

## INVIGORATING THE ECONOMY OF NIGERIA THROUGH GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This paper focuses on invigorating the economy of Nigeria through Guidance and Counselling. It described the economy of a nation as the sum of the network of producers, domestic and the consumer of goods and services in a local, regional or national community. It x-rayed the economic strength of Nigeria before its decline in 2016 which was characterized by high inflation rate, high interest rate, a long lasting increase of unemployment, just to mention a few. It discussed the current situations of Guidance and counselling in Nigeria. Also, in this work, it was discussed that the most important variable/factors in the economy are the human resources which equation is the hub of counselling. Counselling can offer a relief package to individuals in a distressed economy like preventing them from harmful coping skills coupled with Guidance. It recommended among others, the strengthening of guidance and counselling programs in schools.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Economic Planning, Employment, Environment, Guidance and Counselling in Education*

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### **Article History**

**Received: 05 Jan 2018 | Revised: 15 Jan 2018 | Accepted: 21 Jan 2018**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The economy of a nation encompasses the totality of the network of producers, distributors and the consumer of goods and services in a local, regional or national community. Nigeria was once the giant of Africa when it was evidently ranked as the 21<sup>st</sup> highest economy of the world going by the GDP and the 20<sup>th</sup> largest in terms of purchasing parity. Its re-emergent manufacturing sector became the largest on the continent. It produces a large proportion of goods and services for the West African sub-continent (The Graphic, 2017).

Despite years of mismanagement, the economic reforms of the past decades have aligned Nigeria rightly. Proceeds from oil revenue contribute 2/3 of State revenues. Agricultural sector, which was the economic mainstay of Nigeria was relegated to the background. A former exporter of food now imports food in her country. Nigeria attempted from 2003 to 2007 an economic reform program christened “National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS) which was geared towards the standard of living through: macroeconomic stability, liberalization, privatization, transparency and accountability. It addressed areas like water supply, power, decaying infrastructure, impediments to private enterprise and power which was replicated at the state level (SEEDS) to address such areas. In an attempt to further boost the life of the people, a long term economic development in the United Nations, which sponsored National

Millennium Goals for Nigeria, which covers the years from 2000 to 2015 was geared to achieve poverty reduction, education, gender inequality, health environmental and international cooperation (The Graphic, 2017).

Unfortunately, in 2016, a decline in GDP during the first and second quarters of that year. The data unveiled that GDP decline in the first quarter of 2016 is 0.36% where the second quarter showed -1.5%. That is, Nigeria started experiencing economic recession.

### **What is Economic Recession?**

Economic recession is the decline of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for 2 months or more in the consecutive quarter. GDP is the market price of all goods, a significant decline in economic activity sparked across the economy and lasting for more than few months visible through the wholesale – monthly sales, industrial production, employment, real income, Gross Domestic product. It is characterized by:

- Long lasting increase of unemployment
- Drop out in the stock market
- Negative growth of GDP
- Decline of the increasing market occasioned by the following causes:
  - **High Inflation Rate:** As a result of the ban of importation of essential products without giving any period of gestation. There was a removal of fuel subsidy which further sponsored speculation in the stock market, budgetary delay and the prohibiting upsurge of the household. There is poor purchasing power among the workers while goods and services sower.
  - **High Interest Rate:** Investors are no longer secured for bringing into the Nigerian economy. This culminates to high rate of unemployment and consequent negative effect on the GDP. There is a decline in liquidity ratio of money and reduced rate of investment.
  - **High Taxation:** There is a murder of small business in Nigeria with high taxation and high interest rates. Investors become few and less attracted to the business environment of Nigeria.
  - **Policy Conflict:** The government monetary policies are tight like high interest rates and high tax rates. These are very difficult monetary policies which are diametrically opposed to the welfare of the citizenry.
  - **Poor Planning:** there is no tangible implementation of economic planning that is connected with exchange rate policy and economic delay.
  - **Reduction in Consumer Confidence:** Consumers became highly sceptical in spending money. The news of bad economy affects the psychology of the citizenry. (<http://www.naij.com/1089241-auses-economic-recession-nigeria.html#1089241>)

Can Guidance and Counselling be of any use in the Nigerian economy? What roles can it play in invigorating the economy? This is what this paper stands to unveil in the course of this work (write-up).

### Status of Guidance and Counselling in Nigeria

The main goals of Nigeria as given in the National Policy of Education (NPE) are:

- A great and democratic society
- A just and egalitarian society
- A great and dynamic economy
- A land full of bright opportunities for all citizens.

(NPE, 2004, revised edition)

All these can be achieved through a well articulated policy on education that can only be facilitated through services in which guidance and counselling has been adjudged as one of them as encapsulated in this policy, it revealed that:

- Young people are ignorant about career choice.
- They have adjustment problems.

Therefore, there is the need for qualified personnel in this direction. As a corroboration to this, a onetime minister for education. Late Professor Babatunde Fafunwa (1990) in Umoh (2004) remarked:

*Mandatory student guidance and counselling services should be established in all Nigerian institutions of higher learning and through such services, the true conditions of the Nigeria economy and its ever changing labour market situation and requirements would be exposed to students. Choice of field and skill of study and inculcating in them the acceptance of the dignity and more superior option of leaving institution of higher learning well prepared both as possible paid employees of others and creators of jobs for self and others, in both the formal and informal sectors of the economy. (p. 10)*

That is, Guidance and Counselling is very important to the economy of Nigeria.

Again in a milestone address delivered by the then Minister for Education, Colonel Ahmadu Ali at the annual conference of Counselling Association of Nigeria, at Bayero University, Kano, in Umoh (2004) remarked:

*Guidance and Counselling is an educational innovation that enjoys my full support. Any educational system will be deficient without educational guidance. Our students need to be helped by personal counselling, career education and vocational guidance to discover their talents, aptitudes and to make intelligent career decisions. (p. 1 – 2)*

The above is in tandem with the National Policy on Education where it was spelt out in section 5 sub-sections 22 (h) that “secondary education shall provide technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development (P.14).

This programme of Guidance has, from the foregoing, gained the support of the former Ministers of Education in Nigeria. In line with the National Policy on Education, this programme was extended to schools. According to Idowu (2006), Guidance and Counselling has undergone notable development as follows:

- Recognition of guidance counsellors as full time professionals in schools through a tax force commissioned by the National Council on Education.
- A blue print on guidance and Counselling arising from the impact of the National Council on Education (NCE) task force resulting into a blueprint encompassing issues on outlooks, the objectives, scope, activities and strategies for implementing guidance counselling services from pre-primary to tertiary institutions.
- Certification and licensure of professionals. Attempts are being made to legitimise the professional status of counselling in Nigeria.
- There is a minimum standard for counsellor training in Nigeria today through the activities of the National Universities Commission and the Federal Ministry of Education.
- There are attempts at sectionalizing Guidance and Counselling in the National Policy on Education because of its numerous contributions to every phase of education.
- The registration for the umbrella was done with the Cooperate Affairs Commission on 22/4/1996. Although, as at today, the association has been polarised. Today, there is Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) and Association of Professional Counsellors of Nigeria (APROCON).
- A national secretariat of a faction of the association (CASSON) has started in Kuje.
- Academic Publications on issues concerning Guidance and Counselling are carried out yearly.
- Fellowships/Honorary awards are given by the association.
- Regulation on Guidance and Counselling. This is to give the association a legislative backing (Idowu, 2011). All these are subject to modification due to the present polarization of the organization.

### **Guidance and Counselling and Economy**

There can be no economy without human resources. They are the channels with which the economy works. They are the hub of any economy. This is why organizations whether governmental or non-governmental make it mandatory to train and retrain its personnel for maximum productivity. Therefore, no matter how well polished, robust and articulated an economic policy is, it cannot be implemented without an effective human resources. Productivity stems from a well articulated, dynamic, skilled and well focused human resources (Denga, 1984).

The economic development of any nation of the world centres on the level of production and in Economics there are basically four factors of production which include land, labour, capital and entrepreneur. The first three factors becomes dormant and insignificant if the human factor (entrepreneur) is absent.

It is the human factor that counselling enhances its development in what is known as personal counselling in human resource department of an organization. On this note, Akinboye (2002) outlined the functions of personnel counselling to include:

- Personnel counselling develops and maintain effective counselling skills that will help clients to grow towards personal goals and strengthen their capacity to cope with life situations.
- Personnel counsellors serves as resource person with reference to the guidance and counselling serves as resource person with reference to the guidance and counselling needs and concern of individual.
- Coordinates the various aspects of the total programme in the organization.
- Assists in developing healthy attitudes towards work among employee.
- Personnel counsellors identify and assess employee occupational and education placement needs and aspiration.
- Also assist in referral services as well as handling research related issues in an organization.

One of the reasons why Nigerians are deficient in skill work force is because they are technically illiterates (Denga, 1984). Technical illiteracy results from lack of understanding of aptitudes, skills and talents that is in tandem with the industrial.

That the economy of Nigeria is going through hard times today is no longer news. The reasons for this had earlier been discussed until coming out of these hardships translates into meaningful improvement in people's lives, then the suffering will continue.

Economic crisis has reverberated in several countries of the globe that has led to loss of jobs and bringing hitches to people's investment. According to Kottler & Shephard (2011), America had such downturn in the early 80's and 90's and the general depression of 1930s studies by De Angels, 2009, Conger, Conger, Eldier (1992) gave a vivid picture of struggling farmers during hard times. There was a falling income that led to:

- Stretched out parents with strained relationships.
- The stress affected their children.
- Parental abilities weakened.
- Children's performance dwindled.

These findings according to Kottler et al (2011) has equally been replicated by studies of Conger & Desnellan, 2007; Scaramella, Neppi, Ontai & Conger, 2008. These findings may not be different from what is obtained in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, the need for a vibrant vocational counselling cannot be overemphasized. In vocational counselling, the right people at the right peace. Some as a result of the recognition of their talents, skills, abilities and aptitudes could be job creators and not seekers. This boosts employment opportunities for people, giving relief, succour and eldorado to the families. Aefrewal and Abraval reiterated on the importance of choosing a career as follows:

- For job success and satisfaction
- Trial and error may waste time
- To determine one's lifestyle
- It determines ones status in the society.

- Leisure and recreation activities different from choice of career.

Aggarawal (2013) outlined the following as objectives of career education:

- To provide skills to the persons so as to make them employable and rise in their chosen careers.
- To help persons in knowing various career options available to them and make proper decision to choose careers according to their abilities, interests and aptitudes
- To have greater involvement of employers in the educational experience of all students.
- To impart career counselling starting at an earlier age.
- To provide counselling for re-entry and re-training wherever needed.
- To have flexibility in entering the skills development programmes or takes up work or opting for higher education as and when wants.
- To give notion about limitations of the world of work.
- To make people familiar with the process of career decision making by experiencing the actual working conditions.
- To make people familiar with the resources available in the school as well as outside which could be utilized for achieving these goals in life?

Christensen and Rollins (2009), outlined the following strategies for people during economic downturn:

- Teach relaxation techniques to reduce the stress of being out of work or looking for jobs in a scarce market.
- Explore with clients where their meaning and identity come from, lecturing them to differentiate the meaning that comes from career versus from family or other important life pursuits.
- Attend to their marital/partnership family relationships, which are frequently stressed during difficult economic periods.
- Help them develop effective control strategies and monitor the potential for self destructive coping e.g. substance abuse.
- Facilitate the extension of grief as they come to terms with the reality of career life.
- Above all, instil hope. Remind client that crisis by definition comes to an end out of crisis new opportunities, for both career pursuits and personnel growth can emerge.

Coming out of the present economic situation in Nigeria has a lot of implications for counselling. Counsellors need to offer a remediation approach in form of developing a positive attitude, a need for value reorientation and developing strategies to cope with the present economic downturn.

Izundu (1991) in Unachukwu and Igbogbor (ed) (1991) in line with the above direction asserts that counsellors together with professionals and organizations such as church leaders, teachers, welfare officers etc. should make effort to shift the value of people from conspicuous consumption, idleness, lack of devotion and reflection of thrift effectiveness,

creativity, adventure and more moral and reflective attitude. She said this could be done through talks, seminars, flyers pamphlets and posters.

The present economic situation in Nigeria had compelled people to take to meaningful ventures like farming to earn their own living without actually waiting for salary.

In line with the above therefore, counsellors should expose the youths (clients) to enable them discover more of the hidden talents through the teaching of psychology of creativity which will expose them to novel ideas. Creative ideas had helped individuals and nations to come out of economic downturn.

For instance, Japan had no oil and technology after the Second World War but creative ideas made her to excel and today is a country to reckon with in terms of technology.

The counsellor through reorientation should let Nigerians not to see this present economic situation as a period of self-pity, sorrow and unending recrimination. Teachers could help by inculcating these values early enough in their students who will be the adults of tomorrow thereby gradually changing their orientation of Nigerians (Izundu, 1991).

In conclusion, counselling is for help, for relief as a palliative for reassurance and ultimate self actualization. The various steps taken in career counselling can boost the economy of a nation and even distressed one.

The following recommendations are therefore made for this study:

- Human resources are the strongest variable needed in an economy. Therefore effective guidance and counselling are needed to identify the traits, in that, skills that are crucial for employability whether self or government are unravelled.
- Necessary counselling strategies should be used for families affected with any economic distress so that they do not engage themselves in self destructive coping skills.
- Let the educational system be planned in tandem with the economy so that unemployment will reduce.
- It is high time that counsellors are sought for in all aspects of the economy. Counselling is for all people and ages. This is because intervention is needed in every aspect of human life.
- Attempts should be made at removing all factors that could lead to an economic crisis.

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