

Revamping Counselling in Basic Education: Implications for Functional Education in Nigeria

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Abstract: Education is the key that unlocks the door to cultural, social, economic, political and technological development of any nation. Counselling education is in itself an integral part of education that helps an individual in the society to achieve the goals of education. Many Nigerian guidance counselors are unemployed, some roam the streets looking for government jobs yet, there are more jobs in the street unexplored. This paper looks at the concepts of education, basic education and counselling, and revamping counselling in basic education. The paper also examines the need for revamping counselling in basic education in Nigeria, e-counselling skills and challenges of revamping counselling in basic education. The paper is of the view that for counselling to be revamped, counselling education should be relevant to the Nigeria n environment and approximately funded. Finally the paper recommends that government should create an enabling environment for counsellors to function without interference and distraction from the authorities or agencies and to open private clinics and laboratories to handle social cases outside the school.

Keywords: Basic education, revamping counselling, e-counselling skills, functional education

Introduction

Education is a living concept that continues to grow and develop on a daily basis. Education fosters growth in all aspects of a person's personality. Guidance and counselling is an integral part of education that helps one in achieving the goals of education. This facts underscores the reasons many countries have made frantic efforts of providing functional education to their citizens through adequate basic education. The Nigerian educational system is faced with many challenges militating against the quality of their graduates. Among these challenges is the shortage of sound and motivated information technology (ICT) complaint counselors.

The development of any society depends on the nature and functionality of its educational system (Dewey, 1952). Guidance and counselling started in Nigeria with the aim of providing individuals with high-level development of personality, recognition of individual differences, dignity and acceptance of one's needs. But these goals have not been met since the emergence of guidance and counselling in Nigeria. The Nigerian society is still in want expecting more than the present performance of counselling services in the nation.

As one looks at the youth on the Nigerian streets, it is painfully obvious that little or no counseling is taking place because there are many unemployed youths who hopelessly parade the roads smoking marijuana and causing trouble here and there. There are kidnappers, cultists and other emotionally disturbed people who need counseling. Unfortunately, lack of counseling

services gives room for quacks in the counseling field posing as: pastor's or priests; some are dibias and babalowos who parade themselves as therabists.

In realization of the important role education plays as an agent of national development, there has been agitation for more functional education all over the country through counselling. It is believed that counselling education will accelerate development because of its inherent educational values. Attesting to this, Preece (2006) submitted that education is a proven dynamic tool for reducing poverty. To achieve the mentioned objective however, there is need to revamp counselling in basic education through planning for new programmed curriculum in counseling, provision of support services such as the e-counselling and information technology based for the recipients and the classroom guidance instructors to enable learners to be well grounded in counselling services.

Concept of Education and basic education

Education is a concept that is difficult to define in any precise manner. This is because education has the growing qualities of a living organism (Igwe 1990). Edo (2017), posits that even the permanent attributes of education are continuously changing in emphasis and adapting itself to new demands and new circumstances. Thus the concept changes with time and individuals. Nwagu (1976), defined education as the process which every society attempts to preserve and upgrade the accumulated knowledge, skills and attributes in order to foster continuously the well-being of mankind and guarantee its survival against the unpredictable hostile and destructive elements and forces of man and nature. The sociologists see education as the most potent process of socialization of the people. Fafunwa (1975), defined education as the aggregate of all the processes by which the child or young adult develops his abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviour which are of positive value to the society in which he lives. This implies that education is a means of cultural transmission.

From all the definitions, views and meanings of education deduced above, one can say that education is a process of developing a person mentally, physically, socially and spiritually to enable him be useful unto himself and to others in the society where he finds himself. It is also a means of developing the entire individual to enable him live effectively, and efficiently in the society he finds himself. Education however involves acquisition of knowledge skills, attitudes, competencies, ideals, and culture. Thus an educated person is one who has acquired the above attributes of education, including being endowed with initiatives, resourcefulness, and being a responsible, self-confident and well informed personality.

Counselling and Basic Education in Nigeria

In a conference held at Jomtien in 1990, the participants recalled that education is a fundamental right for all the people, women and men of all ages throughout our world and also they noted that education can help ensure a safer healthier, more prosperous and environmentally, sound world. According to Edo (2017), this is the first time policy makers and representatives of the world of education and civil society agreed on a world strategy to promote universal basic education for children and to reduce massive illiteracy rates among young people and adults especially women. The contribution of all these individuals at both national and international is a realization that proper education is the answer to majority of our human problems.

To be called an educated person therefore means that one's knowledge and ability should affect the way he looks at issues and situations. This means that one could be knowledgeable but not functional in the society. It will therefore be a logical tragedy if a person is said to be educated, but such a person has in no way changed for the better. At times, both the learners and the parents chose the courses they want the children to read at school. If the learner is not properly guided by the teacher counsellors, the learner may not do very well in the discipline he has been forced to study by the parents or significant others.

A functional education therefore will take cognizance of the needs of the individual and the society and should meet the needs of the various aspect of development in the country. This is why in 1977, revised in 1981, the National policy on education posits that education in Nigeria is no more a private enterprise but a huge government venture that has witnessed a progressive evolution of government with dynamic intervention and active participation. The policy stated that the course to be run should be relevant in terms of the needs of individuals as well as in terms of the kind of society that is desired. The National objective of Nigeria is therefore related to the Nigeria philosophy of education. The philosophy thus is based on the integration of the individual into a sound and effective citizen.

Due to the National philosophical objectives and its interest to improve the holistic development of its populace, the then Minister of Education Alli (1976) in a land mark address declared at the launching ceremony of counselling Association of Nigeria (CAN) stated that:

Guidance and counselling is an education innovation that enjoys my full support. Any educational system will be deficient without educational guidance. Our students need to be helped in vocational guidance to discover their talents, aptitudes, and to make intelligent career decisions (pp 1- 2).

The National policy on education also endorsed its total commitment and support to the counselling movement by stating that:

In view of the apparent ignorance of many young people about career prospects and in view of personality maladjustment among school children, career officers and counsellors will be appointed in post primary institutions. Guidance and counselling will also feature in teacher education programmes (NPE, 1981).

The introduction of guidance education to the basic and functional education is to foster and inculcate in the learner certain values as well as acquisition of some appropriate skills that will enable the individual to be efficient, creative and free from environmental problem associated with maladjustment.

The Need for Revamping Counseling in Basic Education in Nigeria

Despite the decades of the practice of guidance and counselling in Nigeria, there are still a lot to be achieved. There are still the problems of adjustment in the Nigerian society. Maladjustment brings about the inability of the individual to cope with the problems of his environment. Maladjustment makes it impossible for the individual to resolve his personal conflicts and so bring about a balance in him or herself.

There are also the emotional problems. These involve basically an imbalance in the force of great powers and influence designed by nature to enable the people cope with circumstances for survival or success. Most of the emotional problems are anxieties, inferiority complexes, greed, envy, hatred, guilt and many others. All these are barriers to proper adjustment, security and true happiness. It is because they generate too much emotional turmoil and disruption that they stand out as the most serious problems encountered by Nigerians especially this period of economic recession.

There is also the problem of career choice. It is most tragic that when a student finished his course of study, he does not know the right job to do. In some cases, when he is guided, he feels like joining the band wagon of the mediocre and rejecting the right career he was guided for. At the end, he becomes a misfit and this brings great confusion to himself and in the wider society.

There is also the problem of indiscipline, cultism and unrest in Nigerian schools. Indiscipline, cultism and unrest have been officially recognized by the Nigerian government as a national illness (Edo,2017 p.6). Traits of indiscipline are felt everywhere: in the homes, schools, and even in the religious circles. It also exists in the government and the political party. It arises from lack of proper order in one's life and the inability to bring one's impulses, needs, habits and behaviour in line with the demands of one's own life. It is the acts of lawlessness, chaos, anarchy and disorder which may be seen individually or collectively.

There is also the problem of improper training and unemployment. Education in Nigeria today is aimed at paper qualification which may be obtained by buying the certificates or malpractice. Most of the literate ones are unemployed. All these result in maladjustment, resentments, anger, boredom and frustration. Some maladjustment cases result to psychological disposition and may gradually degenerate to mental illnesses or depression. There is also the issue of juvenile delinquency frequently reported in our daily media. The youth all around us mess themselves up at homes, in schools, and in the wider society. They participate in all sorts of inappropriate behaviour ranging from cultism, alcoholism, armed robbery, truancy, disobedience to constituted authorities, sexual immorality, violent revenge and brutal bullying among others.

The reasons for improper guidance and counselling therefore call for revamping guidance and counselling in basic education. Hence, it is important that necessary adjustments be made so that the country might be a safer place for all. Guidance and counseling is essential for living. It is one of the most essential requirement for human success and survival, yet it is the least available in all the educational sector and where found, less equipped and furnished.

New Counselling Techniques to be Structured in Basic Education in Nigeria

Revamping counseling means effecting a rebirth in a dynamic manner so that useful skills are employed to enhance the already existing ones. Such areas involve effective planning:

New Curriculum in Counselling Education

Counselling education requires a new curriculum to accommodate the Nigeria philosophy and to meet the millennium standards in the 21st century education. The professional counsellor should be mandated to attend periodic workshop and conferences fully sponsored by the government to be abreast with the new skills. This periodic professional management development courses in the form of workshops will help the students to develop individual education and career plans by themselves (IECP). The aim of this will also help students to be well informed on educational

and career choices. The new curriculum should include regular counsellor meetings with the students to review progress towards the goals they have outlined together in the individual education career plan (IECPs). The counsellor will coordinate the career activities of the students like emphasizing career pathways in say high-growth industry sector and also help them locate or apply for relevant training programmes of jobs which we call practicum in counselling. This new curriculum should emphasize that counsellors hold mandatory orientations and offer students on-going guidance and joint planning opportunities as they enter school.

Information Technology (ICT) Compliant

A professional counsellor is one who assists people and the society through the counselling relationship and the environmental opportunities in the process of self-understanding, planning, decision making and coping with problems relative to the developmental needs, educational and vocational activities of their clients (Olayinka, 1993). Thus a professional information complaint counsellor is one who knows and can make use of the computer, can assess the internet, can help the students (clients) with computer base services. He is a counsellor who is well connected with the international community in the global village. A counsellor who is ICT compliant is able to employ computer services in the delivery of his counselling services, duty or online job counselling, e-therapy and e-conferencing. The online counselling is variously referred to as internet counselling, e-therapy, web counselling, e-psychotherapy, interest psychotherapy, or online counselling/psychotherapy (Heinlen, Welfel, Reynolds, Richmond and Rak, 2003, Patrick, 2006 and Anibueze 2013). As the computer technology has become the norm in offices and homes so also have wireless transportable devices. The extension of the potential uses of the internet capabilities has expanded at an astounding rate.

The growth of counselling delivered by computer technology has had more results. This is because the technology revolution has drastically expanded the capacity for person to person communication. The counselling profession according to Aribueze (2013), has ventured into computer mediated world of online.

Foundational to the traditional model of counselling process is the face to face encounter between a client and a counsellor. The online technologies have facilitated increased communication and work management and have simultaneously led to a redefinition of counselling and how counselling can be practiced in ways not imagined decades ago. However, to understand the appeal of online counseling, Anibueze (2013) maintained that counsellors should understand characteristics of those clients who are most likely to use online counselling services, have solid understanding of the appealing qualities of computer mediated counselling, be able to identify the core issues that must be carefully evaluated by counselors. The counselor should also grasp into cultural intricacies involving cultural and ethnic groups.

Internet Counselling Compliant

Internet counselling can be employed to assist technology-assisted distant individuals, telephone based individuals or couples or groups, e-mail based individuals, chat-based individuals or couples or groups, video-based individuals or couples or groups. Telephone -assisted distance counselling for individuals or groups and groups involves the use of the telephone or computer to enable counsellors and clients to communicate at a distance interaction among counsellors and clients using one-to-one or conferencing features of the telephone to communicate.

The telephone-based group counselling involves synchronous distance interactions

among counsellors and clients using what is heard through audio to communicate. It would appear that this kind of counselling does not exist in Nigeria and there is need to establish it to reach certain unreachable people and those who do not want to disclose their identity. On the internet, most of the time, it is the adolescents who use the computer and they are usually very quick to open opportunities for helping people especially teenagers who often feel trapped and lonely. For them, the internet is literally their life line. Since they are used to chatting, sending and receiving e-mail they prefer this type of communication. For instance, a teacher gave an example of a student that sent him an e-mail and asked if they could e-mail each other about some problems she was having at home. But when he told the teenager to come over and see him face to face, the female teenager stopped talking to him (Anibueze, 2013). This kind of situation could be avoided if the internet is used as another counselling tool for helping troubled individuals who would want to remain anonymous.

Dedicated Classroom Teacher Counsellor

Students spend most of their time in the classroom and it is their teachers that they tend to develop close and trusting relationships with. Naturally, teachers are the ones to whom students often bring their life questions. Therefore teachers can be well suited to impart future planning guidance. Incidentally encouraging or mandating students to spend time outside the classroom for career counselling and future planning exercises may not be realistic given the limits on students' time and the fact that many are struggling to meet immediate needs and simply do not have the luxury to plan ahead. Kamoh, Ughili and Abada (2012), posit that getting a job right now is what matters for many students, not plotting out various steps along a lengthy career and future planning exercises into their lesson plans.

However to revamp counselling for functional basic education requires a myriad of lesson plan activities and other resources that should be made available to help teachers integrate these ideas into the classroom. Weaving career exploration and job readiness into classroom instruction may be useful for a wide range of students including those with near-term plans to continue educational training. Firstly, to achieve the rebirth in guidance and counselling, the governments of the Federal, State and Local, all Stakeholders, teachers and parents should all join hands to make these elements applicable to some extent to the work place and other real world situations. Secondly, career and future planning exercises should be incorporated into students lesson plans. In reality however, counselling should be fluid within the basic education occurring both in and out of the classroom setting, during individual appointments and also in the classroom in the career guidance courses. For instance, preparing students for the world of work, can be accomplished in part by structuring classroom tasks and obligations to stimulate these expectations. For example, punctuality, appropriate dressing, seeking information, taking responsibility, problem-solving, work place etiquette and use of technology are some of the tasks that can be given to students to accomplish. Similarly, it can be helpful to repeatedly demonstrate to students how mastery of elementary basic skills can lead to better employment opportunities. Another important tool in working with the student's to identify skills they already have for example, cooking, using machinery, child care or fixing things in order and to determine how they could be used as basis for building career planning in their lives as students in and out of the school.

Challenges Facing Revamping Counselling in Basic Education in Nigeria

Guidance and counselling is among the profession Sanusi (1998) recognized as beginning to receive the perception of second grade dangers. They are among the classroom teachers Adelabu (2005) said are poorly motivated and are dissatisfied with their living and working conditions. Management experts have continued to lay emphasis on the important role motivation plays in the managerial process. Government however should learn from this management principle by paying special attention to remuneration of workers in the school sector in order to boost their moral and to restore their faith on their jobs.

The 1972 Udoji commission harmonized the public sector pay by bringing all public sector personnel under one unified salary scheme and it also ensured that school teachers enjoyed comparable salary status with other key public sector workers. The commission recommended the creation of a uniform grading and pay scale for public servants, including teachers in order to ensure that the public sector is able to recruit and retain its fair share of scarce man power and eliminate invidious pay comparisons between the public and the private sectors. But the commission's bold attempt was thrown to the trash bin by subsequent administrations, forcing the workers to demand through the national union of teachers for a just and more equitable job evaluation, remuneration and grading, as their counter-parts in other professions (Adelabu and Alao 2002). Today their poor remuneration in the country has turned a onetime profession that was an envy of all to a profession of mockery, which youths are now skeptical of going into. In Nigeria today, students no longer fancy education as a course (Kamoh, Ughili and Abada, 2013). Supporting this idea Rousseau (2012) observed that lack of satisfaction within the educational profession is bad news for children.

The environmental work condition of a teacher in Nigeria has been described as the most impoverished of all sectors of the labour force. Sanusi (1998), Adebalu, (2005) and Kazeem (1999) recommended that greater attention be given to improving work-related conditions of teachers which would in turn yield dividends in students' planning.

Other challenging factors facing revamping counselling in basic education is lack of infrastructure. For instance, if internet counselling does exist in Nigeria today, it those not exist in the area of counselling. Nigeria is worse of because there are no infrastructures for e-counselling. Electricity provision is very poor. Majority of the populace are not computer literate, the literate ones do not have computer, there are very few cybercafé and they are only in the cities.

Many counselors in Nigerian schools are illiterate in the use of computer e-counselling. Internet counselling is not covered by the curriculum for counsellors in- training. There are no counselling services for the bereaved, the sick, retirees, HIV/ AIDS patients and many more such cases. That is why people seeking for counselling resort to patronizing quacks. Revamping counselling in basic education will help address the problems of many and especially the teenagers who often feel trapped and do not know where to obtain specialized attention.

Recommendation

In the course of this study, the following recommendations were made?

1. To revamp counseling in basic education: effort should be made to train and retrain school counsellors in the new counselling skills, to be e-counselling competent and online competent.

2. The Government, the Policy Makers, Educational Agencies, Parents, Teachers and Counsellors and all the Stakeholders in education should help to advertise the e-counselling services to benefit all in the society.
3. The Counselling Association of Nigeria(CASSON) should help in organizing holistic conferences for its members and intensify efforts to organize functional workshops that will benefit the already existing members on the newest counselling skills especially the internet counselling and e-counselling and introduce new paradigm in counselling service delivery.
4. Counselling should be made to reach yet the unreached members of the society and those who are unwilling to disclose their identity especially the HIV/AIDS and teenage related counselling.
5. Government should create enabling environment for counsellors to function without interference and distractions from its agencies and also to allow private counselling clinics and laboratories to be opened by the existing counsellors to enable them handle such social problems that are not school based.
6. Massive enlightenment should be carried out by the three tiers of government to enlighten members of the public to know and understand the importance of counselling services in Nigeria.
7. Salaries should be paid as at when due to educational sectors to initiate and promote their images in the society

Conclusion

There is no known way of maintaining a true basic education for a holistic and functional personality other than through counselling education. Therefore, for education to achieve this great task, effective and efficient counselling education programmes should be structured and funded by the government of Nigeria. Emphasis in counselling education at present time should be functional education that will be relevant to the Nigerian environment. Lip service should not be paid to the things that concern counselling education by our policy makers and all education stakeholders. Teachers who constitute these counsellors should not be allowed to decay as they are presently and the national policy on education be fully implemented to give strength to revamping counselling in basic education through the provision of e-counselling, that type that will reach everybody in the society and a curriculum that will not only be centered in the school alone, but one that will be holistic and all embracing.

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