

GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING SERVICES IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS AS A MEANS OF RE- ENGINEERING THE NIGERIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN ENUGU STATE

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Abstract

This study examined the guidance and counselling services in primary school as a way of re engineering Nigerian instructive framework for sustainable development. The study was conducted in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State. Two research questions were posed to guide the study. The descriptive survey design was adopted. The population comprised 350 guidance- counsellors in primary schools in the zone. A sample size of 100 respondents was drawn through simple random sampling technique. A 20 items instrument titled Guidance and Counselling Services for Sustainable Development (GCSSD) was used. The instrument was face validated and reliability coefficient of 0.62 was obtained using Cronbach's Alpha method of internal consistency estimate. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation in answering the research questions. Discoveries uncovered that head teachers/ administrators do not recognize guidance- counselling services in primary schools, insufficient time for guidance- counselling services and ineffective government policies and implementation of guidance counselling services among other issues confronted guidance counselling services in elementary schools. It was suggested that government should organize workshops and conferences for Counsellors to upgrade their expert competency as well as create the need for guidance counselling services in primary schools.

Keywords: Guidance, Counselling services, Re-Engineering, Early childhood Education, Sustainable Development.

Introduction

Effective sustainable education must start from childhood. Childhood education/training establishes the framework for later learning and improvement. Childhood education could be viewed as the educational training that begins from the cradle. It is the first education given

to children by an instructor in formal educational setting. Sarkin-Fada (2010) viewed Childhood education as formal educational training in schools for children at early age apart from the informal activities the child receives at home. Similarly, Aleke (2017) viewed early childhood training to mean the instruction given to kids for their mental, physical and social development in later life. This period is the most important yet dangerous period in the improvement of the young ones because the experiences at this stage may determine future development. Hence, effective childhood education or training is required for sustainable development.

Sustainable development refers to development that addresses the issues of the present without bargaining the capacity of future ages to meet their own needs (United Nations General Assembly, 2005). In the Nigerian context, a ton of unscrupulous practices is taking place in the educational system extending from poor classroom instructions to malpractices in examinations to meet quick wants while trading off the capacity of the future- ages. However, in the discourse of sustainability in education systems, emphasis must be placed on how education could best serve the purpose of tackling current economic issues, political, ecological and technological challenges without jeopardizing the hope of unborn generations. Thus, the kind of education/training that enables people to effectively manage today and the future is required.

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) can therefore be depicted as the act of instructing for sustainability. Sustainable educational practices seek to improve the critical issues that affect the three basic areas of sustainable development (SD) in society (Ezeudu, 2016). According to Ezeudu (2016), the three key areas requiring SD include society, environment and economy. ESD therefore, accentuates interdisciplinary and all encompassing standards that are prescribed in the educational plan or curriculum of school subjects (Aleke, 2017). Thus, the objectives of learning for SD are broad and due to its encompassing application, it is not to be seen as a subject. As such, every young one or child of school going-age has the privilege to benefit from ESD (Ezeudu, 2016). Operationally, ESO can be conceived as values based education, training for development of life skills. To achieve that, effective guidance counselling services are needed in elementary schools.

Guidance and counselling encompasses all instructional programmes that aim at correcting, shaping, advising and re-engineering core values for both society and schools (primary school inclusive) (Akpan, 2010). It could connote the idea of reinforcing desirable behaviours, skills and competencies required to function and cope in the environment. This suggests children's behaviours and attitudes can be shaped or remodelled to function positively through guidance and counselling services. Thus, effective counselling helps young ones to understand themselves, have focus in life and exhibit desired potentials (Egbo, 2015). Literature shows that guidance and counselling programmes enabled young ones to develop positive attitudes, self-concept and career choices (Akinade, 2012; Anagbogu & Nwokolo, 2010; Egbo, 2012). Similarly, Watanable and Herr (2006) indicated that effective counselling services Promote institutional goals and objectives. Guidance and counselling services are therefore essential in primary schools to enable pupils develop practical skills.

Statement of the Problem

Primary education is the most significant in one's educational career. It is the period good foundations are laid for each child consequently each child in such a level deserves good educational foundation (Egbo, 2015). Also it is the period functional skills are impacted in children in order to cope with and solve problems in life (Okere, 2005). Thus, the importance of primary education and its overall goals were stressed by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) (2004:8) to include:

- a) Inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy and ability to communicate effectively;
- b) Lay a sound basis for scientific and critical and reflective thinking; -
- c) Promote patriotism, fairness, understanding and national unity;
- d) Instil morals and values in the child;
- e) Develop in the child the ability to adapt to the changing environment;
- f) Provide opportunities for children to develop life manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society within the limits of the child's capacity.

To achieve these goals, Government emphasizes the essence and role of guidance and counselling for overall functioning of education at this elementary level in Nigeria (FRN, 2004). The implication is that, primary education forms the base and foundation of the nation's educational system. Thus, sustainable development cannot be achieved without first, emphasizing or building an effective basic educational structure at the elementary level.

These therefore call for the need to improve primary education through strategic counselling practices. The main aim of this paper therefore is to identify some of the problems/challenges facing guidance and counselling services in Nigerian primary schools as well as proffer the possible way forward for effective counselling framework for Nigerian primary schools. Specifically, the study sought to determine:

1. The problems facing guidance and counselling services in primary school for sustainable development.
2. The way forward for guidance and counselling services in primary school for sustainable development.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the problems facing guidance and counselling services in primary school?
2. What are the ways forward for guidance and counselling services in primary Schools?

Method

This study adopted the descriptive survey design which investigated the possibilities of guidance and counselling services in primary schools. The study was conducted in 175 primary schools in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State. Two research questions guided the study and the population of the study comprised all the 350 counsellors in the 175 primary schools in the Education zone. The sample size consists of 100 respondents drawn through simple random sampling technique. A 20 items structured questionnaire titled Guidance and Counselling Services for Sustainable Development (GCSSD) was the main instrument used for data collection. The instrument was subjected to face validation. A reliability coefficient value of 0.62 was established for the instrument using Cronbach-Alpha method.

The questionnaire was structured on a 4-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with corresponding values of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) was used to answer the research questions. Any item with the mean of 2.50 and above was considered while items that rated below 2.50 were considered not required.

Results

The data collected from the study were analysed and summaries presented in tables 1 and 2 below to highlight the findings.

Research question one: what are the problems facing guidance and counselling services in primary schools in Enugu education zone of Enugu state.

Table 1: Mean and Standard deviation on the problems facing guidance and counselling services in primary schools

S/N	Items on problems facing counsellors.	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
1	Administrators not recognizing counsellors	2.63.	1.36	Agree
2	Inadequate time for counselling	2.87	0.87	Agree
3	Dual role conflict	2.77	1.14	Agree
4	Government policy on the implementation and support of guidance and counselling services.	3.13	0.95	Agree
5	Non professionalization of counselling	3.09	1.00	Agree
6	Counsellors not having knowledge in ICT	3.10	1.00	Agree
7	Counsellors not having access to computers	3.32	0.86	Agree
8	Inadequate trained personnel's	2.61	1.19	Agree
9	Problem of fund for counselling	3.37	0.73	Agree
10	Not allotting time for guidance and counselling in the school time-table	3.14	0.99	Agree

Table I indicates that all items recorded as issues or problems confronting guidance counselling services in elementary schools had the mean-scores of 2.50 and above. Thus, the items were accepted as the issues confronting guidance counselling services in elementary schools.

Research question two: what are the ways forward for guidance and counseling services in primary schools?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation on the way forward for guidance and counselling services in primary schools.

S/N	Item descriptions on the way forward for guidance and counselling services	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
11	Identifying with counsellors	3.58	0.69	Agree
12	Counsellors performing their duties alone	2.64	0.98	Agree
13	Guidance and counselling should be included in the school time table	3.28	0.88	Agree

14	Provision of adequate funds	3.10	0.81	Agree
15	Relevant equipments should be made available	3.10	0.84	Agree
16	Training and retraining counsellors in ICT	2.75	1.00	Agree
17	Government should support and implement guidance and counselling policies	3.43	0.59	Agree
18	Sending counsellors for training in order to meet up with the current peace and knowledge in counselling	3.30	0.77	Agree
19	Awareness campaign on the importance of counselling through media, etc.	3.41	0.80	Agree
20	Establishment of counselling service in every primary school	3.21	0.90	Agree

Table 2 indicates that all items recorded for the way-forward for guidance and counselling services in elementary schools were accepted by the respondents. These items had a mean score of 2.50 and above.

Discussion

The observation in research question one revealed that head-teachers do not acknowledge guidance and counselling services in primary schools, there is not enough time for counselling services, dual-functions struggle, as well as lack of government policies and implementation of guidance and counselling services among other things constitute some of the issues confronting guidance and counselling services/activities in elementary schools. The discoveries is in accordance with those of Akinade (2012), Anagbogu and Nwokolo (2010), Egbo (2012) and Watanable and Herr (2006) who in their respective studies revealed that, guidance and counselling services for the young ones in primary schools are yet to be implemented in Nigeria.

Furthermore, the findings on research question two indicated the need for administrators to identify with counsellors in primary schools, counsellors to perform their duties alone, guidance and counselling to be included in the school time table, provision of adequate fund and training and retraining of counsellors in ICT among other things as the possible way forward for guidance and counselling services in elementary schools. The finding is in consonance with those of Akinade (2009), Anagbogu, Nwokolo, Anyamene, Anyachebelu, and Umezulike (2013), Tambawal (2007) and Okere (2005) who admitted in their respective studies that, adequate funding, implementation of government policies on guidance counselling services in primary schools, training and retraining of counsellors on computer/media usage, establishment of counselling units within and outside the school setting are effective ways of pushing counselling services forward.

Conclusion

To continue learning and effectively adjust oneself to a wide range of tasks is indeed a strong reason for individuals to become familiar with their entire lifetime. ESD should concentrate on developing the needed skills and competencies in young ones for life-long learning and problem solving in society. Our young ones at the primary school level are often exposed to experiences such as lateness to classes, absenteeism, cheating, fighting, sexual harassment, examination malpractices and poor study habits to mention but a few. Thus, if counselling is

appropriately connected to stem these issues at the developmental or elementary stage, our young ones will encounter less modification issues or challenges in adulthood. These therefore serve as the rational to promote effective guidance and counselling practices at the primary school level for sustainability development. Therefore, all stakeholders including educational policy makers, head-teachers and classroom teachers in Nigeria, should encourage and seek to establish essential counselling programs at the elementary school level.

Recommendations

Based on the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The institutions in-charge of primary school education must ensure that all primary schools under their care have guidance counsellors posted to them.
2. Head-teachers/school administrators and classroom-teachers should strive to recognize and incorporate guidance and counselling services to the school programmes.
3. Government should organize and sponsor workshops and conferences for guidance-counsellors in primary schools to upgrade their professional skills/competencies.
4. The stakeholders must ensure Counselling is regarded as a full-time professional activity in schools. This will enable counsellors to perform their duties more effectively.
5. Government should ensure that all relevant materials such as ICT/computer and media support are made available for effective guidance and counselling services in primary schools.

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