

Professional Development of Counsellors in Facilitating Positive Moral Traits of the Adolescents in Nigerian Secondary Schools

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Abstract

Education is a basic force for the socio-economic development and transformation of any society. Education, by nature is one of the most important instruments for rapid social change and modernization in the world today. Effective education is usually provided in a formal school environment, expected to be in which students feel safe and comfortable and are encouraged to learn. However, adolescent students whose age ranges from 13 – 15 years irrespective of sex and class level, tend to display aggressive behaviours which hinders not only learning but also requires professional treatment by Counsellors. This paper therefore, examines adolescent's moral traits in Nigeria's secondary schools, Counselling, professionalism, and development in Nigerian secondary schools. Recommendations on the implications of these were made.

INTRODUCTION

Guidance and Counselling services as rendered by many today, has been regarded as a sacred duty ordained by God. Odebunmi, (1985), Aluede,(2005) states that, in the past the services of helping was carried out by parents/guardians, priests, Imams, older siblings and so on, in order to assist and help people live in peace, harmony and progress. The kind of services given was not based on professional ethics. Lannap, (1992) observes that, class monitors, senior school prefects and teachers used to provide one form of guidance and Counselling service or the other in schools. This type of practice still going on, in many schools in Nigeria today.

A school is an institution that provides education for the young people. Monthana, Lemmer, Mda and Precious, (2000) explained that school is a site where children of school going age are taught. Such schools can be public or private. Okoro and Egwuasi, (2011) further expatiates that the school environment is expected to be one in which students feel safe and comfortable, and are encouraged to learn. In order to achieve this, there are sets of people who

work with the students within the schools environment. They are the school administrators, teachers, counsellors and other non-teaching staff. The duties of counselors in schools are of paramount importance, because students encounter a number of problems which may be emotional, persona-social and educational. It is the counselors who can assist them to overcome these problems. If these problems are not properly managed and solved (Okoro & Ekwuasi ,2011). Lannap, (1992) opines that, they may cause emotional instability in students particularly the adolescent ones.

Adolescent, has been defined as a way of life and span of time in the physical and psychological development of individual. It represents a period of growth and change in nearly all aspects of the child's physical, mental, social and emotional life. Hurluk ,(1970) states that, it is a time of new experiences and new relationship with adults, as well as peers.

As the school, adolescents and Counselling develop the issue of professionalism comes in. This paper therefore, examines these concepts and specially focused on the following:-

- Professionalism,
- Counselling,
- Adolescent immoral traits in schools
- Counselling strategies,
- Recommendations,
- Conclusion.

THE CONCEPT OF PROFESSIONALISM

Profession is any type of job or occupation that requires special and continuous training as well as high level of education. Hornby, (2010) further states that, professional is connected with a job that needs special training and skills. Professionalism or occupation rationalization, (Cullen, 1978) observes is driven by a number of factors. He further states, that the complexity of modern society calls for the services of a multiplicity of diverse occupations, which demands the preparation of a number of people for different occupations. For any occupation to attain the professional status it must possess the following features; such as autonomy, examination for admission of candidates, law regulating the conduct of members etc

Development refers to gradual growth of something, so that it becomes more advanced and stronger. The professional development of Counsellors in this context therefore, implies gradual growth of Counselling and/or Counsellors by way of training, acquisition of more skills, licences, enabling law of practice and continuous service delivery to clients.

INSTITUTIONIZATION OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING

The history of guidance and Counselling in Nigeria, as a service package to clients started in 1959, at the St. Theresa College Oke-Ado. Several scholars such, ,Ipaye, (1983), Okon,(2004), Bulus, (1995) etc, reported that, the Catholic nuns organized career talk to their graduating students of the college and the outcome of the talk became the success story of Guidance and Counselling services efforts. This led to another one held at Aiyetoro in 1963 (Ipaye, 1983).

The problems brought about by the civil war 1967 – 1970 further led to the development of professional Guidance and Counselling service delivery . The serious problems of post war as evidenced in the political, social, economic, religious and educational spheres are paramount.

The National Policy on Education which was introduced in 1977 brought about so many confusing structural changes. The increase in students’ enrolment at all levels of education, created more roles to Guidance and Counselling professionals in Nigeria.

Another important progress recorded in the professional development of Guidance and Counselling practice, was the mass and rapid training of Counsellors by a number of Universities, particularly, University of Ibadan, Jos and Zaria.

THE ACTIVITIES OF COUNSELLING ASSOCIATION

Aluede,(2005) reveals, that important development of Counselling professionalism can be seen in the following:-

- i) School Counselling programme exist in secondary schools in Nigeria.
- ii) All the Federal Government’s owned secondary schools have functional school Counseling centres with professional Counsellors in charge.

- iii) In most states' owned secondary schools Counsellors are saddled with teaching and other ancillary responsibilities. Some form of career Guidance and Counseling programmes exist and are usually provided by career masters/mistresses.
- iv) In most secondary schools, Counselors are saddled with teaching and other ancillary responsibilities such to the detriment of their counseling practice,
- v) Many Nigerian Guidance and Counselling education departments are making remarkable contributions to the development of counselling practice in Nigeria, through the training of potential counsellors, even at the undergraduate levels, so as to meet with the high demand in the society.
- vi) Many Universities have/are establishing Counselling and Guidance department and recruiting specialists for teaching appointments. Many of these counselor educators are now in the rank of Professors.
- vii) The major problems being experienced in the development of Counseling profession according to Aluede, (2005) are:
 - That, the Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) produced draft copies of its constitution only in 2009 for perusal by members.
 - The Counselling Association of Nigeria also is making serious effort in advancing the standards for professional qualifications and ethical responsibilities of counsellors.
 - Presently, there is no law guiding the practice of counselling. Hence anybody can assume the role of counsellor.

THE CONCEPT OF COUNSELLING

Counselling has been defined by different authors. Counselling is seen as a face to face interaction between the counsellor and person perceived to be in a temporary state of indecision, confusion, tension etc. Bulus (1995) cited Denga (1983), Mallum (183), Ipaye (1983), Makinde (1984) and Nwoye (1990), to but a few, reported that they see counselling as a helping relationship. Bulus, (1995) further explains that, it has the goal to assist the client resolve his problems. Shertzer and Stone (1976) described counseling as an interaction process which facilitates meaningful understanding and/or clarification of goals and values for future behaviours.

Of recent, Akinade, (2005) opines that, Counselling is the application of mental health, psychological or human development principles, through cognitive, affective and behavioural or systematic intervention strategies, that address health, personal growth or career development, as well as pathology.

The definitions show that, Counselling is a dynamic and educative in nature.

THE ADOLESCENTS

Since adolescence represents a period of growth in almost all aspect of life, social and emotional life will be examined within the context of school life. Adolescents whose age ranges from 13 – 15 years are associated with aggressive tendencies that often destabilize their relations with parents, peers and academic progress in school. Aggressive tendencies Okoro & Egwuasi , (2011) observes are exhibited by both boys and girls, though boys are believed to be more aggressive than girls. Frank, (1998) discovered that, the problem of violence in school is prevalent in the highest class of primary school, as well as, lower secondary school classes.

BEHAVIOURS OF THE ADOLESCENTS IN SCHOOLS

Educationists have explained the activities and behaviours of adolescents students which are mostly strange to parents and students, some of which are:-

- i) Underachievement in education pursuits as a result of poor concentration, examination misconducts.
- ii) Lack of respect for constituted authority – rebellion, riots, cultism
- iii) Anti- social activities – bad dressing, bullying, smoking, stealing etc.
- iv) Immoral acts: sexual abuse, homosexuality, lesbianism etc.

The existence of anti-social activities in Nigerian secondary schools is no longer news (Imogie, 2011). The practices are a reflection of a decaded larger society. It has been observes that some of the following factors contribute to their emergence:

- Students' home background
- Peer pressure and influence

- Uncontrolled growth of students' enrolment without adequate staff to supervise the secondary education system.

The rapid development of new media communication such as radio, television, magazines, internet and movies present to the child particularly adolescents and youths many different ways of life, most especially corrupt ones. They therefore see and hear many different opposing views contrary to what would never have been presented to him as part of family living, insecurity, crimes, violence etc (Gbenda 2007).

THE ROLE OF PROFESSIONAL COUNSELLORS

The definitions given above imply that, Counselling is a dynamic and educative in nature. Counsellors, aims at achieving a number of goals through counseling interactions such as:

- **Behavioural changes:** Whatever happens at the counseling session, the goal is to effect changes in the behaviour of client, that will make him/her more productive life, satisfying life, that is relationship with others, family situation, change in personality organization etc (Bulus, 1995, Lannap, 2004)
- **Establishment of positive mental health:** This is the goal of modern counseling. Patterson, (1971) feels that, counseling for the sole purpose of improving or restoring mental health, adjustment or function of the clients.
- **Problem resolutions or symptom removal:** This is another goal of counseling, because counselors helps in resolving conflicts arising from bereavement, traumatic crisis etc
- **Personal effectiveness and decision making:** Counselling help clients to achieve personal effectiveness and success in decision making process etc.

NIGERIAN ADOLESCENTS AND MORAL DECADENCE:

Nigeria as a country has been greatly blessed by nature. Nigeria has rich aptitudes and talents of large populations, huge physical reserve and abundant untapped natural resources. Nigeria can seize the positives of good governance to overcome its challenges and attain rapid development. However, Nigerian youths are facing serious problems that, are affecting not only the individuals, the society but, also the nation at large. This is as a result of destabilization of moral principles and values which lead corruption and other vices among children, youths, and adults who learn to do anything to get money, position, etc. Some of the effects of this problems

are; high rate of juvenile delinquency, etc. These and other related vices increase the high rate of moral decadence.

Ubom, (2001) as cited in Chiaga, (1994) that investigated the moral decadence among Nigerian youths, revealed that 80% of the respondents attributed moral decadence among the youths to bad life exhibited by their parents, teachers, leaders and many Nigerians. The study further exposed the fact that, adults are the originators of the evils, like bribery, corruption, promiscuity and prostitutions, a cult practices, drug abuse, indiscipline, stealing and cheating, 419 (duping), materialistic tendencies, excessive freedom, drinking, lawlessness, Godlessness, laziness, insurbodination, lack of respect for life (murder), abortion etc. The study concluded that, 55% of the respondents felt that, Nigerian youths have imbibed these evils, so much so that, in addition to the above, they are stepped in stealing and cheating.

Okon, (2004) opines that, there are visible signs, that many of us have lost touch with ourselves and moral values system. Hence, many people have embraced and worshipped social vices such as hypocrisy, nepotism, corruption, bribery, embezzlement of public funds, dishonesty, tribalism, selfishness, laziness, greed, grafts, avarice, conformity, kidnapping, wonton destruction of residences and places of worships, rebellion etc.

The issue of religious intolerance, has been and still is the most dangerous feature of moral decadence that cut across not only the youths, adolescents, but also children, intellectuals and other people. This has direct moral implication for the school system because it affects teaching and learning as well as moral values of the students.

Therefore, in order to see vividly the incidences of moral decadence among adolescents in Nigerian secondary schools, the following issues will be examined with a view to making a case for counselling intervention. The action, is in line with professional development of Counselling.

(a) **Religious Intolerance:** Morality to some people is an aspect of religion, while others argued that, it has nothing to do with that. However, many experts, asserted that man is by nature religious (Enang, 2007). It is often believed that, adherent to a religion influences moral behaviour of the people. She cited a study which revealed that Mc Mohan and Resuick, (1973) found no significant correlation between anti-social

behaviour and religious beliefs. However, Mbiti, (1990) observes that, “Africans are notoriously religious and each people has its own religious system with a set of beliefs and practice”. Therefore, in consideration of these assertions, on the teachings of the two religions in Nigeria. Christianity and Islam will be a point of reference, on the importance of morality, principles, norms and values.

Kolo, (1988) states that, adherence to the teachings of Bible, by implication, teachings and exemplary life of prophet Jesus (A.S) brings peace, harmony, tranquility to the individual, community and the nation in general. On morality, Enang, (2007) argued that of all religions of the world, Christianity has the greatest influence on moral character. She stressed that, it has a transforming power and can change the inner core of a man. It raises above all other religions in both theory and practice of virtues and piety. Mbiti, (1990) further explains that, discipline in Christianity varies widely. Some independent Churches are very strict, forbidding their members not to eat pig meat, drink alcohol, have more than one wife, smoke, avoid sins, like murder, adultery, theft and laziness, etc.

On the other hand, Saddiqui, (1992) Abd al ‘Ati, (1999) and Lemu, (2005) explains that, Islam insist on the practical aspect of moral principles and values, they cited a number of Quranic verses and traditions of the prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) which stressed the importance of moral teachings such as:

- *“Let there arise out of you a group of people inviting to all what is good, enjoying what is right and ” they are the successful: (Q3:104)*
- *“Time is the witness” Indeed man is in a state of loss, except those who have faith and do good deeds, counselling each other of truth and counselling each other of patience” (Q163: 1-*
- From the forgoing, we can see that, the teachings of Christianity and Islam both stresses moral principles and values such as:-
 - Honesty in words and deeds which entails shunning anything which is untrue, wickedness etc
 - Avoiding bribery and corruption, no matter the enforcing temptation. This is because bribery is like a disease that disable they body and makes it weak and unable to move (Lemu,2005)
 - Dignity of labour, that is the duty of seeking of lawful livelihood as against laziness and earning a living through deceit etc.

- Alcohol and other intoxicants and gambling.
- Arrogance and extravagance. This means feeling proud of one's wealth, position, lineage intelligence, knowledge, beauty, etc
- Adultery and fornication: The teachings of these religions forbid these acts. Islam says *"And do not come near adultery: Indeed it is an abomination and an evil way"* (Q.47:32)
- Stealing and fraud: Stealing and fraud are both means of taking someone else property. Both are condemned in Islam and punishable by law. (Lemu,2005, Abd al'Ati,1999, Saddiqui 1992).

Adejo, (2007) observes that, "our culture has great regard for the supreme God whom we have unrepentantly turned our backs on.... He advises that, this is the time for true acceptance of God as the only credential to ensuring a new operational mentality for all of us. God's design for the youths in particular can only be realized if they seek to know Him..."

From the above discourse, when carried out, moral decadence can be drastically reduced, if not eliminated in Nigerian secondary schools and in our society.

Social Vices: The manifestation of immoral traits by adolescents can be seen in observable social vices they indulge in, both in schools and in the community in which they live, which are on the increase. The increase in criminal behaviour, rise in drug abuse, teenage abortion, pregnancy, homosexuality, decline in academic achievements lack of respect for elders and authority and life itself are becoming daily news bulletins. Adejo, (2007) observes that, this generation thus embodies a profound shift in cultural and political attitudes. Denga, (2004) explains that adolescents, youths undergo a period of strain and pains, which explain the reasons for their involvement in violence, mass destruction of lives and properties, robbery, ritual killings, cultism and robbery, prostitution and substance abuse and other vices. It then follows that, the antisocial behaviours as exhibited by youths, adolescents and other people can be reduced socially such as by:

Reinforcement of rewards and punishment: Balarabe, (2007) lamented that, children and adults on many occasions are not punished when they commit immoral acts and very often, those who display desirable moral behaviour are not rewarded. The psychological consequences he stresses, is the weakening of the moral values. This means that any behaviour re-enforced (rewarded) will be repeated more and more by the individual and by implication and unrewarded behaviour is less and less likely to be manifested.

The parental Background: Studies have shown that, students who come from homes where codes of good conduct and discipline are strictly enforced are prone to cultism and other vices. Olajuide, (2000) reported that, parental background, lack of moral instruction at home and the manner in which the child is brought up could be a factor, in enrolment as a member of cult, and other undesirable social groups. According to Mgbekem, (2004), some parents love their children to the extent of pampering them. When they do wrong, instead of scolding them, they allow children go free.

Societal Decadence: Ogunbamen, (1997) lamented that, the Nigerian society has willingly or unwillingly provided an enabling environment for all forms of crimes among which is the problem of cultism. Mgbekem, (2005) further explains that, adolescents, youths etc nowadays immoral values instead of inculcating moral and decent values.

Low Education Standards: Some educationists observed that, the economic down turn in the 1980s and early 1990s, in the country encourage corruption and erosion of standards in the educational system. Akinfolarin, (2003) reveals that, most students gained admission into Universities with dubious credentials. Many stakeholders observes, the lowering of education standards has been on the increase over the years with attendant negative effects on students, teachers, society and the nation.

In consideration of all these vices highlighted, which constitutes moral decadence and the desirability of utilizing Counsellors as professionals will assist in reducing the vices in our schools . This will bring about the much needed effective moral traits, such as honesty, truth, hard work, sincerity, respect for elders etc This is because, their main goals and objectives are that of helping individuals to realize their potentials, worthiness, achieve successful decision making, resolve personality crises, conflicts etc.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the discussion advanced in this paper, the following recommendations are made:-

1. Group Counselling techniques should be adopted to in order to facilitate and enhance the practical teachings of moral principles and values in schools, communities etc

2. Orientation and sensitization programmes for the students in schools and programmes for the adolescents and youths outside the school systems should be planned sequentially by the counsellors
3. Information services by way of producing bill boards, pamphlets which emphasize moral principles and values should be periodically provided to all and sundry
4. Counsellors should collaborate with teachers to help students understand and appreciate the relationship between education and work by involving them in work related programmes
5. Outreach programmes on counseling services should be designed with a view to spreading the teachings of moral values to the general public.
6. Counsellors should help the youths to understand the importance of life benefit of hard work, honesty, respect for elders, constituted authorities etc
7. Radio, Television and other medium should be utilized by counselors to spread the teaching of moral values

Instructional media should be based on basic moral teachings and values, exemplary conducts and mutual respect.

8. Inter-state exchange of students from different cultures, tradition and religions should be encouraged
9. Educational institutions should inculcate rights, values

CONCLUSION

The quality of students into schools in Nigeria has declined in terms of maturity and character, knowledge base at the point of entry and willingness to learn (Imogie, 2011). For the education system to succeed, schools administrators, teachers and Counsellors on one hand, parents and guardians on the other, should be interested and show commitments in the conduct of their assigned duties. Since the provision of enabling school environment, is a pre-requisite to effective learning, problems associated with adolescents that often distracts their attentions and creates aggressive tendencies within the schools, should be addressed. The appropriate personnel, to be saddled with these responsibilities are the professional teachers, Counsellors and administrators. The reason is that, professionals have undergone rigorous training and acquired skills, that often enhances their effectiveness in handling specialized tasks. By doing it, this will

go a long way in facilitating the development of individuals and school system. Adolescents that form part of the schools, should be given special attention, in issues such as moral principles, team work, co-operation, problem solving, hope, love, mercy etc and above all dignity of labour, especially in their pursuits of academic programmes

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