The Idea Of Providing Guidance And Counseling Services For Ethiopian Students

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A major characteristic of Ethiopia to-day is change. Our 3000-year-old civilization is being challenged at all levels, social, cultural and political, by the civilization of the West. The traditional values and ideals of Ethiopia have come into conflict – sometimes real, sometimes merely apparent – with the values and ideals of the western tradition. This clash of cultures has been particularly marked in education. Speaking in general terms of the conflicts and tensions generated by contemporary development, Prof. Edward Ullendorff, of the Department of Ethiopian Studies in the University of London had this to say:-

> "Here indeed are forces at work that are inevitable and incapable of being halted. The sympathetic student of Ethiopia feels at times an almost schizophrenic urge of wanting to preserve historic Abyssinia as a relic of an ancient, yet still living, civilization which has no need of aeroplanes or water closets; and, at the same time, he wishes Ethiopia to be healthy and educated, but then realizes that hospitals and schools, by strong inner logic, attract Cadillacs and television sets. Ethiopia – as one of her Ambassadors recently said – possessed the wireless before she knew a piece of wire.[1]

Familiar means and familiar ends alike are being disturbed and sometimes replaced; and a social gap is being created between those who, on the one hand, have had the opportunity of acquiring a modern education and have become involved in the modernizing process, and those who, on the other hand, have had no access to modern or western education. A second division is being created between those who have had some measure of education and those who have had no schooling at all. Over eighty per cent of the population, it is estimated, are illiterate, and these unfortunate people are merely confused spectators of the modernizing program; they have no conception of what education involves, they do not understand what their children are doing in school and do not realise what their children may become through the benefits of education. In these circumstances understanding between parents and children is bound to be difficult. The children cannot look to their parents for help and understanding – though they may expect the opposite – for the parents themselves need help to understand the new and strange things that are coming into the country.

How much help can the children expect from the schools? To judge from past performance, all that the children can reasonably expect from the schools is academic instruction. The teacher-pupil relationship is an academic and im-

personal one. The teacher follows the syllabus laid down by the Ministry of Education, and his responsibility ends when he has covered the prescribed portion of the course of study. Pupils who want to learn something about the school or its program have to find out for themselves, since no orientation, no introduction of any kind, is given to new entrants. If they have adjustment problems, they must solve them for themselves; and if they drop out as a consequence of their inability to solve these problems, no blame is attached to the teacher, who has no responsibility to help pupils with social difficulties.

The school thinks that its responsibility is limited normally to preparing students or pupils academically when they are in class. The school thinks that its work and duty do not go beyond the physical confines of the school. What happens to the child beyond its gates or at some time in the future, the school feels, should not bother it today. The situation in the home and the society are not worth knowing for the school. No family data are kept by the school. No follow-up studies are made. There are no records of the pupils' educational, vocational, or personal plans and interests. Pupils are ignorant of educational and occupational prospects. Parents and pupils alike have one unrealistic general expectation, that education, if endured for the requisite number of years, will transform all the pupils, quite naturally but quite inexplicably, into white-collar government employees. This is a danger which has already been noted and commented on by some American and European educators and economists.

> Ethiopia should seek to profit from the errors committed by other developing nations which did not consider the curriculum in relation to the occupational aspirations of their growing student body. Most students considered school as the avenue of escape from the rural areas, as a road to white-collar positions in the government. But no government with a rapidly expanding system has been able to absorb the large numbers of partially educated who have fled from the countryside. If Ethiopia is to avoid the frustrations which result from the unrealizable occupational aspirations of the coming generations, it must seek to relate junior and senior high school curricula more directly to the needs of agriculture and the activities closely related to agriculture.[2]

What has been so far examined gives us the feeling that there exist confusions to be cleared up and problems to be solved urgently, if the educational programme in Ethiopia is to become of full benefit to the nation. There is a dearth of information, educational, social, and occupational, and yet the need for such information is very wide and very pressing. We have seen that there exist political, economic, cultural, educational, and other changes and developments in the society which present both parents and pupils with difficult problems. We can add to these the normal natural needs of children and adolescents. In the absence of guidance and counseling, the situation has become

highly frustrating. The result of this confusion can be a serious problem to the society as a whole.

> In an underdeveloped country like Ethiopia, a major motivation on the part of the individuals is to pursue education in order to better their economic conditions. Currently, students who leave school at different pre-university stages face the problem of unemployment. This in turn affects those who are still in school. The introduction of vocational training in Ethiopia's educational programme has helped to alleviate this situation somewhat. Intellectual resources are wasted in this country, either because of misplacement or because of lack of jobs. A lack of adequate aptitude tests is also a serious factor which creates an imbalance between employment and the type of training received, especially at the university level. This situation results in frustration on the part of the individual, who gets a job which does not go hand in hand with the training which he has received.[3]

The above observations indicate the urgent and pressing need for guidance and counseling services. The introduction of the programmes will not only benefit the individual pupil but also the parents and the country as a whole. The frictions at home will be reduced. The wastage of talents and the unemployment problem will be lessened. The lack of co-ordination between the elementary school and the high school, and between the high school and the college will cease to be a problem. The value of guidance for Ethiopia has been identified by a recent study sponsored by the AID Mission to Ethiopia, the authors of which give high priority to the introduction of guidance and counseling.

> There is no need to expand these examples. The relevant points stand out clearly. Effective university planning should aim to allow maximum freedom of choice to the student. Next, strong guidance and counseling services should be made available. The responsible representatives must devote time and energy to keeping abreast of the changing structure of demand for their graduates and must institute a follow-up system so that they have some hard facts to go by. The most important challenge the university faces is to establish and maintain standards which will ensure that all of its students demonstrate the ability to deal analytically with problems in their chosen field.
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> If an effective feedback system is established between the market and the university – and it is difficult to foresee any barriers that prevent it – the distribution of students should be determined by the students themselves. Many are not sophisticated when they enter the university but by their junior year they should be able to make responsible choices, especially if the university fulfills its obligations with respect to information gathering and the provision of guidance services.[4]

The existence of a Testing Center in the University is in itself an affirmation of the need for guidance and counseling services. The Department of Secondary Education has already indicated the desirability of training guidance and counseling specialists for Ethiopian Secondary Schools. "Educational Opportunities in Ethiopia" produced by the Department of Educational Operations in January 1970 is an acknowledgement of the need and value of guidance and counseling services for Ethiopian boys and girls.

The next logical question to consider is the kind of guidance and counseling services to be given. It has been explained earlier that, so far, the sole function of the schools in Ethiopia has been the giving of academic instruction. A radical change here is in order. The schools must be helped to realize that educating or preparing the child demands more than that. Education should help the intellectual, physical, social and vocational growth of the child in order to serve the individual and the society fully. The school has to have as its aim the development of the whole child.

> It would seem that the school could be charged with a multifold function of developing intellectual, social and vocational competencies – perhaps in that order of importance Social intelligence and competencies are as important for those whose vocational preparation needs are served later in the school experience as for those who will enter into vocational life just following school. As a school objective, the development of social competencies serves both groups.[5]

The suggestion for starting this wide guidance programme including educational, social, and occupational help to students is justified by the existence of many problems and needs among Ethiopian students demanding no less a programme. It has been shown above that there are political, economic, cultural, and educational changes going on that affect many things in the Ethiopian family, tradition, and society. We have seen that the pupil is in the center of conflicts and flux. He cannot turn to his parents for guidance and counseling, as was customary in the old days, since many of them know much less than their children about the society of to-day. The school ought to be the most effective agency in helping the pupil overcome his confusions and frustrations, for it is in the school, which is an agency of transmission, change, and adaptation, that the old and the new meet and compete in the forming of the Ethiopia of tomorrow. Ethiopia has already made the commitment to westernize or modernize and has acknowledged that modernization can come about only through modern or western education.

It is reasonable to expect that any sincere attempt to make a realistic and practicable suggestion should include some investigation of the possible obstacles. Here, I must point out the two major problems. Ethiopia is a developing country with a low level of economic development. Shortage of money is to be expected. This may limit the immediate expansion of the programme. It is prudent for Ethiopia to have a policy of economical and tactful approaches in starting guidance and counseling services. The other problem that must be

reckoned with in considering the idea of providing guidance and counseling services in Ethiopia is the scarcity of suitably qualified people. There are a few people qualified in guidance and counseling but they are presently doing other work in Ethiopia. However, their number is very small in comparison with the number of schools in Ethiopia. In addition, we have also a few psychology minors who could be utilized. What the Ministry needs to do is to make a quick survey of the number of qualified people available, and funds available, and the urgent needs and problems of Ethiopian students as far as guidance and counseling are concerned.

In general, a reliable start needs to be based on realistic and accurate studies. Before starting guidance and counseling centers in the schools, the Ministry of Education or any other concerned authority will have to answer a number of questions. I hope that it is not out of place to mention a few pertinent questions asked by other communities before launching guidance and counseling programs. An experienced specialist, Glen E. Smith, for example, has listed the following questions:-

1. Are qualified people available for providing counseling services?
2. Can essential physical facilities, materials, and supplies be provided for the counselors?
3. How can teachers be helped to provide educational, occupational, and other information through their classes?
4. Should a course in occupational and educational information be included in the curriculum?
5. Should schools have an organized orientation plan for beginning pupils?
6. Can job placement services be provided for pupils?
7. Can testing services be provided?
8. What plan can be developed for acquainting pupils and teachers with the nature and purposes of the counseling service?
9. How should we go about acquainting parents and pupils with the guidance programme?
10. Have community services capable of supplementing the counseling services been identified and how should we go about developing cooperative working relationships with each one?
11. What can be the estimated cost of providing guidance and counseling services and how can this be met financially?

The answers to these questions are very important. It would be highly prudent for the Ministry of Education to attempt to answer questions of this nature. Such a survey of the real situation provides a realistic and useful foundation.

In spite of the two major problems of shortage of money and shortage of qualified personnel, I think that guidance and counseling services can be started in Ethiopia without any delay. The situation needs only calculated or intelligent approaches. The few available personnel or qualified people can be used to develop starting competence among the teachers and create a few professio-

nal centres, too, if possible. Through in-service training, teachers can be helped to become more useful to pupils. It is easy, for example, to assist teachers to realise the importance of keeping and using personal and family data for each pupil so that his problems can very easily be brought to the attention of the teachers. The preparation and keeping of a personal inventory for each pupil offers a feasible starting point.

> There is no single point at which the staff must begin in developing a guidance programme. There are, however, certain activities which precede certain others if the services to be included are to be maximally effective. To be sure, the counseling services will be ineffective in the absence of an adequate personal inventory for each pupil. This fact, however, does not imply that the inventory service must be the first aspect of the guidance programme to be developed. It may be, and often, is desirable to begin with an in-service training for the entire staff. This activity should include group projects which lay the foundation for guidance services.[6]

The in-service training that can be given to teachers will serve as a very useful functional start. Teachers can be given in-service training in several activities. They can be given in-service training in the techniques of carrying out follow-up studies. The follow-up studies can contribute to educational and occupational sources of information for the school. Educationally, the modification of the curriculum can be guided. The school can report its findings to the Ministry of Education. The school can recommend changes based on realities. Occupationally, the school can learn about the employing bodies of its students.

The third place where in-service training can be very helpful is in organizing conferences. Teachers can be given in-service training in the techniques of organizing occupational conferences and college day programmes. Through these two kinds of conferences, much useful educational and occupational information can be obtained for the pupils. The pupils, by hearing responsible men from both management and labour speak, can get first-hand information about the opportunities and requirements of occupational areas. From college representatives, students can learn a lot about colleges, opportunities, and requirements. This information will offer ideas about their college attendance plans. These kinds of information are of vital importance as students approach important decision-making points. Secondary school students can benefit a lot from such information programmes.

> The needs of pupils for information designed to aid them in making appropriate choices, plans, and decisions become more acute as they become increasingly self-directive. The process of social, educational, vocational, physical and emotional maturation tends to open for pupils new vistas of interests and activities. As their activities increase in number and scope, the process of selecting and rejecting courses of action becomes a more varied and complex one. Many

> decisions which they must make emphasize the need for appropriate information upon which to decide between alternative courses of action. In addition, they need certain information concerning the physical and social setting in which they move. It is a responsibility of the school to provide needed information for pupils directly or through referral to available sources outside the school.[7]

The fourth place where in-service training can be useful concerns trips and visits. Teachers can be trained in the techniques of organizing and conducting trips and visits to important places in the community. Visits can be made to important economic or business activity centers or to important educational and social institutions, and pupils can gain a direct experience of the activities carried on there. Teachers, provided they are given the necessary training assistance, can very easily and willingly conduct trips to useful places in the community. Such an arrangement serves an additional purpose. At present, the schools work in isolation from the economic and social agencies of the community. The programme of visits and trips would help to bring about useful contacts and co-operation.

Fifthly, teachers in the elementary schools can give help in classes, too. Elementary school pupils generally use information of a general and simple nature. The social studies teachers, especially, can give much needed information. They can give educational, social, and vocational information during class. This will even add a practical touch to the social studies instruction, and pupils in Ethiopia will find this rather interesting and helpful.

> The logical place in the elementary school to introduce information of an occupational, education, and social nature is the social studies curriculum, through special units, or in the daily activities of the class. Factors pertaining to understanding self and relationship with others, etiquette, good grooming, leisure-time activities, techniques of study, and the world of work can usually be included in the social studies curriculum. Elementary grades' teachers have the responsibility to make the basic skills functional in the student's life, and concepts of reading, arithmetic, and writing can be continuously related to the needs of the world of work or understanding self and others.[8]

At the secondary level also it will be helpful to include a few units of occupational instruction either in the Amharic classes or the history classes. Secondary school students are ignorant of job prospects, new economic activities and programmes coming into the country, new projects planned by the government, and the requirements of various occupations. While educational information can be given through conferences and orientation programmes, the occupational information cannot be sufficiently delivered through the two arrangements.

> The economies of time inherent in teaching occupations make it possible to provide the student with a background of factual information against which to discuss the individual aspects of his problem. In the interview itself, the time usually spent on presenting

general information may be devoted to the applications of this information to the problems of the client.[9]

The activities or services that have been suggested up to now are those which can be started without much difficulty and without delay. They have been suggested in full awareness of the present shortage of qualified people and shortage of money due to the low level of economic development in Ethiopia. However, Ethiopia, sooner or later, will have to have well-developed guidance and counseling programmes for her pupils. Development may be gradual, but, in the long run, Ethiopia will have to have many counselors trained, many kinds of tests developed, many publications regarding occupational and social information prepared and made available, and the needs and problems of Ethiopian boys and girls studied and made known.

As it has been made clear above, Ethiopia at present lacks many of the needed things. She does not have perfected scholastic aptitude tests, reliable special aptitude tests, or standardized achievement tests. There are no interest and personality measuring instruments. The absence of these things has made it difficult to identify talents and to motivate their development. Many talents have been and are being wasted, yet Ethiopia badly needs the proper utilization of every talent to overcome her shortage of manpower, especially high-level manpower, for which she is largely dependent upon outside assistance.

The identification of the academically talented must be given special attention. It is imperative for Ethiopia to identify early, motivate, and develop the available talents. Neglecting this duty will create serious shortcomings for the society – as well as misery for individuals. At a time when every nation has become talent-conscious, it would be unthinkable and shameful for Ethiopia to be neglectful of this fact. The United States cannot afford to lose or misuse talent – witness what Wrenn says below. How much less can we!

> The academically talented are receiving a great deal of attention. This is as it should be, for failure in the past to identify students in this category, and to motivate them to appropriate intellectual achievements has cost both those students and society a high price. The cost to society has been the greater perhaps, when society's loss has aroused more concern than has the loss to the individual student. We are a bit frightened not only by the advances of the totalitarian nations but also by the substantial technological and social developments in such areas as Western Europe, England, Russia and Japan. In observing both our ideological friends and enemies, it behooves our society to marshal all available brainpower if our leadership is not to be lost or neutralized.[10]

Whatever money is devoted to organizing guidance and counseling services in the Ethiopian schools to help Ethiopian boys and girls is money wisely invested for the intelligent development of human resources. Proper identification of talents and provision of conducive situations for their development are two

vital services urgently needed. Any reduction of social, educational, and vocational problems for the individual learner through guidance and counseling services in a positive contribution to the smooth and healthy development of the individual and the society.

FOOTNOTES

1. Edward Ullendorff, *The Ethiopians* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965,) p. 207.
2. Eli Ginzberg and Herbert A. Smith, *A Manpower Strategy for Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa: AID Mission to Ethiopia, 1966), p. 753.
3. World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching Profession, *National Reports* (1965), p. 50.
4. Eli Ginzberg and Herbert A. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 56.
5. C. Gilbert Wrenn, *The Counselor in a Changing World* (Washington, D.C., American Personnal and Guidance Association, 1962), p. 70.
6. Glen E. Smith *Principles and Practices of the Guidance Programme* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966), p. 109.
7. Glen E. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 169.
8. William Noris et al, *The Information Service in Guidance* (Chicago Rand McNally and Company, 1960), p. 406.
9. Robert Hoppock, *Occupational Information* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1963), p. 167.
10. C. Gilbert Wrenn, *op. cit.*, p. 70.