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## **The Role of Guidance and Counselling in Sustaining the Effort in Achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGS)**

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By

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### **Abstract**

*The educational target within the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is to ensure that by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary school (Daly, 2003). This is an important objective as is contributing tremendously to literacy growth in the developing countries of the world. This paper views guidance and counselling as a tool for sustainable national development in MDGs. It stressed the conceptual meaning of guidance and counselling, the historical background of counselling in Nigeria. It also highlighted the relevance of guidance and counselling and the opportunities for the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The paper also advanced some recommendations.*

Education is one of the greatest instruments for change and national development of any nation. In fact, it is the greatest instrument that a country can adopt for a rapid development of its political, scientific, technological and socio-cultural and human resources. It is when individuals are educated and developed that meaningful development could materialize. Schools as social institutions have a lasting role to play so that they can galvanize development.

The concept of guidance and counseling for sustainable achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) cannot be relegated to the background. Guidance and counseling are viewed from different perspectives by different people, resulting in various definitions. Agbaegbo (1996), saw guidance as a quasi-parental style of steering a child towards behaviour on decisions, deemed to be on his own for his own good. Oladele (2000), saw guidance as the process of helping individual to understand himself and his world. Counseling has also been defined in various perspectives.

Agbaegbu (1996) saw counseling as a problem-solving relationship between two people. That is, counselee who is having problem and the counselor, an expert or a professional. Guidance and counseling is a process and never an event, which happens once and for all. To sum up, concepts of guidance and counseling are geared towards helping an individual to be useful to himself and become happy and successful in realization of his ambition.

### **Historical Background of Counselling Practice in Nigeria**

It is generally accepted that, traditional guidance and counseling services had been in existence world wide for centuries. Sambo (2008) opined that, the counseling practice in Nigeria started in Ibadan, at Saint Theresa Secondary School by Irish Reverend Sisters who were primarily concerned with the final year students' future vocational engagements (vocational counseling). In 1961, a meeting was held that led to the formation of Ibadan Career Council (ICC) which was later transformed to Nigerian Careers Council (NCC). He further opined that, the major goal of this association is to promote occupational placement to assist youth to derive happiness and earn a living from work activities. Similarly, Makinde (1976) highlighted that, a journal named "careers" was published after a series of workshops for teachers and career instructors. In 1972, as Sambo (2008) further stressed, the NCC invited twelve (12) states of the federation to a conference. Several activities stimulated the conference among which was the use of aptitude tests on educational placement. The increasing interest in this field led to the formation of the Counseling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) in 1976, which is an upshot of the NCC.

### **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is a declaration of eight international organizations have to achieve by the year 2015 (Wikipedia, 2008). The goals are as follows:

- 1) Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- 2) Achieve universal primary education
- 3) Promote gender equality and empower women
- 4) Reduce child mortality
- 5) Improve maternal health
- 6) Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- 7) Ensure environmental sustainability
- 8) Development of a global partnership for development.

### **The Concept of Sustainability Achievement of MDGs**

Umoh (2007), defined the concept with reference to environment, thus: sustainable development of any nation can only be achieved through acquisition of relevant knowledge and skills by the citizen to enable them participate as effective citizens using and exploiting environmental resources in a sustainable manner of themselves and generations to come. Form another perspective. Anderson (1990), defined sustainable development goals as the enhancement of an enduring socio-

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economic and political development capable of improving gross national product (GNP) of any given nation. He postulates that the indices of sustainable national economy are stable political and socio-economic values.

Umoh (2007), maintained that sustainable national development is essentially “a people-oriented economy paradigm. He argues that, it is not the presence of skyscrapers nor the mere physical ride of gross domestic products (GDP) and per capital income”. But it relates to the maintenance of improved real wages to stable, non-inflationary price cost structure. Hence, it relates to the functional and fulfilled health of the citizenry. He further states that it relates to the growth in “mental horizons of the population, curtailment, if not eradication of unemployment and under employment.

Guidance and counseling programme if given the desired attention and well implemented in both school and non-school settings can lead to sustainable national development.

#### **Relevance of Guidance and Counselling in Sustaining MDGs**

It is generally accepted, that education is the roadmap of any sustainable national development. It is the most valuable investment that can bring about rapid development for any country in terms of economy, socio-cultural, political, scientific and technological. It is not a fiction that NPE (2004) stated that “Education in Nigeria is an instrument for effective national development. FRN (2004), stated that: Education shall continue to be used as a weapon to bring about a fundamental change in the intellectual and social well-being of any society. The wholistic view of education is to help an individual to be useful to himself and contribute meaningfully to the development of his community.

Through personal or group counseling, the potentialities and limitations in individuals can be pointed out. This helps to reduce aggressive and delinquent behaviour tendencies which ultimately reduce riots and students’ disturbances in schools and guide individuals in their choices of subjects or careers. Students make better career choice that agree with their interests and abilities rather than insisting on becoming engineers, doctors or lawyers because their parents want them to be so, and ultimately drop out of school because of academic deficiencies.

Guidance and counseling can help the individual to develop his abilities to make the best possible adjustment within his new environment so that he can make good contribution to the school and his immediate society. In the new system of education i.e. (6-3-3-4) only good guidance counsellors can help children with their choice of subjects, careers and schools or universities. Students themselves look up to the schools to help them realize their aims in life, parents expect the schools to develop the intellectual abilities of their children, they even expect the schools to build up the moral, social and career aspirations of their subjects. It is only through proper guidance and counseling in the school that these obligations can be achieved.

Dropping out of school is a very serious problem in Nigerian secondary schools today. Many children enter secondary schools or colleges with the aim of obtaining school certificates that will enable them go to higher institutions or at least earn a

living. But due to poor direction from teachers, wrong choice of subjects and other problems, they may fail to obtain the desired certificates and finally drop out of school. This problem should be a major concern for the guidance counsellors.

### **Conclusion**

The main objective of guidance and counseling is to develop potentialities of individuals to meet the yearnings and aspirations of the society and to contribute positively to the growth of individuals and the nation at large.

Similarly efforts should be geared towards relating education to overall community needs as rightly pointed out in NPE (2004). Hence sustainable development could be achieved if learners are properly assisted and guided especially the youth whose future and development of Nigeria rest upon. This underpins the fact that guidance and counseling becomes imperative in the entire educational system.

Recommendations on the counsellors, the government, curriculum planners and the society were also included in order to have effective practical guidance and counseling services in the Nigerian society.

### **Recommendations**

In order to effectively sustain the achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), counsellors should be more dedicated to their work and should draw the attention of curriculum planners to provide a comprehensive and resourceful curriculum with the multi-cultural objectives and aspirations for effective counseling in the country. The government should see that the guidance and counseling programme is generally given the most appropriate financial assistance needed, including awareness schemes to the public for the importance attached to his useful profession.

Readiness to play active role on the part of all stakeholders in the education industry and all other relevant sectors of the economy is a veritable attitude required for the sustenance of the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

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