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Appraisal of Guidance and Counselling Services in Schools and Non-School Settings in Nigeria: The Way Forward

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Abstract

Counselling services are offered in the school and non-school setting. Effective school counselling programme empower students to realize their potentials for functioning living. The position of this paper is that counselling services can also be used to rehabilitate the disabled who could be trained to be useful to themselves, family and the community. The paper also advocates the need for utilizing effective counselling services to check the spread of HIV/AIDS endemic in the society. Group counselling should be conducted for Youths in counseling centres established in various communities. This paper also surveys the need for counselling for special needs – family counselling, vocational counseling matched with entrepreneurial education for job creation. It is the position of this paper that effective implementation of counselling services in schools and non-school settings will enhance sustainable development of our economy.

One of the primary goals of functional education system is to equip its products with the necessary skills and values for productive living. In pursuance of the goal, the Federal Government of Nigeria determines to make Nigerian education relevant to the life of the individual (FRN, 2004:30) consequently, schools are set at the various levels of education to translate the government vision into reality. At the primary and post primary levels, the schools are expected to provide the tripartite functions of administration, instruction and guidance and counselling service. Counselling services, according to Anwana (2005:3), are designed to enable an individual to gain self-

understanding of himself as well as his self-direction. The services are offered by a counsellor who is professionally competent in relevant psychologically skills and knowledge to assist the client. Over the years, counselling services have been adopted at the primary and post primary levels in Nigeria, and they have been found to play a good complementary role to other school programmes.

Needs Appraisal

It is assumed that with the increasing complexities in the society, the growth of industrial and technological development, most students find it difficult to adjust themselves to the school challenges, the society expectations, selecting and entering into sustainable occupations as well as adjusting to satisfactory family roles. It is also observed that within the school, children have counselling needs ranging from educational, personal-social and vocational which if not properly handled, may lead to their maladjustment or frustrations in their later lives. McDanial (1966) cited in Anwana (2005) stated that the three major functions of the school counselling programme should aim at:-

- (i) Assisting the individual student achieve an increasing degree of maturity in working towards the solution of his varied personal adjustment problems,
- (ii) Assisting the school and its staff in security, interpreting and using information concerning the characteristics, needs and opportunities of students, and
- (iii) Assisting the school and its staff in understanding and working closely with the community they serve.

The implication is that students should maximally utilize their schooling period to acquire the basic skills that would launch them into functional adulthood who would contribute meaningfully to the society's sustainable development. But situations are observed where most of our students show apparent lack of reading culture or zeal for their academic engagements. A great deal of their time is spent on social networking on "facebook", "Twitter", among others, using their cell phones. Examination fraud is fast becoming an acceptable tradition among many students despite government efforts to stamp it out from the educational system. One wonders the type of manpower that would be produced for our economy in future if this trend continues. Okon (1984) asserted that guidance and counselling within education can help in the development of skills, attitudes, and potentials of Nigerian youths so as to realize their fullest potentials for national development.

Moreso, the implication of technological revolution across the globe predicts that any nation that desires development deep into the 21st century and beyond should not

pay lip service to guidance and counselling but should ensure that all machinery is set in motion to maximize the potentials of the youth, for the timely absorption, and survival in an uncertain technological future. Nwachukwu (2003) believed that school counselling services equip the students with skills for career adjustment in areas where jobs are available.

Counselling for Attitudinal Change against the Disabled for Productivity

A close observation of people and events in our contemporary society reveals the need for counselling services for people living with different forms of disabilities who cannot partly or wholly participate in activities of daily living. We are living in a kind of society where those with disabilities are neglected or scorned. Abdul (2005), lamented the attitude of the average Nigerian to the disabled population is nothing short of hostility. They are considered useless and hopeless and as such considered to be a waste. Counselling services should achieve the need of rehabilitating the disabled by providing adequate information about their disability, and where to get help.

Members of the public could as well be sensitized to develop positive attitude towards the disabled. There is need for re-integration of the disabled into the social welfare programme of the society.

Eneh and Usen (2009:33-35) maintained that counselling for awareness is the most important contributor to help reduce disability in the community and make the community develop healthy attitudes towards the disabled.

Counselling the Youths against HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS is a dreaded disease greatly contacted through sexual relationship and at the moment is known to have no cure. The disease is very devastating and claims lives. New approaches of counselling could be adopted by setting up community rehabilitation and recreational centres to provide counselling services to the youths. Necessary information on productivity, job creation, drug taking and abuse could be made available to the youths. Since youths belong to the productive age that constitutes the bedrock of the economy, it becomes imperative for them to be groomed on the strategies of preventing HIV/AIDS. Onuorah and Ezeh (2005) maintained that setting up counselling centres could enable counsellors to avail youths and their parents of all necessary information they need to have about the HIV/AIDS transmission and assist them in the acquisition of skills to prevent the dreaded disease. Much more sensitization should be done the public on the need for positive attitude of acceptance towards those living with HIV/AIDS as this people could still encouraged to contribute their quota towards the sustainable development of the society.

Family Counselling for Development

Tensions in most families sometimes generate conflicts that affect social order in the society. Most families are faced with problems of unstable homes, lack of home-training for children, neglect of children by parents, broken marriages, all leading to poor emotional climate and poor social adjustment among members of the family. Since the family constitute an integral part of the society, its preservation for productivity becomes highly necessary.

Olusakin (2005:30) remarked that family counselling should not be ignored because the family as a social institution is subjected to different management approaches for effectiveness. Parents should therefore be counselled on effective parenting to foster good inter-personal relationship among family members. A family system that develops good inter-personal relationship is essential to good social networking outside the family. Obinaju (2011) asserted that inter-personal relationship which does not promote social networking obviously leads to the following tendencies: foul language, bigotry, envy, making unguarded statements, insults, unnecessary secretiveness and malice.

Children reared through this culture are more likely to exhibit same behavior in the larger society. Again, it is observed that violence and aggression constitute environment where some of our children are brought up such that one wonders what the future of the society would be when those children become adults. Equally, despite the introduction of free and compulsory education at the primary and post-primary levels in Nigeria, most parents still lack the moral courage to support their children to acquire basic education. Many children are still found on our streets hawking. Obinaju (2011) observed that some parents neglect their children but enjoy the financial contribution brought in by the child hawker and continues to promote the practices. It is also observed that many parents send out their children as housemaid. To ensure a stable society, the adult population has a vital role to play toward the preservation of the family. Teenage pregnancies, drug taking, increasing crime wave among many other social vices committed by our youths, are all the reflections of the incongruence experienced in our various family system.

Empowering Youths through Vocational Counselling and Entrepreneurial Education

The problem of unemployment is posing challenges as well as threats to governments at all levels as the rate increases every year that fresh graduates are turned out from schools particularly tertiary institutions. It is obvious that government alone can not continue to create employment for all its qualified citizens. Therefore, the need for individuals to begin to acquire skills that would earn them employment becomes necessary. This calls for the introduction of entrepreneurial education matched with

vocational counselling. Observations reveal that most students at the secondary school level still lack the knowledge about activities involved in different occupations and the qualification required for progressing in them. Vocational counselling services enable the individual to know himself, be able to evaluate his abilities, and the world of work, in other to make and take a realistic career decision. Entrepreneurial education on the other hand, entails exposing students to the developmental process towards the acquisition of skills that will enable them to initiate, maintain and organize a profit oriented business for production or distribution of economic goods and services.

The implication is that vocational counselling matched with entrepreneurial education will provide opportunities for students to progressively experience more challenging educational activities, and situations that will enable them to develop insight needed to discover entrepreneurial opportunities (Udofia and Sam 2009). By this, students would graduate from schools to become job creators rather than being job seekers. As young adults, the means of survival is guaranteed because they are equipped to contribute to their personal development that leads to the sustainable economic development of the society rather than constituting a burden to the economy.

Challenges

From observation, Guidance and Counselling is only given a lip service treatment as services of counsellors are yet to be really recognized in most public and private primary and secondary schools in Nigeria. Some schools that create spaces for counsellors ensure that those designated as counsellors are tasked with many duties that overshadow their perceived counselling duties. Some situations are observed where students with deep personal-social problems, educational problems, hardly consult school counsellors. It is either that counsellors do not know how to exert their influence in the school communities or the school authorities do not accord Guidance and Counselling a pride of place in their schools. Equally, the non-school setting Guidance and Counselling are mostly offered by religious organizations which in most cases are not handled by qualified counsellors.

Conclusion

Guidance and Counselling services have been identified as indispensable tools of assisting people to adjust for lie actualization. Counselling services rendered in school settings enhance students' realization of potentialities for functional living. In the non-school setting, counselling services are used for the purpose of rehabilitation of mal-adjusted individuals in the society. Vocational counselling services also help reduce un-employment in the labour market.

Recommendations/Implications for Counselling Services

To achieve a stable society through the implementation of Guidance and Counselling services in the global context, the following recommendations are offered:

1. School counselling programme should be strengthened and fully implemented to enhance a guaranteed future for our children.
2. Specific counselling needs should be rendered on HIV/AIDS endemic, drug taking and abuse and family life. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) should assist the government to employ the services of professional counsellors in this regard.
3. Counselling rehabilitation and recreational centres should be set up in various communities where counselling services should be obtained. Group counselling sessions/workshops/seminars should be held there for students, youths and other interested members of the public.
4. Vocation counselling matched with entrepreneurial education should be vigorously pursued and implemented right from the basic level of education. It should form part of the school curriculum.
5. Only counsellors with minimum qualification of Masters degree who have been subject to screening test should be licensed to practice. There is need for counsellors in Nigeria to be well versed with the cultural settings of the clients to enable them adopt counselling techniques that would enhance result oriented counselling relationship.

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