

Guidance Counsellor as an Agent of Peace among Youth for Sustainable National Development in Nigerian Secondary Schools

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Abstract

The paper attempts to highlight the role of guidance and counselling in promoting peace among youth in secondary schools in Nigeria. The concepts of guidance counselling were discussed. An attempt was made to discuss youths and their problems were also identified. It also discussed secondary education and the concept of peace. Recommendations such as employing qualified guidance counsellors in secondary schools and providing the necessary materials for effective guidance and counselling services were also given.

Key words: Guidance, and Counselling, Counsellor, Peace, Sustainable, National Development.

Introduction

Secondary education is the bedrock for every education. That is why in Nigeria today you must have good grades from your secondary education before you can transit to any level of education. Secondary education occurs mainly during teenage years. This period is characterized by various problems and conflicts within youths. The Guidance counsellor focuses on assisting the individual to achieve self-understanding and self-direction so that the individual lives happily and peacefully with himself and with others. Guidance and counselling is a twin concept expected to work together to help individual understand himself and the world he lives, realize his potentials, adjust in his society and live peacefully within the society. Guidance and counselling is concerned with every aspect of an individual's life and has role to play wherever people exist and interact. This paper therefore, examines the role of Guidance Counsellor as an agent of peace among youths in secondary schools for sustainable national development.

The Concept of Guidance and Counselling

Guidance in a layman's context connotes some form of help given to an individual. Various scholars have given out different definitions of the concept "guidance". For instance, Shertzer and Stone (1976) cited in Ali and Isiyaku (2012) as to direct, pilot or guide. Kaura (2008) defined guidance as the process of helping individual to attain self-actualization so as to maximise his potentials and be useful to himself and to the society which he lives. Gurjiya (2012) sees guidance as an assistance made available by professionally qualified and adequately trained personnel to an individual of any age to help him manage his own life activities, develop his own point of view, make his own decisions and carry his own burden. Ali (2010) sees it as services available to each student to facilitate his academic success in school, to help him better understand his strengths and limitation, to identify his interests, to aid him in his planning for attaining realistic goals. In agreement with this assertion, Kolo (1992) in Gurjiya (2012) stated that guidance is an assistance given to an individual to help him/her understand the nature of his/her problems in life and how to go about solving such problems.

Counselling on the other hand refers to a process through which an individual who needs help is assisted by a professionally qualified individual to make necessary adjustments in life and to the environment. It is a process whereby an individual is helped to voluntarily change his behaviour positively, clarify his attitudes and goals so that he can solve his problems. Okumu (2020) sees counselling as a process in which helpers show concern for the person in question to promote their personal growth and positive change through self understanding. It is help carried out mainly by means of interpersonal communication whereby the counsellor helps the counsellee in achieving adaptive attitudes, insights and behaviour. He further states that it is a method of helping the individual to utilize his psychological resources by focusing on that individual's personality, behaviour and emotional assets that could be mobilized. Gurjiya (2012) defines counselling as an interactive process co-joining the counsellee, who is vulnerable and needs assistance, and the counsellor who is trained and educated to give this assistance, the goal of which is to help the counsellee to deal more effectively with himself and the reality of his environment. Kaura (2008) also described counselling as an applied art that seeks to deliberately change the behaviour of an individual.

From the above definitions Guidance and Counselling therefore, is the process of assisting individual to understand himself and his world better and be better equipped to solve life problems. It aims at helping the individual to realize his potentials to become better and contribute positively to the society as well live peacefully with himself and with his society.

Who is a Counsellor?

A counsellor is said to be “a trained expert with enough psychology necessary to understand and predict human behaviour” (Obikeze & Umezulike, 2013:9). This means a counsellor is someone who is professional and has the ability to understand client's problem and be able to assist that person to overcome such problem and be able to adjust and become a functional member of his/her society.

Youths and their Problems

Youth has been defined as the period between childhood and maturity. It is the early part of one's life approximately the adolescent stage. The youth and adolescent are used interchangeably in this paper. Youth or adolescent period is a difficult time of life. It is said to be the period of "storm and stress". Ali (2010) acknowledge that adolescence had always been challenging time in a person's life, but believe that in today's fragmented, chaotic world with its dangerous, sexualised and media saturated societies, adolescents face incredible pressures. Many adolescents are confronted for the first time with facts about themselves and their backgrounds that may produce serious conflicts. For instance they face problem of independence versus dependence, conformity versus non-conformity, self-assertion versus self-negation, early maturity versus later maturity, development of genitals and financial troubles (Salawu & Abdulkadir, 2011).

Youth problems are many; they think more for themselves and do not accept the ideals of their elders. Events which the elder generation does are nothing to them but past history. Today's youth problems involve juvenile crimes such as drug addiction, cultism, riots, theft, examination malpractice, rape etc. Youth love luxury, they have bad manners, contempt for authority, they show disrespect for their elders and they always contradict their parent's orders. Such types of behaviours by the youth often cause conflict and crises within the school setting (Ali, 2010)

Secondary Education

Secondary education is the bedrock for every education. It is the education that children receive after primary education and it is a stepping stone towards the tertiary education. It includes the final stage of compulsory education. Secondary education is the education that occurs during adolescent period. It is characterized by transition from typically compulsory, comprehensive primary education to optional and selective tertiary education (Ali, 2010).

In Nigeria secondary education is divided into two sections, that is junior and senior secondary education with the duration of three years each. At both stages the youths require guidance and counselling services so as to enable them adjust to their environment and live peacefully with themselves and with the members of the society which they live in.

The Concept of Peace

The word peace is said to come from the Latin word "pax" meaning "freedom from civil disorder" (Wikipedia Encyclopaedia, 2021). Peace is said to be a state of harmony characterized by lack of violent conflict and the freedom from fear of violence (Ali & Isiyaku, 2012). It suggests the existence of healthy international or interpersonal relationships.. At personal level peaceful behaviours are kind, considerate, respectful, just and tolerant of others' behaviours which manifest goodwill.

Peace can also pertain to an individual's concept of himself. It is also used to reflect quiet as in calm, serene and meditative approach to group relationship that avoid quarrelling and seek tranquillity or absence of disturbance or agitation. It is important for youths at secondary schools to be at peace with themselves and with other members of society. It is important for them to have a peace of mind. Peace of mind refers to a state of being mentally and spiritually at peace, with enough knowledge and understanding to keep oneself strong in the face of discord or stress. Being at peace is considered to be healthy and free from being stressed or anxious. It is associated with bliss and happiness (Ali & Isiyaku, 2012). Therefore peace of mind, serenity and calmness are descriptions of a disposition free from the effect of stress.

The Role of Guidance and Counselling in Promoting Peace among Youths in Secondary School.

It is common knowledge that students enter secondary school at an adolescent period. This period is characterized by a rapid bodily growth called adolescent growth spurt. The effect of this is increased sensitivity and interest in the opposite sex and increased sex drives. The conflict between sex drive and societal norms is especially intense and a way of resolving this conflict must be found by those who help these children in finding methods of adequate adjustment of life's problems (Ogbochuku, 2008). Guidance and counselling services plays a vital role in bringing about peace within the school by helping the youths to curb these problems and help the students to adjust with these adolescent growth spurt and accompanying sex drive. A youth who adjusts to such changes in him becomes at peace with himself and with other members of the society (Ogbochuku, 2008).

Such students need help in their growth towards emotional maturity. Adolescents should be taught to understand and accept themselves and become more understanding and accepting of others. This will bring about a peaceful coexistence among youths in secondary schools. Chireshe (2006:26) states that "schools are ideally positioned to initiate and maintain activities and services to enhance the

psychological development and well-being of youth” this could only be gained through organized and effective guidance and counselling services.

In the secondary school setting, students need educational counselling. Educational counselling means the process of helping an individual in planning a suitable educational programme and making progress in it. Many youths face a lot of personal, social and learning problems which teachers are not adequately prepared to handle. Students drop-out because of various reasons. Some of these may not be rooted in the academic inability of the child. Inability of youth to choose the right subject that is in line with their interest, abilities and aptitude brings about internal conflict to the child and this may lead to other unruly behaviours among youths. Guidance and counselling services enables the child to make the right choice of courses and this promotes peace among the youths in secondary schools (Chireshe, 2006).

There is also the issue of academic failures and poor performance in our schools. Many students fail examinations because they have personal, social and psychological problems and no reliable person within the school system to discuss such problems with. They become so involve in such problems that studying becomes impossible and hence failure and poor academic performance. Academic failure usually results to school dropout (Kolo, 1992 in Ali, 2010). Dropouts engage in different types vices in schools which may disrupt the peace of the school and the youths at large. Guidance and counselling improves students' performance thereby promoting peace among youths in secondary school. Students also fail or perform poorly because of lack of study skills and lack examination writing skills. All these could be resolved when an established guidance and counselling services exist and is well equipped to handle these educational problems.

Writing on the subject, Ali (2010) feels that the need for guidance in our school should be seen from two standpoints. One of this according to her is manpower utilization. There is really no doubt that this is a major problem in most schools today, where some areas are understaffed while others are overstaffed. Also the manpower production is not coordinated to meet our national aspirations. In Nigeria, it is a known fact that we are faced with unemployment problem largely due to our insufficient planning.

In agreement with the above statement Salami (2018) claimed that “Nigeria today assumes that every youth is a potential leader of tomorrow. Such men need to be men of integrity”. Guidance and counselling services will provide a fertile ground for the production of men of such calibre. However, he also sees the need as universal since it is present whenever, at any age, help is needed in making choices, adjustments or in solving problems. This statement justifies the importance of guidance and counselling in our secondary schools as a tool for promoting peace among youths in secondary schools.

Our schools are dumping grounds for youths of various social, economic, mental and psychological imbalances with different capacity, interests and values. Equality of educational opportunities can only be achieved by encouraging, recognizing and fertilizing individual differences in the students which will serve as the foundation for each to plan and progress towards realistic educational, vocational, mental and moral goals so as to achieve peace within the school. That is what guidance stands for in any educational institution.

There are a number of socio-economic and psychological problems which disturbs the learning process of students. In other words, the growing number of social, economic and family problems has resulted in various crises in our secondary schools. Guidance and counselling services in schools enables the child to understand himself and his problems thereby improving the peaceful coexistence of the youth.

Nigeria has multiple ethnicities and it is usually at secondary school that the child comes into contact with divergent cultures. Conflict often erupts when two or more groups of individuals have different beliefs, identity and interests. They see each other as threats to their identified individual or group coexistence. Ali (2010) posits that conflict exist when two people believe that they have incompatible objectives. Conflict therefore is inevitable in human interaction and can lead to disharmony among youths. Personal-social guidance builds in the youth respect for self and respect for others thereby making them to understand and accept other people's cultures and beliefs.

Rimfat (1995) in Ali (2010) conducted a study on six hundred and forty (640) secondary school students in Plateau state. The study shows that guidance and counselling can serve as an effective tool in solving any multi-dimensional problems in the school system. Below is a table from study conducted by Rimfat (1995).

Table:1 Responses from students on assistance they get from guidance counsellor.

S/N	Types of Help	Responses	%
1.	Identify their strengths and weakness	590	89.1
2.	Strive for improvement and growth	605	94.5
3.	Work towards self concept	600	93.7
4.	Make useful decisions	540	84.3
5.	Obey school rules	610	95.3
6.	Avoid trouble	500	78.1
7.	Obey teachers and parents	630	98.4

Source: Rimfat (1995)

From the above table we can see that guidance and counselling promotes peace among students in secondary school because once a student can identify his strengths and weaknesses, obey school rules, avoid trouble, obey teachers and parents and make useful decisions, definitely there would be peace in such schools and among students. Guidance and counselling therefore is instrumental to peaceful living in secondary schools.

Implication of Guidance and Counselling for Sustainable National Development

The essence of guidance and counselling in secondary schools cannot be over emphasized. When youths are identified according to their talents, abilities and potentials, it is easier to nurture them to become skilful and functional. Their socio-economic inputs therefore go a long way in building our nation which in turn promotes sustainable national development.

Conclusion

Guidance and counselling concerns plays an important role in promoting peace among youths in secondary schools. It is concern with youth development and makes the youth to be consciously aware of their problems so that they adjust and tackle such problems and live happily and peacefully with themselves and with others. Looking at the societal changes, guidance and counselling is necessary in our secondary schools so as to help youth solve their social, emotional, economic and behavioural problems for peaceful coexistence of youths in secondary schools.

Recommendations

The followings are recommended

1. Government should employ qualified guidance counsellors in all secondary schools in Nigeria.
2. Government should also strengthened guidance and counselling in secondary schools and all facilities needed should be provided.
3. Counsellors should provide effective guidance and counselling services to students in secondary schools.
4. Youths should be encouraged to seek guidance and counselling services in their schools.

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