

GUIDANCE AND BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD: NEED FOR REFORM IN CHILD CARE DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

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Abstract

Education is a life time experience acquired right from birth till the time of death. It is a life long journey which ought to start from the moment a child is born till his/she breaths his/her last. Guidance is a generic term for all the helping services provided (ideally) by the counsellor to the individual in need of direction, instruction, guide or information to enable him or her understand himself, his world, his challenges/or opportunities as a way of leading meaningful life. Behaviour management is the act of guiding both the process of behaviour development and the general behaviour manifestation of children under the childcare development programme of the Federal Government. This paper examines the concept of guidance and behaviour management with particular reference to the issue of childcare development. A critical appraisal of the concept and current practice reveals a dare need for reformation of our education system to ensure inculcation of purposive, responsible and culturally relevant behaviour in the children for whom early child care development centres are established. It was observed that there is still room for great improvement in the process of delivering child care development education and thus, the need for educational reform to be extended to this area.

Key Words: Behaviour management, Child care, Child care development education, Education, Guidance.

Introduction

Education is a life-long experience acquired right from birth up till the time of death. It is noted that the series of learning experience put together to form what is commonly referred to as education is a journey of so many miles, which must start as early as the moment a child is born. In the words of renowned educationists like Paiget, the mind of a little child is like a plain slate capable of receiving any impression; it is a "tabular Rasa". The implication of this, is that the process of guiding the child and helping him to develop productive behaviour must start very early in life so that as he grows up he learns unconsciously and consciously desirable behaviour befitting a perfect and responsible gentleman.

In the words of Salami (1989), teaching is a social function which aims at guiding desirable growth in others (in this case, children). It is based on a social or interacting relationship between people. Its method, he noted, is communication between the teacher and the learner and the goal desired for attainment influences the teacher's methods (e.g. care given by care givers to infants in the pre-primary school classes).

Guidance means an assistance given to some one in order to make him aware and know the direction he or she is coming from or going to in life. Kolo (1992), quoting Shertzer and Stone (1980), said guidance is to direct, pilot or guide. In the light of the present discussion guidance is essentially a directing and pilot assistance. More specifically guidance in the context of early child care development Education means the process by which care givers guide, pilot and direct the behaviour acquisition and development of children under their custody. Education reform is an integral part of development and must be holistic to be meaningful such as incorporating guidance and behaviour modification in the child care development education into the main stream of on-going reform in the education sector.

Concept of Child Care Development Education

The name *care giver* is a combination of two words viz: CARE and GIVE(R). In the first place to care is to assist some one who is in need of such assistance because of certain peculiar conditions concerning his being at such a time. For example the act of assisting a child to cope with learning and schooling regardless of his personal assets or weakness by an expert in child care development education is an example of caring for the young ones. On the other hand, one who gives the care is otherwise

known as the giver because of his position, training or other characteristics such as patience, commitment, and tolerance of childish behaviours. While the concept of "house help" "school matron" and "office assistant" are common terminologies, the concept and introduction of "Care givers" into our education system appears to be a new innovation and entails the whole process of providing qualitative education to children below the conventional school age especially in this era of Universal Basic Education (UBE). The Care Givers are those individuals who, because of their maturity, baby friendly disposition and commitment, have been employed to "take care" of children in our primary and pre-primary school settings. This paper would highlight the areas in which these care givers could assist the children under their care to develop desirable behaviour that would be beneficial to all and sundry. The main thrust of this discussion is for our education policy makers to appreciate the necessity of incorporating the service of these people into the education sector and more importantly to critically examine their existing service with a view to incorporate it into the on-going reform as a way of ensuring an all-embracing reform.

Two key issues are central to the guidance and behaviour management among children. These are (1) integrity and (2) curbing causes of unethical behaviour. As care givers, the focus of providing child care development education is on how to assist the children in their care to maintain their integrity as "future stars" and leaders of our nation. By training, they are taught to be careful in the process of taking or giving care to children not to do anything that would damage the integrity of the children directly or indirectly.

Similarly they have been trained to remember that the philosophy behind behaviour management is to ensure that they lay solid foundation for the development of enduring productive behaviour in the children under their care. Essentially their focus has always been how to guide these children toward developing peaceful, fruitful and productive behaviour that would not be harmful to them and their society. They are expected to do this based on their familiarization with basic principles of human behaviour and behaviour modification (Asonibare, 2004).

Operational Definition of terms

Let us at this point attempt a brief definition of some key terms as they relate to the focus of this paper.

Guide/Guidance: The art of leading somebody in the right direction. It also means to help somebody to learn something (e.g. good behaviour).

Behaviour: means the way somebody behaves or the way in which a person, organism, or group responds to certain set of conditions (e.g. the way our children in the social world respond to school work, home work, examination etc).

Management: is the act of handling something (e.g. human behaviour) successfully. It is also a reflection of one's skill to handle something e.g. human behaviour expertly. Therefore to manage would mean training children on how to achieve or learn good behaviour without much difficulty.

Behaviour management: is a branch of behaviour science with its aim being how to expertly handle the behaviour of children so that it would be very productive both for the benefit of the children and their society.

Behaviour Management in Child Care Education

It is important to note that care givers are often trained to pay attention to the following general methods in the process of handling the issue of behaviour management or learning of new behaviours by children under their care:

- They try to motivate children for any good behaviour properly mastered as a way of increasing its occurrence;
- They are conscious of the fact that children could easily be frightened thus objects/materials likely to cause anxiety are often kept away;
- They try to provide them with activities that would encourage them to use their six sense organs in the process of day-to-day interaction;
- They try to make the process of acquiring new behaviour less formal and method of evaluating same as informal as possible.
- They try to give plenty opportunity to the children to use their manipulative skills in the process of handling objects and game materials so as to have value for classroom activity;
- They are liberal in their usage of audio-visual aids, such as films, recorders, video, TV., children play;

- They try to make learning environment very conducive and suitable to special needs of the children.

The concept of child care development education entails providing the young child with expert care and training especially in the development of the three domains of psychomotor, cognitive and affective skills. In order to enhance the development of the child's potential in these three areas, the providers of child care development education employ the use of certain techniques in the process of disseminating information, experience, and imparting skills onto the children under their care. The techniques being used, according to Adeoye (1980) and Oniye (2006), include play, simulation and games among others.

Play: According to Adeoye (1980), play is the child's natural and best way to learn. Adeoye maintained that the idea of getting pupils and children to acquire new/more desirable behaviour through play was popularized by Montessori in confirmation of what earlier philosophers like Pestalozzi, Jean Piaget, Rousseau, and others have done. This approach implies using a variety of approaches involving play such as children's play, role playing and dramatization, simulations and games. In the early days of children learning, in this process of using children's play they could be asked to get into activities like drawing, modelling, building mud/clay houses, playing with objects, singing etc. The most important point here is that in the process of exposing them to play, children learn important behaviours in an informal way

Simulation and games: These are teaching techniques in which real life situations and values are simulated by substitution, although they may still display similar characteristics of the original situation. This approach is otherwise known as vicarious teaching or learning. It is expected that through this approach children would be assisted to participate in class work in a relaxed atmosphere.

Recognizing child need:

Children's needs have been classified in different ways by educational psychologists. According to Kolawole (1989) and Adegoke (2004) some educational psychologists list five fundamental needs of children as follows:

- (a) Need for status:
- (b) Need for security;
- (c) Need for affection
- (d) Need for independence
- (e) Need for competence

It is imperative to note that children enjoy being praised, recognized by the adult group and peers; they also like to be loved and to feel secure. They want to feel accepted both by the teacher and classmates; they usually are happy when a skill is mastered or more control is gained over the environment.

The implication of this for care givers is that they try to assist the children they are caring for to meet these needs and to recognize these needs in their colleagues. Thus, they try to train them formally and informally to develop a balanced personality which would work toward the actualization of these needs for themselves and respect the needs of their colleagues in the same area. Nothing in the behaviour of these children, they emphasise, must be done to infringe on the rights of others. They strive to encourage the children to assist their colleague meet these needs as a necessary foundation for a productive adult life.

Furthermore, they realize that there is a very strong relationship between the actualization of these needs and a child's social and emotional development. As a matter of fact, both social and emotional developments are potential determinants of human behaviour. Therefore they often try to ensure that they meet the need of children in these areas.

Character Development

Another focus of providers of child care development education as care giver (equivalent of teachers of young children) is that they are trained to remember that character development, moral education and habit formation are important in children's formative years. Habits are formed by constant practice. They are taught to constantly note also that habits both good and bad, are learned (Asonibare, 2004) and that any behaviour which is learned can be unlearned. Thus, their focus most often is on assisting the children to practice constantly desired behaviour since a habit left unpractised may be lost. Care givers by orientation are taught to remember that a child's behaviour may influence the behaviour of his peers. Therefore, there is need to emphasise acquisition and manifestation of desirable behaviour by children very early in life. Children shape the

behaviour of other children by appealing to their feelings for affection and acceptance. Finally, they are oriented toward being conscious of their own behaviour, language and appearance, since other children may like to imitate them.

Conclusion

The concept of child care development education in this era marks a rebirth of the age-long informal education. Similarly, the introduction of caregivers into our education system under the canopy of UBE is a bold step meant to concretize the idea of providing equal and all round education to all citizens of the country especially in the first nine years of education. The caregivers as the main providers of child care development education are expected to serve in-loco parents to these children in the area of providing guidance and behaviour management to the beneficiaries of early child care development education. It is important to note that the caregivers pay attention to the total process of guiding the behaviour development of the children under their care. The interwoven relationship between social and emotional development and consequently the behavioural disposition to be manifested is noted and guarded jealously. As caregivers they are ever ready to assist the children to learn good manners both by their conscious approaches and their unspoken general disposition.

However, these services, as they are, cannot on their own be adjudged super excellent until they are critically examined in the light of on-going reform in education sector of this country. This appraisal, it is hoped, would enable the policy makers and implementers of the policy to develop a uniform evaluation strategy for the regular assessment of the child care development education programme. Thus, in the spirit of on-going reform in education, it is suggested that the necessity of incorporating early child care development education in the UBE programme into the on-going reform agenda is established.

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