

## **Relevance of Guidance and Counselling to Basic Education Curriculum in Primary Schools**

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### **Abstract**

This paper focused on the dynamics of primary education curriculum which implies the continuity of relevant changes designed to cope with the emerging problems, either identified or anticipated in the guidance of the primary schools on the contrary changes have existed in its objectives, contents and its administration in the past several years of Nigerian educational history. The paper also discussed the rationale for primary school guidance and counselling and its place in the educational setting. The need for primary school guidance and counseling is also highlighted, with an exposition on the principles underlying primary education guidance programme. The paper also discussed the purposes, objectives and goals of primary school guidance and counselling; integrating primary school guidance into the curriculum; nature of primary school child; role of government in promoting guidance and counselling services; and need to integrate guidance and counselling into the primary school curriculum. The article concluded with suggestions on how to harmonize guidance and counselling programme into primary school curriculum.

**Keywords:** Guidance and Counselling, Basic Education, Curriculum, Primary School.

### **Introduction**

It is necessary and appropriate to start this section with Jewish proverb which states that “a person who has no destination in mind does not bother about choosing a particular road because any road he chooses can take him to some destination”. This means that our teaching must be properly focused on well set and realized objectives as our delivery destination. Curriculum has been defined by Denga (2005) as “the learning experience and teaching strategies organized by the school to bring about desired outcome in the learner”. Curriculum contains the statement of aims and specific or behavioural objectives which cover both curricular and co-curricular experience organized by the school.

The presence of numerous delinquent adolescents in secondary schools, in the universities and society, who are involved in all sorts of criminal activities like armed robbery, dropping out syndrome, drugs, rape, murder, blood battles, examination malpractice etc.; and unhappy and unproductive adults, indicate the existence of human

failure after primary schooling. Early guidance is therefore essential for the prevention of such failure.

Primary school counselors should therefore be concerned with prevention as well as remediation of problems and emotional deviations of children. Classroom teachers/counselors will therefore be positioned to deter or prevent human abnormality. Primary school guidance is equally concerned with the growth and development of children, which means that primary school guidance is developmental. Teachers or counselors help pupils to develop their potentials. They must be helped over their normal developmental problems so that they are freed and enabled to grow socially, emotionally, physically, psychologically and intellectually, in a normal manner. To achieve this the classroom teachers should plan and execute a programme of guidance for children.

The early grade is crucial in an individual's development. Supporting this stance, Kegan and Moss' research Cottingham, in Mkpaka cited in Ogbodo (2022) indicated that during ages 4 to 10 years, development induces changes in the child's behavioural organization which has great significance for guidance in primary school. These first 4 years of children's 1<sup>st</sup> contact with the school, and peer culture, according to Kagan, result in permanent behaviour changes which last through early adulthood. Some serious problems, which begin before secondary school age, have necessitated designing services which will help the primary school teachers to recognize and resolve them. This has accentuated the need for primary school guidance and counseling.

It is very vital to identify and remedy problems early enough. But besides these identified and remediation functions, children's continuous and maximum development is equally, if not more, important. This development guidance does not negate the corrective aspects of guidance. It rather prevents a child's life being wasted because of lack of the guidance programme which the school should provide to complement its instructional one. Development guidance and the designed curriculum are meant for all children's needs of self-understanding, acceptance of self and others and sense of responsibility of understanding, education and work, of choice making and problem solving; and children's need for developing right and correct values, attitudes, habits, insights and behaviours. If children's developmental needs are met and their problems resolved, many adolescent delinquent and deviant behaviours will be prevented.

The sparsity of primary school counselors implies non-provision of guidance services. It also means that children's developmental needs will be hardly met. This will

consequently jeopardize the holistic development of these children. Therefore there is a more urgent need today for all the states in Nigeria to appoint counselors or teacher-counsellors in all primary schools. Since many schools do not have guidance programmes, the appointed guidance personnel, should as a matter of importance, plan and execute these guidance programmes in primary schools. Formation should begin in primary schools. It is the primary school counsellor or teacher who should promote the development of good character, values, habits and attitudes.

### **Primary Principles Underlying Primary School Guidance**

Certain major psychological principles undergird primary school guidance.

They are adapted and summarized from Cottingham, (1970), in Mkpa (1998), cited in Ogbodo (2017), as following:

- Guidance is for all children, not just for abnormal, exceptional children, or deviants.
- Guidance is wholistically oriented, having to deal with the intellectual, socio-emotional and behaviour development of the child.
- Guidance is development, not just preventive or remedial.
- Developmental guidance leads children to understand and accept themselves and others.
- Guidance enables the child to assess himself, plan and make choices and be responsible for his actions.
- Guidance functions well when its programme is well organized, continuous and developmental.
- Guidance considers children's need and developmental tasks as it focuses on purposes and goals.
- The teacher provides and the Counsellor facilitates the guidance programme.
- Guidance focuses on the individual's assets, abilities and potentialities.
- Developmental guidance encourages pupils and builds up their self confidence.
- Cooperative guidance programme is the most effective because it involves the teachers, counsellor, headmistresses/headmasters and the community.

### **Purposes, Objectives of Primary School Guidance and Counselling**

The functionality and effectiveness of primary school guidance is appraised in terms of the goals, objectives and purposes of primary school guidance. The necessity for the

establishment of purposes, objectives of primary school guidance is obvious and does not need to be overemphasized.

### **Purpose of Primary School Guidance and Counselling**

Among the purposes of primary school guidance are the following:

- Facilitation of the child's learning.
- Modification of the child's teacher's, and parent's attitudes, habits, behaviours etc.
- Knowledge and understanding of oneself and others.
- Development of self- acceptance and acceptance of others and development of self- concept, and self- confidence.
- Development of methods of solving developmental tasks of life.
- Development of increased self direction, problem solving and decision making skills.
- Development of responsibility for choices and decisions.
- Modification of faulty concepts and convictions.

These purposes are in agreement with primary school guidance objectives enunciated below.

### **Objectives of Primary School Guidance and Counselling**

Goals of primary school guidance have an alignment with the personalizing of the education process. The goals are geared towards facilitating the production of fully functioning people. The goals of the counsellor therefore focus on assisting the child, teacher, parents, administrators and the community to help children develop fully,

Broad objectives derived from guidance and counselling goals are as follows:

- To assist teacher/counselors to meet all students' intellectual, personal and social needs.
- To enhance pupils' self-understanding.
- To encourage the adaptation of the guidance programme to specific need, purposes, interests and maturities.
- To promote early identification of pupils' weakness, strengths, talents, abilities or deviations.
- To provide developmental, preventive or remedial guidance and counselling consequent to identification of developmental problems.

- To increase the teachers'/counsellors' awareness and sensitivity towards the needs, goals, and purposes of children.
- To aid the teachers'/counsellors' utilization of psychological principles, learning and child development principles for effecting classroom guidance.
- To stimulate the teachers, counsellors' and other staffs' study and utilization of guidance techniques in their provision of guidance services.

The onus of achieving the above listed objectives lies on the teacher or counsellor who uses them to plan and evaluate the guidance programmes.

### **Roles/Functions of the Primary School Counsellor**

In addition to helping children develop optimally, the primary school counselors implements a broad array of facilitative, preventive and change experiences. He helps to prevent future problems developing, in children, and helps the teachers to guide the children.

### **Integrating Primary School Guidance into the Curriculum**

However, we shall examine the element of school guidance and the primary school curriculum. In the light of the need for curriculum improvement, and given the obvious problems – academic and socio-personal of the Nigerian primary school child, it has become not only desirable but in fact imperative that the primary school curriculum should immediately create room for guidance services. More specifically, we shall briefly examine the current trend in the primary school curriculum in order to show how little emphasis is laid on organized guidance services, the nature of the primary school child as a basis for establishing the need to integrated guidance programmes into the curriculum. Finally we shall establish the procedures for ensuring the integration in a sustained manner.

### **Nature of the Primary School Curriculum**

The National Primary Education Commission prepared the Primary School Curriculum Modules (NPEC, 1988) whose documents contain the programmes of studies and activities used in Nigerian Primary Schools. The modules exist in six volumes, one for each of the six years of primary education. In each case, the range of school subjects to be studied each year is listed, and details of the subjects are outlined in a way that enables the teacher impart the relevant information to pupils.

The subjects taught include English Language, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Cultural Arts, Christian Religious Studies, Islamic Studies, and Home Economics. The content of these subjects are broken up into topics and presented in a modular form that facilitates teaching and learning. The module consists of sections which include subject matter or content, unit, objectives, pupils' activities, teaching aids and teaching hints, suggested assessment techniques and the period or duration of the teaching. Furthermore, the module is organized into terms to show what ground is expected to be covered within each of the three terms.

However, the goals of the 9-year Basic Education curriculum are linked to the core elements of the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), which included value re-orientation, poverty eradication, job generation, wealth creation and using education to empower people. These goals also aimed at addressing the foci of Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In 1999 the Federal Government of Nigeria introduced the Universal Basic Education (UBE). The aim was to ensure unfettered access and equity to education for the total development of the individual. Thus, the poor, the socially marginalized and vulnerable groups can effectively develop their full capacities and potentials..

With the introduction of the 9-year basic education, a set of contents to cover both the primary and junior secondary curriculum emerged. The curriculum was structured under core and elective components. For the junior primary level, the core curriculum contents were ten in number, namely: English Studies, one major Nigerian Language (Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba), Mathematics, Basic Science and Technology, Social Studies, Civic Education, Cultural and Creative Arts (CCA), Religious Studies, (Christian Religious Knowledge/Islamic Religious Knowledge, CRK/IRK), Physical & Health Education (PHE), Computer Studies. The electives are three: Agriculture, Home Economics and Arabic Language. Each child must offer one elective but not more than two. In the upper primary school, both for the core and the elective, the curricula are similar but with an additional core subject, French. There were eleven core subjects and three electives.

A peculiar feature of the curriculum is the fact that it fails to lay emphasis on the affective domain of learning outcomes. Rather emphasis is largely on the cognitive. This understandable since the cognitive domain is the focus of external and internal examinations.

Another feature which prevails in many places is the fact that in implementing the curriculum a single teacher teaches several if not all the subjects. This fact is particularly true with respect to teachers who trained in Teacher Training Colleges for the Teachers Grade 2 certificate. The National Policy on Education (FRN (2004) stipulates that the Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) should henceforth be the minimum qualification for teachers in Nigerian primary schools.

The optimistic note in this policy is the fact that specialization now becomes possible for teachers in training. One teacher does not therefore have to teach all the primary school subjects but just the ones he/she specialized in. furthermore, it becomes possible for professional training to be undertaken in various fields of education including guidance and counselling.

Prior to this time organized guidance and counselling services were not undertaken in the primary schools. The subject teachers undertook what appeared as guidance services as situation arose and in relation to their perceived problems of the pupils. As would be expected, the fact that the teachers were not trained professional guidance counselors greatly inhibited their competence in the execution of the needed tasks. There was a limit to which they could be successful in identifying pupils with varieties of educational and socio-personal problems requiring the intervention of professional counselors. Even when a few cases have been identified the teachers could not intervene successfully through a confident application of proven and research backed principle of guidance and counselling. Much of what the teacher did was therefore based on trial and error approach under which condition successful intervention could not be guaranteed(NPE 2004).

It was fashionable in the past for parents to refer their children and wards who had one behaviour problem or the other to the teacher who was believed to have the final word on behaviour therapy. A child who was stubborn, who stole something or was thought to be incorrigible at home was quickly referred to the teacher who was believed to possess the magic that could transform the life of the culprit. If the teacher failed to succeed, then all hopes were lost.

Although the teacher did his best at that time, we know, today, that a lot more could have been achieved if the right professional touch was given to the guidance and counselling activities. Certainly, the teachers were not professionally trained in the execution of tasks associated with the guidance and counselling programmes. The

content of the training programmes for teachers did not provide for this additional skill, so it was not unusual that teachers never undertook the tasks quite successfully.

The absence of organized guidance and counselling programme from the curriculum of the teacher training institutions in the past could have resulted from the facts that:

- It was believed that teachers could carry out the task creditably with or without formal training. In this case, people over-estimated the ability of the teachers.
- The planners of the curriculum did not consider the course necessary for inclusion into the programme of studies; in which case they were ignorant of its importance.
- The curriculum planners did not anticipate the need for the course, not did they consider the nature of the primary school child as a basis for developing the curriculum.
- The primary focus of the curriculum was on the teaching and learning of cognitive content rather than on behaviour modification.

With increasing awareness of the factors involved in the teaching-learning process, it has become obvious that guidance services could no longer be neglected or ignored in the programme of studies at primary school level if success must be recorded in the attainment of the goals of primary education in Nigeria. This need for guidance services becomes more obvious when we consider the nature of the primary school child.

### **Nature of Primary School Child**

The nature of the primary school child as he grows and develops through the years suggests the need for integrating guidance services in the primary school system. We shall briefly examine the developmental characteristics of the primary school child.

In terms of social development, the primary school child is influenced by three major forces – the family, peers and the school. The family exerts the first major influences. The parents, at the early years communicate to the child role expectations and assist him adjust to the demands of independence existent in the school. Parental guidance and support are a major influence upon achievement as the child progresses. Peer influence begins to manifest, cliques are formed on the basis of sex, age, interests. Extreme energy is expended in physical activities. The school creates a new environment for the child and teachers continue to assist the child develop along socially acceptable ways.



In emotional development, the primary school child is increasingly sensitive to criticism and ridicule. He seeks a warm, friendly relationship with adults. Worries are more evident regarding self-esteem and threat to security.

In terms of physical development, the girls tend to grow more rapidly than boys. The girls begin adolescent growth spurts toward the end of primary school life. There is improved motor development and coordination especially for boys, who excel in physical achievement. Changes in the body may be inadequately handled if people are not properly counselled.

The developmental characteristics of the child have implications for guidance and counselling services. The National Policy on Education (1981) makes statement that support guidance and counselling services in primary schools.

The Policy recognizes the importance of counselling services in the schools but in practice, hardly do primary schools possess such personnel. It would seem that Government appreciation of the importance of counselling services is limited to the secondary school because at that educational level, personality conflicts and educational/learning problems once resolved, a firm foundation is laid for success at higher levels of education.

Counselors are needed to tackle a variety of socio-personal and academic problems of the pupils. Socio-personal problems and conflict situations result in indiscipline among the pupils. Diverse learning problems also exist among them. Many pupils have problems of reading – they are very slow readers, many are unable to comprehend easily what they read, some are unable to identify main points in a passage and so cannot summarize ideas. Other problems include lack of concentration, that is, divided attention while reading, day dreaming, inability to remember or retain what is learned, difficulty in planning private studies, poor use of available time, sleepiness during studies, inability to prepare for examinations, wrong choice of examination questions, poor organization of written answers during examinations, lack of motivation to study, and in general, poor study habits.

If efforts are made in the tertiary institutions to counsel students along these identified learning problem areas it is doubtful that any significant attention is paid to the areas in the primary schools because the guidance programmes of many tertiary teacher training institutions do not seem to emphasize the acquisition of skills in tackling these problem areas. Faculties of Education and Colleges of Education need to take a second look at

their guidance and counselling programmes in order to ensure that the provision of educational guidance with emphasis on learning problems is emphasized.

### **Aims of Education**

The aims of education as related to the topic are:-

- The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society;
- The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around; and
- The acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competences both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society.

Guidance and counseling would aid in the rapid achievement of the goals stated above if properly integrated into the educational system. The inculcation of the right attitude to academic work, the acquisition of the right ethics towards work, the adjustment of individuals to the varying situation of life, are some of the benefits of exposure to guidance and counseling services. Vocational guidance and counseling assists individuals to match their abilities, aptitudes, personalities and attitudes to their career, choice, thus minimizing job dissatisfaction, wrong entry into careers resulting in waste of manpower development.

The teaching of decision-making skills by counsellors help individuals make decisions on their own and so train the mind in the understanding of the world around them. Thus the effective participation of government in promoting guidance and counseling services would serve as a catalyst in achieving the goals of education. (Cottingham, 1970) in (Ogbodo-Adoga 2019).

### **The place of Guidance and Counseling in the Educational Process**

In order to fully achieve the aims of education enumerated above, within and outside the school system, guidance and counseling should go along with learning for maximum achievement. Guidance, according to Shertzer and Stone (1976), in Ogbodo (2017), (2018), has been defined as ‘a process of helping individuals to understand themselves and their world.’ Zeran and Riccio (1962), cited in Ogbodo (2017), (2019), defined guidance as a process, developmental in nature, by which an individual is assisted to understand, accept and utilize his abilities, aptitudes, interests and attitudinal patterns in relation to his aspirations.

Guidance can thus be seen as an integral part of the educational process in which the student is aided to understand himself, his abilities, his interests and his goals. He thus attains self-understanding, self-insight, motivation, aspiration and the acquisition of decision-making skills. Guidance helps the student to view his behaviour realistically. The major purpose of guidance is to facilitate the personal development of students. It is an on-going process in the educational career of a student and so must be available at all stages of the educational process.

Counselling on the other hand can be defined as a process in which one person assists another person in a persona-to-person or face-to-face encounter. Although counseling is a part of guidance programme, it is a more personalized process. It does not confine itself to information giving but deals more intensely with personal and emotional issues. It is more private and confidential than general guidance. Counseling helps an individual to take an honest look at himself, become aware of his potentialities and weaknesses, consider alternatives in the light of existing facts and information and then make his own decisions. Counseling aids growth, independent thinking and self-reliance.

### **Role of Government in Promoting Guidance and Counseling Services**

The government's role in promoting education has already been highlighted and guidance and counseling, falls within educational services – an arm of education. It then follows that government has a responsibility of promoting and guidance and counseling. This is evident in the National Policy on Education (2004), under Educational Service which reads “In view of the apparent ignorance of many young people about career prospects, and in view of personality maladjustment among school children, career officers and counselors will be appointed in post-primary institutions. Since qualified personnel in this category is scarce, Government will continue to make provisions for the training of interested teachers in Guidance and Counselling. Also, in the policy under Counseling Services it states, ‘A number of teachers are now undergoing in-service training in this area and more will be trained in the future.’ From these, it can be adduced that the Federal Government recognizes the dearth of guidance counselors.

- Formulating Policies and Guidelines
- Guidance and counseling as an educational enterprise needs to be backed by policies and guidelines for its effective organization and uniformity of practice. As the governments formulate policies for general education, so it should be

done in case of Guidance and Counselling by the appropriate bodies or arms of government.

- Training of Guidance Counsellors
- Guidance is a function of every member of the educational team, but the responsibility for leadership is one of the primary function of the school counsellor. Guidance counselors are the key personnel in administering guidance and counseling in schools.
  - Counselors assist the students to:
    - Plan their educational endeavours, career prospects, personal and social development;
    - Develop healthy habits and positive attitudes and values;
    - Develop an awareness of the world of work by disseminating educational and career information;
    - Acquire a better understanding of the world of work through the acquisition of skills and attitudes and participation in work-related programmes;
    - Participate in school activities with a view to increasing their effectiveness in personal and social activities;
    - Adjust to new environments;
    - Understand their strengths, weakness, interests, values, potentialities and limitations.

In general, the counsellor carries out counseling services with students on matters of self-understanding, decision-making which are personally oriented using both the interview and group discussions while general guidance and provide information individually or in groups. The school counsellor is not only responsible to the students but also to parents, staff members and the community in general. Parents are made aware of their children's aptitudes, abilities, interests and attitudes in relation to educational and career planning, achievement at school and personal-social development.

The teacher is so engrossed in the academic achievement of the students that the counsellor's role in finding out the child's total developmental pattern is not out of place in the school system. The counselors are the ones readily available to supply parents with information relevant to the guidance programme of the school and the services available to all. Parents are reached by the counselors at the Parent-Teacher's

meeting, group and individual discussions and through correspondence. The counselors work with members of staff in cordial and friendly manner to achieve the goal of educating and developing the students towards individual fulfillment. Co-operation of counselors and staff in the following areas aid the achievement of the goal stated above:-

- Development of a curriculum that caters for the individual differences of the students.
- Co-ordination of student appraisal by compiling information in the cognitive, affective and psycho-motor domains.
- Co-ordinating the use of services available in the school and the community and getting teachers involved in these services.

The role of the counsellor has been enumerated to enable us appreciate the rationale behind the training of guidance counselors for our schools. The Federal Government has taken the lead of training counselors both for the Federal and State schools. The problem is that the rate of expansion for our schools especially with the government policy that all children must have primary education. With the introduction of the 6-3-3-4 system, the services of the Guidance Counsellors becomes needed more than ever before. The Counsellor is needed to administer psychological tests, score and interpret as he is the person capable of doing this correctly by virtue of his training. The counsellor is required to use the results of the psychological tests as well as standardized achievement tests in:-

- Streaming students into vocational, technical and academic areas at the end of the Junior Secondary School as required by the system;
- Carrying out placement services; and
- Guiding them into career clusters from where a choice eventually emerges.

### **Need to Integrate Guidance and Counselling into the Primary School Curriculum**

The need to integrate guidance and counselling into the curriculum of primary schools has become more obvious now than was the case in the past. The importance of taking care of the child's all-round development is obvious. The trained counsellor must now be fully employed to monitor trends in the learners' intellectual, socio-psychological, emotional and physical development in order to be able to detect when there is need for intervention, for it is said that a stitch in time saves nine. Any identified problems

should be quickly addressed in order to prevent more serious development in the future( Ogbodo Adoga, 2020).

The nature of the modern society is so complex, and so full of contradictions that the child is often unable to reconcile the values taught in school with the reality of the contemporary world outside the school. This contradiction compels the learner to be uncertain about what value to accept and live by. He therefore needs the services of the guidance counsellor to help him choose the best way to live, to solve his daily problems and cope with verities of conflicting situations.

In addition, there is the need to lay a solid academic foundation for the child at the primary school level. The activities of the guidance counselors are indispensable in establishing that foundation. How best then should guidance programme be integrated into the primary school curriculum in a sustained manner?

### **Procedure for Integrating Guidance Programme into the Primary School Curriculum**

There is a strong need to train guidance counselors specially for our primary schools for obvious reasons. Since primary school children differ from secondary and tertiary level ones in a number of ways, counselors need to be specially prepared to cope with the varieties of learner characteristics needs, problems and interests at the primary level of education. Products of the training programme should therefore be deployed to the primary schools to undertake fulltime jobs as professionals.

Those professionals already trained conventionally may also be posted to primary school where they are expected function. However, there is the need to re-orientate them toward being able to cope with the demands of primary school counselling services. Workshops and seminars which seek to effect the desired re-orientation would be appropriated if conducted periodically. While in school, the professional guidance counsellor should have a conducive environment to function at his best. He needs an office space, and a variety of materials that should facilitate the successful execution of his job. Children in the primary school should be encouraged to take advantage of the availability of the counsellor to have their problems sorted out. They need to develop confidence in the counsellor so as to create an enabling environment for him to do his job effectively. It is only when there is the confidence that the children's problems can be solved (Ogbodo Adoga, 2018).

It is important for the school to create a definite time for the pupils to consult with the counsellor. At the stipulated time, pupils with various problems should proceed to see

the counsellor in order to have their problems solved. Such time should however be flexible.

If possible, more than one counsellor should be deployed to each school if the school has a large population. And if it is a mixed school, a male and a female counsellor should be posted to handle the boys' and girls' problems.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, our educational development, it has become necessary for our primary schools to enjoy the services of guidance counselors – on a permanent basis. The traditional system wherein teachers combined the roles of teaching and occasional counselling is no more satisfactory. The training, employment and effective utilization of professional counselors calls for immediate intervention by various governments of the states. The need has become urgent if we must attain the noble goals of our primary education in our Nation.

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