

Factors militating against effective Counselling of Students with Hearing Impairment in Special Education Schools in Kano State

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Abstract

This paper discusses the concept of students with hearing impairment and the effect of counselling as well as the importance of counselling for students with hearing impairment. The paper describes the challenges of learning faced by students with hearing impairment as the basis for effective counselling and it also examines some of the factors militating against effective counselling of students with hearing impairment in Kano State. Some of the identified challenges include lack of establishment of counselling centers in various special schools, lack of proper and adequate awareness of parents of students with hearing impairment about the counselling services, lack of specialist counsellors in most of the special education schools, lack of using adequate media resources for effective counselling, amongst others. Many students with hearing impairment are endowed with potentialities in one form or the other, but they find it difficult to develop and utilize their God given potentials. It is due to this reason that counselling intervention for social, academic, physical, and spiritual adjustment is needed for students with hearing impairment in special education schools in Kano State.

Keywords: Factors, Counselling, Students, Hearing, Impairment, Special, Education, Schools

Introduction

Humans are the most important resource and capital base of any society, nation or people. In other words, the wealth of a nation in terms of available natural and economic resources is never more important than the capacity of human beings (referred to as human resources and human capital) who are the ones to utilize their abilities and expertise to explore and convert the economically related resources to societal development (Ozaji, Kolo & Unachukwu, 2016). In other words, a country's economically related resources may remain inadequately explored or the potentials unrealized if the human resources and human capital required are not fully developed through informal, non-formal, formal and specialized education for all, irrespective of their social and physical status. The human resources and human capital base of a nation cannot be said to be fully deployed for sustainable national development without inclusion of the special needs persons (those with disabilities and those specially gifted and talented).

Globally, education is recognized as the most important catalyst for national development. This explains why nations that have achieved an appreciable level of development invest massively in education. This is in line with Tahir (2001) who posited that today, education is universally accepted as a form of investment in human beings which yields economic benefits or returns and contributes to a nation's future wealth and development by increasing the productive and consumptive capacity of its citizens. Education is the fundamental instrument which differentiates human beings from other non-human creatures. It is a criterion for measuring the mental, spiritual, social, physical and mental development of man. The importance of education to all human beings cannot be over-emphasized, the quality of education of any nation, to a very large extent, determines the development status of that particular nation. Education is a fundamental right of every person emphasized in various contexts, since the establishment of the United Nations in 1948. The rights of children with special needs to education have not always been realized and therefore, has become a topical issue at national and international fora. For instance, Ozoji (2001) itemized some of the national and international fora which discussed about equal educational opportunity for persons with special needs, namely: the Jomtien Declaration on Education for All, the African Charter on Human rights, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted by General Assembly 1989, Universal Basic Education (UBE), launched at Sokoto by Obasanjo administration 1999, the World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons 1982, Dakar Declaration, Salamanca Declaration of 1994 discussed how a broad and balanced Special education should be provided for students with special needs in a way that accommodates their needs. With appropriate education, students with hearing impairment will be prepared to lead independent lives and to contribute as integral part of human resource base for national development. Based on this, an individual in the society regardless of his/her conditions should be educated, hence, special education and other related services are provided.

Many of the conventional schools in Nigeria lack technical know-how and specialist who will instruct and guide the students with hearing impairment. It is believed that use of school counsellors will give teachers the opportunity to interact with students with hearing impairment and it may also improve the academic performance of such students.

According to the Individual with Disability Education Act cited in Pierangelo and Giuliani (2002), hearing impairment means impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuated, that adversely affects the child's educational performance. Hearing impairment is a generic term that is used to describe individuals who have sustained damage in their hearing mechanism. They include deaf and hard of hearing. A deaf person, on the other hand, is one whose hearing is impaired to an extent that precludes the understanding of speech through ear alone with or without the use of hearing aids,

whereas the hard of hearing is defined as those in whom the sense of hearing although defective, is functional with or without hearing aids. According to Jatau, Uzo and Lere (2002), hearing impairment refers to all degrees of hearing loss which range from mild or moderate hearing loss to profound deafness. The hearing impaired persons are those in whom the sense of hearing is non-functional for the ordinary purpose of life. Students with hearing impairment may have partial or full hearing loss on one or both ears; the characteristics exhibited by the students depend on the degree of hearing loss (Ademokoya, 2016). The earlier the hearing loss manifests itself in a child, the more difficulty he or she will have in developing the spoken language. A hearing impairment or deafness involves not only the loss or impairment of hearing, but the loss or limitation of the ability to acquire language and speech naturally. Impaired or total lack of language has serious implications for the student's development generally.

Effect of Hearing Impairment on Students

Educating the students with hearing impairment is not as easy and straight forward as educating the students with normal hearing. This is because hearing impairment has been found to have a deleterious effect on the student especially in the area of language and communication (Mba, 1995). Similarly, Okuoyibo (2006) stated that hearing impairment is more than a loss of ability to hear sounds. The most devastating consequence is its impact on communication. In other words, when hearing impairment affects an individual, its major impact is on language communication which serves as the main vehicle for transfer of knowledge from one to another. If communication becomes impaired, as in the case of the student with hearing impairment, the process of educating such child automatically becomes difficult and less effective. It then requires the special skills and intervention from different professionals to accomplish the tedious task of educating the student with hearing impairment. Johnson (1987) as cited in Okuoyibo (2006) supported this assertion by declaring that without adequate support services, the classroom teacher of hearing impaired students may be severely limited on what he or she can accomplish. Regardless of the setting, audiology, speech/language, sign language interpreter, and counselling service are equally important components for instruction in the educational process.

Studies have shown that untreated hearing loss can have mental, physical, psychological, educational and social effects. Whether it happens suddenly or gradually overtime, hearing impairment can leave a student feeling depressed and disconnected from his/her friends. Straining to hear all day can make him feel frustrated and exhausted. He may start avoiding social situations, even with his loved ones. Hearing impairment is also linked to impaired memory, learning ability and job performance. By alertness, hearing impairment can even increase risks to the child's personal safety. Perhaps most critically, hearing impairment robs an individual many

precious every day moments. The earlier hearing loss occurs in a child's life, the more serious the effects on the child's development. Contrastively, the earlier the problem is identified and intervention begun, the less serious the ultimate effect (Bala & Rag, 2007).

Students with Hearing Impairment and the Challenges of Learning

The fact that hearing is an important facilitator of learning, students with hearing impairment may possess the same intelligence and scores distributions like their hearing school mates, but not the same academic performance score distributions since they always lag behind their hearing mates in various school subjects such as language, reading and mathematics (Moore, 2004). They usually have fewer vocabularies compared to that of their hearing mates (Mba, 1981; Heward, 2001). Similarly, their reading achievements are lower than that of their hearing age mates (Moore, 2004). Learning disadvantages of school students with hearing impairment widen with age (Smith, 2007 cited in Ademokoya, 2016).

Reasons why students with hearing impairment perform poorer than their hearing peers are largely accounted for by their disability. A growing child, for instance, begins to learn by establishing links between what he/she hears and sees (Werts, Cullata & Tompkins, 2007). His/her proficiency in speech, language and communication skills is critical to his/her cognitive, social and emotional development (Rose, 2001). On the one hand, his/her skills in using speech to communicate are fundamental to his/her learning and growth (Goswami & Bryant 2007, Ademokoya, 2016). On the other hand, spoken language difficulties, as experienced by students with hearing impairment, erode their self-esteem, destroy their achievement motivation and consequently limit their academic achievement. They contribute immensely to the high rate of truancy and dropout which are commonly associated with students with hearing impairment (Ademokoya, 2007). Students with hearing impairment always lack necessary requisites to fully comprehend available information; they also lack the ability to express themselves clearly and as a result, have low ability for providing narrative information in a logical and sequential manner or for understanding concepts and learning rules (Humber & Snow, 2001).

Concept of Counselling

According to Chukwuka (2012), counselling is an interaction between two or more people; one is a trained professional who is ready to give expertise assistance of guidance to the party that is burdened with some educational or contending issues. These could be psychological, educational or career problem. With regard to the above definition, counselling is for everyone irrespective of ability or disability of that person. Okeke (2001) noted that counselling refers to advice given to an individual or a group of people to assist them overcome their social, mental, emotional, physical,

vocational, educational and psychological problems. Garba (2003) posited that counselling cares and shows concern towards the persons with problems to facilitate their personal growth and position change through self-understanding. The concept and practice of counselling generally denotes a relationship between a concerned person and a person with a need. The relationship is purposely designed and intended to help people with problems to understand and clarify their views of life and to learn to reach their self-determined goals through meaningful, well informed choices. Ozoji (2005) opined that counselling is the medium through which the professional guides a person in need to solve certain problems of adjustment. Akande (2005) cited in Chukwuka (2012) sees counselling as a helping relationship through which individuals learn to solve certain personal, vocational, emotional and educational decision making problems.

Purpose of Counselling for special needs students

The purpose of counselling is to improve the special needs student's ability to make social adjustment and to enjoy his living (Aiyaleso, 2012). Counselling is to make it possible for the student to develop better attitude towards school attendance and learning, and to help both parents and teachers to treat the students with hearing impairment with respect, love and care.

However, with respect to the students with hearing impairment, their talent/potentials are not well developed compared to normal students. Where the talent/potentials are well developed, the presence of one type of impairment or the other may seriously affect the expression of such potentials. All these therefore, further amplify the necessity for early counselling of these students with hearing impairment, which can only be accomplished if the parents and teachers are well counselled on hearing impairment. When this is solved, parents and teachers will be in a better position to accept, adjust and counsel their students with hearing impairment with a view to achieving various goals which counselling service is set to achieve in their special needs students (Aiyaleso, 2012). It is important for counsellors to note that in order to improve the academic performance of students with hearing impairment, the students, teachers, the society and government need counselling on a continuous basis. The demand for counselling services will continue to rise with increasing cases of poor performance of students with hearing impairment, especially where students continue to perform below 40%. Also, the demand of counselling services will definitely rise with population explosion of primary and secondary schools students, which could more or less have greater negative impact. Therefore, the services of counselling will surely continue to increase in demand in order to help many students in need. Unfortunately, the service is not being adequately provided because of the gross shortage of counsellors in the school system (Bot, 2012).

Factors Militating against Effective Counselling of Students with Hearing Impairment

The National Policy on Education (2004) stated that the aims of educating the handicapped is to provide adequate education to children and adults in order that they may fully play their roles in the development of the nation, and provide opportunities for exceptionally gifted children to develop at their own pace in the interest of the nation's economic and technological development. It is obvious that these objectives may not be achieved because of many reasons such as:

1. Lack of Establishment of Counselling Centres in Various Schools

In order for counsellors to render effective service, counselling units or centres must be established in each special education secondary schools in Kano state. These centers should provide free counselling services delivery to all students in need. There should be adequate number of qualified counsellors in the centers for effective service delivery.

2. Counsellors are not given Opportunity to perform their core duties

Counsellors are restricted in providing counselling services which they were trained for as they are drafted into being classroom teachers. Iherebeme (2007) cited in Bot (2012) pointed out that over the years, counselling services are not adequately rendered in the Nigerian educational system because counsellors in secondary schools are given other subjects to teach instead of allowing them to render counselling services that will help lead and direct students with hearing impairment. That is, the primary and secondary schools counselling services are not very effective due to the problem of inadequate trained personnel, inadequate funding of counselling services and lack of enough counselling centers.

3. Lack of awareness of parents

At the arrival of the special needs child in the family, parents are at a loss, feeling dejected and confused. If they are alert and aware of counselling services, it might help to lighten their burden. Moreso, some of these parents are often ashamed of interacting and sharing their feelings with other parents and soliciting for help, for fear of being stigmatized.

4. Lack of Specialist Counsellors

State and local governments failed to include provision of specialist counsellors in their plan. Thus, there are no professional counsellors in most special schools to guide the students and their parents on what to do. Therefore, the need for proper counselling of students with hearing impairment and parents cannot be overemphasized if the objectives set out in the National Policy on Education are to be achieved.

5. Inadequate use of Media Resources for Effective Counselling

In addition to direct counselling which can takes place at any time within school, it is important for counsellors to explore the use of other means of counselling students. These include the use of Parent Teachers' Association (PTA) meetings, school career days, workshops, seminars and conferences. These can be used for counselling

students with hearing impairment regularly and indirectly. Others include the use of new technologies like handset, satellite, internet, Television, tape recorder, Newspaper etc. These media provide opportunity for counsellors to engage their clients at any time.

6. Lack of Counselling for Parents

In order to help students adjust properly in teaching and learning, counsellors should continue to counsel parents to see the need to assist them by providing relevant learning materials, monitoring and guiding them in doing homework/assignments (FME, 2004).

7. Lack of outcomes of Counselling for Students with Hearing Impairment

Counsellors should ensure that the positive impact of their services is made public at the slightest opportunity. This can be in form of testimonies by students, teachers and parents that have benefited from such services. This measure will help in appreciating the roles of counsellors in the tasks of helping out with the problems in learning. It is important for counsellors from different special education schools to work hand in hand with one another to share their experiences on helping students through visitations and meetings. They should endeavor to attend workshops, seminar and conferences organized by Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) to get to know the technical know-how and strategies for assisting the students in need. This will ensure that they are up and doing in discharging their duties therefore, their services will be appreciated since the problem of poor performance of students with hearing impairment is already a public concern (Bot, 2012).

Conclusion

The thrust of this paper is to establish the factors militating against effective counselling of students with hearing impairment in special education schools in Kano State. There is the need to reiterate that counselling services are required to help students with hearing impairment develop and realize their potentials for national development. The counselling services should be provided on continuous basis through establishment of counselling centers in various special education schools. This is to enable them to have better perception of themselves, community and society at large. This will ensure the development of students with hearing impairment who can positively participate and contribute his or her quota to the national development.

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