

THE PROVISION OF QUALITY EDUCATION FOR NIGERIAN STUDENTS: THE ROLE OF THE COUNSELLOR AND OTHER SCHOOL PERSONNEL

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Abstract

The paper is set to discuss the functions of the counsellor and other school personnel in the provision of quality education. It points out the objective of Guidance and Counselling in Nigerian educational setting by pointing out who the guidance counsellor is, his role and that of the principal and the teacher as well. All geared towards quality education

Introduction

The significance of guidance and counselling cannot be over emphasized. This is because it enables the learner to derive optimal educational benefits so as to maximize his potentials. In the words of Denga (1986:34):

Gone are the days when education was regarded as an insurance policy for any type of job. In the past, a graduate from the university, secondary school and even primary school was generally regarded qualified for a variety of jobs that were available. In fact one could shut his eyes and randomly choose his occupation from among a pool that was available. Of course, prevocational guidance was considered crucial since the labour market was likely virgin.

But the increasing demand for educational, vocational and personal social life of the society more especially the youth necessitated the need for guidance; it is also useful in manpower development, social and moral adjustment of the youth. Their educational placement and proper carrier prospects, justifies these needs. In relation to the need of guidance still, the National Policy on Education (1981:5) clearly enumerated:

In view of the apparent ignorance of many people about career prospects and in view of personality maladjustment among school children, career officers and counselors will be appointed in post primary institutions. Guidance and Counselling will also feature in teacher education programmes.

This statement gives full support to the establishment and practice of guidance services in Nigerian schools. The guidance counsellor assists each student to cope with problems of living which range from academic and vocational incompetence to personal-social problems.

The technique for bringing up a child for optimum development vis-a-vis quality education is the best when it is a team approach with eclectic characteristics. The school guidance programme is a programme that aims at optimum development for quality education of students. The guidance programme on its own is so numerous and tasking that it should not be left alone to the counsellor. The other school personnel have similar and yet different and varying roles to play in the guidance programme of the school. It is against this background that this paper attempts to highlight the role and responsibilities of the school counsellor and those other school personnel, collaborative as it were, for optimum and total quality education. The other school personnel in question include the staff of the Ministry of Education, the principal, teachers and school psychologists amongst others.

Functions of Quality Education

Students and parents have certain expectation from education. Students look to the school to help them realize their aspirations while parents expect school to provide intellectual development of their children, (Shertzer and Stone 1976:102). According to them (Shertzer and Stone), education has three main functions:

1. **Developmental function:** Education has the responsibility to develop the unique qualities of the individual. It should enhance the individual's skills in the arts, sciences, social adjustment, and personal philosophy, as well as skills in vocational endeavours. Through education, individuals have the opportunity to enlarge their special interest, abilities and talents.
2. **Differentiating functions:** Differences in abilities, interests, talents and purpose of students show up in different patterns as the individual matures. These differences make it imperative that educators recognize that education cannot and should not reduce the range of human differences, provided within the general framework education,

different systematically organized programmes suitable to a variety of students. No single uniform programme can suit all students; there is no defined body of skills in which all will achieve equally well.

3. Integrating function: It is a major function of education to contribute as much as possible to the cultural integration of students. The stability of society and the ability of its people to act CO-operatively as one nation, necessarily depend upon every one possessing a measure of common understanding, attitude, benefits, skills and purposes. A society depends partly on education to develop in children a common core of shared benefits, attitudes, values and underlying knowledge. Formal education should perform this function with the home and other institutions.

Objectives of Guidance and Counselling the in Nigerian Educational Setting

Guidance and counselling in education provides such experiences that assist each student to understand himself, accept himself and live effectively in the society. It helps the students to have learning experiences about the world of education, the world of work and how they are related. Guidance is also a programme of services to the individual based on his needs and his understanding of his immediate environmental factors and influences of such on him.

The main purpose of guidance and counselling is based on the assumption that individuals who understand themselves and their world become more effective, more productive and happier human beings. They will become more fully functioning persons in the society. Through the services of guidance, individuals achieve greater awareness of who they are, and who they can become (Jpaye, 1983). He suggested some of the following objectives of guidance in Nigerian secondary schools.

1. To help students develop the skills of self study, self analysis and self understanding.
2. To help students develop an awareness of opportunity in the personal, social, educational and vocational areas by providing them with appropriate, useful and usable information.
3. To help students acquire the skills of collecting and using an appropriate information.
4. To assist students in making appropriate and satisfactory personal, social, educational, vocational and recreational choices.
5. To help students develop positive attitudes to self, to others, to appropriate national issues, to work and to learn.
6. To help children use their potentials to the maximum.
7. To help students acquire as early as possible in their life a positive usage of self understanding, and self-directing.
8. To assist students in the process of developing and acquiring skills in problem-solving and decision making.

On the objectives of guidance in the 6-3-3-4 system of education, Oladele (1991) quoted Williamson who suggested three main aims of guidance and counselling.

1. To help the individual order his experience.
2. To help him define his goals.
3. To help him define his values.

The implementation of the objectives stated above is the responsibility of a professional i.e. the counsellor.

The Role of the Counsellor in the Provision of Quality Education

A counsellor is the helper in a face-to-face relationship, who by virtue of his training and experience attempts to assist the client in becoming an independent person capable of resolving his conflict situation.

There are so many facets of the Nigerian economy that are undergoing highly accelerated rate of development. While (here are so many changes in the economic, political, health, social, technological, agricultural and other sectors, the pace of development in the field of education tends to be so phenomenal. The government is aware of the need and evolves adequate strategies that can cope with the realities of this outline changes. This is probably why a new policy on education was launched in the country.

An important element within the policy is the 6-3-3-4 educational programme. The implication of this coded numeric abbreviation is that children will spend six years of primary, three years of junior secondary, three years senior secondary, and four years of university education. The 6-3-3-4 system of education requires that many important decisions have to be taken on the child at the

end of the primary, first three years of secondary and the latter three years of secondary before he joins the labour force or goes onto university. Many of (he decisions are very sensitive and eternally crucial to the child that traditional strategy of examination at the other end of the term or the end of the year is a woefully inadequate data source for it. This is why a programme of multi-method continuous assessment is being advocated for in place of short, continuous assessment. Adequate information supply and systematic guidance and counselling become an inevitable service in such a system of education.

Before the critical role of counselors is amplified within the system it is necessary that one should point out that even though the National Policy on Education brought out the role of counselors under educational services unit, no aspect of the policy- can be said to have been adequately executed without the counsellors playing certain roles. This is because the services of the counsellor are required in the execution of the primary, secondary, tertiary, teacher education, special education, adult education and others. In fact the services of the guidance counsellor permeate activities under the various sub-units of the policy. For instance, in all the levels of education [Nursery, Primary, Secondary & Tertiary] the guidance counsellor needs to effectively utilize psychological as well as basic counselling principles to support their learners to overcome their developmental and maturational problems, including guidance & counselling, so that learners can make better decisions on personal, social, educational, career and family marital issues.

The counsellor is also inevitable in the motivation of learners to learn and in helping learners adjust to their physical and social environments and also in providing adequate reinforcements to sustain socially desirable behaviours. The counsellor plays critical roles in assessment of the learners' entry behaviours including their guidance. Counselors have inevitable roles to play in the execution and actualization of quality education for an average Nigerian student.

It is important, however to note that the guidance counsellor does not exist in a vacuum or in isolation; he exists in the midst of people, professional teachers and administrators who constitute the school personnel. The counselor's existence in school system is in collaboration with other school personnel. The aims and objectives of guidance and counselling for total quality education is such that is jointly carried out by the counsellor and the other school personnel the principals and the teachers among other personnel in schools have roles to play.

The Roles of School Personnel in Guidance Programme

The Ministry of Education has the following roles to play -

1. Establishing guidance and counselling department in the ministry with qualified and experienced staff.
2. Drawing up policies as to how guidance should be run in the schools.
3. Assessing the guidance needs of schools in their area of authority.
4. Employing and posting counselors to schools to work as full-time counsellors.
5. Organi/.ing guidance seminars and workshop for principals and school staff with a view to improving their perception of counselors and counselling as well as teaching them their roles in the guidance programme.
6. Conducting periodic evaluation of the guidance programmes in the school.

The Principal

The school principal has roles to play in the guidance programme to facilitate quality education. His\her roles which are expected to be active, positive and purposeful include the following:

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3. Making his personal contributions as counsellor for academic, career and personal -social problems.
4. Providing joint orientation programme at the beginning of the year involving the entire student body, all teachers and other members of the school community. Initiating, screening and approving referrals to the services of specialists when necessary. Promoting and encouraging in-service training for staff, including guidance staff, as the need arises.
5. 6. Assisting teachers and the counsellor in making valid and meaningful reports to parents to ensure the continued cordial home-school relationship.

The Teacher

The teacher is older than the counsellor in the school system. This is because guidance in its formalized nature is new. The teacher traditionally comes into more direct contact with the students when he teaches his assigned lessons. He knows them by names, knows their abilities and limitations, it is against this background that he should play certain roles for quality education and these include:

1. Engaging in child study to find out their abilities so as to build upon them.
2. Identifying students' problems and making prompt referral to the counsellor or other guidance personnel.
3. Encouraging students to make use of available guidance services in the school.
4. Assisting students to develop effective study habits.
5. Helping the counsellor to disseminate educational, vocational and personal-social information deemed useful and relevant to students.
6. Accepting and executing possible remedial lessons for improving students' academic achievement as may be suggested by the counsellor.
7. Monitoring of students after counselling and giving objective feedback to the counsellor.
8. Participating in guidance committees as may be set up for some guidance activities like orientation, career day, continuous assessment etc.

Conclusion

This paper has tried to establish the fact that quality education in the Nigerian educational system is realistic but not without the valuable services of guidance counsellor. It has been established that guidance services should not be left alone to the counsellor in the school. It has been identified that other guidance personnel in the school system include the principal, teachers and Ministry of Education etc. Their roles in the school guidance programme towards the achievement of quality education were highlighted and it could be inferred that these roles are not dichotomous but are overflowing ones. At this juncture, therefore, this paper lends to submit that any educational programme bringing about total quality education, owes part of its success to the team or co-operative work of the counsellor and the concerned school personnel.

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