

CHALLENGES MILITATING AGAINST GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING SERVICES IN NIGERIAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: THE WAY FORWARD

Flora Adebukola Haastrup

Abstract

Guidance and counselling is the process of helping individuals discover and develop their educational, vocational and psychological potentialities and thereby to achieve an optional level of personal happiness and social usefulness. Pupils in primary schools engage in the formulation of a style of life in which individuals establish an identity and a self-concept. Also, individuals deal with the problem of adequate social relationship as well as the challenges which occur in the world of educational achievement. The paper examines the challenges militating against the guidance and counselling services in Nigerian primary schools such as insufficient time, inadequate facilities, teachers' attitudes and inadequate training of counsellors. All these have negative impact on the guidance and counselling services. It is recommended that the government and the schools' management should provide needed infrastructure and training of guidance counsellors should be given priority by the schools and the government.

Primary school pupils face a lot of developmental problems which hinder their intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral and vocational development. This is because, the basic stage of pupil is the first of all dimensions of development of the worth, dignity and maturity of the individuals. Most of what the individuals are facing today is as a result of

what their foundation is laid upon at their preliminary stage of their life. Many primary schools are faced with indiscipline and poor performances, many people do not regard guidance and counselling as a critical issue in the development of the pupils. The focus of this study is on the challenges militating against guidance and counselling services in Nigerian primary schools such as lack of shared understanding in the school and community about the role of guidance and counselling such as; Para-counseling views or attitude of the pupils, time allocated for practice, curriculum planning, political influence, changes in education plan, fund, and availability of trained personnel. The function of those who guide children and young people is not to effect a compromise between the requirement of individuals on one hand and the demands of the community on the other. It is rather to orient the individual towards those opportunities afforded by his community that can best guarantee the fulfillment of his personal needs and aspiration. The guidance counsellor, for example may provide educational opportunities and the requirement of various occupation.

Nram (2005) sees primary education as the basic or introductory schooling that children received from 6 years and continuing to 11 years. Primary education as referred to in National Policy on Education (2004) is the education given in institutions for children aged 6-11 years.

Concepts of Guidance and Counselling

Ogunboyede, Dada and Oyewumi (2013) opined that, guidance comprises of the procedure and processes organized in other to achieve certain education and personal goals. Ipaye (1983) stated that, guidance is a general label, an umbrella term that covers all the means whereby an institution identifies and responds to the individual needs of pupils/students and thereby helping the individual to develop his or her maximum potential. Counselling, on the other hand, is a subset of the general term we call guidance services. Guidance is the process of helping individual to understand them-selves and their world. Some of the guidance services include: orientation service, appraisal service, counselling service, information service, placement service and follow-up service. (Shertzer and Stone(1981), Malami (2011).

Guidance is a pervasive activity in which many persons and organization take part. It is offered to individuals by their parents, relatives and friends and by the community at large through various educational, industrial, social, religious and political agencies and particularly, through the press and broadcasting services. A part of such guidance may be giving of information that enables others to increase the scope of their exploratory behaviour.

Counselling

Counselling is an interaction which takes place between a counsellor or therapist and a counsellee or a group of counsellees or clients in a professional setting with the aim of facilitating positive changes in the behaviors of the counselee(s) or client(s). Counselling is one of the services rendered through guidance; counselling is deeper than guidance. Geshinde (1991) defined counselling as a number of procedures in assisting an individual to solve his problems. Counselling is more involved emotionally in the affective realm, personalized learning that is, it has to do with emotions,

feelings, values, and attitude. According to Makinde (1983), counselling is designed to provide an interacting relationship where the counsellor is attempting to help a student to understand his/her present and future decisions or problems.

In the school and within the community, the counselling service is the heart of the work of guidance counsellors. While other aspects of guidance may be concerned with the provision and interpretation of information, counselling is concerned with the feelings, attitudes, emotional dispositions of an individual about himself/herself and the situation facing him/her. Counselling aim at helping the clientsto understand and accept themselves “as they are”.

Aims and Objective of Guidance and Counselling

Guidance and counselling is the process of helping individuals to discover and develop their educational, vocational, and psychological potentialities and thereby, to achieve an optimal level of personal happiness and social usefulness. The concept of counselling is essentially democratic in that, the assumptions underlying its theory and practice are that first, each individual has the right to shape his own destiny and, second, that the relatively mature and experienced members of the community are responsible for ensuring that, each person’s choice shall serve both his own interests and those of society.

According to Geshinde (2000), the aims and objectives that guidance and counseling set out to be accomplish include the following:

1. To contribute to the improvement of standard of education, for example, poor memory, inability to adjust to school environment, underachievement, ability to decide on subject, inappropriate educational

programme, learning disabilities such as mental retardation, truancy, school anxiety and school dropout.

2. To help individual deal effectively with development problem as well problem arising from the gradual disappearances of the extended family system, mass movement of cities, the importance of technology and foreign culture.

3. To help an individual identity and know special aptitudes and abilities to make realistic choice of careers. For example in the third national development plan (1975), it was orally that absence of career counseling in educational training system in the past must be held responsible for the frustration observed among the nations' young men and women.

4. To help individual develop adequate value and moral discipline that are necessary for the building of a just society. The adolescent engages in nefarious activities to the extent that many of them become juvenile delinquents, drug addicts, and underachievers.

The relevance of government policy on counseling in school is appreciated based on the rampant cases of deviant behaviour among Nigeria youths. The Federal Government, through the National Policy on Education, (FRN,1998), has succinctly stated that, In view of the apparent ignorance of many young people about career prospects, and in view of personality maladjustment among students, career officers and counsellors will be appointed in post-primary institutions. Since qualified personnel in this category is scarce; government will continue to make provision for training of interested teachers in guidance and counselling. Guidance and counselling will also feature in teacher education programme.

Importance of Guidance and Counselling in Primary School

Some pupils comes from broken homes, polygamous family, single parent and all that. Due to their background, some of them have wrong believe about life but with the help of guidance and counselling, such pupils are helped to adjust to normal way of life. There is need to hunt for gifted children in the society with a view in helping them to develop their talents fully. This can only be done through counselling strategies to mention a few:

- There is a need to provide special help for numerous primary school children. It is worth knowing that the Nigerian prisons, and mental health hospitals are inhabited by individuals who could have profited from guidance and help them in early life. They lead unproductive and unhappy lives because they were not properly guided from the beginning (Idowu, 1986).
- The ability to trust what someone is saying and to trust other people.
- To understand sexual education and guidance.
- To talk to someone when facing a problem or when do not know where to go for an answer.
- To understand and accept his uniqueness and liabilities.
- Understand the expectation of the educational environment.
- Understand the importance of individual effort, hardwork and persistence.
- Demonstrate individual initiative and a positive interest in learning.
- Use appropriate communication skills to ask for help when needed.
- Demonstrate time management and organization skills.
- Recognize personal strengths and weaknesses related to learning.

- Demonstrate goal setting.
- Demonstrate good manners and respectful behaviour towards others.
- Understand the concept of job and career.
- Some pupils are passing through some trauma due to their family crises which affect their academic performance. Guidance counsellor will help in balancing both life challenge and academics.

Guidance Services in School

Oladele (1987) opined that school guidance service in various class room and out of class school activities which the counseling carry out with students provide the much needed learning experiences. According to Ogunboyede, Dada and Oyewumi (2013), the school guidance programme or service is prominent at the basic and post basic secondary school levels. They opined that the school guidance programme entails a lot of service provided within the school aimed at helping the students from the beginning to the end of the school so as to cope with, function well in, and ultimately get the best out of educational system (Oyinloye, 2001). The common guidance services in a good school guidance programme include; information service, orientation service, placement service, counselling service, appraisal service, referral service, and follow-up service.

Information Service

Information service entails the creation of awareness and provision of necessary guidance, in order to assist pupils in decision making. Information service concerns itself with providing social, educational, occupational or vocational and psychological information to pupils, teacher, parents, administrator, and entire community. The aim of information service is to provide pupils with greater knowledge of education, vocational and personal-social

opportunities in order to help them make better decision and realistic choices.

Orientation Service

The orientation service consists of activities provided to the pupils in helping them to adjust to the school environment. The school is usually new to the pupils, not only in environmental features, but also in some other characteristics, overwhelming and confusing to the pupils. The orientation services which includes information that are provided to the pupils to help them in their adjustment effort which will ultimately help them to feel emotionally secured. Ipaye (1986), asserted that orientation services help pupils to make effective adjustment.

Placement Service

Placement service deals with appointing pupil into their respective classes according to their ability. A confidential report is usually written by the counsellor to the manager about the pupils indicating his confidence in the pupils. Placement is a crucial function of counselling (Geshinde, 1991).

Counselling Service

Counselling service includes helping the client to understand himself better. Counselling involves something more than a solution to an immediate problem. Counselling itself is to maintain a personal stability interview of repeated challenges and changes. Counselling is at the heart of the word called guidance (Adegoke, 2014). The counselling includes educational, vocational and personal-social aspect. Pupils' problems in these area can easily be solved if only the individual pupil can open up, be ready to be helped, and participate fully in solving the problem at hand.

Appraisal Service

The appraisal of an individual is the value judgment arrived at, based on the result of the assessment of different relevant characteristics of the person. Appraisal service consists of the gathering, organizing, interpreting data and information about students for the purpose of helping them to understand themselves (Oladele, 1987). The assumption is that when pupils are aware of their strengths and weakness, they will be able to make rational decision.

Referral Service

This is a procedure by which pupils or clients who need special attention or assistance is directed to special institutions and agencies in the community which includes schools for the handicapped (that is, special schools), hospitals and employment officers. In other words, referral service is a procedure in which a client with problems beyond the competence of the parents, teachers, counsellor or any other social worker are directed to a more competent personnel for solutions with the consent of the counselee or client. Such referrals could be made to nurses, doctors, police, dentists, welfare officers and so on.

Follow-up

Follow-up means monitoring drop-out or a graduate of the school. The counsellor will have to see the result of the counselling after the counselee must have left the school. Questionnaire needs to be prepared and sent to counselee, hence, addresses have to be collected when the pupils are about to graduate or leave the school.

Counselling Approaches

There are hundreds of differing types of talking therapy, but all of them can be found their root in the three approaches. The reason there are differing approaches is that not all human beings

are the same and some of us have difficulties which may be better suited to one therapy than another, this is known in counselling circles as best fit for client.

Client Centred Therapy: Is a non-directive form of counselling and as such suits people who want to explore issues of personal development such as relationships, moving on from abuse or coming to terms with loss. It is a philosophical approach and as such relies on the client being able to change their outlook on life and value themselves. For individuals in the grip of addiction this approach may not offer enough strategies or techniques that the client can use to move on. Client centred counselling is relatively short term with about 14 sessions being the norm although it can go on for longer.

Transactional Analysis: Is an active directive form of counselling this means that the counsellor teaches the client the model of counselling and analysis the client's past, sometimes as far back as their childhood. This form of therapy is very effective for clients who have had a difficult early childhoods which then goes on to affect their behaviour as adults.

However, it is not a quick fix, with sessions that can last for months or even years which if you are a playing client can be expensive, if you have a fear of flying and are going on holiday next week this therapy is probably not for you.

Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy: Is also an active directive form of counselling, this means that the counsellor teaches the client the model of counselling and techniques that the client can use to change their irrational thoughts and replace them with more useful thinking. Thus, the mind set of "I have had three interviews and no job offers" is replaced with "perhaps I will have to have lots of interviews before I find work, I just need to

keep trying". This therapy is usually short term usually six sessions and may not be useful for issues such as bereavement or historic abuse.

The counsellor in his bid to counsel the primary school child has to be cautious in the use of counselling theory and strategies. Some of the counselling theories may not be adequate for counselling the primary school child. For example, the client-centred therapy, which is non-directive therapy, may not be very adequate for the primary school child, who needs a directive approach. Being a slow therapy, it may not be very adequate for the primary school child whose needs may be immediate. The same holds for some other counselling theories. It may be more prudent for the counsellor to embark on the eclectic approach to counseling

Challenges Militating Against Guidance and Counseling Services in Nigerian Primary Schools: Way Forward.

Lack of shared understanding in the school and community about the role of guidance and counseling such as; Para-counseling views or attitude of the pupils, time allocated for practice, curriculum planning, political influence, changes in education plan, fund, and availability of trained personnel are some of the challenges militating against guidance and counseling services in Nigerian primary schools.

Para-counsellor: Most schools headmaster believes that there is nothing special in guidance and counselling that any experienced teacher cannot do it. Most of these teachers believed that, the counsellors are doing their jobs or see them as rivals not knowing that the counsellors are trained as professionals. The counsellors make use of some psychological tests in handling pupils issues which enable them to understand and appreciate pupils problem during the diagnosis and state possible solution to the problems and knows how to relate it to the parent if need be

while Para-counsellor will not have the understanding of these.

Time Allocation: In most of the primary schools in Nigeria, there is no specific time allocated for guidance and counselling services apart from the break during which the pupils ought to eat and relax. This time is too short for counsellors to attend to pupils, let alone for effective counselling to take place.

Curriculum Planning: Counsellors are the intermediary between the pupils and teacher. So counsellors should be active at all stages of curriculum development and implementation of school curriculum activities and programmes designed to facilitate pupils development. Most of the subjects that the pupils offer in schools are designed to develop pupils intellectual ability only, not minding the emotional and psychological wellbeing of the pupils. The involvement of counselling in curriculum planning and development will help in putting all the domain of leaning into consideration which will promote the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

Fund: Lack of adequate funds is one of the major factors that is affecting the effectiveness of guidance and counseling programme in Nigeria. Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) should enforce standard for how the office of a counsellor should look like in schools. As an agent of curriculum implementation, should inform the federal government of the needs of counsellors in schools. Counsellors in some school are not recognized as professionals because of lack of adequate facilities. Some headmaster /headmistress do not provide office accommodation for counsellors that could be considered suitable for use as counselling office where counselling could be carried out. Many counsellors are just given any available space

to use as counselling office. Many are not provided with the facilities and materials required to practice effectively.

There should be adequate fund allocated from the three tiers of government and school management, to carry out some programmes like career day, career weeks, vocational training and seminar for the counsellors in order to improve on their profession and perform excellently on their job.

Political Influence: Political influence in country is another factor affecting guidance and counselling programme. Some State government do not believe the need of counsellors in schools, due to lack of understanding of the duty of counsellor in schools. The educational planner should have a standard across the country that will be stronger than the political influence of each state. The appointment of educational leader should not be based on political appointment, because most of the people be appointed as commissioner of education and minister of education are not educationist which may have no idea of what education of a nation or state should look like.

Changes in Educational Policy: Changes in educational policy is another factor that affects the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services in primary schools. Most of the aims of so called new advancement in education would not have been achieved before another set of idea comes up. There should be a stable educational policy and it should be uniform across the country. Each idea should be attained before introducing another one.

Availability of Trained Personnel: For as much as a teacher cannot be appointed as a medical doctor in the hospital, any other professionals should not be appointed as schools counsellors. Professional counsellor should be allocated to all

primary schools for effective guidance and counselling services.

Conclusion

Lack of shared understanding in the school and community about the role of guidance and counselling, lack of confidential space to meet client, poor referrals and appointment process and allocated time are some of the challenges militating against guidance and counselling programme in Nigerian primary schools. School guidance counsellors help to make learning a positive experience for pupils. Guidance counsellors also help to identify the problems associated with effective teaching and learning. The paper examined the challenges militating against effective guidance and counselling services in Nigerian primary schools. The guidance counsellors in the primary schools should realize his counselling approaches and should be such that will enable him to meet the needs of primary school children.

Recommendations

This paper recommends that guidance and counselling to effectively meet the challenges militating Nigerian primary school, there is need for the following:

- i. The government should start counselling of pupils in Nigerian primary schools. The school guidance counsellor plays a major role in the academic achievement of primary school pupils in Nigeria.
- ii. Relevant facilities and furniture needed to run the counselling programme should be provided by the government and the school management.
- iii. Workshop and seminars should be organized for schools heads who see counsellor as unimportant in primary schools.

iv. School authorities should give the counsellor free hand to create awareness of the counselling programme and advertise the service he/she can render to staff, pupils and parents in the school and beyond.

v. A guidance committee that will see to the proper monitoring of guidance and counselling programmes in primary school should be set up at the federal, state and local government level.

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Flora Adebukola Haastrup

Department of Educational Foundations and Counselling,
Adeyemi University of Education,
Ondo