

Guidance and Counselling as a Tool to Promoting Sustainable Lifelong Learning in Nigeria

Angela Ebere Abaa, Ph.D

*Department of Educational Foundations
Faculty of Education
National Open University of Nigeria
Victoria Island, Lagos, Nigeria
talk2angelabba@yahoo.com*

Abstract

As a result of globalisation and rapid technological development, the traditional patterns of life are gradually fading away. Lifestyles and survival strategies have been adopted to curb job insecurity and help their skills and interests meet the demands of the labour market. This study examines using Guidance and Counselling as a tool for promoting sustainable lifelong learning in our society. Until the later part of the twentieth century, formal education and training were confined mainly to the earlier phase of a person's life. The design was for young learner's to progress on a stereo-type line from school to work or to vocational training or to higher education with little opportunity to change direction. It was such that as one left educational system they were unlikely to return. Recently, the trend has shifted. There is now a swift change in the labour market. This paper explores the areas of counselling, psychology, and education in general. The writer starts by introducing the reader into guidance and counselling, and sustainable lifelong learning, then stresses the need for sustainable lifelong learning in Nigeria. The paper concludes by identifying the guidance and counselling services as a handy tool for promoting sustainable lifelong learning in Nigeria.

Keywords: Guidance, counselling, sustainability, lifelong learning, Nigeria.

Introduction

In recent times, there have been clarion calls and mandate for the promotion of lifelong learning for sustainable development in Nigeria. To achieve this, all hands are expected to be on deck for equipping the work force, be it teachers, university educators, lecturers in colleges of education and polytechnics, educators from ministries, parastatals, policy makers, implementers and stakeholders at our education levels with functional skills towards promoting lifelong learning.

As a result of the advancement in science and technology, there is high level of knowledge explosion affecting individuals in different spheres of life. Individuals, through continuous education, can learn about this diverse new knowledge, skills

and experiences that may affect them. It then becomes necessary to create lifelong learning opportunities for sustainability.

Lifelong learning is an organising principle of all forms of education, a shift from the ideas of teaching and training towards those of learning from knowledge conveying instruction to learning for personal development and from acquisition of special skills to broader discovery and the releasing and harnessing of creative potential. Lifelong learning is very important to both personal development and national development, especially in a developing country like Nigeria.

The Concept of Guidance and Counselling

Encyclopedia Britannica defines Guidance and counselling as "the process of helping individuals discover and develop their educational, vocational, and psychological potentials and thereby achieve an optimal level of personal happiness and social usefulness." The concept of counselling is essentially democratic in nature. An individual has the right to shape his destiny and had the choice to serve both his interest and society. This objective is complementary and not conflicting. The counsellor is to orient the individual towards those opportunities afforded by his environment that can best guarantee the fulfillment of his personal needs and aspirations (Denga, 1983). Guidance is a pervasive activity involving all, including parents, relatives, and even the community. This is through educational, industrial, social, religious and political agencies and particularly through press and broadcasting services. Part of such guidance is by giving information that enables others to increase their exploratory scope of behaviour.

Guidance:

Agi (2017) cited Ajoku (2009) as pointing out that a good guidance policy should be educative, curative, futuristic as well as preventive. Guidance services deal with such problems that have arisen from the developmental stages of individual students and to prevent those major problems (educational, vocational, and socio-psychological) from surfacing because "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Ramalingam (2006) in his view sees guidance service as a professional assistance provided to an individual with the aid of interviews and tests for maximising the satisfaction of an individual. Uzoeshi (2005) affirms that guidance is a programme designed to help an individual himself and his environment in relation to his abilities and limitations.

Counselling

Olayinka (1987) defines counselling as a process in which one person helps another in a one-to-one and a face-to-face encounter. Looking at the definition, we will assert that counselling is a process whereby a professionally trained

personnel/counsellor renders assistance to individuals (clients) who have seemingly educational, vocational, social or psychological problems to understand and overcome them effortlessly. The counsellor serves as a coach focusing on the potential of the client to help him understand himself.

Sustainability

The concept of sustainable lifelong learning reflects the process that meets the present needs of the society without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Education is the key to all this. Without providing highly accessible and enhanced quality education in form of lifelong learning, sustained and reasonable development could not be attained (Leal, 1997).

Lifelong Learning

Literacy in Nigeria, according to available literature, is slightly above average (UNESCO, 2015), while many children and youths are yet to be educated, including dropouts. Lifelong learning will help to address this situation. Lifelong learning, according to UNESCO, Abuja (2015) is a component of adult education in which learning is a continuous process. It refers to the ongoing voluntary and self motivated pursuit of knowledge for either personal or professional reasons. The term recognises that learning is not confined to childhood or the classroom, but takes place through life and in a range of situations. Since change is the only permanent thing, education remains a catalyst for change and development that involves lifelong learning process. The concept basically connotes the ongoing nature of learning as a lifelong occupation.

Lifelong learning programmes include:

- (i) Home schooling: learning to learn or the development of informal learning patterns. Home schooling or home education is the education of children inside the home (Wikipedia). It is usually conducted by a parent or a tutor. In many developed countries, home schooling is a legal alternative to public and private schools while in some other nations it remains illegal or restricted to specific conditions.
- (ii) Adult Education: the acquisition of formal qualifications of work and leisure skills later in life. The scope of adult education is wide and covers all types of learning situations and activities organised at different levels for adults at different ages (UNESCO, Abuja 2015). Thus, adult education is for everybody, regardless of level of education one has acquired. Some programmes of adult education are: adult basic education, including basic literacy, functional literacy; out-of-school youth programmes; income generating programmes; adult extension programmes; extra-mural education, and continuing education; distance learning programmes, etc.
- (iii) Continuing Education: extension or not-for-credit courses offered by higher education institutions. UNESCO, Abuja (2015) defines it as a branch of adult

education that aims to link the needs and goals of individuals with educational activities that would help to develop their full potential, as well as aid the socio-economic and political development of a nation.

(iv) Knowledge work: it is also called Workers Education. It includes professional development and on-the-job training. It is a form of adult education which is provided for workers who, for one reason or the other, were unable to complete their educational pursuit before joining the workforce (UNESCO, Abuja 2015). It also provides the opportunity for workers to update their skills and knowledge so as to be relevant in the work place because of the demand of the technological age. Obsolescence is no longer tolerated in the world of work. Workers who benefit from such programmes have greater job satisfaction, advancement on the job, occupational mobility and a sense of belonging. Various professions now recognize the importance of developing practitioners to be lifelong learners. Formal training nowadays is only a beginning; knowledge is accumulating at such a fast rate that one must continue to learn to be effective (Williams, 2001). Indeed, most professionals mandate that their members continue learning in order to maintain their license to practice.

(v) Personal learning environment or self-directed learning using a range of sources and tools including online applications. E-learning is available at most colleges and universities or to individuals learning independently. There are even online courses being offered for free by many institutions.

The characteristics or skills a lifelong learner needs to develop include reflective learning and critical thinking. This can help a learner to become more self-reliant through learning how to learn, thus making them better able to direct, manage, and continue their own learning process. It is believed that learners who are better equipped to create learning strategies for themselves will have more success in achieving their cognitive goals. As lifelong learning is lifelong, life wide, voluntary, and self motivated, learning to learn, that is, learning how to recognise learning strategies and monitor and evaluate learning, is a pre-condition for lifelong learning.

Professionals of different areas of life also need lifelong learning for self development all through their lifetime. This will help them to acquire vital knowledge, skills, competencies, and values that help to enhance their current functions at work place for sustainability. Opportunities abound through work place training and re-training, ICT–online education, and even technical and vocational education. Lifelong learning helps one meet the ever changing needs and roles in families, at work, and society at large. It is also needed for teachers' professional development to enable them meet the needs of learners for sustainability in the society. There is a great need for promoting lifelong learning using guidance and

counselling as a tool as through this avenue information is given and updated and everyone well informed.

The Role of Guidance and Counselling Services in Sustainable Lifelong Learning

The guidance counsellor is the practitioner of guidance and counselling services. His services include:

1. Collating information about a client's own abilities and interests.
2. Administering of psychological tests on clients.
3. Collating information on educational opportunities with a view to offering placement services to the client.
4. The Counsellor does not attempt to solve problems; he rather clarifies the client's thinking which aids the client make intelligent decisions.
5. They help to deal with grief of unexpected tragedies.

The major aim of Guidance and Counselling services is to help develop and encourage the students' academic, social, emotional and personal development. To achieve this aim, guidance and counselling services help students get to know themselves better and find effective solutions to their daily problems and also encourage them to perform better when faced with such problems. They also help students improve themselves in all aspects and become fully-functioning individuals. Counsellors monitor the students' development, and according to their needs, they give them the necessary support needed; such as helping them to find solutions to their problems, to make realistic decisions, to improve their skills and abilities, and to help them fit themselves into their environment in a healthy way.

People are different. The guidance counsellor understands this, and so addresses each person's psychological needs differently. The students also have to trust and be willing to share with the counsellor, and on the guidance counsellor's part, confidentiality is essential. In the guidance and counselling services, the student and his/her needs are primary. Counsellors could cooperate with the administrators, teachers, parents and the other staff members if it is necessary, while supporting him. The Guidance counsellor also offers the services of working with teachers and administrators; preparing handouts and lesson notes, contacting outside experts to get consultation and trainings; preparing handouts/trainings for the parents about parenting related issues and topics or inviting outside professionals to do the trainings.

The programmes that Guidance and Counselling Services run include Orientation Programmes, Growth and Development Programmes, dealing with how to cope with

bullying, how to cope with peer pressure, how can I improve my organisational skills, including strategies for effective learning, and transition to upper grades/divisions. The programmes also include Career Guidance and Social Skills Programmes. All those programmes can be appropriately run through early childhood education, primary school education, post-primary school education (including vocational education) and tertiary education.

The Nigeria National Policy on Education introduced by the Federal Government (revised edition 2004) highlights the school counsellor's function of providing elaborate background for schooling adolescents at junior secondary level by exposing them to various manipulative skills. The policy aimed at providing entrepreneurship development among school adolescents by equipping them for appropriate adjustment in the field of work, and motivating their curiosity and drive for business enterprise. Students who are not capable of continuing at senior secondary level should benefit maximally from this innovation and proceed for appropriate apprenticeship training at the end of their junior secondary school education. On the other hand, Guidance and Counselling as an integral part of the new policy aimed at providing special services which will assist students attain self understanding to harness their latent potentials for proper educational, personal-social and vocational development and adjustment.

The Place of School in Learning

School in Nigeria remains a place of social integration though its contribution cannot equip people with all knowledge needed to pursue their careers and develop their full potentials. It has decisive role in formative years in giving the child a grounding in the general culture and equipping him or her with the fundamental skills and knowledge that are essential prerequisites for further education. It therefore remains a place where people are inducted into society more than the family. It opens doors, not only to others but to community at large. It is the cradle of citizenship. The objectives of school are not limited to the acquisition of knowledge in traditional scholarly disciplines; school also contributes to the forming of citizens by teaching civic matters.

Another essential function of school that has been highlighted by changes in society is the task of teaching students how to learn and to whet their appetites for knowledge and learning. That is why school instills learning methods and techniques in students as well as encouraging them to apply throughout life what they have learned. It provides children with the foundation to secure their future self-reliance and help them through guidance and counselling become capable of organising work, carrying out research, analysing and processing information in order to enable

individuals to manage skills which are not only useful for the career or private life but essential for learning in all contexts.

If the school's main mission is ultimately to create appetite for knowledge and learning, the Guidance and counselling service is not simply an instrument for transfer of information for matching supply with demand as effectively as possible, it is a service for promotion of learning. It is also educative process which aims at developing autonomous/individualised citizens who can envisage a personal life project and work proactively towards achieving their goals.

Conclusion

Globalisation and advance of information communications technologies have led to substantial changes in job content, resulting in more autonomy and responsibilities for the individual, and an increase in the fragmentation within the world of work. The transition to the information society invariably implies that everyone has to adapt, not only to new technical tools, but also to changes in work organisation and working conditions. This adaptation is crucial, as these changes enhance individual responsibility in making use of the new kinds of educational facilities and possibilities that will be developed within such a society. Lifelong learning, therefore, becomes very necessary to enable the individual fit into the continual changing world of work and career, as learning is no longer confined to childhood or to the classroom. In the context of the learning society, one concern is about ways of organising informal achievement because the basic principles of education must go far beyond a purely utilitarian perspective, that must extend to all educational activities outside school. Guidance and Counselling Services come in as the key if lifelong learning is to be sustainable and effective.

This is necessary in our society so that new ways that target all population meet the needs of all for access of lifelong learning to be sustained. Education and training of the 21st century should be a mixture of short and long courses, updating of skills and upgrading of qualifications, with a variety of modes of learning, including open and distance learning, multimedia, and the recognition of skills and knowledge acquired from life and work. In order to equip young people for lifelong learning and to facilitate adult access to education and training, reforms should relate both to compulsory education and to subsequent phases and include:

- Equipping people for lifelong learning and changes of career through broad courses which impart skills of problem-solving and using knowledge that make autonomous learners/individualised learners able to identify their own learning needs in the future.
- Guidance and counselling has to be seen as crucial prerequisite, both for young people and for adults, to help them choose the most suitable learning

opportunities to enable them to face adoption to the radical economic and social changes currently taking place in developed countries.

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