling according to Alao (2005) would be so placed in our National policy on education, it will go a long way to curb waste in our educational resources and will move the nation forward in terms of individual and national development. The UBE should therefore avail itself with the services provided by the counseling services to avoid failure like other scheme.

Conclusion

If the 6-3-3-4 system of education, and guidance and counseling services have been

effectively accorded a prime position, there would have been no vacuum in the system therefore, it would have not been necessary for the 9-3-4 system of education today.

Also, we should not continue to group in the darkness of ignorance at the detriment of developmental process of the individual and the nation. To arrest youths restiveness especially in the Niger - Delta area and with EFA, Needs and SNEP being put in place, efforts should be made to put guidance services into proper perspective and appropriate use. The UBE should integrate counseling into the scheme and encourage developing community based guidance and counseling service to meet the needs of the students without alienating them from their society. If the UBE scheme allowed guidance service to work in collaboration with other educational processes and personnel (teachers and school administrators) much more than what is being achieved and the UBE programmed will be a success.

Recommendation

In view of the importance of the UBE programmed as an effective instrument for national development and enlightenment and the huge fund recommendations are put forward.

1. Education is a huge venture that can no longer be shouldered by government alone; therefore rich individuals and interested groups should assist the government to carry out the programme, in areas of fund and provision of infrastructural facilities.
2. Effort should be made by the state and federal Government to sponsor candidates to do course in guidance and counseling.
3. Guidance and counseling be extended to the primary. This will assist teachers to catch them young and be in their right areas of interest.

4. Efforts should be made to provide more female school so as to overcome the problem of shyness.

References

- Adugho, J.A. (1988). The development of guidance and counselling in Bendel State. *Career, Journal of Counseling: Association of the area is Very Check Guidance and Counseling Nigeria 2*, (33-43).
- Alao, I.F. (2005). Repositioning guidance and counseling services in the national policy on education in the 21st Century; *Knowledge Review: Multidisciplinary Journal*, 2, 44-47 National Association for the Advancement of knowledge. NAFK
- Apologun, S.S. (2005). School guidance and counseling: An indispensable instrument towards realizing national goals and objective in the 21st century. *Knowledge Review*: 11 (3), 49-54.
- Buadi, J.Y. (2003). Students utilization of guidance services in schools in Delta State: *Journal of Education Research and Development 2*, 191-200.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004). *National Policy on Education* Abuja: NERDC Press.
- Hassan, T. (1991). *Problems confronting counselling practice in Nigeria counselling practicum*. Ibadan: Vantage publishers.
- Iroegbu, M .N. (2006). Efficacy of guidance and counselling in improving the quality of student's academic performance in Nigerian secondary schools, *International Journal of Research in Education*, 3 (2).
- Madumere–Obike, C.U. (2006). Functional education for self actualization and

- sustainability: The secondary education sector. *The Nigeria Academic Forum. A Multidisciplinary Journal* 10, 20- 25.
- Odebunmi, A. (1992). *Understanding guidance and counselling*, Abeokuta. Gbemi Sodipo Press Ltd.
- Okobiah, O. C. & Okorodudu, R. (2006). *Issues, concept, theories and techniques of guidance and counseling*, Benin-City Ethiope Publishing Co.
- Olayinka, M.S. (1993). *Guidance and counselling for Nigeria schools*. Yaba: Literated Publication Limited.

Daniel O Avwenagha
Department of Educational Psychology
Delta State College of Physical Education
Mosogar.