

CURRICULUM AND COUNSELING TRENDS: CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS IN THE TERTIARY LEVEL OF EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

OBILO, IJEOMA PRINCESS Ph.D

obiloprincess@gmail.com

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

&

OPARAH, CHIJOKE ZITA Ph.D

Zitaoparah223@gmail.com

Department of Psychology (Guidance & Counseling)

&

BEST-NJOKU, MARIS MARIA Ph.D

marisbest2013@gmail.com

Department of Psychology (Guidance & Counseling)

Faculty of General Education

AlvanIkoku University of Education, Owerri, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

This study examined curriculum and counselling trends: challenges and solutions in the tertiary level of education in Nigeria. The study employed the descriptive survey research design. The population for the study was 28, 470 students, (Alvan Ikoku University of Education= 4114 student, Imo State University 6801, FUTO 7641, Fed Poly Nekede 7203, Imo State Polytechnic Umuagwo 2711 students). Purposive sampling was used to select 69 students from each school, thus 69 students served as sample size for the study. Three research questions guided the study. Data collected was a 31- item structured researcher developed questionnaire having a reliability coefficient of 0.79 which was used for the study. Findings showed that in spite of the tremendous list of curriculum and counseling trends, a lot of challenges abound to include non-use of professionals/ expert teachers, non-employment of ICT in everyday teaching among others. Based on the findings, it was recommended that expert/professional teachers should be employed by ministry of education; curriculum and counseling experts should employ increased use of ICT in their day to day teaching to extend services to non-school settings among others.

Keywords: curriculum, counseling, trends, challenges, solutions, tertiary level, Education.

INTRODUCTION

Curriculum at any level of education gears towards the achievement of predetermined goals of that particular level. For this reason, curriculum contents are embedded in purposeful, well-structured and clear intended learning experiences that are well designed, well directed and well supervised by agencies meant for education. Curriculum has been defined by Ughamadu (2009) as quoting Tanner and Tanner (1980) as the reconstruction of knowledge and experience systematically developed under the auspices of the school to enable the learner increase his/her control of knowledge and experience. This definition of curriculum by tanner and tanner as quoted by Ughamadu with the ingredient of “reconstruction” is in tandem with the issue of trends in this topic. Trends in this title is seen as innovation in the right direction.

Trends are fashion styles. Trend is also an inclination in a particular direction, a general direction in which something is developing or changing, something that is popular at a certain point in time, Obilo(2019). These trends in curriculum and counseling will be surveyed through tertiary education level. Tertiary education is the education given after secondary education in universities, colleges of education, polytechnics, monotechnics including those institutions offering correspondence courses.

The goals of tertiary education shall be to:-

- (a) Contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training;
- (b) Develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society;
- (c) Develop the intellectual capability of the individual to understand and appreciate their local and external environment;
- (d) Acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society;
- (e) Promote and encourage scholarship and community service;
- (f) Forge and cement national and international understanding and interaction.

Tertiary education level must embrace these curriculum and counselling trends as highlighted by Nitin (2023); the authour stated that the future of curriculum lies on the following trends and predictions, thus:-

1. Gamification.
 2. Online learning
 3. Project based learning
 4. Hybrid/ blended learning
 5. Disability accessible learning.
 6. Micro learning
 7. Collaborative learning.
- Others according to Obilo (2017) include; -
8. Constructivism
 9. Information and Communication Technology (ICT)
 10. Inclusive education
 11. Personalized learning
 12. Global education
 13. Team teaching
 14. Social emotional learning.

From these trends listed above, curriculum trends are now synonymous with the 21st century learning that requires consideration of those elements that comprise a shift from the old method to the new model of learning which helps in creating learners who take intellectual risks and have positive learning attitudes; The collaborative project-based curriculum used in learning, develops the higher thinking skills such as critical thinking , divergent thinking and logical reasoning ; effective interpersonal communication skills and knowledge of technology that learners will need in the 21st century workplace, UNESCO (2013).

1. **Gamification Learning:-** This makes education engaging. It increases students interests and encourages them to participate actively in learning activities, motivates , results in an overall learning process and interactive classroom environment .

2. **Collaborative Learning:-** This revolves around the concept of students teaming up in small group to work to achieve a goal, helps in discussion and voice their points of view. It builds interpersonal skills which are pre-requisite for success.
3. **Personalized Learning/Individualized learning:** - Tailors learning courses in a way that meets the need of every student.
4. **Blended Mode of Learning/ Hybrid Learning:-** This brings together the good features of classroom learning and online learning. It provides students with the optional of virtually attending classes from their homes or physically attending classes in school. It enhances learners' learning experiences.
5. **Mobile-First Learning:-** This refers to accessing the course content on mobile-based devices. It allows students to access the educational resources at a time and place of their convenience. It ensures learning continues to take place out of the boundaries of the classrooms.
6. **Micro-learning:-** This is also as bite-sized learning, it is an approach to learning where complex topics are divided into small digestible chunks. It prevents burnout by reducing cognitive overload. It also improves studies and leads to better retention.
7. **Disability accessible learning:-** this involves students with speech defects, deafness, photosensitivity. Many educational institutions have provided websites that are WCAG-compliant, meaning provision of screen-friendly and easy-to-understand content that includes the learning needs of different-disabled student.
8. **Social -Educational learning:** The likelihood of children suffering from stress, anxiety, depression and other mental health disorder increased drastically due to state of economy and so the need to include social-emotional learning (SEL) in education content of curriculum. It helps develop self-awareness, control, management and interpersonal skills. It assists students in becoming mentally and emotionally strong.
9. **Project-based learning** known as learning by doing, helps students build their skills.
10. **Constructivism:-** This is a theory of knowledge and meaning from the interaction between their experience and their ideas. Students are helped to find knowledge themselves, Obilo, (2017).

There are many definitions of counseling depending on the professional's theoretical orientation, but in all, counseling is a relationship between a concerned person (professional counselor) and a person with a need (client or counselee), as posited by Salawu and Abdulkadir (2011), counseling is a learning orientation process, which occurs usually in an interactive relationship with the aim of helping a person learn more about himself and to use such understanding to enable the person to become an effective member of society. Akinade (2012) sees counseling as a number of procedures used in assisting an individual in solving problems which arise in various aspects of his life or in assisting him to maximize his overall personal development in that he could be more effective, satisfied and useful in the society in which he lives. The World Health Organization (WHO 2001) defines counseling as a process of dialogue and mutual interaction aimed at facilitating, problem solving, motivating, and or decision-making.

As a learning process, clients are helped to know more about themselves, relationship with others and avenues to enhance personal development. All problems concerning the academic, career and personal – social aspects of life of a client are taken care of through appropriate techniques and skills. With a critical look at the above definitions., one can see the need for

counseling at the tertiary level of education in Nigeria, Nigerian youth at the tertiary level of education need to be exposed to more counseling (if incorporated in their curriculum) to be able to better understand themselves, set better goals for the future, achieve these goals, acquire better life-long skills, take better decisions and make better choices. Just as reiterated by Idoko (2023) in Nigeria, counseling plays a crucial role as it helps individuals overcome mental and emotional challenges. It provides guidance support and empowers people to make informed decisions. No wonder it was entrenched in the National Policy on Education stating “In view of the apparent ignorance of many young people about career prospects, and in view of the personality instability among school children, government shall continue to make provisions for the training of teachers in guidance and counseling, to establish and equip counseling clinics, career resource centres and information centers. Proprietors of schools should provide adequate number of counsellors for their institutions (NTE, 2014). The researchers believe that with a good curriculum and well packaged counseling programs, our students at the tertiary level will turn out better citizens when exposed to such.

Since inception in 1953, counseling has evolved and gone through many phases to the extent that it has become a house-hold name to reckon with. Currently according to Arcar and Ingersoi (2021) making references to Gelso, 2011, Neukrog,2017, scvofield, 2015 and Silverman, 2013, counseling trends for improved services are tilting towards new trend globally such as:

- Increased use of technology
- Integration of knowledge of brain science or psychotherapy –Trauma informed practice –importance of adapting counseling for diverse population –specialization – Expanding scope of practice –Managing Care –Cultural diversity – Increase in aging population and counseling services for them and their care givers.
- Internationalization of the counseling profession.
- Influence of the social media and effect on the mental health of client population.

But in Nigeria, the trends according to Idoko (2023) includes:

- Professionalization of counseling
- Increase in the number of counseling centers and practitioners
- Availability and accessibility of counseling services.
- Emphasis on multicultural and diversity competences in counselors inclusively.
- Employment of professional counselors at the primary level of education.
- Use of technology in counseling
- Extension of counseling services to non-school settings

All these will widen the scope of counseling activities in Nigeria for the better benefits of all but particularly students in tertiary level of education.

Considering the enormity of these services/trends and the teeming population of Nigerian students at the tertiary level of education, numerous challenges abound that need to be addressed for effectiveness.

These challenges include:- stigma associated with seeking for counseling.

- Negative attitudes towards counseling by principals, teachers even parents.
- Lack of awareness about the benefits of counseling.
- Limited resources and funding for high quality counseling services.

- Shortage of trained and qualified counselors Idoko (2013)
- High inclusive rate of students to counselors.
- Teacher rivalry.

However, these challenges can be surmounted with the following measures posited by Iwuagwu et al (2022):

- Employment of more qualified counselors.
- Proper funding of counseling activities.
- Provision of enough counseling facilities.
- Provision of psychological batteries.
- Provision of enough time for group and individual counseling during official school hours – sponsorship of counselors to conferences and workshops.

As numerous and beneficial these trends are a lot of challenges abound. These challenges include: 1. Shortage of specialized teachers to man these trends;

2. Unconducive learning environments;
3. Poor and dilapidated infrastructural facilities and equipment.
4. Inadequate funds Obilo, (2017) and Obilo (2019)

In a study done by Nitin (2023) on ten trends that will shape the future of curriculum development. It was revealed that blended mode of learning, personalized learning, gamification, collaborative learning among others were trends to shape future of curriculum development but a lot of problems abound to include non-use of these trends due to unspecialized teachers to handle the trends, inadequate time allotted in the timetable, and teacher rivalry though these can be solved by reversing these issues.

In similar study done by UNESCO (2013) on teachers for 21st Century global citizenship. The study showed that today's learners are no longer confined to the classroom. Rather, the classroom has become borderless as many learners can today access much information from the internet through their cell phones and computers, social networking with friends and sites. UNESCO added that numerous curriculum trends abound to include pupil-centered learning, collaborative learning, learning no longer passive but active learning should have context; learning extends beyond the classroom.

UNESCO added that many challenges militate against the trends such as non-experts to teach the trends; unprepared classrooms/environments, dilapidated infrastructures and the economy of the nations. It went on to add that training of teachers, provision of infrastructures and equipment, together with better economy shall solve this problems.

Again, in a study done by Kemal (2023) the study showed that the following are curriculum trends:- personalized learning, project-based learning, lifelong skills. Equity and inclusion skills, flexible learning spaces, digital citizenship, data driven decision making, social emotional, that is STEAM education. The study outlined a lot of challenges to the effective implementation of the trends to include unqualified teaching fund, lack of infrastructure. The study added that putting all these lacks in place will improve the system.

Statement of the Problem

Curriculum cum counseling are supposed to help learners do better in their academics bearing in mind their trends in today's educational activities yet it's as if these trends are not been implemented. This calls for need to look into these trends, their challenges and solutions in the tertiary level of education in Nigeria.

The Nigerian educational system is designed in such a way that the curriculum content of the tertiary level of education will at the end bring out an all-round developed person, while the counseling programs were introduced to help students develop competencies needed to overcome academic, career and personal social challenges.

Observations have shown that even with an improved curriculum, tertiary level students are finding it difficult to access proper counseling activities in order to meet up with societal expectations for which they were trained. Students graduate with cases of maladjustment, wrong behaviors, no skills, destructive behaviors/violence, inability to make good choices, take appropriate decisions and adjust favourably in their environment. These have cast doubts on the effectiveness of our curriculum content and counseling services offered at the tertiary level of education. This informed the researchers guess that this could be as a result of unknown challenges that calls for identification and solutions. Hence the researchers were prompted to x-ray the curriculum and counseling trends: challenges and solutions in tertiary level of education in Nigeria to find out better ways of ensuring a functional tertiary level of education in Nigeria.

Purpose of the study

The general purpose of the study is to look into curriculum and counseling trends: challenges and solutions in tertiary level of education in Nigeria.

Specifically, the study sets out to:

1. Find out curriculum and counseling trends in tertiary level of education in Nigeria.
2. Ascertain the challenges of curriculum and counselling trends in the tertiary level of education in Nigeria
3. Determine the solutions to challenges of curriculum and counseling trends in tertiary level of education in Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are curriculum and counseling trends in the tertiary level of education in Nigeria?
2. What are the challenges of curriculum and counseling trends in the tertiary level of education in Nigeria?
3. What are the solutions to challenges of curriculum and counseling trends in the tertiary level of education in Nigeria?

Methods

The descriptive survey design was adopt to elicit information from students in public tertiary level of education in Imo State of Nigeria. The public tertiary level of education in Imo State are:-AlvanIkoku University of Education = 4114 students, Imo State University =6801

students, Federal University of technology = 7641 students, Federal Polytechnic Nekede = 7203 students and IMO State Polytechnic, Umuagwo = 2711 students.

All given a population of 28,470 students. Purposive sample was used to select 69 students from each school, this 69 students served as the sample size. Instrument employed for data collection was a 31-item structured questionnaire of four-point likert type of Strongly Agree (SA) 4 points, Agreed (A) 3 points, Disagreed (D) 2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD) 1 point, development by the researchers. The questionnaire consisted of two sections.

Section A, Provided background information while B dealt with questionnaire items as relates to the respective research questions. The instrument was validated by three experts in Curriculum Studies, Guidance and Counseling and Measurement and Evaluation, and their inputs were effected during the final draft. Instrument for data collection were further subjected to a test-retest reliability using 51 students outside the target population. Data generate were subjected to Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and a Coefficient of 0.79 was realized and this was adjudged. The instrument was administered on 345 students by the researcher with a 100% return of all questionnaires administered due to on-the-spot administration, but three were wrongly filled, therefore rejected, leaving 342 for the analysis. Mean was used to analyze the data generated with mean score of 2.5 and above regarded as being agreed or accepted, while items that scored below 2.5 are regarded as being disagreed or rejected.

Results

Table 1: The following are curriculum and counseling trends in the tertiary level of education in Imo State.

S/N	ITEMS	N	MEAN	DECISION
1	Blended mode of learning	342	3.8	Accepted
2	professionalisation of counseling	342	3.9	Accepted
3	Collaborative learning	342	2.7	Accepted
4	Availability of counseling services	342	3.4	Accepted
5	Personalized learning	342	3.7	Accepted
6	Gamification learning	342	3.5	Accepted
7	Use of ICT in counseling services	342	3.6	Accepted
8	Lifelong learning	342	2.7	Accepted
9	Multicultural & diversity in counseling	342	3.4	Accepted
10	Extension of counseling services to non-school settings	342	3.9	Accepted

Research question one, table 1, which sought to identify curriculum and counseling trends in tertiary level of education in Imo State, the results indicated that all the items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 were accepted by the respondents with their mean scores of 3.8, 3.9, 2.7, 3.4, 3.7, 3.5, 3.6, 2.7, 3.4 and 3.9

Table 2: The following are the challenges of curriculum and counseling trends in tertiary level of education in Imo State, Nigeria

S/N	ITEMS	N	MEAN	DECISION
11	Stigma associated with seeking for counseling	342	3.6	Accepted
12	Unconducive environment for learning	342	3.8	Accepted
13	Negative attitude towards counseling	342	3.6	Accepted
14	Lack of awareness on benefits of counseling	342	3.4	Accepted
15	Dilapidated infrastructures/equipment	342	3.7	Accepted
16	Limited resources	342	3.6	Accepted
17	Lack of funds	342	3.8	Accepted
18	Unspecialized teachers	342	3.6	Accepted
19	Inadequate time allotted for teaching	342	3.6	Accepted
20	Teacher rivalry	342	2.1	Rejected
21	Inactive learning	342	3.4	Accepted

In research question two, table 2, that sought to find out the challenges of curriculum and counseling trends in tertiary level of education in the Imo Sate, it was revealed that out of 11 items on the table 10 items were accepted with only one rejected. This reveals that respondents agree that all are the challenges.

Table 3: List below are the solutions to challenges of curriculum and counseling trends in tertiary level of education in Imo State, Nigeria

S/N	ITEMS	N	MEAN	DECISION
22	Employment of experts in teaching field	342	3.7	Accepted
23	Provision of adequate/ proper infrastructures	342	3.4	Accepted
24	Proper funding	342	3.6	Accepted
25	Adequate time allocation	342	3.9	Accepted
26	In-service training of teachers	342	3.5	Accepted
27	Making learning active	342	3.8	Accepted
28	Collaboration among teachers	342	2.7	Accepted
29	Awareness on the need for counseling	342	3.9	Accepted
30	Inclusive education emphasized	342	3.6	Accepted
31	Social emotional learning emphasized	342	3.5	Accepted

In research question three, table 3, that sought solutions to the challenges of curriculum and counseling trends in tertiary level of education in Imo State, the results showed that all items 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28,29, 30 and 31 with their mean scores of 3.7, 3.4, 3.6, 3.9, 3.5,3.8, 2.7,

3.9, 3.6 and 3.5 respectively are all above the reference mean of 2.5. The indication is that all the items are solutions to the challenges of curriculum and counseling trends in tertiary level of education in Imo State.

Discussion

For research question one, table 1, analysis presented indicated that all the items on the table are curriculum and counseling trends in tertiary level of education in Imo State. This is evidenced in the mean scores of all the items been above the reference mean score of 2.5 and for that accepted. The outcome of this finding is supporting the findings of Nitin (2023), UNESCO (2013) and Kemal (2023). The finding is also in agreement with the findings of Idoko (2023), Arcars and Flagaso(2021). These scholars found out that blended mode of learning, increased use of ICT in classroom teaching and learning, collaboration among teachers and learners are trends in curriculum and counseling trends.

For research question two, table 2, that found out the challenges of curriculum and counseling trends in tertiary level of education in Imo State, data presented on the table revealed that items 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 21 with their mean scores of 3.6, 3.8, 3.6, 3.4, 3.7, 3.6, 3.8, 3.6 and 3.4 are all above the reference mean score of 2.5, therefore were all accepted. It was only item 20 with its mean score of 2.1 that was below the reference mean score of 2.5, so rejected. The summary indicates that a lot of challenges abound. The findings of these study is in agreement with Akinade (2012), Idoko (2023), Nitin (2023), Obilo (2017), UNESCO (2013) for their findings that numerous challenges abound for curriculum and counseling trends to include: inadequate funds, poor and dilapidated infrastructures and equipment, among others.

For research question three, table 3, which sought solutions to curriculum and counseling trends in tertiary level of education in Imo State, data presented on the table showcased that items 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30 and 31 with their- mean scores of 3.7, 3.4, 3.6, 3.9, 3.5, 3.8, 2.7, 3.9, 3.6, and 3.5 respectively above the reference mean score of 2.5 and all were accepted. These show that respondents are in agreement, that all the items on the table above are solutions that will definitely cushion the effects of the challenges. The finding is in line with the findings of Iwuagwu, Akuta and Iwuagwu (2022), UNESCO (2013), Nitin (2023), Kemal (2023), that reversal of the challenges which includes provision of adequate facilities, use of professional teachers in teaching/experts, proper funding, active learning strategies, collaboration among teachers and learners among others will become solutions to the identified challenges of curriculum and counseling trends in tertiary level of education in Imo State of Nigeria.

Conclusion

From the findings of the study, it was concluded that curriculum and counseling trends are too numerous to mention but the issue is that a lot of challenges abound which militates against its employment in everyday teaching. Finally, solutions to these challenges were proffered by the researchers for effective and efficient employment of these identified curriculum and counseling trends in tertiary level of education in Imo State.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

1. Ministry of education should help to employ professional / experts in curriculum and counseling for effective and efficient services.
2. Curriculum and counseling experts should employ new trends like blended mode of learning, collaborative learning, gamification among others to make learning active instead of passive in their classrooms.
3. Curriculum and counseling experts should employ increased use of information and communication technology in their day to day teaching, to extend their services to non-school settings.
4. There should be provision of adequate and proper infrastructures /equipment.
5. There should be prompt and proper release of fund for procurement of required facilities.

REFERENCES

- Akinade , E. A. (2012). Introduction to Modern guidance and counseling. Ibadan: Brightways Publishers.
- Conchi, M. B. (2017). Issues and challenges Facing Councilors in Nigerian schools setting: A dilemma to education. World Educators Forum. Retrieved from <https://www.worldeducatorsforum.com>, 10/11/23.
- Nitin, S. (2023). Ten trends and predictions that will shape the future of curriculum development. Retrieved from <https://www.hurix.com>
- Arcar, J and Ingesoi, C. (2023). What are the trends in counseling? Retrieved on 8/11/23 at <https://pacja.org.auJ<article>>
- Federal Republic of Nigeria. (2014). The National Policy on Education (Revised 6th Ed.). Lagos: Federal Government Press.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013). National Policy on Education Lagos: NERDC.
- Idoko, N. (2023). Counselling in Nigreria: Current trends and Future. Proffesion.ng. Retived 8/11/23.
- Iwuagwu, F. O, Akuta, F.O and Iwuagwu, G.G (2022). Assessing the challenges of Guidance and counseling among primary schools, way out: Implication for functional primary education. Sapienta Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Development Studies (SGOJAHDS). 5(2). 285-294. Retrieved from <https://www.sgojahds>. 9/11/23.
- Kemal, P. (2023). Emerging trends in education models, curriculum design and schooling... Retrieved from <https://linkedon.com>.
- Obilo, P.I. (2019). Curriculum Implementation processes. Owerri: Divine Favour concepts.
- ObiloP.I. (2017). Effective teaching of government: methods, approaches and techniques, owerri: Cel-Bez Publishers.
- Ughamadu, K.A. (2006). Curriculum: concept, development and implementation. Onitsha: lincel publishers.
- UNESCO (2013). Teachers for 21st century global citizen. Retrieved from <https://www.unesco.org>
- Salawu, A. A. and Abdulkadir, R.O. (2011). Theory and Practice of Guidance and Counseling. Ilorin: Integrity Publishers.
- Swank, J. M. and Puig, A. (2003). Current trends in counseling and the future of counseling. Dallas: Spingers Publishing.
- WHO (2001). The World Health Reports: 2001: Mental Health: New Understanding , New hope, Geneva.