

School Counselling: A Vital Process in Achieving Effective Learning in Nigerian Schools

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Abstract

Learning is a very complex exercise which involves the development of the cognitive, affective and the psychomotor domains of the learner. However, the process of this development is not a smooth ride on the part of the various actors involved: that is the learner, the teacher and the school administrator. The trio is in a symbiotic relationship to achieve a desired goal which is effective learning. This could only be achieved when there is a synergy of purpose among the trio. This synergy involves timely identification of problems, isolation and proffering possible solution. Therefore, the place of counselling in the overall process of learning cannot be overemphasized. This paper therefore, presents the important roles of counselling in achieving effective learning in Nigerian schools. The scope of the paper includes the concept of Guidance and Counselling, School counselling services for effective learning, roles of teachers in the counselling process for effective learning among others. Recommendations made include the need for management and leadership of schools in Nigeria to give prominence to counselling services in the schools, creation of adequate funds for counselling services and the need for periodic training and retraining of counsellors and supporting staff in the school system.

Keywords: education, guidance, counselling, services, learning

Introduction

The word “education” can be traced to its Latin word origin, “educare” meaning to bring up, to lead out, to raise up, to educate. Fafunwa (2004) defined education as “the aggregate of all the processes by which a child or young adult develops the abilities, attitudes, and other forms of behaviour which are of positive value to the society in which he lives.” Globally, education has been identified as one of the most important factors in human development. It involves conscious and deliberate efforts towards inculcation of the right type of values, attitudes, skills, abilities and competences. The main purpose of education, therefore, is to develop an individual so that he can be useful to himself, his family, and the society generally. This development transcends the physical development, but it also includes intellectual and emotional developments that only manifest themselves in the behaviour and mental activities of the individuals.

Therefore, for this purpose to be achieved, education as powerful instrument for achieving individual as well as national development must be effective, properly planned and well administered. Nations all over the world have been investing heavily on national educational system. However, the success of this investment depends on proper planning, efficient administration and collective efforts of all actors involved. Meanwhile, one of the most important aspects of educational administration is the administration of counselling services. Whether at the level of primary, secondary or tertiary education, the roles of counselling cannot be ignored. In Nigeria, the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) recognizes the importance of counselling in educational institutions. Counselling is seen as a helping relationship that is essential for the growth and development of students. In addition, through counselling, students are assisted to discover their talents, aptitudes and make intelligent life decisions thereby unlocking life's 'golden opportunities'. It is against this backdrop that this paper is presented on counselling as a vital process in achieving effective learning in the school system. The aim of this paper is to advocate the importance of counselling in achieving effective learning in the school system. The scope of the paper covers: concept of guidance and counselling, school counselling services for effective learning, students problems that require counselling, elements of counselling session, stages of counselling session, roles of teachers in the counselling process and conclusion.

Concept of Guidance and Counselling

It is expedient to start this with the concepts associated with Guidance and Counselling. It is believed that every educator at one time or the other in the course of training at various levels, must have come across the word Guidance and Counselling. The exposure included various attempts to define guidance and counselling and to delineate guidance from the word counselling both as a concept and in practice. All these would be expounded in the course of this paper. Guiding and Counselling students is an integral component of the educational system. Guidance and counselling services and programme promote the personal, social, educational and career development of students. According to Okobia and Okorodudu (2006), guidance and counselling is an interaction between a person who has a problem and a guidance practitioner or Counsellor. The aim is to help the individual analyse himself/herself, identify the causes of the problem and eventually attain a solution. Many Scholars have also attempted to differentiate the two words "guidance/counselling." For instance, Oladele (1986) described guidance as an umbrella term which refers to all that is done to protect and guide the development of students. Furthermore, Adana (1998) defined guidance as "an idea and a service considering the characteristics and needs of the individual person (idea) and provision of the activities required (service) for helping the individual to enhance his functioning."

In the same vein, counselling has been variously defined. Lewis (1970) stated that counselling is a process by which a troubled person is helped to feel and behave in a more personally satisfying manner through interaction with an uninvolved person. English and English (1971) believed that the term “Counselling” best describes a relationship in which one person endeavours to help another to solve his/her adjustment problems. Another scholar, Shertzer and Stone (1976) defined counselling as a wide range of activities designed to aid individuals in solving their problems. Furthermore, Okobiah and Okorodudu (2006) explored the differences between Guidance and counselling as tabulated in the next section of this article.

Differences between Guidance and Counselling

According to Okobiah and Okorodudu (2006), the differences between Guidance and Counselling can be summarized in a tabular format thus:

Table 1: Differences between Guidance and Counselling

s/n	Guidance	Counselling
1	Less personal; less intimate	More personal and intimate
2	Deals with facts and principles (cognitive in nature)	Deals with teachings, needs, attributes etc. (affective in nature)
3	Informative and didactic	Emotional and less didactic
4	Counsellor – initiated	Client – initiated
5	More public	Usually private and highly confidential
6	A programme	A Process
7	Umbrella term	The case of accident
8	Less open –ended	More open-ended

Although attempts have been made to differentiate the two words, however, these various attempts are of no importance. Akinade (2006) observed that the attempts to call the discipline as guidance and counselling only remain with the lay people. He noted that the traditional label of Guidance and Counselling gave way to the new nomenclature since 1996. It is now being known as counselling psychology which is one of the fifty-three (53) branches of psychology and coded as Division 17 of Psychology by the American Psychological Association (APA, 2000). Therefore, with the new nomenclature, the pertinent question is what then is Counselling? Counselling involves a number of processes and procedures used in assisting individuals (Counselees) in solving problems which arise in various aspects of their lives. It also assists them to maximize their overall personal development so that they could be more effective, satisfied and more useful to the society in which they live.

Akinboye (2003) advocated that counselling Psychology of the 21st century could be seen as a specialty in the field of psychology. Its practitioners (counsellors) help counsellees improve their well-being, alleviate distress, resolve crises, and increase their ability to be creative, innovative and make success-focused decisions wherever they exist (Akinade, 2006). Furthermore, modern counselling is the application of mental health, psychological or human development principles, through cognitive, affective, behavioural or systematic intervention strategies, that address wellness, personal growth, or career development as well as pathology. Counselling is planned and professionally executed. One of its characteristics is that everyone in need qualifies to participate in it. Children, adolescents, youths, middle-aged, senior citizens, male and female, literate and illiterate can seek it. Counselling also takes place at all settings, including the school setting.

Counselling in the school setting

School counselling is a specialized service designed to assist pupils/students who have some concerns to make appropriate decisions. It is an enlightened process in which counsellors assist counsellees/clients by facilitating growth, development and positive change through an exercise of self-understanding (Makinde, 1983). Counselling in schools provides career information to students and it also promotes sound moral behaviour, while preventing students from engaging in youthful risky-behaviours such as smoking, drug abuse, prostitution, examination malpractice, inappropriate dressing and defective study habits. It equips students with generic-improving and problem-solving skills such as politeness, good work ethics, good interpersonal relationship, effective decision making, effective communication and team spirit (Okobiah & Okorodudu, 2006).

School Counselling Services for Effective Learning

Several studies (Idowu, 1995; Carrell & Carrell, 2006; Yahaya & Mustapha, 2014; Ibijola, 2017) have confirmed the significant impacts of counselling on students. The major counselling services provided in the school are:

- a. **Educational counselling:** This involves provision of assistance to students in solving problems of learning, teaching and education generally. Issues such as admission, study skills, coping with examination anxiety, choice of subjects or courses, academic success are essential in educational counselling. Osarenren (2011) noted that educational counselling focuses on issues pertaining to academic success and furtherance of education. It aims at helping students to realise their educational goals.
- b. **Personal-Social Counselling:** This deals with intra and interpersonal concerns. It focuses on personal, social and psychological concerns of students. This involves assisting students to acquire requisite skills and facilitate interactions with

their colleagues, teachers, school administrators and members of different communities.

c. **Career/Vocational Counselling.** This involves provision of assistance to students on career related issues. Through this process, students are assisted to assess and understand their strengths and capabilities, interests and motivation. Osarenren (2011) noted that through vocational counselling students are enlightened about job requirements, duration of training, the emoluments, job prospects and hazards.

d. Other counselling services include financial counselling, Health counselling, marriage counselling, and Religious counselling. Akinade (2006) listed some of the traditional service counsellors conduct in schools to include: Orientation, Appraisal, Placement, Evaluation, Continuous assessment, Remediation, Cumulative Recording Keeping, In-service programmes, Curriculum development, Referral, Follow up and Research.

Students' Problems that Require Counselling

Onu (2016) listed 120 problems that students encountered, that require counselling. In the same vein, McDowell and Hostetler (1996) categorized student's problems as:

a. **Emotional Issues**

Loneliness	Facing Death
Anxiety	Grief
Guilt	Anger
Unhealthy self-Esteem	Depression
Suicide Thoughts, Tendencies and Threats	

b. **Relational Issues**

Love
Dating
Choosing the right marriage partner
Coping with singleness
Handling peer pressure
Contending with peer rejection and persecution

c. **Familial issues**

Overprotective parents
Rebellion
Inattentive parents
Runaway threats and attempt
Parental divorces
Living in a single-parent family
Dealing with step-parents
Sibling rivalry

- d. **Sexual issues**
 - Lust
 - Masturbation
 - Pornography
 - Premarital Sex
 - Unplanned pregnancy
 - Abortion
 - Homosexuality
 - AIDS
 - Other sexually Transmitted Disease

- e. **Abuse**
 - Sexual Abuse
 - Nonsexual Abuse
 - Rape
 - Ritual Abuse
 - Addictions
 - Alcohol use and Abuse
 - Drug Use and Abuse
 - Gambling

- f. **Disorders**
 - Attention Deficit Disorder
 - Anorexia nervosa
 - Bulimia

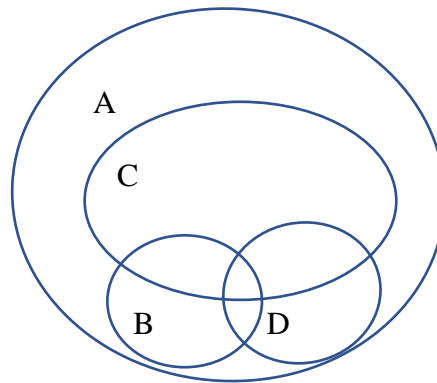
- g. **Educational issues**
 - Dropping out
 - Under achievement and overachievement

- h. **Physical issues**
 - Living with a deformity or disability
 - Coping with long-term illness

- i. **Vocational issues**
 - Knowing God's Will
 - Choosing a School/College
 - Choosing a Career

Elements of the Counselling Situation

The elements of a typical Counselling situation could be diagrammatically described as follows:



- A. The total Cultural Environment
- B. The problem
- C. The client (or counsellee)
- D. The counsellor

a) **Total Cultural environment:** This refers to physical conditions and customs of where counselling could take place; a situation in which the counsellor, the client and the problem exist and interact.

b) **The problem:** This could occur in any area of the counsellee's life. This could be educational, vocational or socio-personal.

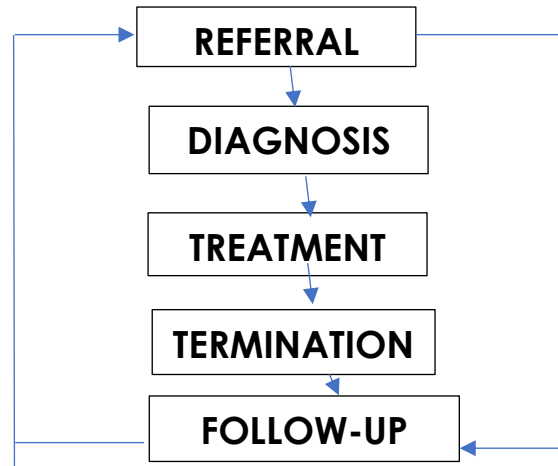
c) **Counsellees:** This refers to individuals whose psychic durability have been jolted and have come to therapists for professional help to resolve the dilemma. They are individuals who require the service of professional helpers (Akinade, 2006).

d) **The Counsellor:** A well-trained applied psychologist who has some expert knowledge and skills to assist the counsellees with their problems. Counsellors respect the privilege to be invited to share in the life of another person. They do this by being available, purposeful, and supportive and being sources of encouragement to counsellees and not being judgmental to them.

Stages of Counselling Session

A model of counselling sessions is one that follows the medical model and has five stages namely: referral, diagnosis, treatment, termination and follow up. The model (RD TTF Model) is diagrammatically described below:

Stages of a Counselling Session



Roles of Teachers in the Counselling Process for Effective Learning

Education is not a venture that can only be undertaken by a single system. A child cannot grow into an adult without lots of help. To produce a total child, there are stakeholders whose contributions cannot be overemphasized. They include but not limited to the parents, teachers, the school and the government. The teacher is one who is involved in training and instructing the learners. Teachers are expected to get the best out of the child. Teachers and students relationship is very important for effective learning to take place. Today's teachers must be ready to play a variety of roles in the classroom; roles as educator, motivator, disciplinarian, mentor, coach, counsellor etc. This is because psychological and educational forces operate together in the classroom. The teacher as a para-counsellor has many roles to discharge in the counselling process and in the effective education of the students. These roles include:

- a. Embrace and demonstrate unflinching support to the school counselling programmes.
- b. Engage in counselling appraisal services.
- c. Engage in psychological testing programme.
- d. Engage in referral services when necessary.
- e. Serve as members of the school's counselling committee
- f. Be a Behaviour Change Agent (BCA).
- g. Guide against all misconceptions about counselling.

Conclusion

The school is a major and important environment of the child in his/her formative years. However, for the school to effectively play its role as a citadel of effective

learning, counselling remains a vital organ in the process. Counselling services are very essential for the overall growth and development of the total child. The task therefore is enormous. The teacher and the counsellor must work harmoniously and help in enhancing the overall discipline and tone of the school to produce mentally-healthy and well-adjusted youths in the country.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made in order to achieve effective learning in Nigerian schools:

- a) Management and Heads of schools in Nigeria should give prominence to counselling services in the schools.
- b) Government and proprietors of schools in Nigeria should create adequate fund for counselling department/office.
- c) Management and Heads of schools should periodically train and retrain counsellors and staff through seminars, workshops and conferences.

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