

**PROFESSIONAL COUNSELLING SERVICES AS PANACEA FOR
THE REALIZATION OF NIGERIA'S TRANSFORMATIONAL
AGENDA**

By

Dr. M. U. Tambawal

Department of Educational Foundations
Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto.
e-mail: malamiumar@udusok.edu.ng
08057278548 and 08028591217

AND

Shehu Yahaya Tsagem

Department of Education
Umar Musa 'Yar Adua University, Katsina.
e-mail:sheikhtsagem@gmail.com
08032868031

BEING A PAPER PRESENTED AT 2ND NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF COUNSELLING
ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA, KATSINA STATE CHAPTER (KTCASSON). HELD AT
CONFERENCE HALL, KATSINA STATE SECRETARIAT ON THE 4TH TO 8TH OF JUNE,
2012.

Introduction

Nigeria's development efforts have over the years been characterized by lack of continuity, consistency and commitment (3Cs) to agreed policies, programmes and projects as well as an absence of a long-term perspective. The culminating effect has been growth and development of the Nigerian economy without a concomitant improvement in the overall welfare of Nigerian citizens. Disregard to these 3Cs has resulted in rising unemployment, inequality and poverty. The need for a holistic transformation of the Nigerian state has necessitated a strategy that gives cognizance to these 3Cs. The current administration has responded to this need in its Transformation Agenda, which covers the period 2011 – 2015. The Transformation Agenda which is based and draws its inspiration from the NV 20:2020 and the 1st National Implementation Plan (NIP), aims to deepen the effects and provide a sense of direction for the current administration over the next four years. The agenda is based on a set of priority policies and programmes which when implemented will transform the Nigerian economy to meet the future needs of the Nigerian people.

A Presidential Committee set up for this purpose and technical experts drawn from the public and private sectors properly scrutinized and came up with prioritized policies, programmes and projects. While this exercise does not cover all projects in the 1st NIP and the 2011 budget but rationalizes them on the basis of certain criteria to produce a more compact set of programmes on which the government will deliver in the next four years. The transformation agenda's key priority projects are derived from 20 Ministries, Department and Agencies (MDAs) and sectors where a total of 1613 projects were identified, out of which 385 are new while 1361 are ongoing. *(Provide source of information)*

The scope covers issues such as macroeconomic framework and economic direction, governance, sector priority policies, programmes and projects of the following key thematic areas; (i) Real sector, (ii) Infrastructure, (iii) Human Capital, (iv) Enablers (which include private investment, finance mobilization, external economic relations and diplomacy, etc.) and (v) Monitoring and Evaluation (N. P. C., 2012).

Key Policies of the Transformation Agenda

The key policies to be pursued by government during the programme period are as follows:

- a. Ensuring greater harmony between fiscal and monetary policy. In this regard, the National Economic Management Team will be strengthened to facilitate effective coordination of fiscal and monetary policies.
- b. Pursuit of sound macroeconomic policies, including fiscal prudence supported by appropriate monetary policy to contain inflation at single digit.
- c. The budget process shall be reviewed to provide greater clarity of roles between the executive and legislature and to ensure that the appropriation bill is enacted into law within the first month of any year. The direction of policy shall draw inspiration from the US system and concentrate on setting allocation priorities rather than micro-budgeting or contesting figures with the executive.
- d. The existing revenue allocation formula shall be reviewed to achieve a more balanced fiscal federalism. This is expected to pave the way for more effective implementation of programmes at the sub-national level.
- e. Institutionalizing the culture of development planning at all levels of government and ensuring that the annual capital budget allocation takes a cue from medium and long term development

plans. Towards this end, government wants the National Assembly to expedite the passage of the Planning and Project Continuity Bill in order to strengthen the Plan-Budget link and reduce the high incidence of abandoned projects (Usigbe, 2012).

A Synopsis of the Transformation Agenda

Job creation - Government will pursue certain policy measures to reinvigorate various sectors of the economy and enhance their employment generating potentials, including implementing a youth employment safety net support programme that includes conditional cash transfer and vocational training; development of industrial clusters; reviewing of university curricular to align with industry job requirements and promotion of apprenticeship/work experience programmes and joint ventures; enforcement of mandatory sub-contracting and partnering with locals by foreign construction companies and implementation of mandatory skills transfer to Nigerians by foreign construction companies.

Governance - The critical policy thrust of governance will be to maximise the benefits the citizenry derive from governance through more effective and efficient use of public resources, proper financial management and fiscal prudence. This entails adequate emphasis on the attainment of law and order, guarantee of safety of lives and property and the provision of an environment in which people find happiness and fulfilment.

Public expenditure management - Government will entrench a culture of accountability by beginning to sanction and prosecute officers that breach established financial management rules and regulations. The monetization policy will also be strictly enforced.

Justice and judiciary - The policy thrusts of the justice and judiciary sector will be achieving greater independence for the judiciary in terms of funding, improving capacity and efficiency in judicial service delivery, eliminating all forms of corruption in the administration of justice

in Nigeria, enhancing the capacity of the justice ministry to superintend prosecution and improving professionalism in legal practice for better service delivery.

Foreign policy and economic diplomacy - Nigeria's foreign missions are to be properly focused and well funded in order to meet the foreign policy goals of the country. Government may rationalise missions and appoint honorary consuls to deal with consular issues in areas where Nigeria's interest does not loom large as practiced by other countries.

Legislature - Under the planned period, the thrust of the policy will be to facilitate the creation of a dynamic, constitutionally effective and public responsive legislature that is proactive in its legislative duties and independent but aware of its constitutional partnership with the executive and judicial arms of government. Other policy measures include regular auditing of the activities and publication of annual reports of the national and state legislatures to promote greater transparency and accountability in the use of public funds; promote greater public interest in the scrutiny of legislative actions; and inform public debate to these ends. Attention will be paid to human capital development policies, programmes and projects because of government's belief that investing in human capital development is critical.

Education - Under Priority Policies for the Development of Education, the administration will promote primary enrolment of all children of school-going age, irrespective of the income profile of the policies; engage in the provision of infrastructure such as classrooms across all levels, so as to ease over-crowding, increase access and reduce pupil/teacher ratio; and enhance the efficiency, resourcefulness and competence of teachers and other educational personnel through training, capacity building and motivation.

Health sector - The underpinning policy for the inputs towards achieving the human capital development goal of the Vision 20: 2020 strategy is the National Strategic Health

Development Plan (NSHDP). The NSHDP is the vehicle for actions at all levels of the health care delivery system which seeks to foster the achievement of the MDGs and other local and international targets and declaration commitments.

Labour and productivity - Here, the agenda is to focus on the implementation of the National Action Plan on Employment Creation (NAPEC) targeted at creating five million new jobs annually within the next three years, establishment of more skills acquisition centres; implementation of local content policy in all the sectors, especially in the oil and gas industry in order to boost job creation in the country. The transformation agenda also provides for Key Policies for the Real Sector under the plan period. Its policies for developing the seven growth drivers are agriculture and food security, water resources, solid minerals, manufacturing, oil and gas, trade and commerce as well as culture and tourism.

Infrastructure policies, programmes and projects - Government will seek to address the infrastructure deficit in the country in key development areas such as power, transportation, housing, Information Communication Technology (ICT), Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and Niger Delta. The Transformation Agenda stresses the critical importance of these areas in the national development.

Power - Expenditure aims at increasing generation and transmission capacity in order to provide adequate and sustainable power, intensifying rural electrification efforts in a more efficient manner; and achieving optimal energy mix using the most appropriate technology. The strategies to be adopted in achieving these include creating a deregulated and competitive electric power sector to attract foreign and local investments; ensuring a viable commercial framework for the electric power sector including a tariff regime that promotes transparency, guarantees security of investments and a reasonable rate of return on investments; ensuring

the transmission capacity and providing redundancies in the transmission system so as to ensure a fully integrated network that minimises transmission losses while strengthening grid security.

Information and Communication Technology - The agenda will focus on the development of a national Knowledge Based Economy (KBE) 10-year Strategy Plan, sustained human capacity development in ICT; creation of a favourable and friendly investment and enterprise environment through transparency in tax systems, anti-trust laws, incentives and trade policies that would stimulate local and foreign investments in ICT, as well as development of infrastructure, particularly global connectivity as a prerequisite to leveraging the benefits of the global economy, improving domestic productivity and attracting foreign investments. Other strategies are: creation of an enabling environment through appropriate policies, legal, regulatory and institutional frameworks and enhancing Public - Private Partnership (PPP) in project funding, financing and management.

Niger Delta - The main policy thrust will be to entrench peace and stability to drive sustainable socio-economic development in the area with the aim of reducing the high incidence of poverty, high rate of unemployment and high level of insecurity.

Transportation - Government expects total investment would cover roads, railways, inland waterways, ports and airports development. The main policy thrust during the Plan period is to evolve a multimodal, integrated and sustainable transport system, with greater emphasis on rail and inland waterways transportation. An enabling environment for Public-Private Partnership (PPP) is being created by designing new policies, legislation and institutional framework that would support the envisaged transformation of the sector (Usigbe, 2012).

Professional Counselling Services and the Transformation Agenda

Professional counselling services (CASSON, 2009) that can be rendered through partnerships, collaborations and consultancies, for both the public and private establishments and agencies, in the following areas will prove invaluable to the realization of the transformation agenda:

- i. **Rehabilitation and Behaviour Change Counselling Intervention.** Through Cultural and Moral Orientation Projects, Educational Interventions and Project Initiatives etc. this counselling service can be geared towards a total overhaul of the individuals' behaviours in both the public and private sectors especially looking at how the agenda has emphasized on the need for good governance by both the executive, legislative and judicial arms of the government and the championing of financial management prudence. School graduates can also be targeted with a view to producing behaviourally changed and morally upright individuals who will prove to be indispensable instruments for the new envisioned Nigeria and which will easily be realized through the entrenched scheme of the transformation agenda.
- ii. **Human Development Initiatives.** Counselling plays a very vital role in the overall development of individuals in all spheres of life. The transformation agenda has greatly emphasized on human development through initiatives in the sectors of education, health and labour and productivity. Counselling by partnerships, collaborations and consultancies will provide initiatives through schemes like Child Development and Protection Projects, Youth Development Projects, Women's Empowerment Projects, Social Re-orientation and Human Development Impact Projects etc. which will lead to the realization of the objectives upon which the transformation agenda was built.

- iii. **Organized Guidance and Counselling Services.** Such services in educational establishments extends for the purposes of career development, eradication of youth restiveness, cultism, examination malpractices, improvement of self-concept, academic performance and self-esteem among target clients. This can also be adapted to suit non school settings and because the objectives of the transformation agenda clearly targeted for a revamping of the whole governance philosophy of the country such services will readily come handy in respect to work and workplace settings. Occupational guidance and counselling services have proven to be very valuable for the realization of the optimum in work settings and conditions hence, their employment in this regard will also prove precious for the realization of the objectives of the transformation agenda.
- iv. **Human Resources Development.** Because counselling has always played a noticeable role in coming up with means for developing and awakening the best in individuals and helping them achieved that also, professional counselling services in the context of structured interventions for quality professional commitment in organizations like the oil industry, banking sector, telecommunication and manufacturing sectors will definitely play a vital role in the implementation of the transformation agenda and also for the main key enablers of the scheme.
- v. **Personnel or Human Capacity Research.** Counselling has always thrived by building a strong base on research. Personnel and human capacity are always the bedrock on which organization and administration is entrenched and for enhancement of productivity in all organized work settings in the private and public sectors; or for purposes of recruitments, promotions or projects development counselling is a solution provider because actions will be based on facts made feasible by counselling research methods and techniques.

- vi. **Peace Mediation.** One of the key areas of concern and recognized as vital for the realization of the transformation agenda is Niger delta. It is also a fact that the area is notoriously known for its communal clashes, youth unrest and politically motivated uprisings, wanton criminal activities made easy by the proliferation of arms, etc. Without any doubt, counselling will prove effective for overcoming such contending issues through means such as interventions in families, neighbourhoods, communities and organizations, particularly in terms of conflict and crisis resolution.
- vii. **Legal aid mitigation linkages and outreaches for prospective clients.** Achieving greater independence for the judiciary, eliminating all forms of corruption in the administration of justice in Nigeria, and improving professionalism in legal practice for better service delivery are main key issues of the transformation agenda in the field of judiciary. Counselling can readily be brought in here to sensitize the sector and also through proper guidance clients will easily know where to take and how best to tackle concerned issues. Counselling can also come in to act as liaison or avenue through which people can pursue in order to get desired legal services through referrals.
- viii. **Capacity Building and Enhancement.** The transformation agenda has emphasized and encompassed all aspect of human and capital development and with this, counselling is one aspect that can single handedly make such a realization possible. Services can be rendered for personnel (Such as teachers, para-counsellors, child and youth development officers, social workers, mental health workers, personnel management officers, etc) for improving their skills for human relations management, guidance and counselling, peace and harmony reinforcement in organizations. And this will undoubtedly prove very important to the realization of the transformation agenda's goals and objectives.

- ix. **Action Research and Training in Research Skills.** With the planning and implementation of the transformation agenda come the need for a change in attitude and philosophy and also the need for the training and retraining of personnel in order to instill the desired thinking and discipline which will pave the way for achieving the stated objectives. There is also the need to employ people who are capable and eager for development in various fields but, especially for the main that are pointed out as vital to the agenda. Counselling will be of immense importance for carrying out such researches and proffering solutions for such as it is well known that such skills are deeply entrenched in the counselling profession. Such skills can aim for organizations and establishments, especially in terms of evaluation of potentials and capacities in systems and organizations.
- x. **Assessing Programmes and Policies Impacts.** Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is an essential component of programme implementation of the transformation agenda. It is a veritable tool for tracking developments in policy and programme performance. It attempts to measure inputs, outputs, outcomes, and the impact of policies, programmes and projects on the economy and the welfare of the citizenry. In order to perform its role effectively, there are preset goals and targets along with key indicators against which performance is measured or assessed. To everyone's knowledge follow-up is an aspect that is deeply entrenched in guidance and counselling services involving visiting of institutions and employment establishments to find out how well the objectives of the guidance programme are being realized and what other counselling need is required (Eweniyi, Olowe and Olagunju, 2002). In essence, counselling can lend this professional service for the realization of the transformation agenda's objectives.

Conclusion

We cannot be oblivious to the importance of guidance and counselling programme to the realization of the transformation agenda's objectives, more so, when the nation is looking up political, economic, social and/or technological avenues for an immediate and distant ideal Nigerian of full and bright opportunity for all. It can easily be considered that professional counselling services can be the talisman for that, hence the government should give it a portion on the dance floor to waltz its own kind of steps.

References

N. P. C. (2012). *The Transformation Agenda 2011 – 2015: Summary of Federal Government's Key Priority Policies, Programmes and Projects*. Retrieved from <http://www.npc.gov.ng/vault/Transformation.pdf>

Usigbe, L. (2012). *Transformation Agenda – Breakdown*. Retrieved from <http://www.resourcedat.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/TRANSFORMATION-AGENDA-BREAKDOWN.pdf>

CASSON (2009). *Introducing Counselling Association of Nigeria*. Abuja, Nigeria: Author.

Eweniyi, G. B., Olowe, D. T. & Olagunju, M. K. O. (2002). *Essentials of Guidance and Counselling*. Lagos, Nigeria: Fembol Integra Nigeria Ltd.

OBSERVATIONS

- 1. No abstract**
- 2. Too little quotations from authorities**
- 3. The paper needs to recommend based on the discussion**
- 4. The references are too scanty.**

*****Improve on all the above observations**