
Reaching the Unreached with Guidance and Counselling Services through Information and Communication Technology

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Abstract

Guidance and Counselling had been found to be efficacious in changing behaviour and in helping to make choice and take decision. As good as this ,service is; many are unaware of it besides; some who know of it cannot get it because of the areas they are staying and on the other hand counsellors are few. These group of the unreached can be reached with counselling services through information and communication a technology, (ICT) a device that employs micro-electronic based computing and telecommunication in reaching the world even the remotest part. This paper posited that counsellor through careful planning of simulated programmes assigned or affixed to ICT devices can reach the unreached. Besides counsellor can reach the unreached through electronic chatting or discussion. It is therefore recommended that the use of ICT be an integral part of counselling education. Practicing, counsellors should update their knowledge on the use of ICT Government should create opportunities for counsellors to use the television, radio, internet services free to reach the unreached with counselling services.

Introduction

The world today needs attitudinal change. In face of global economic meltdown, cold war, global warming and Nigeria in particular; corruption, human trafficking, and other negative isms; the world should consciously seek efficient ways of behaviour change.

Wanton misbehaviour of mankind brought the world into the crises

aforementioned. One of the sure efficient ways of bringing about behaviour change is through guidance and counselling. Guidance is the assistance given to an individual or group of individuals to understand him/themselves and the world. Counselling is the learning process through which an individual/individuals can learn about him/themselves, interpersonal relationship and behaviour that leads to personal development (Shertzer and Stone, 1980). These services had proved effective in the process of behaviour change (Oniyama, 2004) and in making choices and taking decisions (Ker and Ada, 2003, Agishi, 2006). Regrettably enough, these services cannot reach all individuals due to the fact the counselors that provide the services are few, some people are not aware of the services and their usefulness and some are in areas that they cannot be reached.

The above scenario may not be allowed to continue or for ever bemoaned since Scientists and technologists had made life easier with the advent of information and communication technology that have made the world a global village. Information and communication technology is "the acquisition and dissemination of information by a micro-electronic based combination of computing and telecommunication (Okere, 2007). This system had made communication amongst communities and between people in the community easier, relevant and efficient. Thus, any community that wants to reach all and sundry in the world should then key into ICT.

Arising from the above the unreached in Nigeria; the nomads, migrant fishermen and women and their families, the orphans, vulnerable group, HN/AIDS sufferers; aged destitutes, people in riverine areas and the like who could be in need of guidance and counselling services knowingly and or unknowingly can be reached through ICT when such services providers (Counsellors and others) make use of the system. The crux of this paper therefore is; how can information and communication technology can be employed by counsellors and other stakeholders to reach the unreached in guidance and counseling services delivery.

Information and Communication Technology and Guidance and Counseling Services.

As discussed at the introductory aspects above guidance and counseling services can be provided for those difficult to reach through information and communication technology. Information technology is the use of electronic equipment such as computer to generate, analyse, store, retrieve and distribute all kinds of information (Igonoh, 2004). Similarly, Okere (2007) described information technology as the collection, retrieval, use, storage and communication of information using computer and micro-system. To him ICT is the acquisition and dissemination of information by a micro-electronic systems and communication. The place of ICT in development of mankind had been ably emphasized by Aboho, Andurai and Aboho (2006). They observed that technology is the bedrock of academic pursuit. Similarly, earlier on Iji and Agbulu (2006) revealed that the use of information technology in acquiring knowledge and skills is an essential element in education and training. Meanwhile it has been emphasized by the Federal government of Nigeria that education had been taken by her as a vehicle par excellence for the development of the nation (FRN, 2004). Thus, the place of IT albeit ICT in human development cannot be

over emphasized.

Human development is the purview of guidance and counselling. The essence of guidance and counselling is to foster behaviour change in human beings. It is communication based. It involves gathering, digest and disseminating information about the individual to him/her for self knowledge and or understanding and the environment to adjust meaningfully to the world one is born to live in. Arising from the above, ICT and guidance and counselling are meant for human development.

Information and communication technology had been proved to enhance guidance and counseling practices (Magnusen and Magnusen 1995; Ker & Ada; 2003; Nwamara, 2005; Agishi, 2006). Specifically, Nwamara (2005) revealed that through ICT medium like the internet; individuals can create Website where information about them can be deposited for any user. In addition that the internet can be used for electronic discussion, lectures delivery, research information to mention but a few. Ker and Ada (2003) observed that career awareness can be created in the secondary school students through ICT. Thus, the link between information and communication technology with guidance and counselling is high and useful. This can be harnessed to get the unreached.

Getting to the Unreached Population with Guidance and Counselling Services through Information and Communication Technology

It is probable that some members of the Nigerian Society are not reached with guidance and counselling services. This might be caused by the locale they are; lack of awareness and existence of few counsellors. Today Nigeria is on a rebranding mission yet it is evident that not all Nigerians can be reached. It is true that through counselling attitude or behaviour is changed. It is also true that when government and other agencies concerned about behaviour change for the better employ counselling expected results can be achieved. The only cog in the flywheel of this concern is how all and sundry could be reached with counseling services.

Guidance and counselling services are provided to people especially students in three main areas viz: educational, vocational and personal social for proper adjustment to life. Through ICT; educational information can be provided for all. Educational programmes can be planned and organized and deposited in the internet for use by those who need them. Research findings by counsellors can also be deposited for by the needy to enhance and or advance knowledge. As Nwamara (2005) suggested, lecture can be planned and prepared by counselors and deposited at the internet to educate all and sundry.

In addition to the above; career information as to how to plan and enter into any career; strategies for securing gainful employment or be self employed can be prepared by counsellors and deposited at the internet for use by students and others. Besides, audio and video tapes about career counselling can be prepared to be used with radio and television programmes. Job search strategies can be taught through the internet and be done through it also. Record keeping of services of guidance either of education, vocation and personal social can be done with the computer (Ogbodo, 2006). Through television broadcast that combines motion with picture and or vision can help its users to appreciate better the world of work. This can help in career

decision taking and choice making. Again with video interviewing (Magnusen & Magnusell, 1995) counseling clients can be interviewed in the process of career counseling and subsequent employment.

In the aspect of personal-social guidance and counselling counsellors can chat with clients through video conferencing, electronic newsletter and the like targeted at identified group. Through clients on their own; clients and parents can be interviewed in the process of counselling. From previous counselling encounters; counsellors can get all human issues and concerns and constitute model group and individual counselling and deposited at the internet. With these vicarious learning can take place for those who visit the internet. For those that will be programmed in video or audio tapes; families and individuals can buy play back and learn from them. These also can be broadcasted through television, radio, projectors and the like freely for beneficiaries to view.

In crisis situations counsellors should be given the opportunity to discuss such issues through the ICT. For instance the amnesty deal can be discussed by counsellors, offer fruitful ways of problems. National issues can be discussed by them through ICT to reach all.

Conclusion

Information and Communication technology has relevance to guidance and counselling service delivery. It enhances guidance and counselling services and also make it efficient. It is therefore pertinent for counsellors to use ICT in their service delivery to reach hi ether to the unreached. Information and communication technology should therefore be made available to counsellors for use by government and other stake holders and the nation will be better for it.

Recommendation

Arising from the above conclusion; the followings are recommended-

- (1) Proficiency skills acquisition in ICT should be integrated in counselors education.
- (2) Counsellors should update their knowledge from time to time on the use of ICT.
- (3) All stakeholders should help counsellors with access to ICT to reach the unreached.
- (4) Television viewing centres should be provided in the rural community.
- (5) All and sundry should be encouraged to patronize ICT.

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