

SCHOOL GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING: AN INDISPENSABLE INSTRUMENT TOWARDS REALIZING NATIONAL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract

The Philosophy of National Policy on Education is fundamentally rooted on national goals and objectives. The ultimate aim of the policy is that of self-realization and equal opportunities for all Nigerians to develop appropriate skills, abilities and competencies in the development of their society. A major reason why the above ideals had always eluded Nigerians is borne out of the little or no attention given to School Guidance/Counselling even against the backdrop of evolving trends. For a maximum realization of national goals and objectives within the context of the 21st century, an emphasis on School Guidance/Counselling becomes imperative. The focus of this paper is suggesting ways and means-through which Guidance and Counselling becomes very relevant towards meeting the needs and demands of national goals and objectives in the 21st century.

Introduction

The need and search for a new philosophy and policy of education shortly after independence in 1960 was borne out of the irrelevance of the curriculum of our educational system to the needs and aspirations of the Nigerian State. This was also the reason why the Nigerian Educational Research Council (NERC) organized a national conference on curriculum development in 1969. The conference was an attempt towards putting quality into education as well as reviewing and identifying old and new national goals respectively. This was closely followed by the Government-Sponsored National Seminar in 1973. It was the recommendations of these conferences that gave birth to the National Policy on Education in 1977 and was revised in 1981 (Oladele, 1986).

However, a cursory look at our educational system tend to dictate that the system is still a bit distant from the redeeming edges of those lofty goals and objectives that are subsumed under National Policy on Education. While these goals and objectives had recorded very little success in few schools, they are completely not given the desired attention in most schools today. It is against the backdrop of these emerging negative trends in realizing educational goals and objectives that it becomes very imperative to examine that aspect of the educational system that combines educational functions with that of vocational, personal-social, referral, placement and occupational functions, among others. This is where School Guidance and Counselling comes into focus. How will Guidance and Counselling become relevant in realizing national goals and objectives in the twenty-first century? This is the focus of this paper.

In formally analyzing the roles and relevance of School Guidance and Counselling towards realizing national goals and objectives, the point of departure shall be an identification and explanation of specific educational goals and objectives of the Nigerian state. The paper shall further attempt a conceptual clarification of goals and objectives. Specific areas of relevance of Guidance and Counselling towards realizing national goals and objectives shall be discussed in more than a casual way. The paper shall be concluded by way of summary bordering on specific areas of relevance of School Guidance and Counselling towards achieving those lofty goals and objectives within the context of the 21st century.

National Goals and Objectives

Nigeria, like every other country, possesses some implicit and explicit ideological commitments which are, to a great extent, borne out of the political and economic system and the citizen's behavioural patterns. This explains why Ehindero (1986) maintained that schools that are reflections of the larger societies are embodiments of ideological issues, problems and questions.

The Nigerian Philosophy of Education is contained in the national goals and objectives. which in turn, informs the foundations of the educational curriculum. It was the philosophical analysis of stated goals and objectives that gave birth to the National Policy on Education national objectives as stated in the Second National Development Plan include the following

- 1) A free and democratic society .
- 2) A just and egalitarian society.
- 3) A united, strong and self-reliant nation.
- 4) A great and dynamic economy.
- 5) A land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens (NPE, 1981).

The above objectives thus show that the general philosophy of Nigerian education is based on the integration of the learner for purposes of being a sound and effective citizen of the society. It is also aimed at providing equal educational opportunities for all Nigerian citizens spanning through all levels of formal as well as informal educational system. The philosophy, according to Okoye (1998) is geared towards self-realization, better human relationship, individual and national efficiency, effective citizenship, national consciousness, national unity as well as towards social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological progress.

The above national goals and objectives are anchored on the following specific values:

- 1) The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity.
- 2) The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society as a whole.
- 3) The training of the learner's mind to be face to face with reality and the world around him. This is to ensure a well-balanced perspective that equips man through education to give a unique interpretation to the world and transform reality.
- 4) The acquisition of the appropriate skills, abilities and competences both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society.

Guidance and Counselling: Conceptual Clarification

There is no single universal definition of Guidance and Counseling as different writers and experts in the field tend to define it from the angle the subject impressed them. Adugbo (1985), for instance, defines guidance, as the processes that the School Counselor employs in helping students in understanding themselves, their environment and to develop self-directiveness. This definition seems to be limited to just the formal school setting. For Makinde (1988), Guidance is seen as an educational construct which is established as an integral part of the school system to offer specialized assistance to students and others in the community in order to develop into a wholesome personality. Durojaiye (1975) sees guidance as a service and thus defines it as a complex process which encompasses the total needs of the individual student to be guided; and it is applicable to his educational, social, moral, emotional, health, vocational and leisure time needs and to his preparation for a suitable occupation.

In all of these and some other definitions of guidance, it is clear that guidance is both a concept and a service geared towards assisting the individual to achieve total development. It is a systematic and professional way of directing, piloting, managing, steering, enlightening, controlling and interacting with individuals in order to help them attain needed development.

Counseling is also a concept that tends to defy universality in terms of meaning and conceptions. Odebunmi (1991) says of counseling as one part of the guidance programme and a relationship of one to one or a group of twelve people that normally deals with personal and emotional issues more extensively but usually characterized by privacy and confidentiality. In the same vein, Makinde (1988) defines counseling as a service designed to help individual analyze himself by relating his capacity, achievement, interest, weakness and modes of adjustment. Egbule (2002) best captures the concept when he defines counseling as a relationship as well as a process that is designed to help people cope with their problems with the assistance of an expert. A synopsis of the various conceptions of counseling shows that it smacks of an activity aimed at facilitating behaviour change, enhancing coping skill, promoting decision-making process, improving relationship with others and facilitating individual potentialities.

The forgoing analyses thus show that Guidance and Counseling are like two sides of a coin. This is because counseling gives meaning to the entire guidance programme. In a point of fact, counseling is only a sub-activity of the guidance programme. As a broad-based concept, guidance embraces a cluster of specialized services of which counseling is only a part. This explains why Egbule (2002) explains that counseling is the heart of psychotherapy while guidance is the body or the therapy; counseling is the central hub upon which the guidance service revolves.

The Role of School Guidance and Counselling in Realizing National Goals and Objectives

One major challenge that the national goals and objectives are contending with in the 21st century is the rapid social changes that had disrupted the home and the family influences on the children. The family had always been considered as a potent influence in the development of the child. This thus makes for significant relationship between the school, the parents and their wards. However, emerging trends in our social settings had shown that Nigeria is today beset by problems ranging from lack of guiding values, lack of patriotism, acrimonious interpersonal conflicts, brazen armed robbery and corruption, little or no value for human life, drug trafficking, colossal inefficiency, to indiscipline. These negative trends are borne out of the weakening nature of the home and other socializing agents of our society today. Most worrisome is the fact that these trends are clear negation of the ideals of national goals and objectives of the Nigerian State. Thus, as a result of parents' inability to live up to their responsibilities, the school should become a buffer zone to provide the needed love, care and guidance. It is at this point that the school is called to duty to provide broad range of mental, health and therapeutic services. This is where the school instrument of Guidance and Counselling comes in. Since Guidance and Counselling touches on the very core of individual development, it is expected that it will be a veritable tool in correcting the above negative trends as well as help in achieving the ideals of national goals and objectives within the context of the 21st century. This also explains why Kure (1985) contends that greater efforts can be made towards providing counselling services for students in areas of academic, personal-social and sex-related concerns. This is because the school is most strategically placed at present to run a system of formalized Guidance and Counselling services for adolescents. By a stretch of analysis the position is that these ills keep persisting in our society and the educational system because of the neglect given to Guidance and Counselling programme in our schools and the society at large.

Again, school Guidance and Counselling is considered to be of utmost relevance towards realizing the goals and objectives of the Nigerian State in the 21st century, particularly in the areas of rendering vocational services. The position here is that Nigeria had, for the past decades been unable to attain the status of being a self-reliant, strong, a great and dynamic economy because schools had been lagging behind in terms of vocational Guidance and Counselling. A general observation of the state of affairs of the Nigerian educational system and the economy shows a wide gulf between those lofty goals and objectives and the concrete situations in schools. Out of about 15 secondary schools that were sampled in Sapele Local Government Area of Delta State in the course of this work, a good number of students in these schools knew little or nothing about vocational Guidance, and Counselling. In a random sampling interview with about 45 students of Delta State University, Abraka, all except 1 claimed not to have had anything to do with the Guidance and Counselling unit of the school because the orientation was not there. The attendant implication of this had been a negative drive that is fundamentally rooted in misplaced vocation. Such activities like career conferences, field trips or excursions, work experience, parents' conferences, Old Students Association day conference, individual vocational counselling which give meaning to vocational Guidance and Counselling are no longer obtainable in schools. Thus, pupils and students are virtually left on their own to choose vocations, which in most cases, may not enhance their personal development or national development. This ugly trend had dovetailed into the national life and had become a major bane of national goals and objectives is contained in the Second National Development Plan. This is where school Guidance and Counselling becomes a veritable tool towards correcting the above trends within the context of the 21st century.

Another major area where the country seems to have failed in terms of realizing national goals and objectives is its inability to attain the position of being a free, democratic, just and egalitarian society. In other words, Nigeria is yet to be a truly free, democratic, just and egalitarian society. A major reason that could be held accountable for this is that schools that should have provided elementary knowledge and information about certain fields of endeavour have completely been neglected. An aspect of the school that is considered relevant in this regard is the informational Guidance and Counselling service. Zerran and Riccio (1962) define informational Guidance and Counselling as the assistance given to student to understand, accept and utilize his abilities, aptitude, interest and attitudinal pattern, in relation to his aspirations. In this case, informational services are planned in such a way that future opportunity, personal abilities and characteristics are taken into consideration. Where this is lacking people tend to aspire to various positions not taking into consideration their personal abilities. The attendant effect of this is a clear manifestation of incompetence, inefficiency and abuse of such positions. This had become the state of affairs in the Nigerian slate of

today. This state of affairs had thus negatively altered the drive towards making the country a free, democratic, just and egalitarian society. The main thrust of the argument here is that informational Guidance and Counselling if properly utilized in our schools will go a long way to help in achieving some vital aspects of national goals and objectives in the 21st century.

It must again be stated that the realization of educational values is a condition sine qua non for the realization of national goals and objectives. In trying to realize such values, school Guidance and Counselling is considered an imperative task. This is borne out of the fact that Guidance and Counselling perform a very vital role in the school system that we ordinarily refer to as educational services. In performing this function, the instrument of Guidance and Counselling is employed to expose the students to educational opportunities through academic counselling, organizing orientation programmes, study habit induction, college day conference, excursions to educational institutions, etc. However, most of the above functions have been eroded from our educational system courtesy of the negative attitudes of parents, teachers and students to school Guidance and Counselling. The attendant effect of this on our cardinal values and the cherished national goals and objectives is a negative one. Given the above state of affairs, it is expected that a positive attitude, orientation and emphasis on school Guidance and Counselling will help in realizing some cardinal values of the Nigerian educational system that are basic and fundamental to the Nigerian national goals and objectives. The point being made here is that the educational function of Guidance and Counselling will go a long way in helping to achieve or attain some educational values. Such values include the acquisition of physical and mental abilities and competencies that are geared toward self-realization. By implication and by a stretch of analysis, the lofty goals and objectives of the Nigerian State Can effectively be achieved or attained if only school Guidance and Counselling is given the desired and needed attention within the context of the 21st century.

The effective attainment or realization of national goals and objectives depend, to a great extent, on the activities of the motivated, conscientious and efficient teacher. This is because the teacher plays the vital role of inculcating norms and values on the learners. For the fact that the teacher performs this function and some other parental functions to pupils and students in school, the teacher stands 'in loco parentis' to learners under his care. However, the lack of reflection on new value orientations as informed by the changing Nigerian society of the 21st century had created a serious gap on the effectiveness and expectancies of society on teachers produced therefrom. This explains why there is that aversion for the teaching profession in recent times. This had negatively altered teachers' personality in Nigeria with equally negative effect on values that are transmitted to pupils and students. Given this as the state of our educational system, it becomes very necessary to put in place a systematic guidance-oriented approach to training of our teachers. In other words, for teachers to acquire new value orientation of the 21st century there is the need for them to acquire special professional Guidance and Counselling skills in their training. For already serving teachers in our schools Guidance and Counselling is considered necessary to cope with prevailing burn-out syndrome. Burn-out syndrome refers to physical and emotional exhaustion which is today responsible for the numerous problems of education today in Nigeria (New Nigeria, 24th May, 1989). The position therefore is that in the training of teachers and in an attempt to minimize teacher-burn-out-syndrome, it becomes very necessary to have our educational system injected or laden with Guidance and Counselling orientations. This will obviously positively alter our teachers and the society's approach to the teaching profession. This, by implication, will help in positively imparting those values that are considered fundamental to the national goals and objectives of the Nigerian State in the 21st century.

There is also the need to recognize the fact that there is a conflicting trend between the traditional aim of Nigerian education and the 21st century Nigerian education. The traditional aim of Nigerian education is the passing onto the youths the people's culture and tradition. Education in the 21st century is more of an individualized form of education with emphasis on individual learner's experiences and problem-solving approach particularly with the emergence of information technology and Internet connectivity. Given the fact that experiences are individualistic in nature, there is this difficulty of developing a coherent theory of experiences that will provide a positive direction to the realization of appropriate educational goals and objectives. This is one major emerging trend that seems to constitute serious negating factor in the drive towards realizing educational goals and objectives within the context of the 21st century. This is where the instrument of Guidance and Counselling comes into play. Apart from recognizing individual abilities. Guidance and Counselling is one instrument through which the school recognizes and attends to individual differences in the teaching-learning process. Through its referral and personal-social services, Guidance and

Counselling will help to contend with the above challenges by reconciling the traditional aim of Nigerian education with that of a coherent and contemporary theory of experiences for purposes of realizing the national goals and objectives in the 21st century.

An analysis of the philosophical foundation of Nigerian education shows that it is fundamentally related to that associated with Guidance and Counselling. In other words, the philosophy that informed some goals and objectives of Nigerian education is, to a great extent, the philosophy that informed the practice of Guidance and Counselling in schools. This is because some basic issues in our educational goals and objectives are rooted in philosophical foundation with emphasis on the concepts of man, human freedom and values in life. These concepts are also of great relevance to Guidance and Counselling and this explains why Guidance and Counselling is sometimes referred to as a process of liberation. The point being made here is that no meaningful goals and objectives in education can be achieved without recourse to or reference to school Guidance and Counselling. If a free and democratic society is to be put in place as stated in Nigerian national objectives, school Guidance and Counselling becomes an imperative activity. Carl Rogers best captures the interrelatedness of Guidance and Counselling to national goals and objectives when he was quoted by Egbule (2002) as saying that Guidance and Counselling is indivisible from democratic liberalistic ideology. Egbule (2002) also observed that Guidance and Counselling derives its background and basic foundation from educational goals and objectives. It therefore stands to reason that a better understanding and appreciation of national goals and objectives should be founded on effective implementation of the school Guidance and Counselling programme.

Recommendations

Given the indispensable nature of school Guidance and Counselling in contemporary education, there is the need to give adequate attention to Guidance and Counselling activities at all levels of our educational system. A positive attitude, orientation and emphasis on school Guidance and Counselling will help in realizing those cardinal values of Nigerian education that are basic and fundamental to educational goals and objectives.

The Government of the day and stakeholders in education should consider it an imperative task to fund the Guidance and Counselling unit of schools in Nigeria. This will go a long way to ensure the realization of such lofty activities like career conferences, field trips or excursions, work experiences, parents' conferences and such other activities that give meaning to vocational Guidance and Counselling.

School Guidance and Counselling services must be rooted on providing the needed assistance to students towards understanding, accepting and utilizing abilities and interests in relation to individual aspirations.

Again, since teachers are veritable instrument in inculcating educational values, efforts should be geared towards making every teacher that is worthy of the profession top acquire, at least, basic skills in Guidance and Counselling.

Conclusion

The foregoing analysis had shown the need and relevance of school Guidance and Counselling in our educational system and more importantly in the drive towards realizing the ideals of national goals and objectives in the 21st century. Analyses have shown in clear terms that school Guidance and Counselling services is increasingly pressing as educational, economic, technological, social and ideological challenges are being experienced within the context of the 21st century. Given the fact that school Guidance and Counselling helps in directing and developing appropriate curricula and policies in our educational system, it stands to reason that it will be of immense relevance in our pursuit of the ideals of national goals and objectives in the 21st century. References

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