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UTILIZATION OF INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY
(ICT) IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COUNSELING CURRICULUM
IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Information Communicating Technology (ICT) has become a useful tool in curriculum delivery. Counseling is a means of assisting young people to make appropriate and judicious educational choices that will enable them to develop their potential and to have access to work opportunities that are compatible with their interest and abilities. The ideal counselor therefore is expected to hold a certified degree in Counselling from a university with an exposure in the following basic courses: Counseling theories, vocational theories, supervised practicum, psychology, psychological testing, and ethical and professional responsibilities. This paper looks at counseling curriculum and its importance, ICT and counselor Education with features that makes it compatible with counseling curriculum and also recommends that the Government must as a matter of urgency increase budgetary allocation to tertiary institutions and faculties of education in particular to enable them put ICT facilities in place and that counselor educators must make effort to acquire ICT skills.

INTRODUCTION

3 The use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in and for education is rapidly expanding in many countries, and is now seen worldwide as both a necessity and an opportunity. The Dakar Framework for Action (April, 2000) identified the use of new information and communication technologies as one of the main strategies for achieving

the Education for All (EFA) goals in the year 2015. The growth and development of any nation is hinged on highly technological skilled labour force. It is technological skills of the work force that pave way for creativity, innovation and higher productivity. The world today is passing through a lot of changes virtually in every field of human endeavour. These changes are no doubt more conspicuous in science and technology. The 21st century is dominated by electronic technology, a world permeated by the effect and product of electronic technology including e-government, e-business, e-learning, e-banking, e-commerce, e-health, e-employment, e-environment, e-agriculture, e-mail, e-shopping and so on. The notion of electronic literacy is based on the assumption that there are skills, awareness and understanding, which will enable individuals to be more effective in an electronic controlled environment (Bonk, 2001).

Information communication technology is any form of technology, that is, any equipment or device used to handle information. Maduewesi, (2005) described information communication technology as a high technology which consists of the various means of obtaining and transferring information using computers, telecommunication and micro-electronics. Information communication technologies are now vital ingredients in the competitiveness of organizations. Emadu and Asan (2005) on their part described ICT as the technology of gathering, storing, processing, distributing and communicating vocal, pictorial, numerical and textual information through computer networks to various audience. Ivowi (2002) however, noted that there is hardly any undertaking of people, be it academics, business or entertainment that has not been greatly affected for the better by these recent development in information technology. We live in a complex, busy, and changing world. In this world there are different types of experiences that are difficult to cope with. Most times, we get on with life, but sometimes, we are stopped in our tracks by an event or situation that we do not, at that moment have the resources to sort out. Most of the time, we find ways of dealing with such problems of living by talking to family, friends, neighbours, priest or our family doctors, however counseling has moved from this parochial nature to a more comprehensive level, where professionals are now being

trained and equipped with relevant skills in tertiary institution to handle these numerous problems. Counselling is a powerful and effective method of helping to bridge the gap between education and the world of work, as well as between school and society. ² It is a means of assisting young people to make appropriate and judicious educational choices that will enable them to develop their potential and to have access to work opportunities that are compatible with their interest and abilities. It could also help to instill confidence and positive attitude to derive fulfillment from their chosen areas of learning and work and most importantly to inculcate an eagerness for life long learning.

Oladele (1997) defined counselling as a process which involves a one-to-one relationship between an individual faced by problems which he cannot cope with alone, and a professional worker whose training and experience qualifies him to give to others ⁹ to arrive at solutions to various types of personal difficulties. The central purpose of counselling he said, is to assist students to ¹⁹ explore and participate in his own development towards becoming purposefully self directed in a changing society, having full respect for the worth and dignity of self and others and becoming the person he desires to become. For him guidance is an umbrella term which refers to all that is done to protect and guide the development of students. It is the help given ²⁰ by one person to another in making choice and adjustment and solving problems. In other words, Oladele sees guidance as a big package of activities and actions geared towards the healthy development and it becomes the function of guidance to help him: in these directions. In fulfilling this function, guidance provides the child with the right frame of reference in making judicious choices among alternative lines of action and decisions. In addition, it prepares him for the challenges and problems of life within his environment. Milner and Palmer (2001) on their part stressed that counselling denote a professional ⁹ relationship between a trained counselor and a client. This relationship according to them is usually person-to-person, although it may sometimes involve more than two people. ⁵ It is designed to help clients to understand and clarify their views of their life space and to learn to reach their self-determined goals and through resolution of problem of an emotional

interpersonal nature.

The professional qualities of the ideal counselor as noted by Ifelumni (1997) require that the ideal counselor holds a certified degree in Guidance and Counselling from a university with an exposure in the following basic courses: Counselling theories, vocational theories, supervised practicum, psychology, psychological testing, and ethical and professional responsibilities. This means then that the counselor is expected to be exposed formally to counselling curriculum in a university. Vuca (2005) observed that curriculum as a concept can be perceived as a connective link between teacher and students, organized in such a way to achieve goals previously set by the teacher, the learning organization or by the curriculum specialist. Offorma (2002) on her part asserted that ⁴ in every society, the curriculum must be a reflection of what people in that society feel, believe and do.

Curriculum is defined as a deliberate and systematically planned attempt to change the behaviours of the young and inexperienced and also to enable them to gain the insight that will enable them to build a better society (Offorma,2002)

COUNSELING CURRICULUM AND ITS IMPORTANCE

Adegoke (2004) noted that Guidance and counseling programme is a total and comprehensive approach that integrates a curriculum of counseling into the educational process for all students in the school, rather than viewing counseling in our schools as peripheral, tangential of something to be tolerated. To guide us in understanding the guidance and counseling curriculum there are a number of principles that must serve as a guide to counseling practice in our schools. They include:

1. Counselling services is for all students
2. Counselling service can be presented as an organized and planned curriculum in our schools
3. Counselling activities in our schools can be sequential and flexible
4. Counselling should be treated as an integrated part of the total educational process
5. Counselling in the school should involved all school personnel

6. Counselling should be geared towards helping students to learn more effectively and efficiently

7. Counsellors in our schools should provide specialized counseling services and intervention.

Today's youth in Nigeria are growing up in a complicated and fast changing society. This is an information age as people's behavior and lifestyle change with new information. Youth in Africa are today caught in a web of change, as they are ²² bombarded with new information every day. The resultant effect of this is a complex need ⁹ of personal and social adjustment, academic and career and vocational awareness that can best be met through a comprehensive, well integrated counseling curriculum. Secondly, counselors in schools cannot effectively use a one-to-one counseling approach alone as it provides services to only a few students at a time. Hence taking advantage of ICT facilities will help counselor to reach not only their immediate constituencies but a larger part of the world will benefit from the services provided by the counselor.

A curriculum of counseling ²³ is based on the premise that all students need assistance through their school years in accomplishing developmental tasks. Successfully achieving these skills can lead each student to a sense of personal fulfillment and enhance the quality of life as a productive person in society.

ICT AND COUNSELOR EDUCATION

¹⁰ The information society demands a workforce that can use technology as a tool to increase productivity and creativity. This involves identifying reliable sources of information, effectively accessing those sources of information, synthesizing and communicating that information to colleagues and associates. ¹⁶ Alabi (2004) noted that, tertiary education is essentially a knowledge based process which includes knowledge-acquisition, knowledge-incubation, knowledge-amplification and knowledge-dissemination

Africa and Nigeria indeed requires 'new ways to look at both access and quality of

education and learning'. United Nations (1998) notes that national policies in Africa are placing a high priority on improving education through bodies that become a test bed for innovation in teaching and learning. ³ Information and Communication Technology enhances the quality of teaching and learning, the sharing of knowledge and information in counseling. According to Bonk (2001). ICT have the potential of contributing to effective learning through expanding access, promoting efficiency, improving the quality of learning, enhancing, the quality of teaching and improving management systems. Using ICT as a tool in education, counseling students should be able ⁷ to communicate and interact with lecturers and clients in an online environment. ⁶ For countries to benefit from technological developments, a cadre of professionals has to be educated with sound ICT backgrounds with various computer platforms and software environment. Pressures of the contemporary age require people and institutions to continuously acquire new knowledge and skills. Although the internet and World Wide Web have been around for nearly forty years, the use of technology in the delivery of university education is a fairly new innovation, only becoming a common practice in 1990s (William, 2002).

In counseling curriculum. Ababakar (2005) noted that ICT is capable of improving ¹ the teaching and learning outcomes through the following:

- increase lecturers productivity: since lecturers work with students, the task of record keeping. providing accurate information as quickly as if is needed is made easier
- Encouraging instructional capabilities, this would link the learners to the information sources, helping visualize problems and solutions as well as linking learners to the learners' tools. This means that learners would have the opportunity of gaining access to the information sources themselves and try to apply the problem solving techniques themselves rather than depend on the lecturers.
- Motivation; lecturers and students are motivated towards the teaching/learning process as they have increased self-confidence and self-esteem.

Agbaje (2006) on his part asserted that ICT has a number of features which make it

suitable ¹ for teaching and learning of counseling concepts. Such features include: ICT combines and integrates a full range of media essential for effective learning as it uses sound, vision, text and numeric data.

it provides lectures with new opportunities and in particular, distance learning and an involvement in the "real world".

²⁴ There is an opportunity to increase the interest and involvement of students by the one to one relationship provided by the student and computer. The computer via ICT can act as a catalyst to interest, involvement and enthusiasm because not all learning is necessary done from books.

It provides students with an opportunity to work and ¹⁴ learn on their own (Arolasafe, 2004).

³⁰ In the past few years in Europe and America, many counselor educators have been experimenting with online instruction, cyber counselling, finding new and innovative ways to integrate online technology into existing course to supplement and in some cases replace traditional methods of instruction and counselling (Grannello, 2000, Jones & Karper, 2000). These efforts continue to increase as counselor educators become more familiar with new and existing online technologies (Baltimore, 2000: Jencius. 2003, Tyler & Sabella, 2004). Despite the increased acceptance of online technology, empirical research remains limited ¹⁴ concerning the use of technology in counselor education. Studies that have been conducted have primarily examined students counsellors' attitudes toward technology use (Berry, Screbalus, Cromer & Takacs, 2003; Chandras, 2000, Hays & Robinsion, 2000; Lunderg, 2000). These researchers found that student counsellors generally have positive attitude toward ³ the use of technology and perceived online instruction to be a valuable experience.

As Colleges and Universities continue to integrate new forms of technology and online delivery systems, Faculties must be aware of the impact these new approaches may have on students who may not have an extensive background in online instruction. This particularly holds true for counselor educators. Baltimore (2000) notes ¹ that there is a

growing need for the counselling profession including its counsellors-in-training to become proficient in various computer applications and the internet.

Dauda, Omak, and Ibong (2005) enumerated possible ways through which ICT can be utilized in the school system to include the following:

- i. Computer-based education (VBE)/computer based instruction (CBI); the computer is used in drill and practice, tutorials, simulations, instructional management, supplementary exercise, programming, data base development and writing using word processor and so on. For instance CD-ROM can be used to store and retrieve counseling practicum exercise which will in turn help student counselor master the art of counseling and techniques involved.
- ii. Computer-Management instruction (CMI) can be used by tertiary institutions to organize students' performance and keep record of their progress.
- iii. Computer-Assisted instruction (CAI): Micro computer can be used for drill and practice, tutorials or simulations activities offered by with themselves or as supplement to traditional teacher-directed instructions.

It is now known that computer-assisted instruction improves the standard of education, it enhances not only the learning rate, but also student learn at a faster rate than with the tradition method of instruction.

1 Utilization of ICT in curriculum delivery in tertiary institutions in Nigeria is still facing some challenges due to the nation's under funding of the educational system which reduces the self-esteem of lecturer and still force them to depend on the old/tiraditional method of curriculum delivery which merely involves the use of chalkboard. Fundamentally, some prominent impediments to 7 the utilization of ICT in Nigerian tertiary institutions include, lack of compuler and ICT resources in colleges and universities' faculties of education; lack of ICT skills by the lecturers themselves and irregular supply of electricity

CONCLUSION

Information communication technology is an increasingly powerful tool for participating in

global market, promoting accountability: improving the delivery of basic services and enhancing local development opportunities. Therefore if ICT is introduced into counseling curriculum, it will increase the number of students/clients who can benefit from the services provided by Guidance Counsellors. Giving the emerging usefulness of ICT in human endeavour and education in particular, it is pertinent to note that counselor educators should wake up to the challenge of becoming ICT acquiescent can also use this medium (ICT) to facilitate their practice especially in teaching, learning, counseling and supervision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Following measures are recommended for improving the level ¹ of utilization of ICT in the implementation of counselling curriculum in tertiary institutions in Nigeria:

1. The ²⁶ Government should as a matter of urgent national importance increase the budgetary allocations to the education sector with particular reference to counselling education and also direct her agencies such as Education Tax Fund (EFF) and a host of others to assist in the funding of tertiary institutions especially in the acquisition and maintenance of ICT resources and Academic Staff Training and Development.
2. Counsellor Educators should make deliberate attempt and effort to acquire ICT skills.
3. The curriculum of counselling programmes in tertiary institutions should be restructured to embrace ¹ the use of ICT resources. This should be planned and enforced by the ¹³ National Universities Commission (NUC) and the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE).
4. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and private sectors should help to provide ICT facilities to tertiary institutions.

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