

**CURRICULUM INNOVATIONS AND THE NINE YEARS BASIC EDUCATION:
A CHALLENGE OF COUNSELORS IN PRIMARY AND JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the concept of curriculum as total experience of pupils/students contact with the school which will eventually change their behaviour. As society is dynamic also our educational aims and objectives has to change to meet the changing society. This paper therefore examined curriculum reform as regard the nine years basic challenge as well as what the national policy on education say about it. The counselor is a professional who has the skills of helping people in undertaking their situation. His role and status as a professional were highlighted and his challenges in the implementation plan of nine years basic education were also discussed; specifically in providing orientation programme. Coping with student's adjustment problems, career counseling, students counseling against students unrest, students appraisal and students involvement in school activities etc.

Reference to this paper should be made as follows: Salisu Garba (2013), Curriculum Innovations and The Nine Years Basic Education: A Challenge of Counselors in Primary and Junior Secondary Schools of Nigeria, *J. of Education and Leadership Development* Vol.5, No.2, Pp. 9 – 15.

Introduction

Curriculum is a broad term that covers the entire experience passed unto learners under the school. In order words, a curriculum is a total experience with which the school deals in educating its students. Curriculum indeed is the life and programme of the school.

Reform in education according to the Oxford Advance Dictionary, is an organization, a law etc. by making changes to it. From the above definition therefore, reform in education is a deliberate activity i.e. a planned and systematic changes in educational policy, theory practice or strategy for a society or any of it parts.

Reform in education is normal and desirable. This is because education is constantly challenged not only to sustain the identity of the society but also to keep tract of its needs, aspiration and goals. It is imperative for education to undergo some changes in order to make it socially relevant and/or to ameliorate crisis that may arise with regards to intrinsic value and quality in addition to these, reform face global challenges, countries in Africa for instance face these as a result of curriculum reform and some of these are summarize below:-

- The challenges of universal literacy.

- The challenges of shortage of highly skilled human resources in the field of education.
- The challenges of the traditional orientation of education with aspiration for modernity.
- The challenges of public private partnership of chagrin e.g. Nigeria
- The challenges of the diversification of the economy to become less dependent revenue. Cited properly (Uba 2004).

Nigeria's Curriculum Reform

The National Policy on Education (2004), rise a fundamental questions about how best to engage in curriculum reform. The policy stated that the major goals of primary schools among others are to: inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy as well as the ability to communicate effectively.

- Give citizenship education as a basic for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society.
- Lay a sound basic for scientific and reflective thinking.
- Mould the character and develop sound attitude moral in the child.

The Nine Years Basic Education

Nigeria has participated in most of the deliberations concerning education for living together in a global world and is committed to the goals of education for which are reflected in national education programmes e.g. the introduction of Universal Primary Education in 1976, which was one of the major national initiatives that were aimed at universalizing access to education in Nigeria. The NPE (2004) provide a framework within which all planned programme and activities for basic education are implemented.

Nigeria has taken some initiatives that have had a beneficial effect on and guided activities in favors of education for all; these include:-

- Expansion of access to formal education.
- Setting up of government agencies to cater for disadvantage groups.
- Placing education on the list for legislative action so that government shall direct its policies towards ensuring that the is equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels, and;
- Government has financed all curricular development effort at primary, junior,

secondary and teacher/training education levels.

Finally, based on the experience acquired over the years and feedback from the National Curriculum Conference of 1991 and 1995, as well as subsequent appraisal of the education system to fit the dynamic of socio-cultural and global economy, the curricular for basic education is undergoing revision.

Basic education of nine years duration introduced to Nigeria Educational System in 1999, comprising 6 years of primary school and 5 years of junior secondary school that is compulsory that is lower basic, middle which composed adult and out of school youth.

The specific goals of the nine secondary shall be as follows:-

1. Pursuance of its goals, the primary shall be tuition free, universal and compulsory with specified curriculum to include: Languages, mathematics, science, physical and health education, religion knowledge, agriculture, social studies and citizenship education, cultural, creative art and computer education. The educational services that were provided by the nine years basic education shall be school library, health care, scheme for counseling specialized teacher of particular subjects and the teaching shall be by practical, exploratory and experimental method.
2. For effective teaching and learning, the teacher/pupils ratio shall be 1:35 the primary school leaving certificate should be based on continuous assessment and shall be issued by the head master of the school locally.
3. **Junior Secondary School:** The nine years basic education concerned or affects only the junior secondary school. The broad goals of secondary education are to prepare the individual for useful living within the society and prepare him for higher education.

The junior secondary should be both the pre-vocational and academic, tuition free universal and compulsory with all teaching subjects which will enable the pupils to acquire further knowledge and certificate at the junior secondary school level and should be based on the continuous assessment and examination. Having seen the goals of nine years basic education even though many of them are yet to be realized since the day of inception till date this is due to poor implementation of programme by the stake holders of which counseling is one of them.

The Concept of Counselor

Counselor, according to Longman (2005) is someone whose job is to help and support people with problem, and if counseling is a relationship between people and an assisting process where someone assists another, then the counselor is the embodiment and the manifest of the counseling technology. So then just as surgery requires a surgeon, so does counseling requires a counselor.

Counselor is reserved for those with professional training in counseling. If counseling is just to be taken as a mere act of giving advice but it cannot be said that, everyone is a counselor. Hence, everybody can guide, but not everybody can counsel. According to Nweke (1989), the professional counselor is an expert in his area of specialization and also has activated skills in helping people understand their situation, clarify their values and make informed decision for which they assume responsibility.

He may also be regarded as an educator who is ready to exercise his/her skills in an environment in which students can easily assess hi/her and communicate their feelings without fear and hope to be more effective with decision making, examine their value and objectives without risks of condemnation. Therefore, such individuals must have received training as a councilor and must possess certain skills and expertises that enable will him to be effective.

Quality of a Counselor

In the literal sense of the word 'quality', it is a feature of something, especially one that makes it different from something else. An understanding counselor is a unique person in the sense that his client sees him as attractive, trustworthy as well as an expert who has the ability to care for other people's needs which distinguish him from all other counselors.

The American Personnel and Guidance Association (APGA) stated six basic qualities that a counselor should have. The following are the six basic qualities.

- A belief in each person as an individual.
- A commitment to individual human values.
- Open mindedness.
- Self-understanding.
- Professional commitment.

Nweke *et al.*, (1989) also quoted Hopke (1978) that other qualities a counselor should have are as follows:-

- Ability to relate easily and well to all kind of persons.
- Sincere interest in people and other welfare.
- He should be a person of high moral value, capable of providing dynamic leadership to the guidance programme.

In general, a counselor is a professional, who is expected to maintain harmonious relationship with groups and individuals. All these qualities help the counselor to be effective.

Challenges of a Counselor

After observing the objectives of various levels of education involve in the nine years basic plan particularly the primary and the junior secondary school levels, the

counselor is faced with challenges towards the successful implementation of the plan both to the society who are the beneficiary of the programme and some of the challenges are:-

Provision of Orientation Programme to New Students: Students who have just been admitted to junior secondary school that is; upper basic education level need to be given proper orientation towards new school and social environment in order to adjust. This adjustment is very necessary for successful learning because the student come from primary schools and this means that new students need to be acquainted with new demands in term of responsibility, mode of studying, ways of acting, pattern of association and so on. The newly admitted students to junior secondary school may be faced with new challenges in terms of coping with different curriculum which is more comprehensive in nature and wide in perspective.

Education and Career Counseling of Students: This geared towards assisting students in choosing subjects in which they are most likely to do well and the most important thing, a student does is to study and pass his/her examination and can only receive this encouragement through education counseling, in doing this, the counselor steps in to help such students to:

- Cultivate good study habits and skills which are indispensable both at the primary and secondary schools level.
- Identify and extract major point from textbook.
- Plan properly their reading, recreation and leisure time.
- Select conducive learning environment and prepare for examination etc.
- Guard against the act of children terminating their formal education after the completion of junior secondary education.
- The National Policy on Education that after secondary education school levers are expected to demonstrate in certain vocational skills. All this put together make counseling an effective means of assisting students to understand themselves and the world at large. By so doing these help to make vocational decisions in line with their literate abilities and other personality characteristics, aptitude and limitation.

Coping With Students Adjustment Problem: Some students usually bring into school or classroom certain maladaptive behaviours which need to be modified habit of fighting. Insubordinations, cheating, truancy, building, indecent sexual behaviours and other misbehaviours tend to hinder academic activities; teachers are therefore expected to report such act to the counselor when discovered in students so as to help take necessary steps and intervention strategies to solve the

problem. Exploitation, bad behaviour for example indecent dress, drugs addiction, immoral sexual act and so on. This make students embark on peaceful demonstration often carrying placards, boycott classes and foods order. All this can be reduced if the counselor educate students and teachers, can also help teacher and principal guide against explosion in schools, and to get the school to be aware of the factors of the students that causes indiscipline among the students and above all, teach students manner or approach and how to go through appropriate channels of communications in their attempt of resolving their problem.

Student's Appraisal: According to National Policy on Education, continuous assessment should be adopted as a mode of appraising the extent to which learning are being achieve; To be used for validation and administration of the instruments and interpretation of the result of the data such records becomes very useful in the counselor's work because they help to identify learner strengths and weaknesses in order for the strength to become consolidated.

Concerning those that completed their junior secondary school education, any students who cannot proceed to senior secondary education are enrolled for vocational skills or school type and must be followed up to determined their performance in the area where they are place (adoption to conditions). All these are done by the counselor because of his close observation of students and analyses obtain from the cumulative record performance and behaviours.

Conclusion

Education is the basis for effective participation and contribution to the life, that illiteracy is responsible for mal-adaptive behaviour found in youth also education helps mould the character of our youth and develop sound attitude and morals in the child.

Therefore, counselor have a great role to play from the primary level to junior secondary level and this roles range from helping the children to adjust fully to school programme. The counselor is expected to go round and make people aware that reform is very important and it is for the betterment of the child and every child should be given the opportunities to acquire it through curriculum offered in primary and junior secondary school level across the country.

Recommendations

- Government should establish guidance and counseling centres for students of primary and junior secondary school nationwide.
- They should also employed qualified counselors at that level.
- Carrier counseling should also be given to the student of primary and junior secondary school.
- Guidance and counseling courses should also be introduces at primary and

junior secondary school level etc.

- Career counseling on course selection should be made mandatory.
- Counseling on drugs abuse, gangsterism, examination malpractice, and cultism should be offered free for them.

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