

Capacity Building Opportunities in Counselling and Guidance in Developing Nations: The Nigerian Example

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Abstract

The paper explored capacity building opportunities which abound in guidance and counselling in developing nations, with specific reference to Nigeria. It provided a conceptual clarification of capacity building and analysed specific areas of the Nigerian life in which a greater capacity could be developed, and skills, knowledge, tools and equipment be improved and retained. It is expected that graduates of guidance and counselling would find, through this paper, areas where they could specialize in even as employers of labour.

Keywords: Capacity building, Counselling and guidance, Developing nations

Introduction

Capacity building presupposes that individuals and organizations periodically obtain, improve and retain skills, knowledge, tools, equipment and other resources needed to do their jobs competently (UNESCO, 2006). It focusses on individuals and organizations performing at a greater capacity (larger scale, larger audience, larger impact, etc.) and also on understanding the obstacles that inhibit people, governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from realizing their development goals which can allow them to achieve measurable and sustainable results. According to UNESCO (2006), this occur at the individual, institutional or societal levels.

At the individual level, it enables individual participants to build and enhance knowledge and skills, and promotes the establishment of conditions that will allow individuals to engage in the process of learning and adapting to change. At the institutional level however, it involves aiding institutions, not just by creating new institutions, but rather by modernizing existing institutions and supporting them in forming sound policies, organizational structures, and effective methods of management and revenue control while, at the societal level, it supports the establishment of a more interactive public administration that learns equally from its actions and the feedback it receives from the population at large.

Meanwhile, it appears as if the need for counselling and guidance gets more imperative in than ever before. People are increasingly being confronted with issues that persistently challenge their natural and/or God-given emotional resources to the extent that many more people either contemplate or actually indulge in self-destructive tendencies like drug dependency, suicidal ideation or actual suicide. The immediate preceding or risk factors in many of these cases are those which can be addressed through

guidance and counselling. This is because guidance and counselling has the ability to provide supplemental emotional resources with which individuals can cope or even successfully surmount the challenges. In fact, Egbo (2015) reported that guidance and counselling became so versatile as a result of its ability to apply mental health, psychological and human development principles to address wellness, personal growth, career development and pathology through thorough cognitive, effective behavioural or systematic intervention strategies.

The author noted that although guidance and counselling had earlier been entrenched in the National Policy on Education, many individuals and governments are now increasingly aware of the need for and importance of guidance services in the nation's educational system, especially in view of recent socio-economic changes of the age. These practitioners are now needed in virtually every area of Nigerian life, given recent reports of individual's inability to cope with psychological pressures experienced daily.

In the recent past, there were strident reports of people committing suicide across all ages, educational levels, social class and any other social divide that make the institution of guidance and counselling go beyond the school setting imperative. For instance, Chidike Oyeka, a 25-year-old graduate of Madonna University who just returned from the compulsory one-year National Youth Service Corps reportedly stabbed himself to death because of unemployment; 49-year-old Abolarinwa Olaoye, a civil servant, hanged himself within the Ekiti State Secretariat in Ado Ekiti in November 2018, after having reportedly lamented the financial problems he faced; and Seun Omogaji, popularly known as DJ XGee, reportedly lamented his marital crisis and felt the best way to overcome the emotional trauma was to take his life by gulping an insecticide 'Sniper'. Very excruciatingly painful is the apparent interest university students appear to develop in committing suicide in recent times.

It should be noted that in many cases, unemployment can be traced to the wrong choice of career, course or field of study, or the poor preparation of graduates for self-employment. These could be easily addressed by career guidance and/or counselling, provision of career information and appropriate assessment of individual personality, areas of strength and opportunities. In fact, a cursory look at the admission system into tertiary institutions in the country and the neglect of assessment of the individual's personality, interest, aptitude and abilities would most likely lead to no other end but frustration, depression and suicide.

It is true that greater demand is being placed on individuals for accountability, productivity and persistent success in every human endeavour as if failure were final or success permanent. All these are expected to take place within the smallest possible time. However, online counselling offers the quick, easy and effective approach by which people "on the go" can assess guidance and counselling services, at least, until they are free enough to pay physical visits to the counsellor.

In modern day Nigeria, different approaches are available for educational advancement and career exploration. Evidence abounds to prove that formal education alone is not the only way to financial success and/or security, such that the need to end one's life may actually not exist. Young men and women are reportedly engaging in lawful, creative, innovative and resourceful endeavours which have been known to fetch them reasonable incomes usually greater than what their academic qualifications are able

to command if employed to work for someone else. Many have become entrepreneurs employing their mates or even seniors not only in terms of age but also in terms of educational attainment. Individuals need to be guided by professionals to see opportunities that abound in their immediate environment and/or within their capabilities.

Personal understanding is another emerging opportunity in counselling and guidance. People are increasingly interested in getting to understand themselves. People need the realization of their personality, temperament, probable disorders, prospects, areas of strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats in order to help them make satisfactory choices in human interaction, construction of modern families, career and vocation as well as other forms of relationships. It is believed that an advanced understanding of all these will lead to appropriate choices, good quality of life, life satisfaction and eventually, rest of mind. The appraisal services included in counselling and guidance make use of instruments, tools and techniques to establish an understanding of oneself.

Furthermore, personal problems like drug abuse and addiction, examination malpractices, cult membership and activities, armed robbery, fraud and other corrupt practices appear to get more sophisticated by the day. It also appears as if punishment and other retributive efforts do not yield the expected results as many more young people appear to getting involved while those already involved appear to get more sophisticated in the activities. It appears that the attention given to cognitive achievements by the human mind in comparison to the neglect of the affective development of the mind promotes the establishment and continuation of personal problems. Guidance and counselling, in modern times, can help in the early detection of this development and its quick address.

Even in the prison, guidance and counselling can be also be very useful. Akyina and Alubokin (2018) described prisons as societal institutions for the confinement and treatment of societal deviants. According to the authors, these are commonly achieved by ensuring custody of prisoners and execution of sentences in a humane manner; ensuring the welfare of prisoners through protection of their rights and provision of good healthcare, clothing, bedding, feeding, recreation and library facilities as well as ensuring their reformation and rehabilitation by offering them opportunities to develop their skills through trade, training and moral education. Research suggests that the best technique used in reforming and rehabilitating offenders and criminals is counselling (French & Gendreau, 2006) as it helps individuals to improve their well-being, alleviate distress and mal-adjustment, and resolve conflicts (Todd & Bohart, 2003). Guidance and counseling also targets bringing a change in lifestyles, increasing awareness or insight, understanding, relief from suffering and changes in thoughts and self-perceptions (Akyina & Alubokin, 2018).

Alao and Adebawale (2014) reported that up to 65% of the inmates in Nigerian prisons were awaiting trial and would have spent over five years in custody. When these “offenders” are labeled, Akyina and Alubokin, (2018) argued that they entered the phase of secondary deviance where they admitted that they were criminals. The authors suggested that guidance and counseling services could assist in repairing the deficiencies in them so that they could return to society and become productive members through many self-improvement avenues, such as work in prison industries and other institutions,

vocational training, drug abuse treatment, parenting, anger management and other programmes which taught essential life skills.

Research has indicated increasing instability and crisis in many Nigerian families which are (Osarenren, Nwadinigwe & Anyama, 2013; Animashahun & Femi-Fatile, 2011; Tobin, 2004), sometimes accompanied by fatal intimate partner violence. Meanwhile, Amadi and Amadi (2014) opined that a good family guaranteed a peaceful and joyful atmosphere which was most suitable for bringing up healthy and happy children who would grow up to excel in school and in all other aspects of life, including their own marital life. The causes of many of such identified crises are known to be issues that can be easily addressed through guidance and counselling (Osarenren, Nwadinigwe & Anyama, 2013). Some of the cause were found to include the inability of the couples to meet each other's sexual needs, and especially the inability of the family heads to provide both the economic and social needs of the family, among other causes (Tolorunleke, 2014).

Another emerging area in which counselling and guidance may feature more significantly in the nearest future is in the integration of individuals with special needs into society. These are individuals whose physical or psycho-social special needs create the necessity to change or adapt the societal conveniences and content of studies arising from the curriculum, and organisation of work or study/work environment in order to guarantee them an opportunity for maximum participation in the study/work process and individual development. Ajobiwe (2007) stressed the need to have professionally trained counsellors to work with people with various disabilities especially among the rural population as they would be able to make use of various skills to handle the emotional, social and psychological concerns of the disabled. Research has shown that this group of people, the counsellors, commonly confronts problems like negative self-concept and low educational aspirations among students with disability

In recent times, fake news seems to be a major developmental challenge in most countries of the world to the extent that youths and other young people become disillusioned, and are brainwashed into participating in unwholesome activities or outright crime. Research posits that fake news is not a new phenomenon, but it seems to become more pronounced as a result of the popularity of social media for interaction and for the diffusion of news and ideas, on one the hand, and because it permits anyone to share a viral fake story to people at a low cost (Apuke & Omar, 2020). The news is usually intentionally fabricated stories, usually false, realistically portrayed and potentially verifiable (Visentin et al., 2019), but it is commonly created with the dishonest intention to mislead readers (Apuke & Omar, 2020). It may create an atmosphere of fear, anxiety and restlessness in the minds of teachers and learners, and may promote truancy. Information services provided by school counsellors in the school guidance programme would be useful in combatting fake news and its attendant effect.

In the wake of the Covid -19 pandemic, fake news was used to destabilize school programmes even after schools were directed to resume such that some students missed classes and even examinations. Parents, teachers and adults were discouraged from getting vaccinated as a result of the spread of propaganda and other types of fake news such as gene mutation, 5G technology spread, magnetization by the injected spot on the arm, and so on. Even after the political leaders were publicly vaccinated on national television, some fake news carriers still insisted that the vaccines used for them were

different from the ones to be injected into the bodies of the common people on the street. Students were discouraged from using face masks with the false propaganda that some masks dried blood or led to drowsiness which were tools for kidnapping, and palms and back of hands got swollen due to the excessive use of sanitizers, and so on. Information service is a veritable tool for confronting fake news and propaganda, at least within the school community.

Religious organisations have begun to realize the importance of professional counselling and psychotherapy in the mental health of their congregants. In fact, some of them send their staff for additional training in professional counselling and psychotherapy. Many families approach professional counsellors to help resolve intra-family squabbles and the promotion of their mental and behavioural health. Consequently, counselling has been added to religious activities in order to apply professional counselling skills to their means of helping their members to stay healthy.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the foregoing, it could be seen that in the modern world, guidance and counselling can play significant roles in societal growth and development without just limiting it to schools as it currently stands in many cases.

It therefore follows that:

1. The training curriculum of counselling students need to be overhauled to put into consideration of being able to work in diverse helping areas such as in the prisons, hospitals, banks, psychiatric homes, etc.
2. The practicum period needs be extended to not less than 6 months to enable each individual to acquire considerable skill in and confidence and strategy for attending to clients in such diverse helping areas.
3. Efforts need be made to see that not many counsellors-in-training are posted to the same institutions so that they are able to feel and take responsibility for counselling practice in such institutions.
4. There should be strict adherence to punitive measures for those who could not make up to 80% attendance in their place of practicum.

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