

**GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING FOR POVERTY REDUCTION AND
PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE.**

BY:

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Abstract

This paper discusses the role that Guidance and Counselling can play in the reduction of poverty within the populace and having a peaceful and harmonious society. Guidance and Counselling as pointed out in the paper is replete with contingencies of helping the society to resolve its numerous security challenges and reduction of poverty by employing the various techniques available in counselling. The paper identified education as a way to reduce poverty, where functional education is advocated. Peaceful coexistence can only be realized when majority of the populace have a means of livelihood. The paper concluded that if Guidance and Counselling is well established in our educational systems then solutions to our numerous problems is not far. Amongst recommendations of the paper is that, Nigerian educational system should focus on the societal expectations and addresses issues of functional education, religious and cultural perceptions.

Introduction

Nigeria is undergoing one of its most serious challenge since independence that is, the issue of insecurity, communal clashes and political thugery. This has been blamed on so many factors, some people blame the failure of our educational system to meet the required cultural, economic, moral and social needs of the various ethnic groups in the country. While some people blame the political class for the crisis happening in the country for mis-management and corruption. What ever be the case, we cannot afford as a nation to stand looking at things falling apart, something urgent and concrete has to be put in place in order to salvage the country from collapse. That is where the intervention of Guidance and counselling

is seen as a crucial factor in the eradication of poverty and enhancement of harmonious living among the multiferous and multi-cultural groups in Nigeria. The value and relevance of Guidance and Counselling to national development cannot be contested. Even in its embryonic stage, guidance was used by Frank persons in the USA, after the second world war to alleviate the post war psychological trauma and the effect of jobless men that devastated the Americans during the economic depression years. His services were hailed by USA (Denga, 2009).

In Nigeria Guidance and Counselling have been harnessed in times of calamities such as advent of HIV/AIDS, natural disasters such as flood devastation, war, trauma, pre-retirement counselling, social volcanic eruptions in families, unemployment problems, communal clashes, political thugery and students unrest among other. Poverty and conflicts are twin issues that if one of them afflict a society or community then the other would surely follow. That is why various regimes made efforts for poverty alleviation, eradication, reduction, self-reliance etc. all with a view of addressing the socio-economic problems of the populace. Guidance and counselling is replete with contingencies that can be used to reduce poverty and bring about a harmonious living.

Guidance and counselling is a programme designed to help people understand and clarify their views and learn how to reach their self development goals through meaningful well informed choices and through the resolution of

emotional and interpersonal problems. Guidance and counselling has always been considered as a helping relationship. The relationship takes from a simple to complex intervention. The simplicity or complexity of a relationship usually depends on the concern of clients and the expertise of the counsellor. Considering the useful nature of Guidance and counselling in the resolution of human problems through uniformed choices and decisions. This paper therefore is poised to discuss the role Guidance and counselling can play in the reduction of poverty and providing a harmonious environment for peaceful co-existence.

Guidance and Counselling for Poverty Reduction

The need for Guidance and counselling in the educational system cannot be underscored, for that reason the National policy on Education categorically made mention of the needs for career officers in our schools because of the apparent ignorance of many young people about career prospects. The lack of knowledge has created a great vacuum in the economy because so many young people would study courses in tertiary institutions which are not relevant to the needs of the society and as such will remain unemployed, thus having a group of unemployable educated citizens which ultimately would lead the individual being lured into gangs, fanatisms etc. the current security challenges faced in the country could be attributed to such situation.

Poverty in Nigeria could be linked to the growing importation of new technologies which have resulted in putting so many people out of work, because with the new inventions and ideas, a job that could have been done by ten or more people could now be done by a single machine faster and more accurately than the human labour. In order to address the shortfall, Nigeria signed up to many international organizations like Millennium Development Goals (MDG), Education for All (EFA) etc. For the success of programmes, Education has to capture as “The most important instrument for change, any fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook of any society has to be preceded by an educational revolution”(NPE, 2004:3). The National policy continued to identify the need to reduce poverty in the society where it states: “There is need for functional education for the promotion of progressive united Nigeria; to this end, school programmes need to be relevant, practical and comprehensive; while interest and ability should determine the individual's direction in education”. (NPE, 2004:1).

The identified programmes can be delivered through the help of Guidance and Counselling which is a programme in education which has vocational guidance to prepare and put young men and women in the world of work. Egbochukwu (2008), asserted that the provision of vocational guidance in Nigerian educational institutions has been necessitated by great challenges in her society and the world at large, has become more complex than ever before. Automation and recession,

for example have forced many people into early retirement and retrenchment, resulting in unemployment. The rate of technological change, and the isolation of young people from possibilities for employment, has created problems in occupational choices. Many students are not able to obtain informal exposure to a variety of occupations, nor can they easily obtain relevant data about them. Students have a limited knowledge of occupation and of the narrow range of alternatives available to them. This ignorance lead to unrealistic career aspirations. There is, therefore, a need to assist students to have more realistic career expectations.

By the time the students are well guided in the courses which will lead them to the right occupation, then the issue of poverty would be minimized because when the educational system tailor the youths towards the right courses per the requirements of labour market then poverty would reduce, peace and harmony would rain within the society. In line with this Sambo (2009), opined that, with a career master in secondary school, children can get information about available career opportunities in the country, the conditions of services and the relevant subjects; so that right from the early stage of secondary school the children are aware of what subjects they need to know and where the subjects they like will take them to. These of course lead to gainful employment and help solve man power problem in the country. This also goes along with a World Bank report

(2000), on National Capacity Assessment Reports of the Federal Republic of Nigeria where it states; The curricula of the training institutions should be upgraded to meet the requirement of the labour market.

This could be achieved by adapting a curricula that is jointly developed by the private sector and training institutions. Curricula should be based on the needs of the labour market and tertiary institutions must produce graduates with requisite qualifications and skills that are required by the industries. The statement mentioned are indicative of the fact when education is given according to the man power needs of the country and people allowed to read courses of their interest and also to persue careers in line with their qualification then a harmonious society in surely expected. The situation in Nigeria is people accept any job they can grab to survive not because they want it or are qualified for it but because that is what is available.

Guidance and counselling as an education service has with it the placement service, where individuals are helped either in the school or work place to be appropriately placed so that they would be able to deliver and have satisfying school or work life. Egbochukwu (2008) asserted that, in a guidance and counselling programme in the school setting, the counsellor's responsibility includes helping the students to plan their educational, vocational and personal-social activities. The counsellor can do this either through individual or group

guidance and counselling. Specifically, counsellors can assist students make appropriate school subject choices and assist in the transition from junior to senior schools. In addition, counsellors are expected to provide information about colleges, polytechnics, college of education and universities education and admission requirements. The counsellor is also expected to assist students in the area of personal-social, for example to secure interventions in the homes where there are problems or get treatment in specialist hospitals if they are sick. Counsellors can also assist the graduating students to visit work establishments, In addition counsellors are supposed to be in possession of work-study programmes. They are also in position to provide potential employers information about individual students, assist in job mobility, that is the transition from one level of employment to the other.

Guidance and counselling also provides opportunities through which clients can be placed in appropriate schools, training programmes, vocations, classes courses and jobs so that they can perform satisfactory. In other words, guidance and counselling has the tools that could be used to aid effective placement of students/workers within and outside the school setting. This would inturn help in reducing manpower wastage which would reduce poverty by people being happily and gainfully employed the result of which is a harmonious society.

Guidance and Counselling for Peaceful Coexistence

Guidance and counselling have come to be recognized as a programme aimed at making an individual discover himself, disabilities, strength, weaknesses, likes and dislikes so that comfortably he fits into the society he finds himself. The achievement of the aforementioned makes one to live harmoniously in his environment and thus making the society in general to have peaceful co-existence. The challenges of poverty in the society is so glaring that it culminated into conflicts with tribes, with work forces, within religious groups etc. which is a factor of the current security challenges in the country. If guidance and counselling services are fully adequately utilized within the schools and non-school settings, the populace would surely be made to understand the usefulness of peaceful co-existence and individuals counselled to getting self-reliant jobs. As long as the gap between the have and have nots continue to widen then poverty would continue to be a factor that increases conflicts and wars within communities.

Carew (2009), opined that Nigeria is a pluricultural society, there are over five hundred ethnic groups with diverse and socio-cultural differences. Trying to put these groups into harmony is not a simple task. To live in harmony means that these diverse groups are expected to work together in peaceful agreement environment based on respect and mutual cooperation. The counsellors role is to aid the “musical notes” combinations played by the various ethnic groups so as to

bring out a united song that will be pleasing to the ears. Thus the counsellor would need to combine the heterogeneous groups with distinct characteristics that should work together in unism in order to accomplish harmonious relationships.

There is hardly a time nowadays that you open a newspaper or listen to a radio or television that some type of crisis or attack is not mentioned in the country. We seem to be engulfed in crisis situation and security challenges is eminent, so much that one find it embarrassing for Nigeria as a nation with collective resolve to live harmoniously with one another. This engulfed situation has created overwhelming influence on the immediate and long range activities of Nigerians in various areas. Counsellors and experts in engineering and behavioural and attitudinal change, should therefore be involved in combating this crisis situation. Counsellors should take active part in the restoration of normal or minimizing the crisis engulfed in parts of Nigeria. The most intractable problem is human, especially violence and aggressive behavior of some people and youth in the country. The stand of guidance and counselling is that peace is the greatest factor facilitating sustainable economic investment and harmonious living, political unrest, breed general destruction, profound poverty, disease, famine, refuge problem and fear. Denga (2009) asserted that counselling psychology is replete with behavioral contingencies that can be used to modify maladaptive behaviour, chronic frustration, misplaced, aggression, excessive love of cupidity (or money)

and other assorted or variegated cargo of criminal behaviours. Counselling can use the Fruedian approach in handling such issues which he describes as “death-wish and sheer tendency to kill or maim” counsellors can suggest a host of peaceful measures to assuage those aggrieved in a variety of ways.

Guidance and counselling programme can partner with various States, Local and Federal Ministries of Education to introduce “Education for poverty alleviation”. An educational system that promotes self-reliance, sense of industry and build people’s capacity will go along way in mitigating economic frustration. Job creation at the grass root will keep people gainfully employed and reduce criminal tendencies.

Conclusion

Guidance and counselling as a programme in education if well-established can bring about the desired change in the society. Through it numerous activities individuals would be led to understand themselves, their capacities and capabilities as well as their weaknesses and short comings which in turn lead them to adjust to a meaningful and purposeful life style. By the time individuals are well guided in the types of professions to choose and how to go about getting the right job at the right time then most of the security challenges arising from poverty will be reduced. In a society where people are gainfully employed then the issue of peaceful coexistence can be seen to have a lead way because everyone would want

peace and harmonious living so that he can enjoy the dividends of his job. So impliedly Guidance and counselling should be given the necessary support and encouragement so that, the programme is well accepted in our educational institutions for the betterment of the nation.

Recommendations

1. The Nigerian Education system should focus on societal expectations and address issues of functional education, religious and cultural perceptions.
2. Vocational counselling should be given much attention, so that individuals are well guided into the kinds of jobs they would pursue which would help them reduce poverty.
3. There should be a partnership between counselling and various governments at all levels to address the issues of militancy, extremism etc.
4. A deliberate government policy in conjunction with guidance and counselling should be put in place to address the issues relating to youth and employment.

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