

**ROLE OF THE SCHOOL COUNSELLOR IN MEETING THE  
EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF EDUCATIONALLY  
DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN IN NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

*People and societies establish schools for certain accomplishments. The success story of education is that it serves socializing functions and provides an avenue for the development of intellectual abilities and skills of an individual. It is an established fact that, the educational opportunities for the basic requirement of an independent life is lacking to the extent that some children of school age are deprived of this ample chance. Therefore, this paper takes a critical look at the role of school counselors in meeting the educational needs of the less privilege children in the country.*

**Introduction**

It is necessary to note that in spite of several pronouncement and encouragement on the need to educate young Nigerians, educational opportunities provided for even the basic requirement of an independent life in our society are denied some children who are of school Age. A large number of disadvantages children are those who are compelled to work at an early age when they have not acquired sufficient skills which could earn them respectable and gainful employment. These children are thus denied the right to effective education, leisure and play.

**Educationally Disadvantaged children**

These are children who are denied education opportunities. Blair (1975). He used the term " educational casualties" to describe people who are disadvantaged educationally. The term used in broader sense to embrace all those who because of cultural or economic disadvantages, negative attitude, or inefficient schooling fail to acquire the learning and intellectual development that they and society rightfully expect.

Among the educationally disadvantaged children, according to Blair (1975) are those who never gone to school or who receive such bits and fragment skills. Children who never attempt schooling, those who began an educational programme but never finished (drop-out), children of migrant workers who receive only haphazard schooling (although they receive schooling but profit little from it), children who drop out of school as a result of unwanted pregnancies or because of financial problems etc.

## **Some Educationally Disadvantaged Children in the Nigerian Society**

Here are some identified Educationally Disadvantaged Children

- i. Househelp and Nannies
- ii. Shop assistants
- iii. Apprentices
- iv. Children leading the blind people/ beggars
- v. Children beggars
- vi. Wheel barrow pushers
- vii. Children Hawkers
- viii. Victims of Communal conflicts

Source-field survey (2004)

### **i. Househelps and Nannies**

Children that are used for these jobs are between 8 -15 years. They are mostly girls. The typical househelp or nanny used to be employed by elites family with children and who are both (husband and wife) engaged in full government work

An average househelp starts her daily assignment from 5.00 am. She goes to fetch water, prepare children for school, help in getting breakfast before tire couples leaves for work. She is left with definite instruction or' how to occupy her day with work in the house -washing, cleaning, cooking etc. she takes over the responsibilities and care of children in the evenings and in some cases sleep in the same room at night with the children. An average househelp/Nanny puts in 13-15 yours of works at her tender age.

### **ii. Shop Assistant/Restaurant Attendants**

Shop assistants are mostly boys who often sleep in the shops at the market. Like househelp, his typical day starts from 5.00am. The shops open early in the morning and closes around 9pm. The shop assistant may equally be involved in carrying heavy goods on his head from the warehouse to the shop.

Most children used as restaurant attendants are girls. Their job also starts from 5.00am when they will be rendering services to their mistress or masters and they may not leave for home until 11pm at times.

### **iii. Apprentices**

These are children who go to learn a trade. They are children of school age who are not in school but have been enrolled to learn a trade such as mechanical and electrical repairs, vulcanizing tyres, bricklaying, knitting/sewing, buying and selling etc

### **iv. Children beggars**

These are children who go about begging for money, food and clothing. Some of them beg to take proceeds to their parents or relations and that may be their source livelihood

**v. Wheel barrow pushers:**

These are children who take part in the transportation of goods, these are mostly boys. Some of them are employed by older persons, who on contract basis to transport goods for buyers from one point to another.

**vi. Children Hawkers:**

Batan (2000) sees hawking as referring to a situation where persons move from place to place to advertise their wares, and find buyers for them. This is not bad anyway, being a money making venture, but the role of the children in this trade is detrimental to their educational development.

Agbakwuru (1991) was of the opinion that money making ventures aim responsibilities bestowed on the working-class aged individuals, this is however shifted to the children in the form of child hawking

Street hawking is identified as important type of child labour children between ages of 5 and 11 years are engaged in hawking they often come from a poor family with many siblings. Both boys and girls engaged in hawking exposes the children to the dangers of cruel world at a young age. Child hawking can lead to sexual abuse, physical harm, health hazards etc. It is important to note that despite the influence of good home training, hawking encourages sexual abuse in young girls and it gives them an air of freedom, exposes them to material and social rewards in exchange for sex

Child hawking is a manifestation of child abuse. Our streets are full of deviants and deviancy generally. These hawkers are hence exposed to dangers of kidnap, ritual killings, molestation, rape, accidents and at time death.

Children often adapted to hawking grow up in it, uneducated and jobless on our streets, which often lead to theft and 419 acts. Girls in addition take to prostitution.

**vii. Victims of Communal Clashes**

Nigeria has been bedeviled with numerous ethnic conflicts that have landed many communities in poverty and hardship. For instance, Ife/Modakeke crises, Niger delta crises, Itsekiri and Urhobo clashes. Zango/Kataf and Kaduna crises in North and Umeleri/Aguleri clash in the East are few examples. Such ethnic clashes kept millions of school age children out of school.

It is important to note that these children who are identified as educationally disadvantaged and who engage themselves in one job or the other for economic reasons do so at the expense of being in school.

**The Role of School Guidance Counsellor in Meeting the Education need of Educational Disadvantaged Children**

Guidance can be defined as service aimed at helping the individual to understand himself well enough to be make appropriate decisions for himself (Denga 1983). It is

worth saying that with the emergence and implementation of Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in Nigeria call for Guidance services in our schools.

For a developing country like Nigeria education serves as an instrument for achieving socio- Economic development of the Nation, it is a means through which society is transformed, since it equips people with Knowledge and skills which become a force or power with which they can do certain things.

The importance of education cannot be over- emphasized, hence, the need to come out with programmes for the education of the disadvantaged children becomes a task for the school counselors.

**The following recommendations could be of help in meeting the educational needs of Educational disadvantages children.**

1. There should be intensified Guidance and counseling talks in schools, village squares, Market places etc. so as to sensitized the youths about the importance of education
2. Educational programme should be organized for school dropouts and victims of early marriage in order to make them more useful educationally to their immediate environment.
3. Basic literacy programme should be incorporated into the curriculum of religious schools (i.e. Koranic and Bible Study schools)
4. More basic literacy programme (centers) and more women education model centers should be established, this will aid a lot in learning skills
5. Time and Venue for basic education programme should be adjusted to suit the children (victims). Considering the fact they are engaged in jobs or trades to earn a living for themselves and their family.
6. Guidance counsellors can undertake some program enlightenment and advocacy visits to church, ,mosques and community leaders for the purpose of making them to realize the need for sending their children or wards to school and become better citizen in life
7. Guidance Counsellor should provide personal counseling services to both students and parents. The counselor should be concern with the child and his education. Guidance counselor should hold regularly the parents for necessary feedbacks.

### **Conclusion**

It is true that young children are not able to decide for themselves, may be because of their immaturity or as a result of their ignorance of the various factors of reality on ground, and for this reason educational guidance for these children need not be discouraged, if educational opportunities provided by the government is to be enjoyed by every school aged children in this country.

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