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## **An Assessment of Guidance and Counselling as an Educational Service and the Achievement of Millennium Development Goals**

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### **Abstract**

*Education is necessary for a developing country like Nigeria to attain economic growth needed to tackle poverty and sustainable development. It enables people to change their lives and the society in which they live. It is essential to the attainment of millennium development goals, most importantly the health and economic goals. Guidance and counselling belongs to the support services called educational services. It is one of the professions in the contemporary institutional capacity building and human resource development. Although, guidance and counselling is difficult to measure in relation to the millennium development goals. Counselling practices have been identified and their implication is measurable as well as their positive effect on progress so far. This paper assessed the operational progress and examines the challenges of guidance and counselling towards the attainment of millennium development goals as well as suggestions proffered.*

The Millennium Development Goals are eight international goals that all United Nations member states have agreed to achieve by the year 2015. With four years to go, member states should look inwards to see if the realization on the said goals is feasible, as this will enable them to be on track. The Millennium Development Goals include the following:

- (1) Eradication of extreme poverty and hunger.
- (2) Achievement of universal primary education.
- (3) Promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women
- (4) Reduction of child mortality rates.
- (5) Improvement of maternal health
- (6) To combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.
- (7) To ensure environmental sustainability.
- (8) To develop a global partnership for development (Wikipedia, 2011).
- (9)

The achievement of these goals is supposed to halve the proportion of people living on less than £1150. or less than a dollar a day, achieve decent employment for women, men and young people, halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger, amongst others. The overall aim of the Millennium Development Goals is to encourage development.

*Education is development, it creates choices and opportunities for people, reduce the burdens of poverty, disease and gives a stronger voice in the society. In many countries of the world, education creates a dynamic workforce and well-informed people, able to compete and cooperate globally. We can say that education creates awareness for economic and social prosperity. In the light of the above, the 1990 conference on education for all pledged to achieve universal primary education by the year 2000, that is, where all children of school age must be in school which was not achieved (UN report, 2006). Guidance and counselling is one of the fourteen educational services mandated by the National Policy on Education (Isect 11:1010).*

It is aimed at assisting individuals to achieve knowledge and self-direction. It enables guidance counsellors to offer assistance in orientation and adjustment to individuals in their environment as well as interpersonal relationships that are essential to social living. Thus, the main goals of guidance and counselling are to assist the individual appraise his attitude, aptitude, interest, general intelligence and personal traits to facilitate self-awareness and decision-making (Denga, 1983). They also assist the individual to achieve self-realization, self-determination, human relationship, economic efficiency, through vocational competencies, and civic responsibility through a sound moral\ training.

As educational service, guidance and counselling according to Nwachukwu (2007) provides within the primary and secondary schoolsystems the following

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standard units of services; information services, placement services, appraisal services, vocational guidance services, counselling services, referral services and follow up services. These services are usually offered by a trained guidance counsellor and form his core work. All these can be focused into the three main types of guidance and counselling services provided in the educational sector, which include: educational services, vocational services and personal-social services.

The achievement of these services enables the products of our educational system attain economic goals needed to tackle poverty and sustainable national development. This has been done basically through vocational/career services where liberated individuals today can fit into respective careers congruent to their interest, aptitude, ability, attitude, personality, for optimal performance and economic attainment.

To assess the development progress in respect of guidance and counselling in relation to the Millennium Development Goals, we shall examine the progress so far, challenges ahead and proffer suggestions if Nigeria must meet up 2015 in this area.

### **Progress of Guidance and Counselling**

#### **(1) Comprehensive Counselling Information Programme Services:**

Comprehensive educational counselling programme through information services have created a lot of awareness in the society on HIV/AIDS scourge. While this ravaged and weakened our population vis a vis national growth, awareness has reduced transmission and spread of the disease, (Communication initiative, 2010). Stigmatization has been drastically reduced because of the awareness creation. Individuals living with the virus can now make themselves available for the Anti-Retroviral drugs and those myths that HIV/AIDS is spiritual or a death sentence have been eroded greatly among people. Though much still has to be done to effect greater attitudinal changes, awareness has been created leading to the expected attitudinal changes.

#### **(2) Provision of Guidance and Counselling Services in Schools:**

Counselling interventions in schools have a substantial impact on students' educational and personal development. This according to Jones (2001) has contributed directly to student's mastery of such skills on self-awareness and attitudes necessary for individual and societal development goals. This has led to the production of individuals in the society capable of participating in national development for sustainable economic growth. These individuals having acquired healthy living and societal attitudes, contributes to societal as well as individual growth and sustainability.

- (3) **Vocational/Career Services:** Guidance and counselling has been able to expose to an extent products of the educational system to the world of work. This has created in them an awareness JA the various career/professions available and the respective entry requirements to these professions/careers. Unlike in the previous decades where most individuals found themselves in professions/careers other than those congruent to their aptitude, interest, personality and abilities, most individuals now are in professions of their interest, due to vocational guidance services,. This has gone a long way to improve service delivery as well as promoting economic growth of both the individuals and national development. Though a lot still needs to be done to reach school dropouts on job training and professional sustainability;
- (4) **Encouragement and Training of More Guidance Counselors:** This has come to boost the profession. Now many universities and other tertiary institutions offer courses in guidance and counselling.
- (5) **Establishment of Counselling Units in Non-School Settings:** Many organisations and establishments have become aware of guidance and counselling/services as agent for institutional capacity building and human resource development. This has necessitated the establishment of counselling units in organisations such as industries, hospitals, government ministries, agencies, corporations and private organisations. This according to Denga (1983) will improve job performance by the industrial staff.

### **Challenges**

Although counselling has made some remarkable progress in Nigeria but a lot still has to be done. The following area still has some challenges.

- (1) **License:** Certificate of graduation does not warrant professionalism in any field of study, professionalism is when one after graduation is ascribed a status of recognition through licensing. Many may be certificated but not licensed to practice. This according to Peterson and Nisenholz in Kolo and Maisarnari (1996) said, this license of professionals in any field is a state prerogative. If guidance counsellors are issued with licenses of operation it will go a long way to reduce poverty.
- (2) **Legislation:** There should be a legislation to back up the licensing by the state and also a body charged with the responsibility to license, moderate and enforce the standards of counselling practitioners in all sectors of the economy. This legislation will allow counsellors to establish clinics as in the developed world e.g. America.

### **Suggestions**

Though, counselling units exist in settings other than the school, it is advisable that these establishments should employ the services of trained guidance counsellors, who have the therapeutic techniques for professional resolution of crisis, than employing the services of untrained social workers. Government should provide legislation and licensing to counsellors to enable them practice independently to reach a wider population.

### **Conclusion**

Despite the fact that guidance and counselling is still faced with some challenges, it has been able to achieve some progress which include: provision of vocational and career services, counselling services, comprehensive counselling information programme, training of more counsellors as well as establishment of counselling units in non-school settings. With the progress made so far it is possible that guidance and counselling will assist more individuals attain self realization, which will enable such individuals, work towards human and economic development for national growth.

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