

GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EDUCATION-FOR-ALL IN THE 21st CENTURY

Alao I.F. (Mrs.)

Abstract

The Issue of Education in Nigeria is a thing of concern for all and sundry. The educational systems for some decades back have not yielded much as expected, despite the huge amount of money the government commits into it every fiscal year. The paper examines the possibility of the achievement of the Education-For-All by year 2015 and the achievement of the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals the paper makes a critical analysis of the Nigeria National Policy on Education and the omission of the employment of Guidance and Counselling as preventive rather than creative services was highlighted. The usefulness and importance of Guidance and Counselling in the achievement of the nation's educational goals are painted out and recommendations for the application of guidance and counselling to achieve efficiency and achievement of maximum gain from the educational system are suggested. I

Introduction

The importance of education in the life of an individual and indeed that of the nation cannot be overemphasized. The development of a nation is very much hinged on the level of education of the citizens of the nation and therefore the issue of education is taken with utmost sense of commitment and responsibility. In order to foster development through education, the nations of the world have been coming together since 1960, to fashion out agenda for ensuring the education of their citizens to improve their national development. These have led to the declaration of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in the 60s, to the declaration of the Universal Basic Education in the 21st century.

Presently, the United Nations have come up with what is described as the Millennium Development goals (MDG) which are meant to concretize the implementation of the declarations of the nations.

The six EFA goals are thus:

1. Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.
2. Ensuring that by 2015, all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free compulsory primary education of good quality.
3. Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable" access to appropriate learning and life skills programs.
4. Achieving a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women and equitable access to basic education and continuing education for all adults.
5. Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.
6. Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

(Source: FME/UNESCO/Private Sector Round Table Report, 2003).

The Millennium Development goals (MDGs) are:

- (1) Eradicate extreme poverty
- (2) Achieve universal primary education
- (3) Promote gender equality and empower women
- (4) Reduce child mortality
- (5) Improve maternal health
- (6) Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- (7) Ensure environmental sustainability
- (3) Develop a global partnership for development

(Source : FME/UNESCO/Private Sector round Table Report, 2003)

A critical assessment of the EFA and MDG would reveal that the main thrust is on quality education, literacy and gender parity in the education of citizens. To achieve these however, great and important attention must be given to the following: (1) Information gathering and dissemination.

- (2) Skillful mentoring and monitoring of students.
- (3) Proper placement of students (especially the vulnerable and disadvantaged children).
- (4) Making short and long term plans with different categories of students.
- (5) Campaign on gender sensitivity and literacy.
- (6) Review and follow up on educational programmes.

These are exclusive areas in the field and functioning of guidance and counselling.

Over the years adequate and necessary attention have not been paid to these areas in the planning of education in Nigeria and this may be one of the reasons why great results have not been achieved in the running of the Nigerian educational system, including the 6:3:3:4 system of education, despite the finance committed to it. As reported by Okoro (2004), "the Addis Ababa conference stipulated that the development of human resources is as urgent and essential as the development of natural resources..... That the content of education should be related to the economic needs, greater weight being given to science and its applications".

It should however be noted that no human resources can be developed beyond the quality of guidance received for its development. The Addis Ababa conference further recommended that in order to increase the internal productivity and the external efficiency of the educational systems, which teacher training and the adaptation and reform of the content of education should be regarded as priorities and the principles of priority should extend to both qualitative and quantitative-requirements (Okoro 2004). This yet did not recognize the crucial input of guidance and the essential role of counselling in the achievement of efficiency, efficacy and productivity of educational system." Emphasis is rather laid on teacher training and content reform without even recourse to guidance. This trend continued even to the preparation of the Nigerian National Policy on Education, in which emphasis is laid on the training and retraining of teachers while guidance and counselling are merely referred to as educational services necessary only for making career choice. No provision is even made, for the training and retraining of counselors. The development of the National Economic Empowerment Development Strategies (NEEDS) also follows the same trend. The neglect or ignorance of guidance and counseling services in the implementation of educational system may cause more problems than the ones we intend to solve. Guidance counselors are effective movers in the achievement of goals and development of strategies for effective development and utilization of resources. To neglect their services is to experience a great loss in ignorance.

Guidance as defined by Shertzer and Stone (1976) is a process of helping an individual to understand himself and his world so that the individual can be more effective, more productive and be a happier human being. Guidance has the following aims:-

- (1) Helping an individual to achieve up to his / her capacity through his / her own efforts.
- (2) Assisting an individual to gain personal satisfaction in many aspects of his life and therefore, be able to make maximum contribution to his society.
- (3) Encouraging the individual to meet and solve his own problems as they arise so as to make correct interpretation of facts and make wise and realistic choice and adjustment (Humphrey, 1960).

There is no doubt that this is the whole essence of education. Therefore, gainful education may not be achieved without guidance services.

In the school system, the following guidance services are packaged to ensure the individual is well prepared to gain maximally from the educational provisions of the school system:-

- (1) **Orientation/Adaptive Service;** This ensures that an individual who is new in the school environment (especially the new intakes) adjust better and effectively (social, psychologically and emotionally) in their new school environment.
- (2) **Appraisal/Inventory Services:** This involves the collection, collation, analysis and interpretation of objective data about an individual in order to have a better understanding of the individual. This gives an opportunity of helping the individual to also understand himself.

- his potential and weaknesses. It also helps the educator (teacher) to understand his/her student and help him/her to achieve optimum education.
- (3) **Information Service:** This service provides adequate objective information on all issues to the student in order to assist him to develop the ability to make his own decisions wisely and to solve his problems independently. It helps the students in making informed realistic effective and satisfactory decisions about his/her education, career, personal and social life.
 - (4) **Individualized Placement Services:** These help the student in achieving his desired goals about his education, health, social adjustment, financial aids in order to achieve general life satisfaction. It also takes into consideration, the peculiar personal characteristics of the student like physical disability, inherited capabilities, health conditions etc, in order to place the student where he can have maximum gain from education.
 - (5) **Follow Up, Research and Evaluation Services:** These services are concerned with the appraisal and review of educational and guidance programmes for the purpose of improvement, refining and advancement for the maximum benefit of those in the educational system.
 - (6) **Counselling Service:** This service helps in ameliorating the student's problems while fostering self-understanding and self direction that will enable him/her make maximum adjustment at home, school and community. It also, attends to the students' personal psychological needs and helps him/her to grow in his independent ability to be responsible for himself while appreciating the reality of limitation determinism and chance. Counselling, also brings about the acquisition of new attitudes, breaking undesirable habits and strengthening desirable ones, all to help the student improve his/her efficiency, happiness and relationship with others.
- With the above services explained, Guidance and Counselling can help in achieving the overall goals of education for all. Through these services, guidance and counselling could be effective tools in making the nation's dream of education for all in the 21st century, a reality.

Recommendations

- The following strategies could be employed.
- (1) The establishment of counseling units in all educational institutions, from Primary School level to non-formal educational institutions, for total guidance and counselling interventions.
 - (2) The establishment of counselling units in Local Governments to enlighten parents and other stake holders in education who are not part of the school system.
 - (3) Government Education Policy to include Guidance and Counselling section, specifying the working of Guidance and Counselling and the training and retraining of counselors for the purpose of preventive and curative counselling.
 - (4) Giving financial vote for counselling services and programmes.
 - (5) Ensuring the effective monitoring of Guidance and Counselling Units.

Conclusion

The effectiveness of Guidance and Counselling for the actualization of education-for-all in Nigeria, should not be underrated in helping to achieve the goals of education for all in the 21st century. The nation can take full advantage of the services of Guidance and Counselling to help the populace to gain maximally from the education system.

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