

**GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING AND THE  
CHALLENGES OF EDUCATIONAL REFORMS IN  
NIGERIA**

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## **Abstract**

*This paper discussed the challenges of Guidance and Counselling for education reforms in Nigeria with specific reference to the Basic education sub-sector. Changes in education often come when the current practices are challenged and same questions being asked about the way things are done, which brought about the reforms in primary and junior secondary levels of education in Nigeria. Guidance and Counselling is discussed in this context so as to have a significant role of assisting individuals through the various systems for proper adjustment and understanding of individual strength and weaknesses. This paper conclude by establishing that Guidance and Counselling is very relevant in meeting the needs of education reforms at the Basic Education level and therefore recommend among other things that, there is the need for capacity building and professional development for members of the Counselling Association of Nigeria to abreast with modern trend comparable with any standard in the world.*

## **Introduction**

Changes in education often come when the current practices are challenged and questions being asked about the way things are done. The search for a more efficient way of achieving educational objectives may lead to proposals for either a new way of doing the same thing, or restoring the current provisions to enable achievement of the same set of goals. Changes however do not normally come about just because someone decides they want a change. There must be an event which informs those in charge of education that the present system is either not achieving or incapable of enabling the achievement of development goals. Once that decision is made, what remains is the attempt to carefully identify not only why the old system can no longer be continued in its present form, but also how to provide a more acceptable alternative.

Durkheim (1938), argued that changes economic, social and political situations in both developing countries have combined to create needs for

constants innovations and the reforms in education. He further stated thus:-

*Educational transformations are always the result and the symptom of social transformation in terms of which they are to be explained. In order for people to feel at any particular moment in time the need to change its educational system, it is necessary that new ideas and needs have emerged in which the former system is no longer adequate. (Durkheim 1938:167)*

In the case of Nigeria, upon recognition of the education policy planners and administration of the short comings of the pre-independence education. Policy of Nigeria come up with a reform of education in which Guidance and Counselling featured prominently as a clause for implementation. The 6-3-3-4 system replaced the 7-5-2-3 system which was echoed at September 1980 seminar on the new system of education in Bagauda, Kano. Concerning the reform in that documents, the National Education Research Council states:-

*The new secondary school proposed in the Federal Republic of Nigeria National Policy on Education is an innovation, indeed a transformation of the present system which is a five year course followed by a two year Higher School certificate course, neither of which is employment oriented. Both aspects appear to prepare for the Higher institutions in a number of disciplines providing university graduates with no supporting intermediate personnel, therefore limiting their productivity, for there, the range of disciplines the student could pursue in the university is equally restricted and particularly deficient in mathematical, scientific, technological and agricultural disciplines. To redress the situation both at the higher institutions and the secondary school, the 3-3 structure has been proposed to channel junior secondary school pupils into the senior secondary school as well as into teacher training and crafts (NERC 1980:29).*

The new system was intended to reflect the fact that educational structure in the country will be made up of six year in primary school, three years in junior secondary school and three years in senior secondary school. The main objective is to diversify educational services for Nigerian children. The curriculum for the secondary schools especially junior secondary school is more technical and vocational oriented while the senior secondary curriculum is more academic. Students who passed the end of junior secondary school examination will then be admitted into the senior secondary schools.

It is in recognition of the laudable importance of Guidance and Counselling to the new educational system that the policy states:-

*In view of apparent ignorance of many young people about career prospects and in view of personal maladjustment among school children, career officers and counsellors will be appointed in post-primary institutions. Since qualified personnel in this category is scarce government will continue to make provision for the training of interested teacher in Guidance and Counselling. Guidance and Counselling will also feature in teacher education programme. (NPE1981)*

The new National Policy on Education (1981) became the bedrock of all future educational reform in Nigeria. Major of such reforms was in the primary school sub-sector of education where there was the UPE in 1976 and the UBE 1999. The task of this paper there is to examine the challenges of Guidance and Counselling in the current UBE programme which encompasses the 6 year primary education and 3 year junior secondary education.

### **The Ideals and Concepts of Guidance and Counselling In Educational Reforms**

Sherter and Stone (1981) save Guidance and Counselling as the process of helping individuals to understand themselves and their world, while Olayinka (1993) posit on counselling as the learning process which stresses more rational planning, problem solving, decision making intentionally prevention of severe and adjustment

problems and support for situational pressures arising in the everyday lives of normal people. From the two definitions one can safely assert that Guidance and counselling is a helping programme carried out mainly by interpersonal communication where by a counsellor helps the client in using adjustment strategies and skills in gaining insight about himself/herself to proposely maximize his or her natural potentialities.

Since Guidance and Counselling is aimed at helping individuals gain insight into themselves and maximizing endowed potentials then it is equally in line to be fused into the commercial Basic education for as Tahir (2006) stated that, the need to ensure equitable educational opportunities especially in developing countries has been highlighted since the jountein Conference Education for All in 1990. This internal commitment to education on equal basis stems from an understanding that the education holds the hey to individual and national progress and its entronement of democratic values among citizens. Thus the National Policy on Education (2004, revised) states that, the government recognizes the education and an instrument per-excellence for affecting national development.

If then education is the key to individual and national development, the Guidance and Counselling has the contingencies of identifying individuals potentials and advising them appropriately for proper subjects and career choices, for adjustment within the school society and top it all assisting them to make realistic decisions about their future based on the understanding of the skills, capabilities, abilities and weakness.

The Universal Basic Education programme was introduced in the country in September 1999, by the Government of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo to serve as a catalyst to the dearth of the entire Nigerian educational system, but most specifically the basic education sub-sector. The long neglect of the basic education sub-sector by successive governments led to limited access to, poor retention in, and poor quality of basic education in the country. Counselling

quality, the rate of illiteracy was unacceptably high, the condition of the school infrastructure was appalling, teachers were poorly trained and poorly motivated and school drop-out rate was increasing at an unacceptable scale, while rendering of basic education continue to dwindle. In view of the aforementioned, the UBE implementation guidelines brought about specific objectives of UBE as:-

1. Developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotions;
2. The provision of free, universal basic education for every Nigerian of school going age;
3. Reducing drastically the incidence of drop-out from the formal educational system;
4. Catering for the learning needs of young persons who for one reason or another, have led to interrupt their schooling through appropriate form of complimentary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education.
5. Ensuring the acquisition of the ethical, moral and civil values needed for the laying of a solid foundation for lifelong learning; etc.

Based on the above stated objectives Guidance and Counselling is replete with behaviour modification theories to address the issues of drop-outs and acquisition of ethical, moral and civil values needed for achieving lifelong learning. With proper programmes of Guidance and Counselling in the UBE programme individuals would be assisted to participate in all school activities by way of identifying their weak points in the school which could be either academic or persona-social so that proper adjustment guides could be initiated in such a way that the individuals come to terms with reality and adjustment to the existing situations.

Also Guidance and counselling could at this level assist the product of basic education into developing career which can ultimately lead them to a useful living. Erueseghebe (2010) has opined that career development is the gradual step-

by-step advanced movements in one's career development in the first stage of working life and is usually faced with decisions on career patterns that could have a profound effect upon the rest on one's working life. It is the period when any doubt or problems needs serious analysis and rectification in order to pave way forward for those solid career formulations. Essentially it is a time to take stock, consider your current position and plan for the future. For the young and serious career builders, they require confidence and determination that comes with knowing who and where they are and to look at the; future with unique and fragment of action for purpose of achieving better career success and personal fulfilment.

Every individual at work today faces rear and seemingly ever greater challenges and to develop the ability to adapt and cope with those unrelenting challenges that come from reality of knowing your strength, performance, derives, motives, where their qualities can best be applied and what you expect from your work and career. Career development helps in individuals of every background and age groups who are seriously interested in analysing their current situations with total honesty and confidentiality, with an objective, non-judgemental and qualified professionals in counselling by ensuring an ideal future with a unique and an exceptional development which is enhanced by the acquisition of relevant information, knowledge and skills to be used in any choosen career.

On the need for career development in the basic education programme Alao (1985), asserted that unemployment situation in Nigeria is a major concern to Government at all levels and results from traceable lapses in educational policies, retirements, job losses and over production of man power in certain occupations. As a result young Nigerian graduate today without any foreseeable realities of job rather they compete for the very few or nonexisting job opportunities. The situation has led to rise in crimes such as armed-robbery, human trafficking, kidnapping, drug addiction, area boyism, political vandalism

etc. This has made Government at all levels in Nigeria to call for a reappraisal of the education programmes and preferably in inclusion of appropriate career development strategies in the school system. It is therefore, important to stress that the basic education programme introduced with the UBE should be properly designed to ensure efficient career development which will lead to an ideal future for members of the large Nigerian society.

Guidance and Counselling can further stem the progress of UBE to develop in the individuals an insight into career choice and development at the early stage of education by implementation the three fold functions as accentrated by Kocchar (2007) as:

- i. Adjustmental
- ii. Orientational
- iii. Developmental

The adjustment role is such that counsellors would assist their clients in making possible decision on their placement and adjustment regarding personal-social, educational as well as vocational issues. While the Orientational function could take the form where students are helped to be exposed to education and world of work available in their immediate environments. Here clients are assisted to make a reliable plan as long term programming and have a direction towards personal aims to be achieved. The developmental nature assisted individuals to solved any cropped up between through the use of preventive measures.

### **Challenges of Guidance and Counselling Services in UBE Programme**

The introduction of the basic education sub-sector is a great challenge to problems ranging from 3 year of early childhood care development and education, 6 year of primary and 3 year of junior secondary school (JSS). It also covers special intervention directed at Nomadic and migrate children, mass literacy as well as almajiris and other vulnerable and excluded groups. Soka (2009), identified how enrolment retention at the basic education level and how



carrying capacity at the tertiary level have created additional challenges.

Sokan (2009), further observed that there is a wide enrolment disparity between the expected and actual at the basic education sub-sector. At the early childhood care development education (ECCDE) level, only 2.02 million are enrolled out of the projected 22 million leaving a shortfall of 19.98 million out of school while at the primary education level only 24.42 leaving a shortfall of 10.5 million children who should be in school. At the JSS level only 3.2 million are enrolled from projected data of 9.27 million a shortfall of 6 million.

The picture is not different at the non formal level out of the population figure of 40 million non-literate adults, only 500, 000 are enrolled at the adult education centres leaving a shortfall of 39.5 million. Out of the 3.5 million nomadic and migrant children only 450, 000 are enrolled leaving 3.1 million intended learners unenrolled.

Some of the factors responsible for low enrolment statistics at the basic education level range from economic to persona-social. Poverty has been found to be among the major limitation to some parents/guardians in enrolling their children/ward to go to school. Guidance information service can be useful tool in the proposed open schooling for children out the formal school system.

The effect of HIV/AIDS pandemic has made many children orphans who have to drop out of school to tend for their young ones. Guidance and Counselling services is necessary to influence policy to design flexible learning hours, for such children. Guidance and Counselling will make such children bear the grief more tolerably and provide coping mechanism for such children playing the role of an adult.

The challenge of equity has been accentrated by factors like myths, tradition, belief and religion. Education is still bedevilled by the girl/boy child syndrome. It is common knowledge that some parts of the worth is confronted with the girl/child syndrome where girls are forced into early marriages rather than sending them to school making the gender gap disparity ride in favour of boys. The

reverse is however the case in the South East where some parents would rather send their sons to be apprentice rather than enrol them in school. Enriched information services, can go along way in enriching the school enrolment campaign planned by various governments.

Yusuf (2009), identified quality assurance as a challenge in the reform, where he posited that, the Educational National standards of establishments of Institution act 16 of 1986 together with 1999 constitution, empower the ministry of education to ensure minimum standards are set, maintained and improved in all schools of the federation. This responsibility is delegated to Federal Inspectorate Service Department (FIS). However, the Federal ministry of Education in its new education Roadmap has develop a quality assurance document and is working on the legal authority with the national assembly.

Quality assurance would undoubtedly stem the tide of the poor quality and 'half backed' product at each level of our educational ladder. Guidance and Counselling services such as appraisal and determine their potentials, interest and aptitude, this is readily applicable in the national continuous assessment instrument which has been put to use at the basic education sub-sector with effect from 2008.

Placement as a service in Guidance and Counselling will ensure that students are appropriately placed and monitored based on their ability. Placement service is put to test especially in the transition of pupils from primary six to JSS one. Although the policy on abolition of exams for placement from primary six to junior secondary school one is being strongly contested by the Federal Ministry of Education. Placement services should ensure that each Junior Secondary School (JSS) has the right mix of students, the high fliers, the average and the weak.

Appraisal and placement services will ensure that the right calibre of students are sent to Gifted Academy which is the institute meant to future scientist and technicians in Nigeria.

The curriculum for Basic Education also poses a challenge to education

reforms which Sokan (2009), asserted that, in order to capture the demand of a challenging society, the new 9 year Basic education curriculum has provided for the teachings of the Nigerian constitution and ethics captured in the primary social studies, while HIV/AIDS awareness education and computer studies are captured in primary science.

Adequate information services can aid curriculum development and review. At the basic education level, effective implementation of new 9 year basic education curriculum requires both information and orientation services to teachers to effectively master the new contents as well as new methodology in curriculum delivery.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has attempted to analyse the relevance of Guidance and Counselling programmes in meeting the challenges of educational reforms in Nigeria particularly the Universal Basic Education programme. There is need for the establishment of strong partnership between the Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) and Government in the implementation of the just designed roadmap for the country.

### **Recommendations**

This paper recommends that for Guidance and Counselling to effectively meet the challenges of educational reforms in Nigeria especially at the Basic Education level, there is the need for the following:

1. Capacity building and professional development for members of the Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) to be abreast with modern trends comparable with any standard in the world.
2. Formal vocational education to be introduced at the Basic education level, so that pupils would be guided into the right thinking of appropriate careers to be pursued.
3. Training and retraining of professionally qualified counsellors on regular basis and they should be involved in the formulation and implementation

of curriculum for the basic education programme.

4. That all reforms in education should take cognisance of the immediate needs of people, so that the current unemployment rate, indiscipline and area boyism are minimised.

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