

AN APPRAISAL OF THE ROLE OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING IN THE VISION AND MISSION OF EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The National Policy on Education more than any other document essentially presents the vision and mission of education in Nigeria. The policy prescriptions with regard to the relevance of Guidance and Counselling undermine the contemporary utility of counselling in terms of the individualization of learning and the realisation of the potentials of the learner. It is recommended that Guidance and Counselling be elaborately acknowledged as an essential component of all levels of the education system.

Introduction

Obani's discourse of the concept of vision shows that it is an idealized perception of future conditions or outcomes with in-built routes and suggested means of achievement. He added that a vision is a mental and intellectual perception of a desired end, situation or outcome that an individual or group would deliberately wish to create and to see materialize (Obani, 1998). His concept of a vision which the writer identifies with, buttresses the assertion of Yoloje (1998) that the most comprehensive vision of education at the national level has been that provided by the National Policy on Education first promulgated in 1977, revised in 1981 and 1998. The opening statement of section 1 of the National Policy on Education, that - a Nation's Policy on Education is government's way of realising that part of the national goals which can be achieved using education as a tool - exemplifies the document as a vision.

Concept of Guidance and Counselling

It is likely that the ancestors of professional counsellors were the elders of ancient tribes who advised their youthful members, guiding them toward responsible decision and behaviours. In ancient times, helping relationships among tribal members probably focused on learning basic survival skills. As civilization progressed, these relationships developed into processes for encouraging youth to acquire proficiency in personal, social and survival skills (Schmidt, 1999).

Makinde in Idowu (2004) defined counselling as an enlightened process whereby people help people by facilitating growth, development and positive change through an exercise of self-understanding. Blocher in Idowu (2004:4) held that counselling is:

...Helping an individual become more fully aware of himself and the ways in which he's responding to the influences in his environment. It further assists him to establish some personal meaning for this behaviour and to develop and clarify a set of goals and values for future behaviour.

A synthesis of most attempts at the conceptualization of Guidance and Counselling shows that it promotes adjustment within the limits of the biological and environmental data of the learner or client through the utilization of largely psychological skills. Adjustment which expresses one's resourcefulness to face life challenges is at the base of one's accomplishment, fulfillment and actualization. The goal of Guidance and Counselling in one word is adjustment,

The Place of Guidance and Counselling in the Vision

Guidance and Counselling is show - cased in the National Policy on Education as one of the educational services meant to facilitate the implementation of educational policy, the attainment of policy goals and the promotion of effectiveness of educational system (FRN, 1998:40). The policy provides that:

In view of the apparent ignorance of many young people about career prospects, and in view of personality maladjustment among school children, career officers and counselors shall be appointed in post-primary institutions. Since qualified personnel in this category is scarce, government

all continue to make provisions for the training of interested teachers in Guidance and Counselling. Guidance and Counselling shall also feature in teacher education programmes. Proprietors of schools shall provide guidance - counsellors in adequate number in each primary and post-primary schools (FRN, 1998:41).

Idowu (2004:10) reported that the Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) through a sub-committee set up at the 1988 annual conference at Maiduguri did an appraisal of the National Policy on Education with a view of ascertaining the relevance of Guidance and Counselling. The subcommittee observed that Guidance and Counselling deserved more than the little prominence given to it in the policy. A number of areas were identified as having bases for the acknowledgement of Guidance and Counselling. Idowu (2004; 13) listed 17 such areas. For example section 1, number 7:(4) provides that educational activity will be centred on the learner for maximum self-development and fulfillment. Also section 1, number 7:(10) states that:

At any stage of the educational process after primary education, an individual will be able to choose between continuing his full-time studies, combining work with study, or embarking on full-time employment without excluding the prospect of resuming studies later on. (FRN, 1981:9).

Furthermore section nine, number 74 observed that:

No matter the efficiency of the pre-service training we give to teachers, there will necessarily be areas of inadequacies. In-service education of teachers will continue to fill these gaps, e.g. for library service education; evaluation techniques; guidance and counselling, etc. and will be systematically planned so that successful attendance at a number of such courses will attract incremental credits and/or count towards future advancement (FRN, 1981:41).

Idowu (2004) reported that it was the reasoning of the sub-committee that if guidance and counselling covers the scope of all individuals in the gamut of the educational system from pre-primary to the tertiary levels, both inside and outside the formal school setting, then it is a major component of education deserving of a whole section of its own.

Counselling Perspective of the Vision and Mission of Education

Every school has an educational mission, and within that mission lies "a purpose for special programmes such as school counselling. Edmonds in Schmidt (1999) said that a fundamental belief of effective schools is that "all children can learn". This is illustrative of the concept and purpose of education as preparation for life. An effective school system requires a climate that gives every learner equal opportunity to succeed academically.

Schmidt (1999) asserts that school counselling assist students in becoming "able" learners, they support parents in their supervising and nurturing roles, and they help teachers to provide effective instruction and create healthy classroom climates for all students. This hypothesis for the role and purpose of school counselors is summarised here as a mission to provide services that ensure an opportunity for all students to learn and develop to their fullest potential.

Meeks (1968) observed that if the purpose of counselling is to facilitate development, then the counselling process must be part of the educational process from pre-primary to the tertiary level. Children and adolescents in contemporary times face challenges that will continue to evolve in complexity and importance for generations to come. For this reason, schools and other institutions need to address the total development of all children. Educational goals cannot be separated from personal, social, physical and other developmental processes. School counselling services are and will remain essential to the total education of our youth.

Contrary to some of the imperatives in prevailing educational practice, educational development is not the sole responsibility of classroom teachers. Optimal educational achievement is guaranteed when teachers receive assistance from school counselors who provide direct services to students, offer support to parents and guardians, and form collaborative relationships with teachers and other school personnel. Through this type of team effort, students' progress is adequately

monitored and appropriate services are designed and implemented. In this way, counsellors identify and address students' learning as a main goal and purpose of comprehensive school counselling programmes.

Presently, Guidance Counsellors are largely perceived as "support personnel". This view implies that Guidance Counsellors provide ancillary services to the instruction offered by teachers and the administration required of Headmasters and Principals. This view of the role of Guidance Counsellor as "supportive" rather than "essential" often leaves the expert prescriptions and reflective professional recommendations of the counsellor at the personal discretion of teachers and school administrators. For example, there is (he widespread un-counselling practice where learners (pupils/students) who owing to gross academic under achievement are informed about their withdrawal from school through publication on notice boards without any attempt to place them in a more appropriate learning environment or an appropriate follow-up strategy.

Conclusion

It is generally acknowledged that the values claimed in all contents of education are attainable only if there is a proper match between policy provisions and implementation strategies and actions. (Ivowi, 2000:30). Sofolahan (2000) observed that school administrators did not receive adequate orientation so as to appreciate the requirements of the policy in terms of philosophy, curriculum, counselling, continuous assessment and those other parameters that were new and designed to ensure effective and efficient implementation. For Guidance and Counselling to play its role in all that education is meant to accomplish in Nigeria, there is need for more elaborate policy prescriptions in the following areas:

- (a) Guidance and Counselling should be a major component of all levels of the education system.
- (b) An atmosphere that will encourage the training of professional counsellors should be created.
- (c) Professional Guidance Counsellors should be accorded the authority commensurate with their orientation and role.
- (d) Learning environment should reflect our commitment to the engendering of equal educational opportunities by creating elaborate training opportunities to make for aptitudinal variety and diversity.

The resourcefulness of Guidance and Counselling is being compromised and undermined by the absence of any organ dedicated to the enforcement of the telegraphic policy prescriptions that exist now. This should be addressed to avert the enormous waste that is going on in our schools.

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