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Guidance & Counseling Services in Nigerian Public Primary Schools: Challenges and the Way forward

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ABSTRACT

This paper examined the problems preventing effective delivering of guidance and counseling services in Nigerian public primary schools. The paper depends on secondary data which was sorted from print and online publication. This paper identified: inadequate funding, inadequate professional guidance and counseling teachers, inadequate infrastructural facilities, poor supervision, political instability, lack of Guidance and Counseling charts, shortage of lesson period, political influence, changes in Educational Policy and lack of administrative support as the problems preventing effective delivering of guidance and counseling service in Nigerian public primary schools. To solve these problems identified in this paper, the presenters suggested the following: increase the funding, employ more professional guidance and counseling teachers, provide adequate infrastructural facilities, improve on the supervision of guidance and counseling programme, provide adequate working materials for guidance and counsellors, more lesson period should be provided for guidance and counselling programme, school administrators and teachers should support the guidance and counseling teachers and government should develop the political will to develop the guidance and counseling programme at the primary school education in Nigeria.

KEYWORDS: Basic education, Challenges, Guidance and Counseling

1. Introduction

The National Policy on Education (2013) defined primary education as the education given to children aged 6-12 years. Nnam (2005) sees primary education as the basic or introductory schooling that children received from 6 years and continuing to 11 years. The objectives of primary education are to: inculcate permanent literacy, numeracy and the ability to communicate effectively; lay a sound basis for scientific, critical and reflective thinking; promote patriotism, fairness, understanding and national unity; instill social, moral norms and values in the child; develop in the child the ability to adapt to the changing environment; and Provide opportunities for the child to develop life manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society within the limits of the child's capability (NPE, 2013).

To realize the objective of the primary school education in Nigeria, the Nigerian government shall establish educational support services in all public primary schools across the country. According to National Policy on Education (2013), educational support services facilitate the implementation of educational policy, the attainment of policy goals and the promotion of effectiveness of educational system. The goals of educational support services shall be to: develop, assess and improve educational programmes; enhance teaching and improve the competence of teachers; provide conducive environment for learning; make learning experiences more meaningful and realistic for children; make education more cost-effective; promote in-service education; enhance access to learning; develop and promote effective use of innovative materials in schools; and promote partnership with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and International Development Partners (IDPs) to access resources (NPE, 2013). To achieve these goals, the following services and facilities shall be provided:

Guidance and Counselling:

- a. Government shall continue to make provision for the training of teachers in Guidance and Counselling;
- b. Establish and equip: Counseling Clinics, Career Resources and information centres
- c. Proprietors of schools shall provide adequate number guidance counselors for their institutions (NPE, 2013).

Public primary schools in Nigerian are full of children with social problems that need the services of guidance and counseling. Adebukola (2015), observed that primary school pupils face a lot of developmental problems which hinder their intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral and vocational development. This is, because the basic stage of pupil is the first of all dimensions of development of the worth, dignity and maturity of the individuals. Most of what the individuals are facing today is as a result of what their foundation is laid upon at their preliminary stage of their life. Many primary schools are faced with indiscipline and poor performances, many people do not regard guidance and counselling as a critical issue in the development of the pupils. Based on this submission, this paper intends to discuss the problems preventing effective Guidance and Counseling services in public primary schools in Nigeria.

2. Concept of Guiding & Counselling Programme

Guidance and counselling is a service that all human beings need at one point of their life. There is no human being that has never got a problem at one point or another. Once a problem arises, one seeks solutions, suggestions or even other people's opinions about the problem. In one way or another, one seeks for guidance and counselling services (Alutu, 2005; Garner, 2000). Adebukola (2015), sees Guidance and counselling as the process of helping individuals discover and develop their educational, vocational and psychological potentialities and thereby to achieve an optional level of personal happiness and social usefulness. Ogunboyede, Dada and Oyewumi (2013), opined that, guidance comprises of the procedure and processes organized in other to achieve certain education and personal goals. Akpan

(2010), defined guidance and counselling as an educational service that seeks to provide the school child opportunity to obtain holistic educational development that prepares him/her for functional life.

John (2020), observed that Guidance and counselling programmers are expected to supplement school instructional and administrative input into students, develop proper attitude to themselves, values, interests, moral beliefs and disciplines; also helps to promote in students, good sense of awareness, ability to acquire a good knowledge of the world of work, possibility of continuing education and ability to make realistic decision and promote human effectiveness. It is also expected to help in school administration, in creating a close and long lasting relationship between heads of schools, teachers, parents, and students.

Suleiman, Olanrenwaju, & Suleiman, (2019) Cited Busari (2012) who listed the following Guidance services below:

Orientation Service: this service is provided by counsellors in schools to assist students in their adjustment efforts. The main objective is to help students, especially during the transition period. An orientation service can be interpreted to mean the assistance given to individual or individuals that will make them understand and adjust to the new environment or policy (Usman, 2020).

Appraisal Service: Involves the use of psychometric instruments to gather data on individuals to enable both the counsellor and the individuals concerned to understand themselves. Using the appropriate appraisal procedure using the test or non-test techniques, the individual can be opened-up to him. He is thus in a better position to understand his strengths and weaknesses, and consequently can make more realistic and effective choices

Information Service: This service is aimed at gathering important information concerning educational, vocational and personal-social opportunities. All students need information about the various educational and vocational opportunities available to them. They also need information on the socio-economic, moral and psychological conditions of the society.

Placement Service: Refers to assistance given to an individual to make adjustment to the next stage of life development (Olayinka, 2012). In secondary school, student's placement may mean secondary adjustment in further education or adjustment in a job after secondary education. Placement therefore refers to the next steps, either in educational pursuit or in pursuit or in vocational pursuit. Individuals need to be placed in educational or vocational field that relate to their interests, abilities and personalities.

Referral Service: This is the act of transferring an individual to another person or agency for professional assistance. There are cases that are out of a counsellor's professional competence, the only thing the counsellor can do to help a client in such condition is to refer cases to professionals who are competent to attend to them (Yusuf, 2018).

Counselling Service: Is a personalize dialogue or interview between the counsellor and counselee or client during which the client seeks expert assistance from the counsellor regarding the resolution of his problem. The Counselling service is personalized in the sense that usually, the client has a personal problem which requires privacy and confidentiality for discussion with a help expert. Such concerns may include emotional problems, family problems, sexual difficulties, marriage issues and other psychological problems (Hammed and Muraina, 2016). The Counselling service is the heart of guidance service and the most important central service of guidance.

Follow-up/Evaluation Service: This service is designed to assess the extent to which the guidance programme is meeting the needs for which it was Yusuf Suleiman, established. This service is concerned essentially with successes, failures, problems and feedbacks from those who have benefited from the programme. The ultimate goal of follow-up and evaluation is to improve the programme or make those adjustments that have been indicated by the beneficiaries of the programme as necessary. Individuals

need to understand what is required in the situation they are placed. In order to determine the effectiveness of planning and placement, there is need to find out how the individuals are developing in their own place of work, and school, how they are adjusting into their new environment. Follow-up service helps the staff to better understand and improve their curriculum and methods (Suleiman, Olanrenwaju, & Suleiman, 2019).

Segun (undated) listed that the following reasons why primary school children need counselling to include.

1. Population Mobility: there is an observable steady movement of people from one part of the country to the other. As far as migration is going one and will continue for a long time to come, therefore there is need for guidance and counseling services.
2. Emotional Illness: Lack of data has made it impossible to make any authoritative statement on childhood psychiatric disorders in Nigeria. It is possible, however, that some children may be afflicted and whatever the proportion is, they deserve attention through guidance and counselling services (Usman, 2020).
3. Broken Homes: Phenomenon of broken homes is much with us and on the increase too. Children from broken homes often have problems of a social or emotional nature that are more serious than the problems of those who suffer from lack of supervision and companionship. Therefore, an organized guidance and counselling services is needed to assist them.
4. Physical and Health Problems: It is a common sight in our schools to see physically handicapped students in the same class with others. There is also the presence of malnourished students and sick children whose problems go undetected. Children suffering from malnutrition shows signs of weakness or sleepiness in class. Sadly enough, majority of the class teachers are in no position to address their problems. Therefore, there is need for guidance services.
5. Adolescents in Schools: In most schools in Nigeria, there is the presence of adolescents, particularly in rural areas. The problems, needs and concerns of these students will definitely be different from those of the younger children often found by side with them in the same class. Guidance services are needed to assist these groups of students in the classroom.
6. Social Ills: Among the social ills that are prevalent in the society include; lack of respect for elders by the younger generation. Though Nigeria is tilting towards development, our values, norms such as respect for others should not go with development. These values may be restored if guidance and counselling becomes operational right from early stages of a child's development.

Importance of Guidance and Counselling in Primary School

Adebukola (2015), observed that some pupils come from broken homes, polygamous family, single parent and all that. Due to their background, some of them have wrong believe about life but with the help of guidance and counselling, such pupils are helped to adjust to normal way of life. There is need to hunt for gifted children in the society with a view in helping them to develop their talents fully. This can only be done through counselling strategies to mention a few:

- a. There is a need to provide special help for numerous primary school children. It is worth knowing that the Nigerian prisons, and mental health hospitals are inhabited by individuals who could have profited from guidance and help them in early life. They lead unproductive and unhappy lives because they were not properly guided from the beginning (Idowu, 1986).
- b. The ability to trust what someone is saying and to trust other people.
- c. To understand sexual education and guidance.
- d. To talk to someone when facing a problem or when do not know where to go for an answer.
- e. To understand and accept his uniqueness and liabilities.

- f. Understand the expectation of the educational environment.
- g. Understand the importance of individual effort, hardwork and persistence.
- h. Demonstrate individual initiative and a positive interest in learning.
- i. Use appropriate communication skills to ask for help when needed.
- j. Demonstrate time management and organization skills.
- k. Recognize personal strengths and weaknesses related to learning (Adebukola 2015).

2.0. Problems facing Guiding & Counseling Programme in Public Primary schools

Odu (2004), stated that the main aim of guidance and counselling is to assist the student to develop physically, mentally, emotionally, morally and educationally to cope with the learning situations within and outside the school environment. Some of the problems include inadequate funding, inadequate professional Guidance and Counseling teachers, inadequate infrastructural facilities, poor supervision, political instability, lack of Guidance and Counseling charts, shortage of lesson period, political influence, Changes in Educational Policy and lack of administrative support.

2.1. Inadequate Funding

Inadequate funding is a major problem hindering effective service delivering of Guidance and Counseling services in Nigerian public primary schools. The funding allocated for the administration of Guidance and Counseling services in Nigerian public primary schools is not adequate. Guiding and Counseling services drives it funding from the primary school annual budget which have been described by Ogunode (2020), as inadequate to successfully implement primary school programmes. Ugwuoke (2020), observed that Guidance and counselling is not well funded today, the education enterprise has become a costly venture. Enough funds are not allocated to each school to run its various services. Where funds are available, very little is earmarked for counselling purposes. It seems the various levels of government (Federal, state and Local) do not want to stretch their budgets with extra demands from emerging unit such as guidance and counselling, yet it is known that effective counselling demands adequate funding to purchase items such as psychological tests, journals and various publications, play gadgets, cardboards and various felt pens as well as money to organize activities such as Orientation, Excursions, career clubs and Career Day/week and furnishing a counsellor's office. Adebukola, (2015), observed that lack of adequate funds is one of the major factors affecting the effectiveness of guidance and counselling programme in Nigeria. Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) should enforce standard for how the office of a school counsellor should look like. As an agent of curriculum implementation, should inform the federal government of the needs of school counsellors. Counsellors in some school are not recognized as professionals because of lack of adequate facilities. Some headmaster/headmistress do not provide office accommodation for counsellors that could be considered suitable for use as counselling office where counselling could be carried out. Many counsellors are just given any available space to use as counselling office. Many are not provided with the facilities and materials required to practice effectively. There should be adequate fund allocated from the three tiers of government and school management, to carry out some programmes like career day, career weeks, vocational training and seminar for the counsellors in order to improve on their profession and perform excellently on their job.

2.2. Inadequate professional Guidance and counseling Teachers or Trained Counsellors

One of the problems facing the delivering of Guidance & Counseling in the Nigerian public primary schools is the problem of inadequate professional Guidance & Counseling teachers or trained Counsellors. Ugochuche (2013), observed that despite the fact that there are many holders of higher degrees in guidance and counselling in Nigeria today, not as many are qualified to be real counsellors because they lack the skills necessary for the practice. There is limited number of trained counsellors in Nigerian schools and the ones already trained choose to go into non-school settings (Akinade 2012).

Suleiman, Olanrenwaju, & Suleiman, (2019), observed that American Personnel and Guidance Association (APGA) recommended that there should be a ratio of 1 to 250 (counsellors-students/clients). Tucker, Hamayan, and Genesse (2006) and Umoh (2008) say the ratio, as at 1980 was 1:800. The situation could be worse. This is because the limited members of trained counsellors are moving out of school settings into non-school settings. A typical school with a population of 1,000 students is expected to have four counsellors; now such a school either has none or at best only one. This poor counsellor-student ratio does not encourage the growth of guidance counselling in such schools (Yusuf, Muraina & Jamiu 2019).

2.3. Inadequate Infrastructural Facilities

School Infrastructural facilities refer to social capital within the school environment. They include school buildings/complexes such as classrooms, tables, exam hall, chairs, auditoria, desks, staff offices, seminar/conference/board rooms, laboratories, workshops, studios, farms, gymnasias, central libraries, specialized/professional libraries, faculty libraries, departmental libraries, etc., Institute/centers' specialized facilities e.g. ICT infrastructure, special laboratories, conference facilities, etc., and Boards e.g. interactive, magnetic, screen and chalk, etc., ICT that is computer laboratories and services, network connectivity, multi-media system, public address system, slide, and video projectors, and Ergonomics furnishing in laboratories, libraries, and lecture rooms/ theaters, moot courts, and studios, etc. They went further and listed the importance of infrastructural facilities in educational institutions include: it aids effective delivery of administrative functions in schools; it makes the delivery of services fast and reliable; it enables teachers to deliver lessons fast; infrastructural facilities provide a conducive working environment for both teachers and students; infrastructural facilities enable learners to learn at ease and learn well; infrastructural facilities enable the teachers to teach well, prepare their lessons, and deliver them online (ICT). The importance of school infrastructural facilities in the realization of educational goals cannot be underestimated. School facilities aid the delivery of the teaching and learning process in the schools. It is unfortunate that many public primary schools in Nigeria do not have Guidance and Counseling offices. Suleiman, Olanrenwaju, & Suleiman, (2019) submitted that several factors such as explosion of students' population and inadequate number of classrooms, problem of space or office accommodation is common in the typical secondary school. This is particularly so in the urban centers (where counsellors may be found). This results into a situation in which there is hardly any spare room that can be released for counselling as counsellor's office. Guidance may be given anywhere but counselling needs privacy if it is to be effective (Adeyemo, 2014). One may see a counsellor interacting with a client in one corner of the staff room, under a tree or a place seemingly away from people but such areas are never distraction free. The best that occurs in schools without a counselling office is guidance or educational/vocational counselling, not socio-personal counselling.

2.4. Poor supervision

Poor supervision of Guidance and Counseling programme in public primary schools in Nigeria is another problem affecting the service delivering of Guidance and Counseling the primary schools. Supervision of Guidance and Counseling is the process of helping the Guidance and Counseling teacher to grow professionally. It is a programme designed to guild and assist the Guidance and Counseling teachers to improve their Guidance and Counseling skills and ability. Guidance and Counseling teachers needs effective supervision to improve the quality of Guidance and Counseling services in schools. It is saddened that the supervision of Guidance and Counseling programme in many public primary schools by external supervisors is poor and ineffective. Factors accounting for poor supervision of Guidance and Counseling programme in Nigerian public primary schools include; poor funding of supervision, inadequate supervisors with specialization in Guidance and Counseling programme, insecurity, lack of transportation, political instability and changes in educational policies.

2.5. Political Instability

Another problem preventing effective guidance and counseling services in Nigerian public primary schools is political instability. The political atmosphere in Nigerian states does not support effective guidance and counseling service delivering. The change in government and administration in the various states across the country is affecting effective guidance and counseling services. The instability caused due to frequent changes in government policies affect education of students. Frequent changes in school curriculum and school system by the ministries and schools also affect the overall performance educational system (Ogunode, 2020, Ani, 2007)

2.6. Lack of Guidance and Counseling Charts

Lack of Guidance and Counseling materials is another problem preventing effective Guidance and Counseling services in many public primary schools in Nigeria. Many Guidance and Counseling teachers are not provided with working materials like records books, pens, charts, ICT facilities to discharge their responsibilities. The inability of the school head to provide the Guidance and Counseling teachers with these resources is affecting the effective delivering of guidance and counseling services in public primary schools.

2.7. Lack of Counselling Period

Lack of Counselling period allocated for the implementation of Guidance and Counseling programme in Nigerian public primary schools is preventing effective Guidance and Counseling services in the primary schools. Adebukola, (2015), opined that in most of the primary schools in Nigeria, there is no specific time allocated for guidance and counselling services apart from the break during which the pupils ought to eat and relax. This time is too short for counsellors to attend to pupils, let alone for effective counselling to take place.

2.8. Political Influence

Political influence is another challenge facing the guidance and counseling programme in public primary schools in Nigeria. Adebukola, (2015) submitted political influence in country is another factor affecting guidance and counselling programme. Some State government do not believe the need of counsellors in schools, due to lack of understanding of the duty of counsellor in schools. The educational planner should have a standard across the country that will be stronger than the political influence of each state. The appointment of educational leader should not be based on political appointment, because most of the people be appointed as commissioner of education and minister of education are not educationist which may have no idea of what education of a nation or state should look like.

2.9. Changes in Educational Policy

Change in educational policies is another problem affecting the development of guidance and counseling in Nigerian public primary schools in Nigeria. Nigerian government is known for constantly changing educational policies due to changes in government or political instability. Noun (2007) attests to this submission by observing that policies instability has to do with a frequent change in educational policy without adequate knowledge of the supervisors which often leads to confusion or uncertainty. The government failed to carry supervisors along when policies affecting education are to be changed/amended For example, change of school calendar, abolition and reestablishment of bodies like NPEC, abolition and re-introduction of private universities etc, Adebukola (2015), observed that changes in educational policy is another factor that affects the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services in primary schools. Most of the aims of so-called new advancement in education would not have been achieved before another set of idea comes up. There should be a stable educational policy and it should be uniform across the country. Each idea should be attained before introducing another one.

2.10. Lack of Administrative Support

Many Guidance and Counsellors teachers do not have maximum support of both the school administrators and teachers and this is affecting the services of guidance and counseling in many public primary schools in Nigeria. Odediran (2014), opined that counsellors face resistance, which might be stiff and persistent from principals and colleagues. Suleiman, Olanrenwaju, & Suleiman, (2019), submitted that it has been observed by many guidance counsellors that people often experience resistance from institutional heads, influential and significant members of staff of their establishments. Such officers often act in ways, which prevent the spread of counselling. Most times, counsellors tend to be viewed with suspicion by them. Some institutional heads might be apprehensive that the “new comer” counsellor does not erode their prestige or popularity and power among students, parents and members of the public (Olayinka, 2012). Resistance of institutional heads may be reflected in their lukewarm, poor or reluctant attitude in supporting the programme or refusal to formally introduce the counsellor to other members of school staff.

3. Way Forward

To address these problems discussed in this paper, the presenters suggested the following: increase the funding, employ more professional counsellors, provide adequate infrastructural facilities, improve on the supervision of guidance and counseling programme, provide adequate working materials for guidance and counsellors, more counselling period should be provided for guidance and counselling programme, school administrators and teachers should support the guidance and counseling teachers and government should develop the political will to develop the guidance and counseling programme at the primary school education in Nigeria.

1. The government should increase the funding of education and more allocation should be given for the administration of guidance and counseling programme at the primary school level.
2. The government should employ more professional guidance and counseling teachers and deploy to the public primary schools to improve the service delivering of the guidance and counseling in primary schools across Nigeria.
3. The government should ensure offices used as guidance and counseling rooms should be well furnish and all guidance and counseling resources are provided to motivate the students come for guidance and counseling services.
4. The government should improve on the supervision of guidance and counseling programme in the primary schools. This will help to improve the quality of guidance and counseling services in the public primary across the country by employing more guidance and counseling supervisors and providing adequate funding for guidance and counseling supervision.
5. The government and school administrators should provide the working materials guidance and counseling teachers needs to carry out her/his responsibilities in the schools. Materials like record books, ICT facilities, pens etc
6. The school administrators should provide more lesson period for guidance and counseling teachers to used and discuss with the students. This will help to improve the services delivering of guidance and counseling in primary schools
7. The school administrators and teachers should support the guidance and counseling teachers. This will help him or her discharge his/her responsibility effectively and efficiently.
8. The government should develop the political will to develop the guidance and counseling programme of primary schools by making policies to improve the quality guidance and counseling services at schools.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this presentation discussed the problems facing delivering of guidance and counseling services in public primary schools in Nigeria. The presentation identified: inadequate funding, inadequate professional Guidance and Counseling teachers, inadequate infrastructural facilities, poor supervision, political instability, lack of Guidance and Counseling charts, shortage of lesson period, political influence, Changes in Educational Policy and lack of administrative support as the problems preventing effective delivering of guidance and counseling service in Nigerian public primary schools. To address these problems discussed in this paper, the presenters suggested the following: increase the funding, employ more professional guidance and counseling teachers, provide adequate infrastructural facilities, improve on the supervision of guidance and counseling programme, provide adequate working materials for guidance and counsellors, more lesson period should be provided for guidance and counselling programme, school administrators and teachers should support the guidance and counseling teachers and government should develop the political will to develop the guidance and counseling programme at the primary school education in Nigeria.

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