



# MAXIMISING THE RELEVANCE OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL RECONSTRUCTION IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY NIGERIA

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## Introduction

The place of guidance and counselling in human development can never be overemphasized. Its relevance in the overall development of human beings cannot be waved aside, as it provides the avenue for the development of an all-round individual who would be able to live a productive life and at the same time contribute to national development. Guidance and counselling as educational services have been entrenched in the National Policy on Education, as it is known that the success of any nation depends to a large extent on the value it places on the education provided for its citizens in their preparation for life. Education has been described as a major weapon or instrument for national development as well as any society; as such, it is expected to solve national problems. It is also therefore vital for the development of the citizenry and to assist the populace to be productive in virtually all spheres of human endeavours – economic, social and even governance. Guidance and counselling have a vital role to play in the actualization of educational goals. Education is one of the indices on which the success of any nation is measured. Against this background, Nigerian education should be geared toward injecting changes that are desirable to the educational system, to achieve societal transformation suitable and meet for national development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Nigeria. The National Policy on Education among other things, aims at the inculcation of some fundamental values and attitudes which are considered necessary for effective citizenship required for national development (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014). In Nigeria, guidance and counselling are aimed at achieving the five main national objectives which include:

1. A free and democratic society
2. A just and egalitarian society
3. A united, strong and self-reliant nation
4. A great and dynamic economy and
5. A land full of bright opportunities for all citizens (FGN, 2014).

Guidance and counselling are deemed suitable for the attainment of the National goals of education in Nigeria. These goals are:

- a) The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity;
- b) The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society;
- c) The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around; and
- d) The acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to his or her society (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014).

Based on the above position, the National Policy on Education further stipulates that the quality of instruction at all levels of education in Nigeria should be geared towards inculcating the following values;



- Respect for the worth and dignity of the individual;
- Faith in man's ability to make rational decisions;
- Shared responsibility for the economic good of the society;
- Promotion of the physical, emotional and psychological development of all children; and
- Acquisition of competencies necessary for self-reliance.

Despite the lofty ideas and value statement entrenched in the National Policy on Education, Nigerian society has not reflected the expectations as stated in the education policy. It is not an overstatement to assert that the Nigerian educational system requires an overhaul to meet the needs of the time and ensure relevance to solve the problems besetting the nation. Currently, Nigeria is passing through major crises in economic, social and political life. News about youth restiveness, social disturbance, and unemployment with its attendant evils as well as political upheaval are on the rise. Many economic and social problems affecting the nation have reached an alarming state so much that Nigeria is on the news not only at the local, national and even international scene. Cases of arson, ritual killing, political killing, robbery, corruption and thuggery are on the increase daily.

Against the background stated above, this paper seeks to:

- take a look at the socioeconomic and political situations in Nigeria
- assess the role of guidance and counselling in the socio-economic and political reconstruction of Nigeria in the 21<sup>st</sup> century
- make some recommendations that will guide the socioeconomic and political reformation in Nigeria.

### **Concept Clarification and the Need for Reconstruction**

**Reconstruction:** It is the act of putting something in working order again. It involves forming again those things that existed before, but which were destroyed due to one reason or the other (Fafunwa 1974). In the context of this study, reconstruction has to do with the complete rebuilding, renovation, recreation and re-establishment of educational activities. Reconstruction, therefore, becomes necessary as a means to effect correction in a system that has become defective.

**Socio-Economic Reconstruction:** It emphasizes the need to address social and economic questions and the quest to create a better society and enable an economic environment for the benefit of the populace. Nigerian society is bedevilled by several problems threatening the survival of the country currently. Among the problems which have become universal are crime, poverty, unemployment, absence of social amenities, religious intolerance and ethnic crises. Socio-economic reconstruction assumes that these problems tend to hinder the development of society and serve as a threat to sustainable development and, therefore require attention or changes. According to Leonora and Gelbrick (1999), social reconstruction will involve first, the identification of the negative elements in the society and second, making efforts to tackle these elements as they affect development. Olaogun (2012) asserted that values meaningfully impacted on an individual would prompt one to:

- determine what is regarded as right, good worth, beautiful and ethical.
- provide standards and norms by which one guides his/her day-to-day behaviour.
- determine one's attitudes towards the causes and issues such as social, political, economic and industrial with which one comes into contact daily, and also



- determine which ideals, principles and concepts one can accept, assimilate, remember and transmit without distortion.

**Political Reconstruction:** Since Nigeria assumed independence in 1960, the country has experienced more political woes than it ever experienced under the colonial administration. Shortly after independence, Nigeria commenced self-government but it was short-lived as the country faced many problems such as nepotism, corruption and the like. This caused the country to plunge into civil war from 1966 – 1970. After the civil war, the country reunited and was ruled by the military. The military disengaged from the government and put in place self-government again in 1979 with Alhaji Shehu Shagari as the president. The second republic which like the first could also not be sustained, was overthrown on charges of corruption and administrative incompetence by the Buhari-led administration. The third republic did not see the light of day because of the annulment of the general election of 1993 by General Ibrahim Babangida. However, the fourth which has lasted twenty-four years does not have a better story to tell. The country is facing a lot of problems; conflicts triggered by political competition, communal, ethnic, religious or resource allocation rivalries, corruption, and insecurities to mention a few. Sonny Okosun 1984, in his song ‘Which Way Nigeria?’ recounted several national political problems for which we have yet to get answers since 1984.

Nwafor (2011) asserted that the experiences in Nigeria so far have been quite traumatic, excruciating and challenging; and riddled with coup d’état and counter-coups, a civil war, annulment of the freest and fairest elections, social and economic strangulating policies and bad leadership, endemic corruption and grinding poverty, acute unemployment, religious intolerance, hostage taking, militancy and terrorist attacks on innocent citizens. The litany of the prevailing social malaise is interminable. Ayeni and Adeleye (2013) commenting on the Nigerian situation stated that it is not in any way far from crisis; a situation of social insecurity, engendered by youth restiveness, political unrest, bad leadership, and a high rate of unemployment among others. Nigeria no doubt needs to evolve a political system that will be acceptable to all citizens, which will be workable and enduring, to allow for sustainable development.

### **Concepts of Guidance and Counselling**

Owuamanam (2003) defines guidance as involving activities which are designed to help students acquire information, plan and implement programmes and enhance their decision-making process in educational or vocational and personal social matters. Contextually, guidance is a helping service given to individuals to enable them to achieve their potential and be useful to themselves and the world in general. Akinade (2006) cited Fergusson (1956) who sees guidance as a process of helping persons to understand themselves by discovering their own goals and make plans to realize them and to evaluate their progress with reference not only to self-satisfaction but also to potential contribution to the society.

Counselling, on the other hand, is defined as a process of helping an individual to become fully aware of himself and how he is responding to the influences of his environment. With the definitions given to guidance and counselling, it is clear that the individual is placed within the context of the environment in which he finds himself. Guidance and counselling are also oriented to helping students understand themselves, become self-sufficient in making realistic and positive selections and grow in human relationships and concerns. Guidance should prepare students for adult life as well as help them acquire appropriate attitudes and values that facilitate them to become productive and dynamic members of their communities. Primarily, the guidance programme should help young people and children to develop a



positive self-image and a sense of identity and create a set of beliefs and a value system that will guide their behaviour and actions.

Guidance and counselling is a vital service in the implementation of the national policy. According to Adegoke (2004), guidance should no longer be viewed as a side attraction, something to be merely tolerated and allowed in our schools if there is time and opportunity, it must now be viewed as the heart of the educational process. If the national policy must make any meaningful contribution to our economic reconstruction efforts, guidance must be assigned its unique role of guiding students to choose appropriate careers. To him, the 6-3-3-4 system involves transitional stages which must be approached with wisdom, because the adolescents in their young minds lack the needed wisdom to make adequate plans for themselves without guidance. This is why the counsellor with the aid of other teachers would be in an unassailable position to help them make wise choices as they transit. Guidance and counselling, therefore, need to be properly established in Nigerian schools to help the National policy meet the challenges of economic reconstruction.

Given the apparent ignorance of many young people about career prospects, and given personality maladjustment among school children, career officers and counsellors shall be appointed in post-primary institutions. Since qualified personnel in this category are scarce, the government shall continue to make provisions for the training of interested teachers in guidance and counselling. Guidance and counselling shall also feature in teacher education programmes. Proprietors of schools shall provide guidance counsellors in adequate numbers in each primary and post-primary school (NPE 2014).

Based on these connotations, guidance in education can be seen as a programme of service to individual students, based on the needs of each student and understanding of his immediate environment, teachers, peers, parents, guardians and people generally, and the effects of their influences on the students. It is the help given by one person that is the counsellor or the teacher, to another in making choices and appropriate adjustments and in solving problems. In 21<sup>st</sup>-century Nigeria, guidance should be well conceived as a process, development in nature, by which an individual is assisted to understand, accept and utilize his abilities, aptitudes and interests about his desires, values and aspirations.

Counselling in education is a process in which one person assists another in a person-to-person or face-to-face encounter. Essentially, counselling provides an atmosphere within which one person, the counsellor or teacher can provide meaningful assistance to another person or group of persons (the counselee). In 21<sup>st</sup>-century Nigeria, counselling in education should be directed towards creating opportunities and a suitable environment for the personal, social, educational and vocational growth of the individual. The central purpose of counselling is to assist students to explore and participate in their development towards becoming purposefully self-directed in a changing society, as such individual students learn new ways of obtaining information, making decisions, responding to the environment and new ways of interaction and communication.

### **Areas of Guidance and Counselling in Education that Require Prominent Attention in 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Nigeria**

Guidance and counselling programmes in schools should focus on the major components of guidance and counselling as students are prepared for life. The specific components that need to be well tackled to prepare students for effectiveness in 21<sup>st</sup>-century Nigeria are:



▪ **Academic**

The academic component is expected to guide students to be able to:

1. Understand the appropriate combination of school subjects.
2. Assist students in developing good study habits or skills.
3. Assist students in developing their initiatives.
4. Assist students in developing realistic plans for the future.
5. Assist students choose the right courses according to their interests, values, desires and aspirations.

▪ **Vocational**

The vocational component of guidance and counselling is needed to assist students:

1. To relate the concept of education generally to the various aspects of life, particularly the world of work.
2. To increase the relevance of the educational process to the employment needs of the society.
3. To offer opportunities for guidance and counselling in the areas of occupational aspirations and choice for all students.
4. To expose students to as many kinds of occupational activities as possible, so that an appropriate choice can be facilitated.
5. Regular interview of students to ascertain their localities, family backgrounds and other factors that might affect their choices of careers.
6. Testing and interpreting of tests for their right application in solving their academic and vocational problems.
7. Organizing seminars and conferences relating to the student's areas of interest to help them make wise occupational decisions.
8. Giving out occupational information to students at the right time and seeing that they understand the need for the information so given.

▪ **Personal-Social**

The personal–social component of guidance and counselling in an attempt to prepare students for life will guide them on:

1. The need to solve adjustment problems.
2. The need to revisit family guidance which appears inadequate.
3. Parental guidance to encourage parents on the need to rise to their responsibility in parenting the Nigerian child in readiness for meeting the 21st-century challenges
4. Coping with the problem of individual differences among students.
5. Meeting the emotional needs of the students and being prepared to adjust adequately to
6. The changing moral values of Nigerian youths in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Nigeria as appropriate measures have to be put in place to enable them to meet the contemporary challenges of the time.

**The Roles of Teachers, School Administrators, Parents, Government and the Community in School Guidance-Counselling in the 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Nigeria**

The move towards achieving socio-economic and political reconstruction in Nigeria in the 21<sup>st</sup> century would require the collaborative efforts of all stakeholders. Counselling should not be limited to counsellors alone; the contributions of teachers, school administrators, parents, the government and the



school guidance counselling team would be required. Among the expected roles of each of the stakeholders are the following:

**A. Teachers:**

Teachers are expected:

1. To identify the problems and needs of their students.
2. Provide suitable situations for maximum student development.
3. Provide individual and group counselling activities.
4. Provide various instructional services closely related to the needs and problems of students.
5. Create opportunities to acquire information and insights about students and their experiences.
6. Develop many effective contacts with parents.
7. Implement many of the decisions made as a result of students' contact with the school counsellor.

**B. School Administrator's Roles in School Guidance-Counselling Service**

The role of the school administrators among others would be to:

1. Explore and interpret the philosophy of the guidance programme to the teachers, parents and immediate community.
2. Provide furnished office space for the counsellor.
3. Provide financial support and suitable facilities such as a modern careers library, bulletin boards, tests and non-test instruments, stationery etc.
4. Give moral support for the development and implementation of the guidance programme in school.
5. Support continuous evaluation of the programme to ensure that it is fulfilling the stated objectives.
6. Ensure that guidance materials are well managed.
7. Make referrals to appropriate persons or centres to assist students.
8. Take the school counsellor as a co-worker instead of a rival.
9. Provide social and health workers in the school.

**C. The Roles of Parents**

Parents have vital roles to play in the preparation of their children for relevance in 21<sup>st</sup>-century Nigeria, they are expected to:

1. Provide for their children's moral, social, educational and financial needs.
2. Provide guidance services in the home environment.
3. Cooperate with the school administration and support the school programme.
4. Provide moral and financial support for the school.
5. Provide stationery and other facilities needed.
6. Help students during holidays by providing for their needs and encouraging proper use of leisure time.
7. Refer students to the counsellor and other professionals where necessary.

**D. The Government's Roles**

The government has to make guidance and counselling functional in preparation for a reconstructed socio-economic and politically viable Nigeria as the government is prepared to:

1. Provide the equipment and other infrastructure needed for the guidance programme.
2. Enforce schools to introduce and provide guidance services for students.
3. Provide public enlightenment on the importance of school guidance services.



4. Provide for regular organisation of seminars and workshops for parents and teachers on students' behaviour in schools.
5. Appeal for funds from wealthy individuals for school guidance.
6. Provide in-service training for teachers in guidance and counselling.

#### **E. The Roles of the Community**

All hands must be on deck; the entire community must be interested and committed to the guidance and counselling activities, to this end:

1. Members of the community are to serve on the guidance planning committee.
2. Organize career day or career week and invite specialists from the community.
3. Referral cases – to the specialists in the community.
4. Give moral and financial assistance and also
5. Serve as resource persons.

### **Relevance of Guidance and Counselling in the Socio-economic and Political Reconstruction in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Nigeria**

Finally, the guidance counsellor plays the most prominent role in the preparation of the students and society at large for a new Nigeria where socio-economic and political life would be rejuvenated to alleviate the populace from the economic downturn, social turbulence and political instability. To this end, the counsellor has to be full of activities and ensure a holistic approach in the preparation for a re-organized and re-orientated society in 21<sup>st</sup>-century Nigeria. The counsellor in addition to all the identified functions above should prepare the Nigerian child to learn essential skills for life.

### **Learning Effective Skills for Life**

There is an infinite number of skills that one can learn through counselling that are useful in everyday life. These range from problem-solving and conflict-resolution skills to communication and interpersonal skills. Counselling provides a safe environment to learn, practice, and experiment with these skills before applying them to real situations outside of sessions. These ultimately lead to better overall wellness for the body, mind, and spirit.

In a nutshell, the counsellor is saddled with the responsibility of facilitating the total and holistic development of individuals who will be useful to themselves and society at large. Specifically, the school counselling programme should be geared towards the following:

- Helping students to acquire an understanding of their self-concept, emotions and aspirations, could best be imparted through emotional intelligence education.
- Emotional intelligence education would help students learn skills to promote self-understanding and the ability to communicate this understanding effectively to others through the acquisition of personal and social competencies (Oyinloye, 2012)
- Helping students to use interpersonal conflict and problem-resolution skills to foster tolerance, understanding and respect for human diversity.
- Helping students to discover their talents and utilize their potential for the benefit of themselves and society.
- Helping students to acquire skills to be productive, progressive, and successful to be able to generate income.



- Helping students to learn how to adjust to changes resulting from maturation, physical growth, and general development.
- Helping students to develop self-efficacy and enhance their quality of life and human dignity.
- Prepare the citizenry for a fully adjusted being who would embrace the principles of orderliness needed to be law-abiding

### **Conclusion**

The paper has attempted to look at the relevance of guidance and counselling in bringing about socio-economic and political reconstruction in 21st-century Nigeria. The paper clarified the key concepts of reconstruction as well as guidance and counselling, and also highlighted the roles of Guidance Counsellors and other stakeholders in the society at large, to ensure socioeconomic and political reforms. The paper finally recommended that guidance and counselling must be given prominence in the Nigerian Education System as well as the society as a whole.

### **Recommendations**

In the journey towards bringing about socio-economic and political reconstruction or reformation in Nigeria, the following recommendations are pertinent:

- Nigeria government should as a matter of urgency invest heavily in education and also allot a reasonable amount to counselling because Nigerians need reorientation to a desirable mode of life that will bring about changes needed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century new Nigeria.
- There should be the training of more counsellors who should practice as counsellors and not as subject teachers in schools. These would be able to impact in the pupils the values that may be required for re-branded Nigerians that will become agents of change in society.
- Counselling and human development centres must be established in all educational institutions to ensure the total development of all students in preparation for life beyond the school environment.
- Vocational guidance must be introduced into the two tiers of secondary education to guide the pupils along the path of making the right choice of career while entrepreneurial guidance must be provided to guide the adult students in tertiary education so that they can diversify into other profitable ventures to enable Nigerians to get off the grip of unemployment and poverty.
- Guidance should be provided for the populace which will arouse the spirit of patriotism in Nigerians; this would make everyone become committed to seeking the good of the country and at the same time contribute meaningfully to national development.
- Counsellors in Nigeria should emphasize Emotional Intelligence training as it is considered a viable option to raise socially, economically and politically conscious individuals, if able to imbibe personal as well as social competencies needed for living a productive life.
- Counselling should not be limited to the school environment alone; it should be taken to ‘Town Hall meetings’ so that everybody would see the need for the transformation being canvassed as desirable and needed by all Nigerians and not limited to students but equally needed by all strata of the society. Let all be reached by the call for transformation in the land for the desired 21<sup>st</sup> century rebranded Nigeria.





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