

The Place of Educational Technology in a School Counselling Programme

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ABSTRACT

This paper looks at the place of educational technology in a school counselling programme. In doing this it first looked at the functions of a school counselling programme and the functions of educational technology. Educational technology has an important role in the school counselling programme. Some of the ways it does this is by identifying and solving problems that could hinder learning; stating appropriate objectives and continuously reviewing and revising them according to the changing needs of the community; emphasising the utilisation of appropriate learning strategies and resources; evaluating the effectiveness of the school system by collecting and analysing data to make decisions about individual learners and the educational system. There is the need to explore other ways educational technology can contribute with more knowledge about how people learn and availability of communication tools.

Keywords: Educational Technology, School Counselling.

Introduction

Education is an important activity of any community. It is always of high priority in any country, whether the country is developed or developing. This is necessitated by its importance, which amongst others, is a means of cultural transmission. Education has been defined in different ways by different people. One of such definitions is that it is the leading out of the in-born powers and potentialities of the individual in the society and the acquisition of skills, aptitudes and competencies necessary for self-realisation and for coping with life's problems (Osokoya, 1987). This definition gives the assumption that the individual is not 'tabula rasa' (clean slate) as is assumed by some early philosophers, but is born with certain qualities that he might be aware of or not (Manilla, 2003). Education is taken to be the ability to realise these qualities and develop them to a stage where he can use them for himself and the good of the society in which he exists. This definition also gives the implication that apart from these in-born qualities, there are other things the individual needs which he has to learn from other people and the environment.

In modern day complex society, the job of leading out the inert abilities and developing various skills, aptitudes and potentialities of the individual is mainly the function of the formal school system. In order to effect these, countries use a large share

of public expenditure to employ qualified teachers, provide facilities, equipment and materials. Children from various cultural and economic background are put together to acquire much needed survival skills and develop potentialities. A large number of learners, coming from these different backgrounds are brought together in a quest to attain meaningful education. In some cases, a teacher has to handle as many as 150 students in a single classroom at a particular time. The large number of students does not allow the teacher, no matter how good he is, to attend to the individual learning needs of the learners. This causes a situation whereby gaps are created in the knowledge of some students, causing high drop-out rates and anti-social behaviour in the school and society at large (Omieibi-Davids, 2022; Kalagbor, 2008). In order to check these deviant behaviours in schools, counselling services have been provided in schools (FRN, 2014).

School Counselling

Counselling is a personalised interaction, intimate dialogue or interview between a client and a counsellor, or a group of clients and a counsellor, which is purported to help the client in self-discovery, self-direction and personal social adjustment. This is with respect to educational, vocational, personal or social aspects of an individual's life. It is usually a face-to-face encounter. The school counselling programme is part of the wider school guidance programme. Some of its functions are as follows (Denga, 1986; Heled & Davidovitch, 2020; Popov & Spasenovic, 2020; www.learn.org):

- a. It helps students identify their ability, capacities and interest, thereby preventing school dropout.
- b. It is geared towards assisting new students to adjust to a new school environment through orientation procedures.
- c. It offers opportunity to individuals to share problems and experiences in groups, thereby developing healthy interpersonal relationships and a healthy personality through improving social, recreational and emotion adjustment of individuals.
- d. It is aimed at suggesting ways of improving the intellectual performance of the clients and aids them on career prospects. It advises students on career orientation and decisions.
- e. It helps socially awkward pupils develop better social skills as well as meeting their various needs and interests.
- f. It provides information to students about themselves, what possibilities are available for their potentials and how they might best utilise this knowledge.
- g. It helps learners towards self-realisation and understanding of potent influences outside the school that affect skills, aptitudes and overall achievement and development of the individual.
- h. It emphasises on collaborating with parents, teachers and school administrators in identifying and developing strategies for assisting learners with learning disabilities or to ensure academic success.
- i. It helps in resolving conflicts between all the various people that make up life in school to make the school environment conducive for learning.
- j. It identifies special students for attention. This includes gifted, slow learners, learners with mental and physical disabilities, etc. (ABA Degree Programs, 2023; Wake Forest University, 2023; Onyekuru, 2021).

Technology

When people talk of Technology, they tend to refer to Industrial Technology which began about 200 years ago with the development of power-driven machines, the growth of factories and so on. It is this concept of technology that makes people think of Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics when they think of technological development through education. Technology, however, is more than just the sciences, machines and industries. Ever since man first appeared on earth, he has had to work to satisfy the basic necessities of life, which are food, clothing, shelter and his desire for leisure and comfort. These needs have made him invent numerous tools, machines, materials and techniques to make his work easier and faster. His use of the knowledge he has acquired through the ages in meeting his needs is what we call technology.

Technology is the systematic application of organised knowledge to achieve a practical purpose (Heinich et al, 2006). This definition of technology does not tell us that knowledge has to be scientific for it to be technology. It says organised knowledge. Systematically applying knowledge distinguishes technology from an art or craft. This means that when we apply our available knowledge, we check back and improve our design as a result of problems that occur in the finished product. In applying this knowledge, men, machines ideas and procedures are organised in an integrated process to solve problems. To do this, available knowledge is used in delineating and analysing the problems, deriving, implementing, managing, controlling and evaluating the solution to the problems (ACE Series, 1981). Technology could be, and is used in solving all kinds of problems. They could be medical, military or construction problems. But when the problem at hand is an educational problem, then we are talking about Educational Technology.

Educational Technology

Educational technology is the systematic application of all available knowledge to solve educational problems in order to solve desired educational objectives. In applying available knowledge, men, machines, ideas and procedures are organised in an integrated process to delineate and analyse problems, devise, implement, manage, control and evaluate the solution to the problems. The application of available knowledge in solving educational problems can be seen in the application of psychology, sociology, history, economics, the physical sciences, mathematics, the arts, and so on. It can also be seen in using everyday life and things in our environment to solve problems. Educational technology has also been defined as the study and ethical practice of facilitating learning and improving performance by creating, using and managing appropriate technological processes and resources (Richey, 2008; Januszewski & Molenda, 2008). This definition implies that educational technology is not just used to solve educational problems but it is used to integrate technology with education in a manner that promotes a diverse learning environment and students learn how to use technology. Ethical practice in the use of educational technology means that technology is used in accordance with the rules or standards for right conduct and practice (Northwest, 2018).

Functions of Educational Technology

Educational technology performs a lot of functions in order to bring about effective education. Some of these are as follows Omieibi-Davids, 2021; Romiszowski, 1970:

It identifies existing educational problems. When the educational system is not producing the desired results, it means something is wrong. For instance, a country that plans its school curriculum to produce scientist should turn out scientists not artists. When this happens, it means there is a need, which results in a problem. A need is the discrepancy between what is and what is required. The need here is the difference between the number of Arts and Social Science students produced each year and the Science-based students and graduates required. A problem is the requirement to reduce or eliminate a discrepancy between what is and what is required at a specific level. What is required to increase the number of science-based students and graduates to what is required, is what we call a problem. Hence, we can say a problem of our educational system is to increase the number of science students and graduates in secondary and tertiary schools every year. The reason why the need for scientists is not being met could be poor funding, lack of interest, lack of teachers, inadequate curriculum, and so on. Finding out the problems that hinder the effectiveness of the educational system and solving them is one of the functions of educational technology. It also identifies the educational needs of individual learners. According to AtZ Technology (2024), in order to convert a bad student into a good student, it is necessary to know the problems of that particular student. This is applicable to classes, communities and countries (Onsori, 2024; www.publishyourarticles.net).

Educational technology is not just concerned with solving problems, it is concerned with how these problems are identified and solved. In examining a problem like ‘High failure rate in Mathematics among JSS 111 students in Baptist High School, Port Harcourt’, does the teacher just change his teaching method or does he try to actually find out exactly what caused the high failure rate by checking their performance in other subjects in comparison with their performance in mathematics; the method used by those subject teachers; the mental development and learning styles of the students; the curriculum, and so on. How a problem is identified and solutions applied, to a large extent determines whether the problem recurs or not.

Specification of objectives is one of the emphases of educational technology. Educational objectives are statements indicating what a learner should be able to do, write, feel or think at the end of an activity, programme, or entire educational system. These are usually stated in terms of what the learner will be able to do as a result of going through various learning activities and programmes, and not what he is doing during the course. Specification of objectives is necessary in order to give a clear direction of what the system is intended to achieve. It is only when we have objectives set that we can say the system is effective or otherwise. It is only when we have objectives that we can determine we there are needs or problems in the educational system. The objectives serve as a yardstick of measurement (Omieibi-Davids, 2024).

The provision of adequate learning environment is of utmost importance to educational technologists in order to bring about effective teaching and learning. These are the social and physical learning environment. The social learning environment has to do with creating a good working relationship between learners; learners and teacher; and learner and the instructional method and media used. Planning of the physical environment involves providing a good temperature, noise control, visibility, right space, facilities and attractive environment that would help the students learn. This ensures that the students have the right learning environment in all situations to motivate them (Duruji et al, 2014; Omieibi-Davids, 2019).

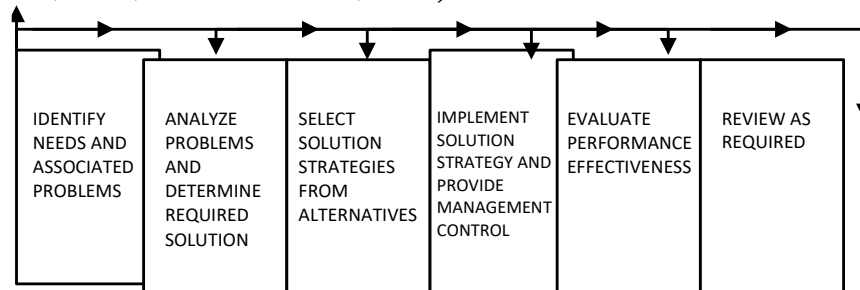
Educational Technology emphasises selecting the most appropriate teaching strategies and learning media for each learning activity. This requires that the teacher has a good knowledge of various teaching strategies and instructional media so that he knows exactly which one to use in particular situations. It also requires that the teacher has a good understanding of the characteristics of the various media so that he uses the right media for the right group of students. What is appropriate in one situation and with one group of learners might not be applicable in another situation (Victor-Ishikaku, 2022). The strategies and materials selected are to enable effective communication in the learning situation. This requires determining whether students learn as individuals, small groups or whole class groups; face-to-face learning, online or a blended format, and so on. Choosing the right strategies and materials helps to bring about effective teaching and learning (University of the People, 2022; AtZ Technology, 2024).

There is emphasis on constantly exploring and structuring the various subject matter. This done to provide learners with the most appropriate learning activities to enable them achieve desired objectives. This is necessary in order to adjust the subject matter to the ever-changing needs of the learners and the society. This is important because the needs of the people/society and the objectives of education are being continuously changing and so it is necessary to constantly review and revise them and the content and ways of achieving them with the passage of time (www.publishyourarticles.net).

Educational technology emphasises planning and designing instruction. This means determining what should be done in the course of a programme ahead of time. In doing this, it takes into account the needs of the learners and the society, the characteristics of the learners, available resources, and so on. Planning and designing instruction eliminate some likely inhibitions to the achievement of desired educational objectives (www.publishyourarticles.com). There are numerous models available to do this. Using a model ensures that most of the inhibitions to the programme will be foreseen by the model and taken care of before it is actually implemented. One of these is the six-step Systems Approach problem solving model which involve the following processes:

- a. Identification of priority needs associated problems.
- b. Determination of required solutions to associated problems.
- c. Selection of solution strategies and tools from alternatives.

- d. Implementation of solution strategies and management control of selected strategies.
- e. Evaluation of performance effectiveness on the basis of identified needs and requirements.
- f. Revision of previous steps at any time in the process when the need arises (Romiszowski, 1970; Omieibi-Davids, 2021).



A Diagrammatic Representation of the Six-Step Systems Approach Model (Romiszowski, 1970)

Evaluation of the effectiveness of the learning system is another function of educational technology. The effectiveness of the educational system is a major concern of educational technology (University of the People, 2022; AtZ Technology, 2024). Evaluation is the process of obtaining data or information about the programme for the purpose of determining the success or otherwise, in order to make decisions about whether to maintain the features of the programme or suggest a more effective alternative. It is a process of finding out how far the learning experiences in relation to the content that have been developed and organised actually produce the desired results. The process of evaluation involves the identification of strengths and weakness. Evaluation is necessary to determine if the problems identified, objectives set, learning environment and activities planned are the right ones. If they are the right ones, then have they been used in a way that we achieve our desired outcome. Evaluation of the system is done so that the knowledge gained from such experience can be used to improve the effectiveness of the learning system (Omieibi-Davids, 2024; Amadi, 2006).

Role of Educational Technology in the School Counselling Programme

Educational technology has important roles to play in the school counselling programme. Some of these are discussed as follows:

Identifying and solving problems of the educational system is important to the school counsellor. A problem is the requirement to reduce or eliminate a discrepancy between what is and what is required at a specific level. Counsellors help to identify problems in the school and use a variety of counselling methods and conflict resolution skills to resolve problems. Some of the problems they try to identify are students' weaknesses, factors that negatively impact learning, and students' behavioural and social problems (Wake Forest University, 2023; www.learn.org) By ensuring that the system is effective, educational technology reduces the work load of the school counsellor by enabling him identify and counsel those learners that have real learning and personal problems.

The approach of educational technology to being particular as to how problems are solved is important for school counselling. Learning problems of students can be caused by many factors. In order to counsel students effectively, the counsellor needs to be particular about how he pinpoints the students' exact problems (Wake Forest University, 2023). Poor performance by a group of learners could be caused by things outside the immediate learning environment or time period. Objectives serve as a yardstick for planning and evaluation. It is important to the counsellor as it is to the educational technologist; and just as there is no problem in the educational system without clearly stated objectives, a learner could not be said to have learning problems without objectives. Clearly spelt out objectives would enable the counsellor what learner needs counselling or encouragement. It also helps him to ascertain when he is making some headway with his students. Without this there would be no need to counsel anyone because nothing could be said to be wrong or need improvement (www.learn.org; www.publishyourarticles.net).

Planning a good learning environment ensures that students have the right learning in all situations to motivate them. A good physical environment involves providing a good temperature, noise control, visibility, right space, facilities and attractive environment that would help the students learn and reduce stress. A good social environment which ensures a good working environment reduces personality conflicts in the classroom. In creating a good social environment, it ensures that learners of similar intelligent levels and mental abilities are put together, and with teachers that can cope with their characteristics to ensure compatibility. This is important to the school counsellor because maladjustment and personality conflicts in the classroom often results in poor academic performance and anti-social behaviour (Victor-Ishikaku, 2022; Omieibi-Davids, 2021). Uzoeshi and Iwundu (2002) assert that for human beings to learn they need a certain degree of conducive environment. They insist that a bad environment cannot provide the necessary and conducive environment for learning.

Learning theories are a major part of educational technology. They are an attempt to describe how people learn. They are the hypotheses that explain the different ways people learn by focusing on the internal and external influences that affect the learning process. They attempt to explain how people learn or behave the way they do, (Fairbanks, 2021; Indeed, 2022). This emphasis on finding out why people learn or behave the way they do is important to the school counsellor in determining why certain students learn or behave the way they do, and what solutions can be found to solve students; academic or social problems (Uzoeshi & Iwundu, 2002).

Educational technology is usually confused with educational media. While educational technology goes beyond the use of media in education, educational media occupies an important place in educational media. Media can be effectively applied by the school counsellor in establishing rapport with students in the process of counselling. This can be done by making the students feel at ease at the onset of the counselling session by giving them a cartoon to read or view; some music to listen to or film to watch. This gives them the feel of having a relax atmosphere rather than a formal set up.

This is necessary because students usually see the idea of seeing a counsellor as a punishment of some kind.

The use of video is particularly favourable in the school counsellor because it can provide face-to-face interaction which is necessary for effective counselling but not always possible. This is more so, especially because of the experience of the Covid 19 pandemic which has taught the world that conventional face-to-face classroom instructions are not sometimes possible. Thus, video helps to give the necessary face-to-face interaction through various video-conferencing forums like WhatsApp, Skype, Zoom, Video lectures, Digital resources, and so on (University of the People, 2022). The use of video has an important place in a school counselling programme. Counsellors are required to have a sharp communication and listening skill in order to identify the needs of the students (www.learn.org). This is sometimes difficult to do effectively when the school counsellor has to deal with the information of hundreds of students in an overpopulated school system. Having a video recording of counselling sessions helps the counsellor to have a referent to go to at a later time.

Use of Learning Management System (LMS) by educational technology provides an important solution to school counselling programmes. LMS is a software application that delivers, administers, documents and manages instructional content of educational courses and training programmes (Ellis, 2009; Davis et al, 2009). It helps instructors deliver content, administer assignments and tests, keep track of students' progress, monitor eLearning course completion, enrolment data, user performance and manages record keeping (Davis et al, 2009; Gilhooly, 2001; Szabo & Flesher, 2002). LMS has implications for the school counselling session. By virtue of its various functions, it helps to identify students who are not academically active and give the counsellor an opportunity to intervene. It gives learners a helpline to reach their instructors immediately in situations when they have difficulties without the fear of being laughed at by their peers (Counseling Africa Editorial Team, 2024).

The use of the most appropriate strategies and learning media has caused educational technology to emphasise the use of various innovative teaching-learning method, and a lot these methods are constructivism-based strategies that emphasise the small group activities, rather than learning individually or as whole class groups. This has led to the emphasis in Group Dynamics. Group dynamics is concerned with how groups and group members act and react to dynamic circumstances such as changes, interactions and forces operating within the group in a social organisation (Plans, 2020). Group dynamics affects learning because the behaviour and interactions of different people in the learning environment affects members of the group. Like educational technology, school counselling is also interested in learners working in groups. Because of the influence of groups on people, school counsellors use group counselling to identify, manage and solve problems (Uzoeshi, 2002). To use group counselling effectively it is important for counsellors to understand group dynamics and its impact on learners (Omieibi-Davids, 2023).

The application of various instructional models in educational technology also has impact on the school counselling programme. The application of systems approach to instruction in solving educational problems can be effectively employed in the school counselling programme. It requires that every situation is dealt with not in part but as a whole which has different parts that work together to ensure effectiveness. Thus, in solving an individual's problems, no problem should be compartmentalised as educational, vocational, spiritual, social, family or personal. All the problems should be looked at and together as the individual's problems because they would affect his academic performance in the long run if they persist. This is because an individual's academic performance, whether good or bad, has a lot of effect on what vocation he chooses for the future.

Educational technology emphasises systems approach. A system is the sum total of several parts working independently and in conjunction with each other to achieve previously specified objectives. For us to say something is a system it must have different parts, which have individual functions. For any system to be effective the various parts must be able to perform their individual functions and be able to function collectively with other parts of that system. Systems approach is a problem-solving process, which ensures that no part of the system is omitted or underplayed in achieving desired objectives. It ensures that all components of a system are designed, fitted, checked and operated in a disciplined manner keeping priorities in mind.

System approach is important in school counselling. This is because the school is an intricate system of people, situations, processes and institutions that have their individual duties and functions, and must work smoothly together in order for a child to get good education and be emotional balance. To be effective the school counsellor needs to understand how the various parts of the system work and ensure that they are fulfilling their purpose. Also, the counsellor has to look at students as a whole. This means that before passing judgement on a child's behaviour and trying to intervene, the counsellor must look at the student during the entire year in order to advise properly to address areas that need improvement to help them to succeed. This is important because it enables the counsellor keep a comprehensive record of the student and identify the right problems not some temporary youthful tantrum (ABA Degree Programs, 2023). Using systems approach is also involved when counsellors involve parents, teachers and school administrators in identifying and solving academic, behavioural and social problems (www.learn.org; Heled et al, 2020).

Ergonomics is a tool used by educational technologist which has a ready place in the scheme of things in a school counselling programme. Ergonomics is the study of the work environment and the work people do in relation to their characteristics and provisions of the law. It is the study of workers and their environment in relation to their characteristics and the provisions of the law (Goodyear, 1997). In the case of the school system the classrooms are the work environment and the students and the teachers are the workers. This is because work is said it is an activity that involves mental or physical effort done in order to achieve a purpose or result (Middlesworth, 2019). Applying

ergonomics means that people should be given work that they can carry out comfortably and effortlessly.

Ergonomics is a useful tool in the school counselling programme because it would ensure that the students are learning knowledge and concepts that are within their cognitive level. Being exposed to content and activities below or above the students' cognitive and physical levels can cause difficulties in learning that lead to behavioural problems, truancy and dropout. Van Praag et al. (2023) and Thomas (2023) assert that many students are unable to learn in the school system because of the arrangement of academic content according to age with the belief that everyone within a particular level should be able to achieve certain things. It is important for counsellors to remember that an individual's maturity and readiness to learn and participate in various activities is dependent not just on age but reflects the complex mix of biological maturity, family, community and life experiences (Hansen 2018). Thus, every student should be considered as an individual worker who has to do work that is suitable to his peculiar characteristics. He should not be judged with the standard of his peers. This is especially so because learning too soon is said to be dangerous to the child. It helps students to walk on an appropriate educational path that is suited to the characteristics and abilities (Gosalia, 2015; www.learn.org).

Counsellors are concerned with evaluating and improving the counselling programme to ensure it is up-to-date and effective. In doing this it constantly cast a critical eye over existing counselling practices and identify areas that could be improved and make it as best as it can be (Wake Forest University, 2023), and to ensure that the most suitable methods and materials are used (www.publishyourarticles.net). In doing this it is in tandem with educational technology which constantly explores and structures the content of the school system to ensure that it is what will help in achieving the objectives of the educational system (Omieibi-Davids, 2021; www.learn.org).

Conclusion

Educational technology has an important role in the school counselling programme. It can contribute effectively to the school counselling programme and make the learning system effective. Some of the ways it does this is by identifying and solving problems that could hinder learning; stating appropriate objectives and continuously reviewing and revising them according to the changing needs of the community; emphasising the utilisation of appropriate learning strategies and resources; evaluating the effectiveness of the school system by collecting and analysing data to make decisions about individual learners and the educational system. There is the need to explore other ways educational technology can contribute with more knowledge about how people learn and availability of communication tools.

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