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**NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION AND  
THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING  
IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA:  
ISSUES AND THE WAY FORWARD**

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**Abstract**

*This paper discussed the provisions of guidance and counselling as an educational support service in the Nigeria's National Policy on Education. It is interesting to note that the National Policy on Education (NPE) has since 1981 recognized the significance of providing the guidance and counselling services in the country's post-primary schools. However, since then, not much has been done in the realization of the objectives of the service in the country's education sector. Apparently, it appeared that there is need for revisiting the provision especially as it is contained in the 2014 edition of the policy. In doing that, this paper ex-rayed those provisions in the policy and identified some issues of concerns which includes non-statement of matters such as recruitment of professional guidance counsellors in schools among others. Similarly, the paper provided some way forward which includes the inclusion of recruitment of professional guidance counsellors and the identification of scope, objectives of guidance and counselling as well as involvement of all tiers of government in the implementation of the provisions of guidance and counselling as an education support service as enshrined in the National Policy on Education.*

**Key words:** National Policy on Education, Guidance and Counselling, Education Support Service

**Introduction**

It is an open secret that the demand for the rejuvenating of the Nigeria's education system is a serious concern to all stakeholders in the country. The situation in the various levels of the education system is very disturbing to an extent that the graduates of the system at all levels leaves much to be desired in learning and character after graduation. This is coming at a time when we have a strong instrument of reform in the hands of school administrators which if effectively used will turn things around and improve the quality of learning and character formation among graduates of the education system. This instrument of reform is apparently no other than the use of proper, effective and purposeful guidance and

counselling services in schools. Generally, it could be asserted that the entire process of education is directed towards leading and guiding the students or learners to become useful to themselves and to other members of the society. In this context therefore, the process of education is also the same as the process of effective guidance and counselling of students. Apparently, the Nigeria's National policy on Education has recognized this aspect an educational support service in the Nigerian education system. It is for this reason therefore that this paper discussed the implementation of the provisions of the guidance and counselling as an education support service in the Nigeria's National Policy on Education (NPE), its challenges and way forward.

This paper is of the opinion that these two concepts need to be briefly discussed because of its belief that in the context of NPE and the process of education itself, it is virtually guidance and counselling services that is rendered in a more directed, coordinated, targeted, planned and well formalized specialty. Thus, whatever the NPE will consider in guidance and counselling as an educational support service is also part and parcel of the education process. It is against this background that some scholars see lots of an educational construct or an intellectual synthesis in the concept of guidance as a service (Sambo, 2009). For instance, Effiong et al (2022) using the etymology of the word guidance which is 'Guide' says its meaning is to direct on a course, to give instruction and to manage. In what will be seen as putting its meaning professionally to have the same end result as that of the process of education the scholars defined guidance as the aid given to a person who realizes that, he or she needs assistance in order to make himself or herself a useful and worthwhile citizen in the society which he or she lives. By the objective of guidance as stated in this context therefore, it is deducible that guidance has the same destination as the objective of the education process. This conception is a corroboration to the definition of guidance by Denga, (1986) who defined the term as a cluster of formalized services through which help is given to individuals in situations where adjustment, planning, interpretation of information and choices are made. That is why also Odebunmi (1992) saw guidance as encompassing the full range of personalized assistance given to the individual seeking to expand his or her self-understanding and his or her understanding of others. In this context therefore, it will not be out of place to assert that apart from guidance meaning guiding, leading, helping, assisting can also include teaching which is the hall mark of the process of education. In other words, guidance can also be seen as teaching or educating depending on the circumstances of the process or essentially as the case may be.

In the same way, the concept of counselling is also seen as sometimes synonymous with education in interpretation. According to Halimat et al (2022) counselling has always been a perennial aim of education that enables the students in enriching their perspective and promoting attitude towards resolving educational, vocational and personal problems. This is also in line with Fuster in Halimat et al (2022) who stated the goals of counselling as facilitating behaviour

change, enhancing coping skills, promoting decision making, improving relationships and facilitating the clients' potential. This is also the goals of education via the school system. Furthermore, Sambo (2009) still observed that although from the approach of counselling, a subtle but important distinction is made, education and counselling are closely linked with some superficial similarities. In his submission, while education is often concerned with giving advice and information, counselling is concerned with making decisions and planning changes. Furthermore, because counsellors are not always claiming to know everything, they are not concerned with giving information but receiving adequate information from the client to enable them provide support to him/her. Meanwhile teachers provide information, knowledge and skills as provided in the curriculum to the students to bring them up as useful human beings in the society. In this process students are compelled to accept and learn the information the teacher provides during interactions, but in the case of counselling, the process depends on the willingness, cooperation and positive acceptance of the service by the individual. Essentially, counselling is all about helping individual or group to be themselves, encourage their growth and the attainment of self-actualization. Olayinka (1972) and Makinde (1983) sums up counselling as any process of face-to-face relationship between the counsellor and counselee. By and large, in the views of this paper, the implementation of the NPE has serious implications to processes of guidance and counselling services at all levels of the country's educational system. To this end, its effective implementation especially as par the provisions made therein with regards to guidance and counselling as an educational support service is very imperative to the achievement of the goals of education in the country.

### **The National Policy on Education (NPE) and Guidance and Counselling**

The National Policy on Education (NPE) is the national guideline for the effective administration, management and implementation of education at all tiers of government. The policy represents a statement of intentions, expectations, goals, prescriptions, standards and requirements for quality education delivery in Nigeria. Historically, the emergence of this policy is traceable to the 1969 Curriculum Conference held between 9<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> September. This conference laid the foundation for the articulation of policy guidelines on standards, procedures and strategies for the coordination of roles to ensure and sustain the delivery of qualitative education in Nigeria. The conference proceedings were also followed up by series of activities which includes wide national consultations, a seminar of experts from governments, educational ministries and establishments, voluntary organizations/agencies such as market women unions and international organizations. It was these participants that drafted the document that culminated in the emergence, development and publication of the first National Policy on Education in 1977. This first edition of the NPE was successively revised in 1981, 1988, 2004, 2007 and 2014 where positive changes and updates were made by

stakeholders and implementers of the education system to meet the dynamics of the global education practice. Of significance to guidance and counselling is that it featured prominently in the 1981 edition where it was expressly stated in paragraph 83 (ii) of the policy document that ‘in view of the apparent ignorance of many young people about career prospects and in view of personality maladjustment among school children, career officers and counsellors will be appointed in Post-primary institutions’... in addition, guidance and counselling will also feature in the Teacher Education Programmes. As it were, it is expected that all education managers and practitioners should be guided by the policy in the actualization of the objectives of education in the country. Meanwhile, in the latest 2014 edition of the policy, it was divided into 10 solid sections among which is section 8 which contains the subject matter of this paper. In the NPE, section 8 is titled ‘Educational Support Services’ which identifies some support services aimed at facilitating the implementation of educational policy, the attainment of policy goals and the promotion of effectiveness of educational system. According to the NPE (2014) the goals of educational support services shall be to;

- a. Develop, assess and improve educational programmes;
- b. Enhance teaching and improve the competence of teachers;
- c. Provide conducive environment for learning;
- d. Make learning experiences more meaningful and realistic for children;
- e. Make education more cost-effective;
- f. Promote in-service education;
- g. Enhance access to learning;
- h. Develop and promote effective use of innovative materials in schools; and
- i. Promote partnership with Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs) and International Development Partners (IDPs) to access resources.

The policy in stating the nationally approved educational support services identified items vi and vii that centered on the provision of guidance and counselling as an educational support service in the Nigeria’s educational system. Item vi referred to the provision of guidance and counselling as a general service. According to the policy, this aspect contained the following provisional guidelines of action that;

- a) Government shall continue to make provisions for the training of teachers in Guidance and Counselling;
- b) Establish and equip;
  - Counselling Clinics
  - Career Resource Centres
  - Information centres
- c) Proprietors of schools shall provide adequate number of guidance counsellors for their institutions.

Furthermore, with regards to item vii, the policy stated it as follows;

vii) Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) Referral Services

From the provisions of guidance and counselling as contained in the NPE, this paper is intended to discuss the extent of the challenges the implementation of these provisions is facing in the Nigeria's secondary education system. As stated earlier in this paper, the concepts of Guidance and Counselling from an educational administrative perspective connotes a service inherent in the delivery of education. A close examination of the provisions of guidance and counselling as an educational support service in the NPE will further explain what the provisions are and how are these provisions adequately taken care of in the implementation of the policy. As a matter of fact, the provision that government shall continue to provide for the training of teachers in guidance and counselling is a good idea. This also shows that, the planners of the NPE were aware about the growing need for Guidance services in the secondary schools. But, even though, we at the beginning saw teachers as guidance counsellors, they still need to be trained to acquire the necessary skills required of a professional counsellor. It needs to be noted that guidance and counselling is a service that can only be provided by professionals who are trained all through their academic pursuits all the elements and contents of the profession.

There is no doubt that government expressed plan through the policy to establish and equip counselling clinics otherwise known as centers in the post primary schools is a noble one and is capable of addressing the myriads of juvenile delinquencies and other undesirable behaviours among secondary school students who are generally at the age of adolescence which is a very reactive stage. There is no better time that these counselling centres are needed in schools than now that there are so many undesirable behaviours and criminal tendencies among the youths. These centers if made available in secondary schools will enjoy the services of professional personnel that are now being trained in special guidance and counselling service from the National Certificate in Education (NCE), Bachelor's Degree programmes, Master's Degree programmes and Doctorate Degree programme. Today there is no gain saying the fact that activities of the Counselling Association of Nigeria with thousands of members and also full Guidance and Counselling Practicing Act approved by the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Muhammadu Buhari GCFR in August 2022 signed into Law Counselling Practicing Act 2022. This milestone will guarantee the availability of guidance and Counsellors in secondary schools in Nigeria. In addition, there are many administrators of schools who are professionally trained guidance counsellors in the country. This is by all means an added advantage to the realization of the objective of guidance and counselling as enshrined in the policy. In other words, in the past there are inadequacy of guidance counsellors in schools but now a great feat has been achieved in the production of these personnel to take charge of which ever number of guidance and counselling centers established in schools. In relation to adequacy of professional personnel, Yabo (2022) observed that the number of professional guidance counsellors are still inadequate in the country, efforts must be made by

school managers to look for them from wherever they can get them or send their staff for training in counselling for the purpose of giving them the responsibility of students counselling in their schools.

The policy also provided for the establishment and equipping of career resource centers and information centers. These are two fundamental services highly needed at this time by the Nigerian youth especially those at the secondary schools. It is very unfortunate that Nigeria is nearly overtaken by numerous acts of criminality and serious threats to its security architecture. Criminal tendencies such as banditry, kidnapping, insurgency, religious intolerance, ethnic and communal clashes, farmers'/herders clashes, cattle rustling and highway robbery and a host of cyber-crimes are today living with us. A fact that cannot be distant from reality is that most of the persons engaged in these undesirable tendencies are people of young ages who are fearless, energetic and enormous strength to perpetrate these crimes. Apparently, most of them are persons of 18-30 years. It is therefore suggestible that if adequate guidance and counselling services will be adequately provided to persons of between 13-18 years of age who are basically of post primary school age a lot of these criminal tendencies will be nibbed in the bud. Secondary school students who are of this age needs a comprehensive career guidance to enable them to make choices between occupations, professions and other future life endeavors. They should be made to identify distinctions between deviant and conforming behaviors and attitudes, occupation and professions as well as the desirable and undesirable ways of securing livelihood. The need to embrace hard work and insistence on the fruits of honest labour should be ensured, encouraged and celebrated. On the issue of information service, students of this level needs lots of information to strive well in their endeavors. The youths of today are often easily misled with rumors and unauthenticated information as well as fake news. Through effective provision of guidance and counselling service students will be led to discover true and false information. Nigeria has suffered many loss of lives and property due to fake news and passing of unauthenticated information. The youths end SARS demonstration, mob action and wild rampage that took place in October 2021 is a point of reference. The destruction of lives and property during the demonstration which nearly took the nation in general cannot be imagined. Similarly, the activities of Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Niger Delta Militants, Bandits and Kidnappers are also not far away from misinformation and misguidance. It is therefore unequivocal that with effective guidance and Counselling in the secondary schools some of the menace of these undesirable behaviors accounted largely by inadequate information and poor career guidance service can be eliminated.

Furthermore, the provision that requires the proprietors of private schools to have adequate number of guidance counsellors in their schools is a full recognition of the contributions of the private sector support to education sector in the country. Today in Nigeria, the private schools are making immense contribution to the growth and development of education. This has made the

education sector to be the most rapidly expanding and largest sector in the country and elsewhere. This is indisputable because as there is government primary, secondary and tertiary institutions so there is the same in the private sector in the country. Therefore, if all provisions of guidance and counselling as contained in the NPE are fully extended to the private partners in the education sector, all growth and development of persons enrolled in the country's education system will be encompassing.

### **Guidance and Counselling Issues in the NPE**

Having discussed the imperatives of the implementation of guidance and counselling provisions as contained in the NPE, this paper identified the following as the issues inherent in the NPE implementation as regards the guidance and counselling component.

- a) *Recruitment of professional Guidance Counsellors:* The NPE up to this time in its latest edition (2014) still echoes the idea of training of teachers in guidance and counselling. While this is welcomed however, it is high time that the policy should move a step further by recognizing the fact that guidance and counselling profession has blossomed and has available trained personnel that can be employed to take charge of established guidance and counselling centers in all the secondary schools in the country. In this respect therefore, the policy in dire need of enunciation the recruitment of qualified guidance and counselling professionals available to expand, promote and popularize the profession and its services in the secondary schools.
- b) *Identification of the scope of guidance and counselling services:* The policy has been silent on the scope of the provision of guidance and counselling services in the education system. At the first introduction of the guidance and counselling service in the 1981 edition of the NPE, its scope was clearly stated as to cover post primary schools which was largely conceived based on the age level and prevalence of the need for such services to such students. However, in the 2014 edition, specification as to a particular level of education was not made and that has made the guidelines in respect of the service as not robust with levels differential objectives, process and outcomes. There is no doubt considering the current challenges facing the Nigerian education system, the need for guidance and counselling services to cover all levels of education in the country is very imperative. Doing this will make the NPE more robust and coming up with the guidelines for the implementation of the service at different levels of the country's educational system.
- c) *Different tiers of government involvement:* The policy did not state in clear terms the roles of states and local governments in the provision of guidance and counselling services in the schools under their jurisdiction. For instance,



the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria has placed education on its Concurrent Legislative list which means the states and local governments have the right to legislate on education matters based on their peculiarities. As it were, presently, the basic education schools are under the care of the Local Governments while the state governments control the secondary education system with the exception of federal unity secondary schools that are owned by the Federal government. These different tiers have strong role to play in the provision of guidance and counselling services in the schools under their control. Through this, the educational support services to be achieved under the provision of guidance and counselling will be customized, domesticated and made effective at their respective levels.

- d) *Effective Monitoring of private schools.* The issue here is that, the policy has made statement of the provision of adequate number of guidance and counsellors in their schools. However, the only way to ascertain adherence to this provision is by effectively supervising these private schools to ensure compliance. As compliments of the public schools in the provision of access and quality education in the country, adequate supervision will make them to keep pace with the requisite standards of compliance to provision of Guidance and Counselling services in all the private schools in the country.
- e) *Involvement of School based Management Committees (SBMC)* This is a committee established to manage and support the school administration. This is a community based committee and if fully involved in the organization and management of guidance and Counselling services in post primary schools. In this direction Yabo, (2022) noted that, involvement of SBMC is a surest way of encouraging parental involvement in school level decision for development planning whereby resources are mobilized, allocated and utilized effectively to meet pupils' needs.
- f) *Involvement of International Donor Organizations* Nigeria as a country has many bilateral agreements for support to education sector in the country and this is across all areas of education in terms of curriculum, provision of facilities and capacity building among others. The policy needs to exploit this opportunity provided by donor partners and which can be channeled to special areas such as guidance and counselling services in schools.

### **The Way Forward**

Looking critically at the issues raised by this paper, the following are recommended as way forward for the realization of the goals of the provision of guidance and counselling services as contained in the National Policy on Education.

- a. All the three tiers of government in addition to training of teachers as guidance counsellors, should effectively focus on the recruitment of professional guidance counselors since they are now relatively available

- b. The policy should be reviewed to provide specifications of scope, objectives and outcomes of guidance and counselling activities at all levels of the Nigeria's education system for clarity in the implementation of the guidelines
- c. All the three tiers of government viz Federal, States and Local Government should be fully involved in the implementation of the provisions of the NPE on guidance and counselling in the respective schools under their jurisdiction. This will provide uniformity, continuity and alliance building in the implementation of guidance and counselling as an educational support service to the Nigerian education system
- d. There is an urgent need for the development of an effective monitoring tool for assessment and evaluation of the efficacy and relevance of all guidance and counselling services rendered in all levels of education in Nigeria. These will include all procedures right from the establishment of guidance and counselling centres, its employed personnel, provision of adequate and relevant facilities, type of services and how they are provided to clients, evidences of changes in behavior of clients after giving support, impacts and feedback received from clients as well as the general functions of the guidance and counselling service as an educational support service for the Nigeria's educational system. As a fundamental requirement of this principle, the monitoring tool should be applied to all operations of public and private schools in the country
- e. Nigeria over the years have enjoyed the support of many international donor agencies in the field of education. There are many examples of them coming from the United Nations (UN) agencies, the World Bank, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and Global Partnership for Education (GPE) USA Washington D.C. just to mention but a few. The policy should recognize their presence and support to education in Nigeria and get their support into guidance and counselling services in all schools in the country. Their support to the provision of guidance and counselling service in schools especially at the secondary school level will assist in reducing the growth of insecurity challenges in the education sector, thereby allowing the agencies to implement their onerous objective of getting out-of-school children in schools and the promotion of children's welfare and education.

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