

COUNSELLING AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR ACTUALIZING SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION AT ALL LEVELS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study focused on counselling as an instrument for actualizing sustainable education at all levels in Nigeria. Education is considered necessary in imparting knowledge, skill, judgment and improves political, economic, social, cultural, information and communication technology (ICT) at all levels. Counselling therefore has an intervening effect in sustainable education. Consequently, the study also emphasized on the role of counselling for sustainable education, types such as Individual Counselling and Group Counselling, problems which includes Acute shortage of staff, Counselling Facilities, Problems of occupational information, Funding, Lack of Psychological Tests, Counsellors' Relationship with School and Administrative Personnel, Training of Counsellors, E-Counselling and offered conclusions and equally recommendations like (a) Counselors should work with organizations in a harmonious condition to be able to get the true positions of jobs and be able to direct their clients effectively (b) Government and school heads should as a matter of policy have annual allocation of fund that will be sufficient to manage counselling programmes among others that will make counselling to serve as a road map in the effective sustainability and implementation of education.

Introduction

Education in all countries of the world is seen as the cornerstone of development. It forms the basis for literacy, skill acquisition, technological advancement as well as the ability to harness the natural resources of the environment. Advanced industrial nations recognized early enough that man is at the centre of development. The difference in their capacity and capabilities to develop vis-à-vis the less developed nations is that they place the highest premium on the development of their human resources. They do this primarily through formal and informal education (Aziude, 2020).

In view of this, sustaining education will amount to preserving it through the processes which Alao (2015) outlined as people's acquisition of cultural heritage, knowledge, ideals and civilization of the future. Education can be sustained when its values, principles and processes are adhered to by the learners, teachers and counselors who are the keepers of the tenets of education.

Counselling is unique and second to none in providing assistance to teachers, students, parents, school administrators and curriculum planners in fulfilling the policies of education as it applies to each of them (Aziude, 2020). The counseling process remains one of the exclusive ways of sustaining the system of education that has been nurtured to build useful and self-productive citizens that can transfer a nation into an acceptable level of development.

Concept of Education

Education is an instrument for the transmission of values, knowledge, skills and competencies and as a vehicle for the speedy achievement of progress and national development. Also, education is

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a mirage of all activities that involves the learners, teachers and content to be learnt or taught (Geshinde, 2016). In most of these activities counseling is required to make teaching and learning experiences worthwhile. The cardinal objectives of Nigerian education:

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.
3. The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around; and
4. The acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society.

In consonance with the above national educational objectives the policy outlined educational objectives for the Primary, Post-Primary (Secondary education) and Higher Education as follows:

Primary Educational Objectives by National Policy on Education (2004)

1. The inculcation of permanent literacy and numeracy, and the ability to communicate effectively;
2. The laying of a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking;
3. Citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society;
4. Character and moral training and the development of sound attitudes;
5. Developing in the child the ability to adapt to his changing environment;
6. Giving the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable him to function effectively in the society within the limits of his capacity.
7. Providing basic tools for further educational advancement, including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality.

In view of the above objectives there is need to prevent emotional disturbance from developing in young children through the co-operative efforts of teachers, parents and school counsellor for effective counselling and reformation of education (Osuala,2004).

For The secondary education level the following are the educational objectives to be pursued:

Secondary Educational Objectives by National Policy on Education (2004)

1. Providing an increasing number of primary school pupils with the opportunity for education of a higher quality, irrespective of sex, or social religious and ethnic background.
2. Diversify its curriculum to cater for the differences in talents, opportunities and roles possessed by or open to students after their secondary school course;
3. Equip students to live effectively in our modern age of science and technology;
4. Develop and provide Nigerian culture, art and language as well as the world's cultural heritage.

The counsellor assist the student to understand the school and its environment and to locate the facilities that they will promote their education, vocational and personal-social experiences and thereby paves way for sustainability of education (Dike,2007).

The tertiary or Higher education shall be concerned with the following educational objectives:

Tertiary Educational Objectives by National Policy on Education (2004)

1. The acquisition development and inculcation of the proper value-orientation for the survival of the individual and the society;
2. The development of the intellectual capacities of individuals to understand and appreciate their environment;
3. The acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individual to develop into useful members of the community;
4. The acquisition of an objective view of the local and external environment.

Counselling As an Instrument for Actualizing Sustainable Education At All Levels In Nigeria

The laudable objectives indicated above cannot be achieved by teacher's effort alone. The input of counseling through the efforts of the professional counsellors are required to help pupils and students alike to achieve these educational goals (Ocho, 2006). Therefore counselling is necessary because in the first year the child needs to be guided properly because of his personal experiences in the society. For instance, for the individuals especially the youngstars life seems to be unpleasant, meaningless, puzzling and strange and deserves counselling in order to sustain their education and reformation to be precise.

Meaning of Counselling

Counselling according to Onah (2005) is a relationship between two people where one person (the client or counselee) is aware of a problem and of the need to talk it over with another (the counselor). Counseling is a person-to-person relationship in which one person helps another, to resolve an area of conflict, which has not been hitherto resolved (Agbajor, 2013).

Counselling relationships in most cases are between two persons (a counselor and a client). In group counseling it could be a counselor and 10-12 persons. It could also be two counselors relating with 6-10 or 15 individuals in a group of counseling section (Mamman, 2021). Counselling encounter between the counselor and clients operates not only within the confine of schools but also homes, churches, offices, industries and the society in general. It was suggested by Okpede (2018) as one of the important guidance services that is relevant in ensuring quality education. Its usefulness in the educational parlance enables it to render assistance to individuals in their areas of need.

The role of Counselling as an Instrument for Actualizing Sustainable Education at all Levels in Nigeria.

Counselling is the driving or motivating force that makes teaching and learning more meaningful to students and adults in all levels of education (Omebe, 2004). Counselling is instrumental in preserving the values of education and in ensuring that educational course content of each subject or course is actualized through the facilitative role of the manager of counseling programmes "the counselor".

General goals and objectives of counselling

According to Okpede, (2018) counselling focuses on the need of the individual. It is therefore designed to:

1. Assist the individual through the use of appropriate tools and techniques to develop the ability necessary for self-direction, personal understanding, self-confidence and mental maturity necessary for a healthy growth and proper adjustment.
2. Assist individual to have a clearer understanding of himself, his personal trait, social values, habits, attitudes and belief which will make a well disciplined adjusted being.
3. Assist the individual to identify his motivation, ambition, resources, and limitations.

These objectives are not only applicable to students but also to other well-meaning individuals that need counselling and they are to be implemented through counselling in order to achieve the central objectives of education. In doing this, the counselor is saddled with a huge responsibility which Aziude (2020) noted to be a function that cannot be provided by parents, peers or teachers. Odediran (2018) opined that the counselor plays a fundamental function in interpreting the content of the school curriculum through individual and group counseling that involves the use of psychological techniques and theories intended to aid clients in identifying problems, explore possible solutions and carry out assignments that are targeted towards resolving challenges (Adugbo, 2021). The services of counsellors are expressly reflected in the three tiers of counseling which is educational, vocational and personal-social counseling. These series are meant to help individuals understand self and apply educational principles to life situations and adapt favourably to their environment (Alao, 2015).

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These activities of the counsellors are indicative of the ways in which counseling helps in reforming and preserving the educational norms through the modification of individual behaviour (Omebe, 2004). The behaviour of individuals could be a channeled made to conform to educational goals and standards through individual and group counselling.

Types of counselling as an instrument for actualizing sustainable Education at all levels in Nigeria.

Counselling is divided into two namely individual and group counselling they are:

Individual Counselling

Individual counselling is a way of offering opportunities to individuals in such a way that a one-to-one relationship will occur (Denga in Shew, 2016). In such relationships, the counsellor would accept and tolerate the client/student in a way that the counselor would be free from advising or judging the individual Okpede (2018). Individual counseling affords the student/ client the opportunity to have proper understanding of self such that appropriate adjustment could be made in self-direction and personal development.

Group Counselling

Animba (2019) posited that man is a social animal and so inter-personal and social interactions. Group is a type of relationship involving more than one person. Group can, therefore, be defined as a collection of individuals or members with common characteristics or goals which aim at assisting, advising and encouraging others (Geshinde, 2016). Group counseling can take place with three members, six to twelve, or more members. Examples of groups are school setting, industrial groups, association, clubs, etc. In counseling, the grouping system is dependent on the number of students or individuals involved. Class grouping is a good example of group counseling, in the sense that the common goal linking the members is that of academic achievement and excellence.

The major goal of these two forms of counseling according to (Mamman, 2021) is helping the individuals, whether they are alone or in a group towards remediation of their emotional, social, psychological and educational problems and in developing a positive self- concept or a fulfilling and satisfying self-actualization (Omebe, 2004). The major difference in the two forms of counseling is in each setting. The setting for individual counselling must exclude a third party while that of group counselling is an open setting.

Problems hampering the effective implementation of counselling

Interestingly, the implementations of counselling are not without some impediments that have reduce the efficacy of counselling practice both within school and non-school setting.

Acute shortage of staff

As a developing country, it is extremely difficult to have enough counsellors who can function as school counsellors. It is however hoped that in the near future, enough counselor and teacher counsellors should be trained by the Federal and State Government, more especially to balance with the population in view of the establishment of new schools (Geshinde, 2016). The school system hinges on continuous assessment which improves the three educational domains, namely: Cognitive, Affective and Psychomotor domains. It is obvious that without trained counsellors that provides information on career, education etc for effective development of the domains the sustainability of education will be affected (Oniyama, 2020).

Counselling Facilities

counselling facilities is a prominent index that has militated against counselling in all capacities. The government through its National Policy on Education (2004) saw counselling as an instrument for sustaining education for national development and hence it's inclusion in the Nigerian

educational system by the Federal Government (Omebe, 2004). The implication of this is that education can be reformed and sustained when the necessary counseling facilities which (Okpede, 2018) listed as career, album, information boards, counselling office, counselling records, suggestion boxes, tape records, computers, stationaries, etc are provided. These counselling facilities when available in any counselling or school settings make counselling functional and the relationship a worthwhile experience (Alao, 2015). Counselling in any school environment should be to cater for pressing issues that bothers on relationships, poor study habits, poor performance, psychological and social challenges that tend to disturb learning processes (Zeran,2019).

Problems of occupational information

Counsellors face serious problems in obtaining occupational information. There is the need for the counsellor to have vocational information which can give young people sufficient knowledge about activities involved in different occupations (Mamman, 2021). Occupational information deals with job requirements, job descriptions, and the qualifications needed especially now that jobs are no longer available. The youths need to be guided effectively so that they can cope with joblessness (Nwoye, 2008). Most establishments and industries usually refuse to make available to counsellors information relating to job descriptions, vacancies, or conditions of service in their establishments and such situation creates laxity on the students if not handled properly by the counsellors through counselling practices (Mamman, 2021).

Funding

Counselling practice like any other service need finance to provide facilities, run its programmes and pay its personnel where necessary. The reverse seems to be the case in the school system. Okpede, (2018) is however, of the opinion that there ought to be enough financial support for counselling units for the purpose of adequate provision of utilities such as audio visuals, stationery and fund for attendance of conferences, seminars and workshops.

Lack of fund according to Riccio (2020) in most cases, tend to thwart the effort of the counsellor in achieving counselling goals and in performing administrative roles and functions. This is the ordeal of counselors in most cases as there is no financial budget made specifically for counselling programmes (Alao, 2015). Counsellors are consequently left to fend for themselves and their programmes which are financially involving.

Lack of Psychological Tests

The problem of psychological tests (vocational interest inventory, V-11, motivation for occupation preference scale- MOPs and student problem inventory-SPI) affects effective sustainability of education (Aziude, 2020). Therefore, counsellors through the use of tests can help to identify talents such as scientists engineers, doctors, managers etc. since the need for people in those categories of profession is critical. Besides the youngsters need to understand themselves, their abilities, needs, interests and their goals before wise decisions can be made through counselling practices (Geshinde, 20016).

Counsellors' Relationship with School and Administrative Personnel

Ifeluni (2010) emphasized that a cordial relationship ought to exist between counselors, principals, teachers, vice principals and other counselling personnel. Hostility, rancor, role confusion, excessive workload for counselors, and disregard seems to have its toll in most counselling relationships with members of staff. Such rivalries and lack of cooperation according to (Aziude, 2020) affects the effort of stake holders whose input in sustaining education provided in schools and other organization where counselling practice is marginalized. The cause of the rivalries could be as a result of fear of counselors taking over their roles, exercising superiority over them especially because he or she has close affinity with the students and students hold them in high esteem where counselors are models indeed (Agbajor, 2013). Close relationship, support and cooperation is needed between

principals, members of staff and counselors to reduce numerous school problems like indiscipline, examination malpractice, poor academic performance, rioting, cultism, sexual immorality, truancy, premarital pregnancy, rape and others which negatively affect student's performance (Mamman, 2021). Parents are not exempted from this as they are part of the agent of educational chance. Their cooperation with the counsellor is something that should be highly solicited for. Counsellors cannot achieve counselling goals when they are not good terms with the school authorities. Njoku (2010) suggested that counsellors can only be termed successful when things are going on smoothly in the school system, organizational settings and any country where counselling is practiced.

Training of Counsellors

Training of counselors for the purpose of certain chance and sustainable education is as important as training the recipient. One of the major challenges in counselling practice is lack of adequate and qualified counselors in the schooling environment and this (Omebe,2004) noted, is largely responsible for lack of articulated guidance curriculum. Oduyale (2009) stressed that individuals without appropriate training in counselling may lack psychological skills for diagnosis, administering and analyzing psychological tests as well as employing their that therapeutic measures for treatment of certain behavioural cases. This is why they need training and according to (Okpede, 2018), they should be competent professionals whose services are highly required in school setting. The main training for counselling is organized by universities and some managers of education and the least qualification for a counsellor as stipulated by the Nigerian Policy on Education in collaboration with the counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) is Bachelor Degree Certificate in Guidance and counselling (Aziude, 2020). Counsellors with such qualification can upgrade themselves by going for further training to obtain masters degree in Guidance and counselling and in order to meet up to professional trends. The essence of this is for them to be well equipped to manage modern day challenges associated with clients' needs. Odediran (2018) engaging in researches and participating in seminars, workshops and conferences are ways of advancement for counselors. However, lack of awareness, motivation and finance are factors that have stalled their training in recent times Oniyama (2020).

E-Counselling

E-counselling seems to be a new phenomenon within the counselling parlance. E-counselling by Nwoye (2008) is a modern means of communication between counsellor(s) and client(s) in sessions via internet within a stipulated period of at least once a week in a year or six months with a singular purpose of assisting clients in discovering themselves and making useful choices in relation to their educational, vocational and personal-social needs. E-counselling or telecounselling is an extension of information and communication technology which (Geshinde, 2016) prescribed as experience term employed in describing the generation, storage, dissemination and eliciting of relevant information for therapeutic encounter (Alao, 2015). Most counselors seem to be regressive in relation to familiarization and use of information technology. Their lack of competency in the use of electronic services could deter them from relating effectively with clients who are not within their immediate reach. Electronic communication involves the use of e-mails, internet and communication aided strategies in counselling clients (Mamman, 2021). Mamman further added that counselors are not left out in this all- important phenomenon which has potential to transform not only counseling practices but education as well. Counsellors who lack basic skills in electronic services may not be able to email and make internet contact with distant clients that need such help (Osuala 2004). This may have been necessitated by lack of access to the electronic gadgets or lack of training in their usage.

Conclusion

Counselling focuses on the individual as a member of democratic society whose individuality is subsumed within the social milieu (Omebe, 2004). Therefore, government and schools at all levels including the parents, teachers, counselors and students have significant role to play in reforming and sustaining educational standard towards producing self-reliant citizens that can fend for themselves and others which is the major goals of education as stated in the National Policy on Education (2004). Counselling also is confidential, reduces anxiety, frustration and fear and improves sustainable education. Moreso, Ocho (2006) observed that counselling in this regard is encompassing because it connects the home, school and society through its unique activities that offers therapeutic services in individual and group counseling.

Recommendations

Recommendations for managing the problems of Counselling for actualizing Sustainable Education in Nigeria is attainable when the following recommendations that will allow for effective counselling are implemented.

1. Counselors should work with organizations in a harmonious condition to be able to get the true positions of jobs and be able to direct their clients effectively.
2. Government and school heads should as a matter of policy have annual allocation of fund that will be sufficient to manage counselling programmes.
3. School counsellors should emphasize on career information to avoid moral laxity and drop-outs and lowering of standards.
4. Government should provide computer and other counselling facilities that could enhance counselling activities both in school and non-school setting.
5. Government should establish counselling units in all the levels ranging from nursery to tertiary institutions depending on the population strength. It creates an atmosphere for early introduction of children to counselling practice which is intended to foster quality education.

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