

THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN PROVIDING USEFUL INFORMATION TO THEIR CHILDREN: (A COUNSELING APPROACH)

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Abstract

In all cultures, parents guide their children in their social, moral, spiritual and intellectual development. This is owing to the fact that they have a better knowledge of the world around. The philosophical concepts of "tabula rasa" lend credence to this assertion. This paper examines the benefit of good relationship between parents and their children in relation to knowledge acquisition. It analyses the ability of parents to source for information for their children. Further, it explores the various media of information which parents make available to their children. The paper concludes that it is the responsibility of parents to source for relevant information for their children. To be able to do this, they have to up-date their knowledge regularly. In this regard, all sources of information have to be explored to the fullest.

Introduction

Anthropologists and sociologists describe the family relationship as crucial for the proper development of children (Smith, 1901). In all cultures, parents guide their children in their social, moral, spiritual, mental and intellectual development. This responsibility is bestowed on them by the society.

The society has spectrum of opportunities to explore both for adult and children. However, the adults owing to their age, and experience are placed in a more vantage position to deal with the problems of society.

The numerous experiences of parents over the years could be of immense benefit to their children, this however, is based on how such experiences-are packaged, presented, accessed, harnessed and imbibed. Some parents hardly find time to know what their children are doing or what they really need for their proper development. In view of the above, Durojaiye (1972), asserts that "one of the most pressing needs of our time is to promote cross fertilization and exchange of ideas which may lead to a more realistic formulation of strategies in this area of research and the provision of services for the school child in this country."

Communication and Information Dissemination

The desire of parents to provide certain information to their children is predicated upon, the understanding that children need to be guided in their social, moral, spiritual, mental and intellectual activities. In this respect, the use of appropriate communication system becomes imperative. Awotua-Efebo (1999), defines communication as impacting or the conveying of information or knowledge from one person to another. Communication is a mutual exchange of ideas, thoughts, opinion, facts and emotion. For an effective communication to take place; the parties involved must be willing to do so.

Relating the above to counseling, Ipaye (1983), hinges the quality and effectiveness of counseling to effective communication. In order to communicate effectively with children, parents must strive to code their information properly. Awotua-Efebo (1999), sees proper coding of information as indispensable in delivering information to children. To this end, the language of the information has to be simple so that such information will not be difficult to comprehend.

The wording of such information should be reduced to the level of the receiver for effective communication. Despite the fact that the language used in delivering a message is simple, the wording must be such that relate to the information parents intent to give to their children.

Hayes (1994), contends that while making information available to children, parents must guide against their personal prejudice. If they allow their feeling and emotions to influence the information they provide to their children, they risk the danger of distortion which may erode the kernel of the information. Parents who give wrong information to their children betray the confidence of those children.

In providing information to children, the communication system may be verbal or non-verbal. At the earliest time, parents used words of mouth to pass information to their children. In this practice, signs and symbols were combined with words of mouth in family relations.

Gestures such as beckoning, frowning efface, blinking or raising the eye-lid were employed in communicating with children. When it became obvious that there is the need to preserve certain information for posterity, the art of writing was invented. This, with other visual communication arts, helped to improve the process of information delivery. Thus, books, pictures, magazines and newspapers among others, came into being. All these went a long way in improving the degree of information. Unfortunately, these still left one fundamental problem unattended the problem of transmission. Someone must convey all these before they can get to anyone outside their location.

Without overstating the obvious, these still remain the primary source of information for children. Parents rely on books, newspapers, magazines and pictures for what they want their children to know. The growing uses of telecommunication materials have added to the increasing source of information materials for children. Radio, television, telephone, fax etc. are useful instruments for providing information to children, (Mogbo, 2003).

The computer and Internet have come to stay as sources of information. It has become an added advantage to children to acquire the knowledge of accessing the Internet. Mogbo (2003), among others applauds the enormous benefit, which children stand to gain by making use of these devices.

When parents struggle to make information available to their children, one of their pre-occupations should be how to make them assimilate such information. If children are adequately motivated, they will be eager to learn. In the words of Hendricks 1986, In impacting knowledge the first point to be considered is how to make children settle down to the task *and* pay attention to the exercise in such a way that they succeed in achieving the objectives of such exercise. Stone (1979), supports this in the following words: Human activities can be reinforced by a commendatory wording the successful completion of learning task. Here, the motivating force of reward cannot be over emphasized.

Applying the rules of differences and similarities in explaining issues of points or facts to children will go a long way in shaping their understanding. Stone (1979), explains that with the proper use of the rules of taxonomy, children can learn the general characteristics of certain plants, if they have a basic idea of the common plants in that specie. While appreciating the benefit of information to society, Mogbo (2003) holds that information increases the economic and political capacity of a society. In this view, information is a primary factor in developing sound scientific, social economic and political spheres of a people. To him, the property of a country depends not on the abundance of its revenue not the beauty of its buildings but consists of a cultivated and well-informed citizenry, in it, men and women of education, enlightenment and character. Ipaye (1983), concludes, "People who are able to gain control over their lives are those who can make intelligent decision."

Intra Family Relationship

Children from birth depend on the virtues of their parents for proper upbringing. According to Odiba (1997), at a very early age, a child could be conditioned to behave in a certain way. Freud in his psycho-analytic theory opines that a man who has been the indisputable favourite of his mother keeps for life that feeling of a conqueror. Therefore, any parent who demonstrates virtue before his/her children is unconsciously transmitting such to them.

It is well known fact that heredity and environment are crucial factors in the life of every individual. Bickerstaffe (1977), contend that how well a person can think of learn or remember is to some extent inherited." Here, Bickerstaffe and other psychologists are agreed that heredity and environment account for all human actions.

Often, parents serve as role model to their children. For instance, the personality, financial status, socio-psychological make up as well as their level of education affect the performance of their children. As it were, the type of job parents do can affect the attitude of children.

Giving children and all round experience go a long way to ensure that they meet the challenges of their time. Durojaiye (1972), argues that there is the need for an inter-disciplinary and multidimensional approach to the socio-psychological development of children. This will enable them keep pace with the numerous changes taking place in the society. The society is a dynamic system and

as a result, children need to be provided them with relevant information if they are to imbibe the content of such information.

Children learn faster than adult. They are very gullible and lack the ability to synthesize the different aspects of their experience. In this wise therefore, parents should strive to analyze the content of very information they make available to their children. As enormous danger are associated with failure to do this.

A cordial relationship between parents and their children go a long way to ensuring that children grow up in the desired direction. Odiba (1997), stresses that every child should be conditioned to behave in a particular way from a very early stage in life. In his words, the child learns that crying may bring comfort. That the sound of "no" and/or various kinds of adult behaviour associated with it are intended to inhibit him from certain behaviour and that to continue with such action will bring him discomfort. Thus, the relationship which exists between parents and their children largely account for some of the behaviours we see in children including their attitude to information. Parents, who express less concern about things and about their children, gradually make them see other people's ideas as not very important. Owing to this, it becomes imperative for parents to instill the feeling of or attach importance to things and ideas especially when they realize that their children are involved.

Social psychologists have come to realize that children should not be taken for granted in their behavioural pattern. Hayes (1994), posited that from the age of two years, children seek more autonomy for themselves and this negatively affects their relationship with parents. According to his observation, from the age of two to four, children begin to assert their independence and strive to establish their identity. It will be suicidal for parents to assume that at this age, the child is still young in his/her behaviour. Parents should at this stage, use approval and/or disapproval to convey to the child that what he/she is doing is right or wrong. Freobel, as quoted by Bickerstaffe (1977), warns that children and especially young persons should not be neglected.

The most difficult stage in the life of the young people is the age of adolescence. This period is characterized by many uncertainties. Hayes (1994) and Anikweze (1978), see the adolescence role as very confused and diffused. They enumerated the problem of the adolescence to include: knowledge, explosion, pursuit of material wealth, plurality of the society, estrangement of the extended family system, hypocrisy of adult standard, the fallacy of physical maturity as well as the desire for economic independence". All these place the adolescence in a dilemma. In view of this, the role of parents in ensuring that the adolescence gets the right information becomes very paramount.

Hayes (1994), sees the adolescence stage as transmitting from childhood to adulthood. In his view, this period is very important since the adolescence as mentioned above, seems to be in a dilemma. He says that at this stage, all experiences which the child had gained need to be re-evaluated and reformulated so as to enable the individual fit into the society.

According to Freud in his psycho-analytic theory, his father was strict disciplinarian who imposed rules, principles and duties on him as a matter of obligation. He concludes that an adult personality is usually set on experiences which the individual acquired during infancy and childhood.

Bringing the experience home, Malum (1990), submits that in the past, West Africans had their own ways of guiding the adolescence as exemplified in the various puberty rites; as avenues where societal norms are impacted. The various rite involving children were aimed at introducing them to new ideas and the various requirements of society for healthy living when they grow up as adults.

Without over stating the obvious, a cordial relationship between parents and their children can go a long way in fostering growth, development and understanding within the family. Honestly speaking, effective communication is a pre-requisite in information dissemination.

Recommendation

1. To be able to provide children with relevant information, a lot is expected from parents thus: Parents should constantly up-date their knowledge.
2. Every parent should be conversant with the national policy on education (since it contains the national goals).
3. Parents should take note of the socio-psychological make up of their children, to enable them determine what information to make available to them.

4. In sourcing for information for children, parents should take cognizance of the age of those children are to benefit from the information.
5. A regular check should be placed on the children to ensure appropriate use of any information made available to them. This will help to avoid any misuse or improper handling of such information.
6. Parents should be keep away from children any information considered above their level as this may be more dangerous than fake or adulterated drugs.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is apparent that parents owe society a lot in the upbringing of their children. If children must grow up to be useful members of society, parents have a central role in shaping them. However, we must acknowledge the fact that the extent to which they are able to do this depends on the information available to them.

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