

LANGUAGE PROVISIONS OF THE NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION IN THE EFFECTIVE ACTUALIZATION OF GUIDANCE & COUNSELLING IN SCHOOLS

By

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Abstract

The real actualization of educational objectives as stated in the National Policy on education depends highly on the learner's disposition as it concerns understanding of concepts and proper guidance. A learner understands the teaching when it is delivered in the language he/she understands well. The National Policy on Education stipulates the use of mother tongue at pre-primary and junior primary, and should be taken as a compulsory subject in junior secondary schools. This provision is highly neglected. This paper examines the language provision of the National Policy on Education and the effective actualization of Guidance & counseling in schools.

Key words: NPE, Actualization, Guidance & counseling, School

INTRODUCTION

The very high regard that English Language has as a school subject and medium of communication at all levels of education in most places in Nigeria derives mainly from its utilitarian value to the larger Nigerian society. In reality the importance of English language acquisition as a medium for proficiency in other school subjects cannot be overemphasized. Knowledge is important not only for classroom teaching and learning but also for economic and national development. It also serves the purpose of increasing communication among the numerous ethnic groups in Nigeria. Hence, there is the need to improve the quality of spoken and written English language as well as increase the number of people that can use it fluently and freely.

According to Oluwole (2008) in recognition of the importance of English language for enhancing educational attainment as well as for improving communication ability of citizens, the government has made the subject a core subject.

However, one of the ultimate goals in learning to read and reading to learn is to construct meaning. One way to make reading meaningful is to connect the new content to what is already familiar or known. From an instructional viewpoint, contextualization refers to drawing connections between what needs to be learned and learners' existing knowledge and experiences. In Nigerian situation,

there should be a connection between a learner's mother tongue and the highly graded English language in order to make learning meaningful.

On the other hand, to actualize the high meaning that is attributed to learning one need to consider other factors. One of the most important among them is the learner's disposition physically and Intrinsic. When this is not properly handled the teacher may put in his best only to realize that the learner achieved nothing. Truly, proper management of disposition goes together with Guidance & Counselling. Here also depending on the learner's level and understanding ability, the Guidance Counsellor truly actualizes her purpose when the language the learner understands deeply is used in reaching or counseling. According to Akpa, Udoh & Fagbamiye (2005), evidence abounds in literature on different manifestation of indiscipline in school as a result of lack of proper Counselling. From the researchers' experiences most indiscipline acts among learners are results of either mismanaged or unmanaged learner dispositions. It has been noted that absence of discipline in school frustrates the teacher, lowers the tone of the school and threatens acceptability of the products of the school. According to Ugodulunwa,(2004), cited in Akpa, (2005), it could also make the school environment less child friendly and teaching and learning ineffective even when the teacher uses the right language and method with the view to make the learning meaningful.

Therefore, the use of mother tongue or the child's first language in the management of behavioural disposition through proper Guidance & Counselling cannot be over emphasized. Thus, in view of the fact that sufficient effort has not been directed to the proper implementation of the language provision of the national policy on education as it concerns the use of mother tongue, this work is directed to the language provision and the effective actualization of Guidance & Counselling roles in schools.

Conceptual Framework on Guidance & Counselling and Mother Tongue

Guidance & Counselling is a process of planned intervention within a school system by which the total development of students is stimulated in areas relating to their personal, social, career, emotional and academic concerns. Counselling services require more than one person; it is an enlightened process whereby people help people to achieve positive adjustment through self – understanding. This is better done by a professional who works by facilitating growth toward achievement. In Akinade's (2012) contribution, Guidance & Counselling is a process of helping an individual become fully aware of him and the ways in which he is responding to the influences of his environment.

Akinade states further that Guidance & Counselling also assist an individual to establish some personal meaning for his behaviour and to develop and classify a set of goals and values for future behaviour. From the above explanations one can freely add that the influence of effective Guidance & Counselling is of both immediate and long time importance. The process involves one on one relationship between a person that is troubled by problems he cannot cope with and a professional or trained personnel whose experiences have qualified him to help others reach solution to personal needs. In other words, one can say that the Counsellor helps people to help themselves through interactional relationship designed to facilitate the personal development of information leading to effective decision making.

However, in addition to creating self awareness and effective decision making, the counsellor helps the individual concerned to learn and also understand their environment. With such exposure they will be in a position to choose between accepted behaviours that can help them to develop progress and mature positively. It can also help them to expand their understanding educationally, vocationally and socially. From practical examples one can understand that the learning process in counselling is transformative in nature whereby people are helped to learn all they need inside and outside the classroom.

During the counselling process, the counsellor makes use of languages. Speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving and processing information. Considering the understanding of the participant the counsellor uses the language the client can better understand and with which he can give proper explanation on what he needs. Consequently a proper knowledge of a client's mother tongue is of great importance to the counsellor.

Mother tongue is defined as a language which a group of people considered to be indigenes of an area acquired and accepted to be their medium of communication. Mother tongue may be the first language a child comes in contact with in his environment. It may also be the language of the parents especially the father. However, a child's first language may not be his parents' language but the language of the environment where he was born and brought up. If he understands this language well and better than any other, it becomes his mother tongue (L1). For instance an Igbo boy was born and brought up in Akwa Ibom State where the language spoken is Ibibio. The boy understands Ibibio more than the parents and understands concepts better in Ibibio than Igbo and English language. Whichever language the boy prefers, the fact remains that his Mother Tongue is the Igbo language. Often a child learns the basics of the first language(s) from the family.

It is accepted that in teaching, learning and counselling processes, the Mother Tongue of the child is of utmost importance. Oluwole, (2008), is of the view that it categorizes a large part of the child's environment. He explains that it has names for most of the objects, actions, ideas and attributes which are so important to the learner as well as to any society. Truly children learn through communicating in a language they understand and which they can speak well. The mother tongue is the natural base on which verbal skills can be built; it is the Child's environment. Wikipedia (2007) also added that if a child's Mother Tongue is the first language that a person learned, the person is defined as a native speaker of the first language, although one may also be the native speaker of more than one language if all of the languages were learned without formal education, such as through cultural immersion before puberty.

Main goal of education

According to Egbo (2013) in Nigerian philosophy of education, it is believed that education is a pivot for national and all round development of an individual. From Federal Republic of Nigeria, FRN (2004) various aspects of education may include the following: the formulation of ideas, their integration for national development and the interaction of persons and ideas.

Education is not only a tool for liberation from illiteracy but also a veritable instrument for transmission of norms and values to the younger ones. When more people are educated social vices is reduced and there is peaceful coexistence. As stated in the Nigerian National Policy on Education, Nigerian philosophy of education is based on these three major goals.

1. The development of an individual into a sound and effective citizen.
2. The full integration of the individual into the community.
3. The provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens of the country at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal schools system.

Egbo (2013) suggests that in order to make the philosophy of education work harmoniously with the Nigerian national goals, education in Nigeria has to be geared towards self realization, better human relationship, individual and national efficiency, effective citizenship, national consciousness, national unity as well as social cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological process. Egbo's suggestion here, embraces nearly all aspect of human engagements. Thus, when this is actualized more and more Nigerians will be liberated from illiteracy.

The issue of Education for all has been in major education policies for some years. Hence, for proper actualization, there is need for guidance and counselling service as a major tool to be given in a language the clients understands well which is the language of the immediate environment.

Relationship between actualization, language and guidance and counseling

Language is a tool to express feelings, thoughts and help one to be creative, reflective and to learn. For instance using motivation properly allows pupils to integrate their specific cultural identity with universal culture, thus helping the pupil to acquire the skills of speaking, listening reading and writing the language of the immediate environment.

Students' focus on the skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing is supported by using poetry, creative writing, drama and theatre to foster mother tongue or the language of the immediate environment.

Language in our school is an intense process which starts in kindergarten where the pupils first begin with the mother tongue or language of the immediate environment and continue until they can use it in their daily lives. Mother tongue is not just a class lesson in pre primary and junior primary but a skill which can be used on a daily life basis. (The basic aim is to achieve the basic objectives of primary education as stated in the national policy on education NPE 2008, p8). This adds value to their lives and improves their ability to fully understand that writing, reading, speaking and listening are the essentials of communication. Through the use of mother tongue, the pupils are enabled to share their experiences, acquire information in the language of the immediate environment and trust in themselves.

Teachers encourage pupils to link various ideas from different things that they read in order to fully comprehend and apply them to their lives.

Speaking and listening

As students are engaged in the activity of listening to dialogues and speech in the local language, it will help them to understand and also criticized others. Hence, their boldness and understanding are enhanced. This activity will also help them express their thoughts and feelings clearly and appropriately in the mother tongue.

Reading

The counsellor encourages the pupils and students to read all available, appropriate books in their mother tongue since this gives them the ample opportunity to enjoy reading in mother tongue.

Writing

The counsellor encourages and expects students and pupils to master skills of writing and grammar in their mother tongue in order to write effectively, to be careful about spelling and reflect their thought accurately, express their feelings through use of different kinds of writings and using it as a tool for learning.

A school counselor helps to make learning a positive experience for every learner. They are sensitive to individual differences. They are aware that a classroom environment that is good for one child may not necessarily be good for another child. They see the need for the use of mother tongue or the language of the immediate environment. The counsellor facilitates communication among pupils, teachers, parents, administrators and students to adopt in the school environment. This can best be achieved by the use of language of the immediate environment which the child understands most and will be able to use easily to express him/her freely.

As stated earlier, the rationale behind counselling individuals who understand themselves and their world will become transformed. Understanding lies in effective communication which also entails the use of a person's language. Most of the things in the world around us can best be explained with the concept around us.

It is in reality true that every individual both adult and infants is more exposed to the language of the immediate environment than the English Language. Hence forcing them not to accept and speak the language of the immediate environment freely means creating a gap between the individual and the environment. Such a gap can neither lead to understanding nor effective actualization of goals. In Egbo (2013) one of the objectives of Guidance counseling in schools is to work with significant others in the life of a child, helping them to understand the needs and problems of the child with the purpose of creating, arousing and sustaining their interest and this understanding of the child's needs, problems and goals.

To help the child to attain goals, handle problems at his level and meet his needs everyone involved must be sure that there are no gaps since most children are sensitive to what they do not understand. Most children's needs and problems lie in their immediate environment, which is in what they see, hear and experience around them. A child understands the environment better when he has a sound understanding of language in the immediate environment. Teachers and counselors are aware that most children hang out of school. Today with the neglect on the language provision of NPE such children only become 'on lookers' conscious of the fact that there are things they should understand in the environment if not for the handicap presented by language barrier. The counselor may understand the needs and problems of the child easily, but helping the child may be difficult because there may be some concepts which the child will understand better with indigenous language. Hence such help is better achieved by actualizing the language provision of NPE.

Actualizing the NPE

The use of motivation as provided in the NPE will make it easy for the Guidance counselor to effectively actualize these few objectives among others:

- a. Help the learners acquire as early as possible in their lives a positive image of self through self understanding and self direction. The child can achieve this easier when there is no confusion in language.
- b. Help the child acquire the skills of collecting and using information. This is best achieved when the child can interpret the skills in a language he hears more around him.
- c. To help build up and sharpen the child's perception of reality, development of a sense of autonomy and to top up motivation for creativity and productivity. This is an important objective for the guidance counselor. Building and sharpening of perception requires adequate understanding, developing the sense of autonomy requires both understanding and sound communication ability. When the child has no stand in these, the guidance counsellor's effort will be in vain. A good alternative is to hold firmly to the language provision of the NPE.

Odiembo (2012) noted that the Guidance counsellor is to check school dropouts and intercept and assist disadvantaged children. Most school dropout and disadvantaged children are more comfortable with their mother tongue. In other words many /students that drop out of school as a result of inability to cope with a second language as these disadvantaged children are more familiar with their mother tongue. If the guidance counsellor is to live up to Odiembo's expectation the above stated alternative is a good choice. Educationists had a fore sight of the important need of motivation before making provision for it. Hence, the counsellor should see the urgent need for the language provision of the NPE and its implementation of accordingly in his capacity.

In the primary school

The National Policy of Education (NPE 2013): The medium of instruction both in the pre-primary and junior primary shall be the language of immediate environment for the first three years (3yrs) in monolingual communities. During which English shall be taught as a subject. The objectives of primary education as stipulated by National Policy on Education are:-

- a. To inculcate permanent literacy, numeracy and the ability to communicate effectively. Based on this the guidance counselor should interact with the children at this level in the language of the immediate community. This is to enable the child open up and to feel a belonging to the community. Parts of the body have to be taught in mother tongue. If the child could master these basic words in the mother tongue translation into English will not pose a problem to the child. The child will thus be free to communicate with the counsellor who understand his/her mother tongue. But the problem here is that before the child could reach the school going age he/she speaks and understands only English and when you try to.
- b. To lay a sound basis for scientific, critical and reflective thinking; for the counsellor to achieve this he/she has to interact with the children in their mother tongue; by pronouncing important words on their mother tongue; holding discussion group using the language of the immediate environment this will help the children appreciate their mother tongue.
- c. Promote patriotism, fairness, understanding and national unity. The counselor achieves this by teaching the pupil to sing the national anthem and pledge in the language of the immediate environment.

- d. To install social, moral norms, and values in the child. The counselor achieves this by encouraging the pupils to appreciate the culture of other people around them like the Yoruba's or the Hausa children in their midst.
- e. To develop in the child the ability to adopt to the changing environment the counselor ensures that the pupil adapts smoothly to their changing environment.
- f. Provide opportunities for the child to develop life manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society within the limits of the child's capability the counselor tends to achieve these by allowing the pupil participate in the local craft like broom, basket.

One can understand that counselling services cut across all aspects of an individual's life. These services help the students in school and also out of school environment. In reality our local language are very important in the effective actualization of guidance and counselling roles in schools.

Ogbuagu (2016) Opines that the local language should be used in pre-primary and junior primary schools but this is not the case in many Nigerian schools, both private and government. Contributing in the same Television broadcast Aniche (2016) added that in her 2011 research it was discovered that 25% of children under 11 years cannot speak their language. She States further that if nothing is done, more languages will go into extinction as some have done already. She explained that UNESCO highlights the use of indigenous language as language of instruction in lower classes and advises that there should be books to reflect curriculum written in local languages. Teachers should be trained to produce books so that everybody is carried along. If this is done youths are energized and empowered and the NPE will be implemented through proper Guidance & Counselling.

Conclusion:

This paper has given the general responsibilities, function and importance of Guidance & Counselling in the effective implementation of the NPE It also stipulates the use of the language which the students are is very familiar with, if it is to lead to the effective actualization of the importance of Guidance Counselling in schools. It is anticipated that Counselling Association of Nigeria (CAN) would agree on the use of mother tongue or the language of the immediate environment in schools during counselling. They should also promote the production of documents to this effect. If this is implemented, counsellors should be able to operate easily in schools at different levels and with different classes of people. This will help the implementation of the NPE. With this counselling in Nigeria can be said to have made another giant stride among others towards the actualization and implementation of the NPE.

Therefore first it is clear from this paper that a basic issue that any school counselor must address concerns the medium of exchange between him and his client, as stated in the National Policy of Education.

Recommendations:

The following recommendations are made for promoting effectiveness in Guidance & Counselling in school teaching and learning using the mother tongue

1. There is need for serious enlightenment on the part of the public and schools to accept and implement the use of mother tongue at the expect level for the expected individual for effective actualization.

2. Guidance & Counsellor on their own part should be committed to the counselling programmes through helping the teachers with the identification of learner with learning problems and inform the teachers, so that individualized methods can be used with the mother tongue for learner for effective teaching and learning.
3. Government should help train qualified counsellors in the use of mother tongue to help meet with learners problems effectively.
4. Parents should also be included in Guidance & Counselling programme through giving them progressive report of their children and advising them on the importance of the use of mother tongue. If parents help at home it will be easier with the teachers and counsellors in the schools.
5. There is need for the clarity about the services rendered by school counsellors. This is done by redefining the counsellors' roles, functions, and objectives for the benefit of school administrators, teachers, learners, parents, staff and community. For every member of the groups listed above to understand this properly, there is another urgent need to promote and implement the use of mother tongue.
6. Every state can imbibe the practice in Anambra State where the legislatures dedicated one day a week for legislation with the mother tongue. Schools can also dedicate one day a week to teach all the subjects for the day with the mother tongue.
7. Nigerians can benefit from what happened in Hongkong where after 100 years of British rule went back to their language same night as observed by Obiefuna (2016).

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