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GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL: THE TRIPARTITE INVOLVEMENT MODEL

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ABSTRACT

Primary Education is one of the identified channels through which Nigeria Educational objectives stated in the Second National Development Plan could be attained. In pursuance of the general objectives of primary Education, the Federal Government has set certain machineries in motion that are stated in the National policy of Education. A critical observation of these Primary Education Objectives vis-à-vis the present position of Primary Education in Nigeria, however, reveals that some aspects of the promises made in the policy are yet to be fulfilled. This paper, specifically focuses its attention on the provision of guidance and counseling services in Primary Schools. The paper generates arguments to support the inclusion of guidance and counseling services in Nigerian Primary Schools.

INTRODUCTION

The educational programme of every nation is guided by its National policy on Education. Although the method of presentation, areas of coverage and specific attention given to some aspects differ from one nation to the other, the major aim of using education for the advancement of social, political, and economic well being remains the same.

There are cases of similarities and dissimilarities in educational policies of various countries of the world. For instance, compulsory elementary education in England begins at the age of five and ends at the age of eleven while compulsory education in Australia which is restricted to elementary education only (pre-school and secondary education are not compulsory) starts from the sixth year of existence and ends at eleven or thirteen depending on the state.

On the contrary, nine years of education is compulsory in Japan and schooling begins for all children from the age of six and ends at twelve for the elementary education after which they must enroll for another three years in the middle school. The purpose of education in Japan, as described in the 1947 law, among others, is to attain;

full development of the personality, the nurture of a healthy people, sound in mind and body, who will love truth and justice, esteem individually, respect labour, have a deep sense of responsibility, and be imbued with the spirit of independence, capable of building a peaceful state and society. (Japan National Tourist Organization, 1975).

The Nigerian educational system, which is the focus of this paper, referred to primary Education as the "education given in an institution for children aged normally 6 to 11+" (NPE, 1981). While the five main national objectives of Nigerian Educational system as stated in the second National Development plan, and endorsed as their necessary foundation for the National Policy on Education are for the building of:

1. a free and democratic society;
2. a just and egalitarian society;
3. a united, strong and self-reliant nation;
4. a great and dynamic economy;
5. a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens.

The general objectives of primary Education which Osokoya (1987) perceived, as being designed to accomplish two major functions that is serving as a complete education and preparing the few top ones for secondary education, are:

- (a) the inculcation of permanent literacy and numeracy and the ability to communicate effectively;
- (b) the laying of a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking;
- (c) citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society;
- (d) character and moral training and the development of sound attitude;
- (e) developing in the child the ability to adapt to his changing environment;
- (f) giving the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable him to function effectively in the society within the limits of his capacity;
- (g) providing basic tools for further educational advancement, including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality.

From the foregoing, Primary Education is, therefore, one of the channels to be used to attain these national objectives. Educational programmes at this level should, therefore, be designed to meet these objectives. Although these national objectives are not realizable within a twinkle of an eye or should one expect one of the educational levels such as the Primary Education to achieve these objectives single-handedly,

Nevertheless, lapses at this level that are not rectified could spell doom for the attainment of these lofty national objectives.

In fact, it is one thing to have objectives stated in clear terms, it is another thing to achieve or realise them. For any objectives to be attainable, certain mechanisms have to be set in motion and programmes designed should be implemented to the letter. Differently put, if Primary Education is to be used to achieve the national educational objective programmes therein should be meaningful and lapses identified in the process of implementation should be rectified.

A critical observation of Nigerian Educational Policy statement on primary education made it clear that in pursuance of the general objectives of primary education as earlier stated, government will ensure that certain educational programmes and materials are put in place. Time has, however, revealed that some of these could be classified as 'empty promises'.

Although specific areas that could be referred to as empty promises are many, the focus of this paper would be on the provision of guidance and counselling services. The concept and the place of Guidance and counselling in the National Policy of Education would be examined; behaviour problems in primary school and the relevance of guidance and counselling services and the tripartite involvement strategy of implementing guidance and counselling in the primary schools would be discussed.

The Concept and Place of Counselling in the National Policy of Guidance and Education

It is gladdening to note that the present 6-3-3-4 educational systems recognizes the need for Guidance and Counselling in schools in order that the educational objectives may be realized maximally. The following from the National Policy of Education (1981) attest to this assertion:

Section 3, 10 (c.)

Counselling Services: A number of teachers are now Undergoing in-services training in this area and more Will be trained in the future.

Section 10, (104)

...Guidance and counselling is another educational service that will be made available as soon as the necessary personnel can be trained.

Paragraph 83 (11)

In view of the apparent ignorance of many young people about career prospects, and in view of

personality maladjustment among school children. careers officers and counselors will be appointed in post primary institutions. Since qualified personnel in the category is scarce, Government will continue to make provisions for the training of interested teachers in Guidance and Counselling. Guidance and Counselling will also feature in teacher education programmes.

A critical analysis of the above clearly demonstrates the fact that the national policy on education recognizes the invaluable contributions which Guidance and Counselling can provide, yet the following observations require further clarification and examination

1. It is only paragraph 83 (11) as quoted above that explicitly promises the appointment of Guidance and Counselling in post primary schools alone.
2. References made to counselling services and Guidance and Counselling under section 3 (10) (Primary Education) and section 10 (104) (Administration, Planning and Financing of Education) respectively are not clear-cut statements like that of post-primary paragraph 83 (11). Hence, they could be regarded as non-committing statements.
3. Provisions of Guidance and Counselling services were not even found necessary in the pre-primary, higher education-including professional education, technical education and special education.
4. Even if the statement on Counselling services in primary education as ambiguously stated in section 3(10) is taken, there is hardly any evidence to support the fact that counselling services are made available in primary school. Assuming they (teachers) are being trained as the policy statement wants us to believe, for how long will they undergo this special training so that they will eventually provide counselling services in the primary schools?

The above observations clearly demonstrate the fact that guidance and counselling is yet to be adequately catered for in Nigerian primary schools.

Disruptive Behaviour Problems and the Need for Guidance Counselling services in Primary Schools

The foundation of an enduring and solid education is laid from the primary level of education. This assertion is attested to when the National Policy on Education (1981) refers to primary education as the key to the success or failure of the whole educational system and the basis of an educational system.

The pre-requisite knowledge gained at this level would greatly assist in the quick understanding of subsequently teachings in the post primary level and beyond. This, therefore, connotes that educational activities in the primary level should be maximally free of problems. School, especially in the early infant years, in the submission of Bryan (1989), is intended to be a happy place where pupils can grow and develop, free from anxiety, fear and punishment – an ideal posture which our educational system is lacking. Several problems within and outside the elementary schools have nearly made the national objectives of primary in Nigeria unattainable.

It would amount to erroneous conception for an individual to opine that school-related problems are only restricted to post primary and post secondary institutions. Evidences abound to show that behavioural problems commonly found in post primary and post secondary schools are also common phenomena in the primary schools.

The dimension in which these problems reveal themselves include behavioural problems, academic problems, family problems medical problems and vocational problems among others. Peterson, et al. (1961) classified child behaviour problems into three viz: conduct problem, personality problem, and autism. Philips (1968) categorized problem behavior in the elementary school into aggression with independence striving active withdrawal, emotional disturbance with depression, self enhancement through degeneration of others, and diffuse hyperactivity. These and many other problems deter pupils from attaining the goals of education.

In his attempt to locate the origin of misbehaviours, McGuinness (1993) observed that teachers overwhelmed by innovation and its attendant paper work point to outside the school and say, "This pupils problems lie in the home, in society, in his defective personality, and we can do nothing about them" whereas there is evidence that schools and teachers do make a difference.

If indeed the schools can make a difference, what are the basic functions of a school and who are those personnel within the school system that would make the difference. Partouillet and Marin (1979) identified three basic functional dimensions of the school, which are administration, instruction and guidance. Personnel within a primary school could be broadly divided into two viz: the teaching and non-teaching staff. They include the headmaster or headmistress, assistant headmasters/mistress, teachers, guidance counselor, school nurse, typists, secretary, drivers, cleaners, messengers, laboratory attendant, etc. While others are saddled with administrative and instructional functions, the Guidance Counsellor is singularly saddled with guidance roles and functions.

The conclusion that could be drawn from the above is that the absence of guidance services in any school, therefore, renders the basic functional dimensions expected in an educational institution incomplete. Majority of (if not all) primary schools in Nigeria falls with this category. Since, counseling techniques have been found to be effective in the management of difficult pupils (Lawrence, 1971) it is, therefore, imperative that their services be employed.

Primary School Children and Guidance and Counselling Services

Guidance and counseling in primary schools primarily involves the Guidance Counselor rendering his professional responsibilities in primary schools. These professional services are, designed for children. Provision of guidance and counseling services to children, it must be added, differ significantly from that of adolescents and adults. Geldard and Geldard (1997) even submitted that if we are to use the same counseling strategy with children, it is unlikely that they would tell us anything of importance.

Certain characteristics that are commonly found in adults in most cases are conspicuously absent in children. The intellectual capabilities of an adult cannot be equated with that of a child. In counseling children, therefore, a counselor should be well versed in the psychology of child development and various counseling intervention techniques should be modified if need be to meet the counseling needs of children.

A child counselor is expected to put into use all the traits that would make him/her achieve the counseling goals. Such traits, as listed in order of frequency by Hamrin and Paulson (1950), include understanding, sympathetic attitude, friendliness, sense of humor, stability, patience, objectivity, sincerity, tact, fairness, tolerance, neatness, calmness, broadmindedness, kindness, pleasantness, social intelligence and poise should be religiously implemented. The extent of exhibiting these traits when dealing with children should, however, be done in a manner that would enable them realise the presence of such traits in them.

As it is imperative that counseling goals be defined before the application of counseling strategies when counseling adults so also should a child counselor identify specific goals to be attained at the end of counseling session. While Oladele (1987) from review of literature identified three central aims of counseling namely:

1. to create a self-reliant person, who understands his strengths and weaknesses and is able to make wise choices and decisions without the help of a counselor;
2. to help individual to adjust satisfactorily to their society and probable personal future; and
3. to ease the work of teachers in schools.

Geldard and Geldard (1997) see the following as the globally applicable fundamental goals for counseling children;

- (a) to enable the child to deal with painful emotional issues;
- (b) to enable the child to achieve some level of congruence with regard to thoughts; emotions and behaviours;
- (c) to enable the child to feel good about herself;

- (d) to enable the child to accept her limitations and strengths and to feel ok about them;
- (e) to enable the child change behaviours that have negative consequences;
- (f) to enable the child to function comfortably and adaptively within the external environment (for example at home and at school);
- (g) to maximize the opportunity for the child to pursue developmental milestones.

From the foregoing it is imperative that Guidance and Counselling courses should involve psychology of child development and counseling techniques for children.

Guidance and Counselling and the Tripartite Involvement Model

The success of guidance and counselling services in the primary school does not only depend on the qualification or expertise of the Guidance counselor but also on the cooperative effort of the governmental and non-governmental organizations, teachers, and parents. The involvements of these groups mostly in primary schools contribute significantly to the effectiveness of counseling strategy. On the basis of which the tripartite involvement model is developed. The adoption of this model would go a long way in making primary education realise its general objectives thereby contributing to the attainment of the national educational objectives.

The extent of their involvement in making guidance and counseling achieve its fundamental goals is diagrammatically represented below after which specific explanations are made on each.

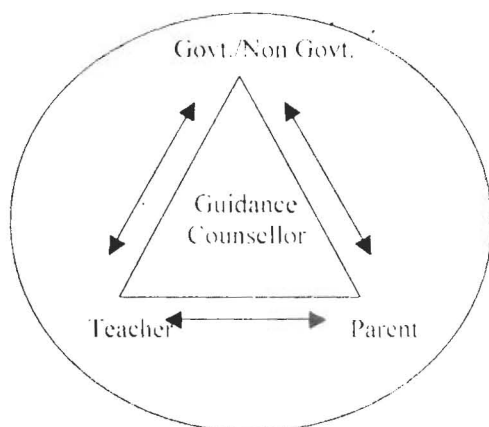


Fig. I: Tripartite Involvement Model for Successful Implementation of Guidance and Counselling Programmes in Primary Schools

Governmental and Non-Governmental Involvement

The successful implementation of guidance and counseling in the primary schools as in other levels of education has its genesis from the government. The educational policy statement by the government should clearly state the position of government on issues relating to guidance and counseling in the primary schools. A situation whereby lip service, after thought or ambiguous statements are made would not augur well.

Due to the fact that the Federal Government controls both the public and private schools through policy statements clear cut policies would, therefore, guide the implementation of guidance and counseling programme in schools.

The appointment of guidance counselor in public primary schools is the sole responsibility of government while the private schools, which are under its control, could be made to appoint Guidance Counselors. The appointment of Guidance Counselor in primary schools does not however put an end to government responsibilities. Material needed for the successful implementation of guidance services are numerous among which are counseling interview room, rotating chair, tables, book shelves, bulletin board, psychological tests, call bell, refrigerator, telephone, air-conditioner or fan, etc. Unless these and many others are provided the probability of success would be reduced.

Bearing in mind that governments have to ensure development in other sectors of the nation, the involvement of non-governmental organizations is, therefore, deemed fit. It is, therefore, highly imperative that their attention should be directed to meeting the needs of guidance and counseling in primary schools. They should be encouraged to build counseling rooms, appoint guidance counselors, furnish counseling rooms, contribute financially to the guidance counselor budgetary proposal, sponsor guidance and counseling programme in schools, etc. The Counseling Association of Nigeria has a greater role to play in this direction.

Teachers' Involvement - The operational definition of teachers here is not restricted to classroom teachers only but it includes the headmaster/mistress and his or her assistant. The headmaster/mistress as the overall boss sees to the smooth-running of the school. He/she, therefore, should provide all materials within his/her capacities to make guidance and counseling functional. Appropriate directives should be given to any of his/her subordinates in order to make guidance and counseling programme effective.

The basic responsibility of the classroom teacher is to instruct or teach in the school. In their attempt to perform their function certain discoveries are made. Their interactions with pupils have revealed specific characteristic behavior patterns of their pupils, which they can classify, as normal or abnormal. Phillips (1968) succinctly states that:

The teacher is in a unique position to observe children's behaviour non-instructively in a variety of behavioural settings and

continuously over long period of time and there is a great deal of evidence supporting the contention that the teacher can relatively and validly report overt, discrete aspects of pupil behaviour.

Teachers' interaction with and recognition of pupils' behaviour serve two purposes viz: It is an avenue to identify pupils' behaviour problems, and it is also a source from where pupils can be referred to the guidance counselor.

For any problem to be solved such a problem must be identified and the client involved should be in contact with the guidance counselor. As it is highly important for the guidance counselor to identify pupils' problems so also it is practically impossible for him to monitor all pupils in order to detect their problems unless they come to him. Majority of these pupils may, however, be too shy to come for counseling but if their teachers refer them the path to problem resolution is therefore set. Problems identified in their beginning stage are easily solved than problems detected at their advanced stage.

The implementation of certain counseling intervention strategies may require the teacher to monitor and report pupils activities, reinforce desirable behaviour, modify methodology among others. Involvement of teachers' could also give room for valuable suggestion in an attempt to find solution to behavioural, academic, personality etc. Problems of pupils. They have also been found to be useful during guidance and counseling activities like career week, symposium etc.

Parental Involvement - The need to involve parents in the counseling programmes for the exceptional, children has been stressed by Gesinde (1996) while the view that parents should have an involvement in the education of their children according to Bryans (1989) will continue to be accepted. The assumptions on which the parental involvements in primary schools are based have been identified by Bryans (1989). These include:

1. the more parents know about their children's school and the process of education there, the better it will be for their children;
2. it will increase the possibility of greater equality of opportunity;
3. parents should or could contribute more to the curriculum; and
4. it gives more access to the school in times of trouble.

The last assumption which states that it gives more access to the school in times of trouble is more relevant to guidance and counselling activities in primary schools. The number of hours spent at home with parents when compared with hours spent at school with teachers are more especially for day pupils. This gives the parents the opportunity of knowing most of desirable and undesirable behaviours that are emitted by their children. The parents, therefore, could serve the following purposes for counseling activities;

1. they can refer pupils for counseling;
2. they can provide detailed information on pupils' behavioural responses outside the school environment;
3. they can be counseled especially if the problem being experienced by the pupils has its origin from their child rearing method;
4. they can be trained to monitor, reinforce and report pupils' activities at home.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper has X-rayed the National Policy on Education vis-à-vis the provision of guidance and counseling services in primary schools and discovered that guidance and counseling services is yet to be properly placed in the primary schools despite the recognition given to it in the National Policy on Education. It is, therefore, hoped that if the issues raised, model developed in the paper and the following recommendations are adhered to, guidance and counseling will take its rightful place in primary schools.

1. The position of government on the provisions of guidance and counseling services should be clearly stated and appropriately implemented.
2. Counselling Association of Nigeria should intensify its efforts in educating government and non-government organizations, teachers and parents of their importance to the success of guidance and counseling activities.
3. Since counseling children is quite different from counseling adults, courses in guidance and counseling department in our Universities should emphasize child development psychology and techniques of counseling children.
4. Guidance counselors should be employed in primary schools and in-service training should be provided from time to time.
5. Headmasters/mistresses should be provided with guidance and counseling materials and be instructed to make it available to guidance counselors in their schools.

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