

*Eliminating the Educational Structural Defects Constraining Effective Guidance and Counselling Services Delivery in Secondary Schools in Edo State, Nigeria*

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to determine the educational structural defects constraining the effective guidance and counselling services delivery in secondary schools in Edo State of Nigeria.

In the conduct of this study, four research questions were generated to guide the study as follows:

- (i) Is there an enabling environment, working materials and tools designed for guidance and counselling services?
- (ii) Are professional counsellors assigned non-counselling roles in the schools represented?
- (iii) Is the School curriculum and instructional programme planned to include counselling periods in the school time table and outside of the school time table?
- (iv) What is the school counsellors' rating of statutory provision of funds for guidance and counselling programmes?.

The sample for this study consisted of 35 school counsellors, who were purposively selected from Secondary Schools in three senatorial districts of Edo State in Nigeria. A survey research instrument, containing 15 relevant items to the research questions, which were properly validated and tested for reliability were used to collect the data of the study.

A reliability co-efficient of 0.79 was obtained using test-retest method. The findings of the study indicated no adequate provision of enabling environment and working materials for counselling services. Furthermore, counsellors are predominantly assigned non-counselling duties, school curriculum and instructional programs do not include counseling sessions in the school timetable, and statutory funds are not provided to facilitate the services.

Based on these findings, some recommendations were made as contained in the study to improve counselling services in Edo State Secondary Schools in Nigeria.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Since the period of political independence in Nigeria, in 1960, Nigerian education has been recognized as a key factor of nation building and development. It is in the light of this fact that the Federal Government of Nigeria, has continuously enabled educational policies to provide systematic guidelines for the growth and development of education in Nigeria. The 1977 educational policy became the first indigenously crafted policy instrument in Nigeria education. As stated in this policy, guidance and counselling is expected to assist many young people in making career choices and also assist school children with personality problems to overcome their challenges. Subsequent editions have emerged in quest of quality standards of school learning and practices (see 1981, 1998, 2004 and 2013 editions).

In all of these documents, guidance and counselling services remain a factor highly recognized for its important role in the achievement of the successful education of school children. It is also to be noted that whereas guidance and counselling services sector is pigeon holed as a key element in Nigerian educational policies, there is unfortunately a huge gap between policy prescriptions and practices, particularly at the primary and secondary school levels of education in Nigeria.

The school curriculum is notoriously saturated with instructional activities aimed at preparing the learners for their examinations. In addition, Oramah (2014) opined that school counselling in Nigeria, in recent times, appears to have been immersed in controversy regarding the unequivocal roles of school counsellors within the school environment.

Guidance and counselling suffers severe neglect inspite of policy provision. The burden of this paper is to undertake a critical analysis of visibly identifiable structural defects through an empirical investigation of structural defects, which obstruct guidance and counselling services in Nigerian Schools and which as a result obstruct its positive contributions to the holistic success of Nigerian Education.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

In Nigeria, it is observed that there are many challenges militating against effective guidance and counselling services delivery in schools, inspite of the recognition of its relevance in the National policy on Education in 1977 and the subsequent editions of 1981, 2004 and 2013. These constraining challenges of counsellors in the Nigerian school system as suspected by Mammam (2002), Denga (2004) Bukoye (2012) and Oramah (2014) include issues as inadequate funds for the service delivery efforts of schools counsellors, provision of an enabling environment and work tools for counsellors, schedule of counselling session on the school time table and the assignment of non-counselling duties to school counsellors by school principals. There is a further need for empirical verification of the foregoing factors as a means of ensuring that concrete efforts towards improvement of counselling services in schools is based on empirical evidence. This would be the most reliable way of unveiling the educational structural defects of counselling services in Nigerian Schools.

## **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

This study was designed to examine the educational structural defects militating against effective guidance and counselling services delivery in Secondary Schools in Edo State of Nigeria.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following research questions guided the study.

1. Is there an enabling environment and adequate working materials and tools for school counsellors to effectively discharge their professional roles in Secondary Schools in Edo State of Nigeria?
2. Are professional counsellors assigned non-counselling roles in Secondary Schools in Edo State of Nigeria?
3. Is the school curriculum and instructional programme planned to include counselling session in the school time-table and outside of the school time-table?
4. What is school counsellors' rating of statutory provision of fund for guidance and counselling programmes?

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

This study adopted the expo-factor research design. As a descriptive and survey study, the expo-factor research design is assessed as adequate in conducting the study, as it enables the establishment of the data concerning the subject matter under investigation as they exist, without any manipulation of the subjects.

### **INSTRUMENT FOR DATA COLLECTION**

The instruments for data collection was a structural questionnaire. It consists of fifteen items designed to elicit responses from school guidance counsellors in schools in the three senatorial districts in Edo State of Nigeria. The instrument was validated by two experts in the field of guidance and counselling. Their inputs were applied to prepare the final draft. A reliability co-efficient of 0.79 was obtained using the test-retest method.

### **SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE**

Purposive sampling procedure was used in selecting thirty one schools. Only schools with professional counsellors were used. Four schools had more than one counsellor. Both counsellors in such schools were used for the study, bringing the total of subjects, who participated in the study to thirty-five professional school counsellors.

### **TECHNIQUE OF DATA COLLECTION**

A total of thirty-five questionnaire were personally administered to the respondents by the researcher to ensure high response rate. The completed questionnaire were collected on the spot and 100% return rate was achieved.

## **TECHNIQUE OF DATA ANALYSIS**

The data collected were analyzed using frequency counts and percentage of responses in the dual categories by the respondents.

## **PRESENTATION OF RESULTS**

### **RESEARCH QUESTION 1**

Is there an enabling environment and adequate working materials and tools for school counsellors to effectively discharge their professional roles in Secondary Schools in Edo State of Nigeria?

The data for this research question are presented in tables 1a and 1b attached in Appendix 1 of this paper. From table 1a, it is observed that 65.71% of school counsellors are not provided an enabling environment to perform their counselling duties in schools. 71.43% of school counsellors disagreed that they are provided with comfortable office table and chair, while 94.29% of respondents indicated that students are not provided with desks and chairs for counselling session.

The data presented in Table 1b showed that 28.57%, and 22.86% of respondents agreed that they are provided with counselling books and stationeries respectively while 71.43% and 77.14% of respondents disagreed. The table also showed that 100% of respondents disagreed in the area of provision of computer/internet facilities.

### **RESEARCH QUESTION 2**

Are professional counsellors assigned non-counselling roles in school?

The data for this research question are presented in table 2 below attached in Appendix 1 of this paper. Table 2, showed 68.57%, 62.86% and 80% of respondents agreeing that they are assigned to teach, register new students and perform the role of a disciplinarian respectively while 31.43%, 37.14% and 20% disagreed on the performance of these roles.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS 3**

Is the school curriculum and instructional programme planned to include counselling session in the school time-table and outside of the school time-table?.

The data for this research question are presented in table 3 below attached to Appendix 1 of this paper. The data in Table 3 showed that 34.29% of respondents agreed that they have counselling session on their school time-table as against 65.71% of respondents, who disagreed. The table also showed 85.71% and 91.43% of respondents disagreeing on the extension of counselling services beyond school hours and to non-school settings respectively as against 14.29% and 8.57% agreeing on these issues.

## **RESEARCH QUESTION 4**

What is school counsellor's rating of provision of funds for guidance and counselling programmes?

The data for this research questions are presented in table 4 attached to Appendix 1. From the data presented in Table 4, it is observed that 91.43%, 94.29% and 94.29% of respondents disagreed on the provision of fund for orientation of new students, counsellors' attendance at seminars/workshops and organizing career day and excursion respectively as against 8.57%, 5.71% and 5.71% of respondents who disagreed on these issues.

## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The results presented in Table 1 showed that regardless of the recognition of the relevance of guidance and counselling in Secondary Schools as stressed in the National Policy on Education (1977) and the subsequent editions of 1981, 1998, 2004 and 2013, many school counsellors are not satisfactorily provided with the required enabling environment, working materials and tools to effectively discharge their professional duties as indicated by 65.71% and 77.14% of respondents. The data are in line with other scholars, who have the popularly held views concerning the neglect of the needs of school counsellors. This means that there is still much to be done in terms of meeting the needs of school counsellors. This should be an issue of great concern to Government and all stakeholders. The future of counsellors in the schools and the professional services incumbent upon them, remain bright if adequate enabling environment and work tools are provided for the sake of improving the quality of education of Nigerian children.

The finding of the second research question on the issue of performance of non-counselling services by school Counsellors indicated that 68.57% and 62.86% of school Counsellors are predominantly deployed to teach and perform clerical duties respectively. While 80% of school Counsellors in Edo State, Nigeria, are assigned to perform the role of a disciplinarian. The finding is in consonance with the finding of Ojeme (2010) and Bukoye (2012) in their studies. This report also aligns with the opinion of Adeyemo, Daodu and Elegbede (2012), Egbochuku (2008) and Oramah (2014) that school Counsellors are assigned teaching and clerical duties. It is observed that many school principals believed that appropriate task for professional Counsellors include many roles and functions not recommended by Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON), many of which are clerical task. This is, however, contrary to the professional expectation of school counsellors. Using school Counsellors to teach and perform clerical duties such as registration and scheduling of all new students and the role of a disciplinarian, could be a distraction from the effective conduct of professional Counselling roles. The relentless deployment of counsellors to perform clerical duties adds more responsibilities to the already overloaded counsellor's professional schedule. The performance of non-counselling functions in addition to core professional roles may be over burdening of the Counsellors in the schools. If non-counselling activities were eliminated or redirected to other staff, Counsellors would have more time for student Counselling, which would lead to greater job satisfaction and student productivity.

In table 3, the study revealed that many schools do not have Counselling session on their school time-table and Counselling services are not usually extended beyond instructional hours. This amount to a very constricted time to interact with students. This finding agrees with the finding of Bukoye (2012), from her research on non-inclusion of Counselling session in school time-table that 66.67% of the participating Counsellors indicated non-inclusion of Counselling session in school time-table. This implies that many school administrators do not recognize the need for Counselling sessions in schools. Perhaps they believed that both school administrators and teachers could do the work of school Counsellors. Obviously this is not good for the school Counselling profession, Counsellors and ultimately students in schools. The study also found out that Counselling Services are not extended to non-educational settings. This finding agrees with the views of Tor-Anyim (2014), Mulak (2014) and Ojeme and Iyamu (2014) that Counselling Services are not extended beyond school confinement to non-educational settings. This is not surprising because the general perception of the Guidance Counsellors in terms of their roles mostly focused on the educational system. This is a big challenge to the Counselling Association of Nigeria. Just as in educational institutions, where Guidance and Counselling fulfils the enabling role of enhancing teaching and learning effectiveness, it is conceivable that Guidance and Counselling in its occupational and vocational concerns, could also facilitate successful implementation and conduct of the programme of non-school settings, to maximize their goal attainment. This implies that the basic principles of Guidance and Counselling could be applied in other social institutions.

The result of the fourth research question showed that funds for the implementation of Guidance and Counselling programmes are grossly inadequate. 91.43% of Counsellors disagreed that statutory fund was provided for orientation programme. While 94.29% disagreed that fund was made available for Counsellors to attend seminars and workshops. The study also showed that the same 94.29% of respondents disagreed that fund was provided for the planning of career day and excursion. The finding aligns with the finding of Abanihe and Adeniyi (2011), who reported that 83.7% of Counsellors studied indicated that fund was not allocated to Guidance and Counselling programme. The finding of the study of Bukoye (2012) is also in consonance with the result of this study. The study which revealed that 86.67% of school Counsellors indicated lack of statutory fund for Guidance and Counselling programme, has confirmed a problem investigated by this study. Alao (2005) noted that the lack of adequate financial support for Guidance and Counselling activities, could frustrate the genuine efforts of school counsellors in the discharge of their legitimate duties. This problem of lack of statutory fund, needs to be addressed by the government and education stakeholders, if Guidance and Counselling is to strive in schools. Lack of proper funding of Guidance and Counselling could inhibit the rapid growth and spread of Counselling activities and thereby, result in the failure of achieving the education aims and objectives as stated in the National Policy on Education 1981.

## **CONCLUSION**

The following conclusions were reached from the findings of the study.

- 1) Secondary schools in Edo State, Nigeria, are not satisfactorily provided with an enabling environment, working materials and tools for effective Counselling Services delivery in schools.
- 2) Professional Counsellors are predominantly assigned teaching role and clerical duties in the Secondary Schools.
- 3) The Secondary School curriculum and instructional programmes do not satisfactorily accommodate Counselling sessions in the school time-table, thus, making systematic service delivery very challenging.
- 4) There is insufficiency of statutory funds to facilitate the conduct of Guidance and Counselling programmes in Edo State Secondary Schools in Nigeria.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Considering the ever ascending relevance of the school Counsellor in the successful implementation of Nigeria's educational initiatives as captured by the National Policy on Education, there is need for the following:

- 1) Government, Parents' Teachers Association (PTA) and all stakeholders should be persuaded to provide enabling environment and work tools through the school principals for the school Counsellors to properly execute their legitimate professional roles in the schools.
- 2) Organize re-orientation programme for school principals through workshop on the need for a change of attitude towards improving Counselling duties of school Counsellors.
- 3) There is need for a review of the school curriculum and instructional programme to include Counselling session on the school time-table and beyond the school confinement to non-educational settings.
- 4) The Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) need to show more interest in interfacing with school operator as a professional pressure group to secure better attention for the needs of Counsellors in the school system.
- 5) School counsellors should at all times establish a cordial and collaborative working relationship with the school principals as a basis for effectiveness.
- 6) School principals should be dissuaded from using their position to assign non-counselling duties to school counsellors.

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## Appendix 1

**Table 1a: Provision of Enabling Environment**

S/N	VARIABLES	NUMBER AGREEING (YES)	NUMBER DISAGREEING (NO)
1.	Does your school have a counsellor's office designed for counselling only?	12 (34.29)	23 (65.71)
2.	Is there a comfortable table and chair for the school counsellor?	10 (28.57)	25 (71.43)
3.	Are there desks and chairs for students in the counsellors' office?	2 (5.71)	33 (94.29)

Figures in parenthesis represent percentage distribution of responses.

**Table 1b: Provision of working materials and tools**

S/N	VARIABLES	NUMBER AGREEING (YES)	NUMBER DISAGREEING (NO)
1.	Are there books for counselling?	10 (28.57)	25 (71.43)
2.	Are the computer/internet facilities for the school counsellors?	0 (0)	35 (100)
3.	Are there stationeries for the school counsellors?	8 (22.86)	27 (77.14)

Figures in parenthesis represent percentage distribution of responses.

**Table 2: Assigning non-counselling roles to school counselors**

S/N	VARIABLES	NUMBER AGREEING (YES)	NUMBER DISAGREEING (NO)
1.	Counsellors are assigned to teach in school	24 (68.57)	11 (31.43)
2.	Counsellors are assigned to register all new students	22 (62.86)	13 (37.14)
3.	Counsellors are assigned to perform the role of a disciplinarian	28 (80)	7 (20)

Figures in parenthesis represent percentage distribution of responses.

**Table 3: Inclusion of counselling session on school time-table and outside of the school time-table.**

S/N	VARIABLES	NUMBER AGREEING (YES)	NUMBER DISAGREEING (NO)
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1.	Does your school have a counselling session on the school time table?	12 (34.29)	23 (65.71)
2.	Counselling services are extended beyond school hours	5 (14.29)	30 (85.71)
3.	Counselling services are extended to non-school settings	3 (8.57)	32 (91.43)

Figures in parenthesis represent percentage distribution of respondents.

**The data for this research questions are presented in table 4 below**

S/N	VARIABLES	NUMBER AGREEING (YES)	NUMBER DISAGREEING (NO)
1.	Fund is provided for the orientation of new students	3 (8.57)	32 (91.43)
2.	Fund is provided for school counsellors to attend seminars and workshops	2 (5.71)	33 (94.29)
3.	Fund is provided for planning of career day and excursion	2 (5.71)	33 (94.29)

Figures in parenthesis represent percentage distribution of responses.