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AVAILABILITY AND FUNCTIONALITY OF GUIDANCE COUNSELLORS AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KOGI CENTRAL SENATORIAL DISTRICTS

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Abstract

This study focused on the availability and functionality of guidance counselors among the ninety one (91) secondary schools in Kogi Central Senatorial District of Nigeria. It defined counseling as an input made by a professionally trained counsellor on the vocational, educational and personal-social decisions of students of secondary schools in kogi central senatorial district through a face to face interaction. The population consisted of all the secondary schools in the five (5) local governments that make up central senatorial district. The purpose sampling technique was used to select the ninety secondary schools that participated in the study. It chronicled the history of guidance and counseling in Nigeria and to entrenchment in the national policy. The instrument employed was made up of only two (2) interviewed questions that bothers on availability and functionality of guidance counselors among the secondary schools in the district. Two research questions and one hypothesis were formulated for the study. The result revealed that only 23 counsellors are available in 91 schools with only seven that are functional. Recommendation among others, include the implementation of the national policy of education concerning the services of counselors in secondary school.

Key words: Availability, functionality

Introduction

One of the greatest and most exhilarating achievements in the Nigerian educational sector is the enactment of a well articulated and robust educational policy tagged “National Policy on Education” (1977, revised, 2004). This is because the country realizes that education is indispensably germane to her overall development. This policy, as a lofty blue-print needed for the realization of her educational goals and objectives, is in line with her national philosophy which includes:-

a free and democratic society
a just and egalitarian society
a great and dynamic economy
a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens (NPE, 2004 pg. 1)

To facilitate the implementation of this educational policy, some educational services were put into place in which guidance and counseling was captured as an indispensable part of the services when it says:

In view of the apparent ignorance of many young people about career prospects and in view of personality maladjustment among school children, career officers and counselor should be appointed in post primary institutions since qualified personnel in this category are scarce, government shall continue to make provision for the training of interested teachers in guidance and counseling that also feature in teacher education programme proprietors of school shall provide guidance counselors in adequate numbers in each primary school (pg. 48).

In response to this, today in Nigeria, all Colleges of education and Universities where education courses are mounted, guidance and counselling courses are offered at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Are they actually available and functional in Nigeria schools today with particular reference to Kogi central senatorial districts in Nigeria. By availability is meant whether counselors actually exist in these schools and by functionality is implied whether they are actually engaged in their expertise.

Today, there are many cases of youth unemployment, gory stories of youth restiveness, indisciplinary acts of all kinds in the schools which justifies the need for this services. In addition, most of the students of the secondary schools in this area are Ebirras who by nature are ruggedly individualistic, aggressive, republican by nature and could be reasonably intransigent and who are ready for show down at any slightest provocation where series of unrest and other forms of indisciplinary acts have become the order of the day. This questions the veracity or otherwise of counselling services in this area. Are they available? Are they functional? These are what this study intends to unveil.

Historical Evolution of Guidance and Counselling in Nigeria

Guidance and counselling is an offshoot of knowledge from various disciplines like philosophy, psychology, psychiatry, sociology. It was reported that the early professionals in the area of health believe that mental problems were caused by demons and so the only way out of the problem was drilling of the patients head for the escape of the demons. Counsellors operated initially like psychiatrist, physicians or priests. Its present mode of operation dated back to the nineteenth century.

In Nigeria, it could be traced to the unflinching effort of groups of Rev. sisters in 1950 at Theresa College, Oke Ado Itadan who took steps on how to match their final year students to jobs after graduation. This they did through a well packaged

career talk piloted by knowledgeable professionals in various fields of endeavour which became known and called Ibadan career council in 1961. It later on metamorphosed to Nigerian career council in 1967. As a proof of its wider converge, it was charged with the responsibility of organizing enlightenment programmes for the council through conferences, workshops, etc(g geared towards vocational counseling). The interest of the government in this service became obvious when it appointed Mr. Berepiki as a vocational guidance officer in the federal ministry of education which led to a programme in vocational guidance in Nigeria in conjunction with USA and Aiyetoro grammar school as the first partakers. A serious turn around came for the programme when it was entrenched in the 6334 system of the Nigerian educational system. A diploma programme in guidance and counselling started at Olunloyo College of Education, Ibadan in 1975. Today, many universities offer courses in guidance and counselling at undergraduate and post-graduate levels with a controlling body known as Counselling Association of Nigeria (CAN).

The Concept of Guidance and Counseling

Guidance and counselling are two sides of the same coin. This is because both are geared towards the transformation, growth, self-actualization and overall development of the individual. However, encyclopedia of education (2013) averred that guidance as a continuous process is the process of helping an individual to develop to the maximum of his capacity in the direction that is most beneficial to himself and the society. Every developmental goal must be in tandem within the permissibility of the society. Guidance is required from cradle to grave. It is a life path-finding process through some formalized services geared towards bringing succor to an individual in all ramifications both in the school and the larger society as a whole but for the purpose of this paper, emphasis is on the school setting.

Jeffrey and Sheppard (2011) define counseling as a multidimensional dealing with human feeling, thoughts and behaviours as well as the present, past and future. For the purpose of this paper, counselling is defined as the input made by a professionally trained counselor on the vocational, educational and personal – social decisions of students of secondary schools in kogi central senatorial district through a face to face interaction.

Why counselling activities in the Nigerian secondary schools

The need for guidance and counseling in the Nigeria secondary schools cannot be overemphasized. Its indispensability in the system was brought to limelight when it was entrenched in the national policy on education in 1977, revised edition 2004. With the diversified and increase in the school subjects the need for counseling activities in the schools become germane; what combinations are needed for choice of courses, admission requirements, available courses, available schools and Colleges and how they would study to pass exams, etc. Today, in the Nigerian work force, there are several square pegs in round wholes as people find themselves in wrong places of professional calling. This has led to shortage of manpower in some profession and others over bloated. The foundation for success in their direction stems from giving appropriate attention to students in secondary schools in the choice of

career/vocations. What are their potentials? What are their interests? What are their socio-economic background? The need for vocational guidance becomes unequivocal, that is matching individuals to jobs in tandem with the personality variables of the individual. This will prevent the misplacement of talents, add meaning to the education received, bring security to the nation, the school and the students as they will be able to face tomorrow. They become acquainted with occupational opportunities that is, the world of work which is giving students insight on the process of making choices. In Nigeria today, youth restiveness is rampant, drug abuse, cultism, sexual abuse and general forms of indiscipline are recurring decimals among secondary schools, there are equally personal-social problems. These x-rayed problems need the service of a counselor who would give therapeutic intervention. The refusal to attend to these issues at this level could spell doom for the society in future. There is a divide between the young and the old in all ramifications which calls for counselling.

One of the major thrust of the national policy on education is for an individual to acquire appropriate skills, abilities and competencies both mental and physical as equipment for the individuals to live in and contribute to the development of the individual and the society. With the ignorance of self in the life of the secondary school child, how does he makes meaningful contribution to the society. How does he knows what to acquire and where to acquire the skills, does he know himself? This is where the position of a qualified professional counselor becomes incontrovertibly indispensable. With the professional input, the student becomes knowledgeable with the needed wisdom to take useful decision that is capable of transforming him to be a useful person to the society. Nigeria today has seriously metamorphosed in all areas. It has witnessed changes in the area of politics, economy, technology and even in the area of security, for instance, the avengers, Bokoharam, human right activists. There is need to be acquainted with all these dynamics that can only be facilitated by a counsellor. (Idowu, 2004; Okeke, 2000, Encyclopedia of education, 2013, and Eyanro, 2004).

Statement of problems

Education, no doubt, aims at the total transformation of an individual. The individual potential needs to be harnessed through the services of a trained counsellor in the secondary school setting. Counselling activities bring about prophylactic measures against frustration, general disorientation misdeamor, that is rampant among secondary school students in Kogi central. With the barrage of indiscipline in Kogi central secondary schools coupled with the involvement of these innocent youths in political thuggery, joblessness, visionlessness, cases of teenage pregnancies, etc, it becomes expedient to find out whether professionally trained counselors exist actually, and functional in Kogi central secondary schools. This statement of problem is translated into the following research questions:-

1. Are there counsellors inKogi central senatorial district in tandem with the population of the schools?
2. Are the counselors functional?

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to find out whether:-

There are trained counsellors among secondary schools in Kogi central senatorial district and in tandem with the population of the schools. Again, whether the trained counsellors are functional and whether there is a significant difference in the number between counselors of private schools and those of public schools.

Significance of the study

This study will act as a proof to the extent of the implementation of the national policy on education in the area of provision of educational services with particular reference to guidance and counseling in kogi central senatorial district secondary schools.

A deficiency in this direction will therefore ignite the necessity for re-addressing the issue of guidance and counselling in Kogi central senatorial schools by policy makers and major stake holders in education.

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference between the number of guidance counsellors in public and private schools in Kogi central senatorial district.

Methodology of the study

This study is a survey research; the population consisted of all principals of secondary schools in the five (5) local governments making up kogi central senatorial district. The purposive sampling technique was used to select all the principals of these schools because they are all important to this study. The instrument was made up of only 2 interview questions. The interview questions cover only issues concerning availability and functionality of the counselors. Positive responses indicate the presence and functionality of counsellors in these schools or otherwise. At the end, statistics were taken for their availability and functionality. Since it is a counting data, the chi-square statistics was used to analyse the hypotheses at .05 alpha level while the frequency and percentage were used for the demographic data obtained from the study.

(Results)

Demographic Data

Table 1

Distribution of private schools among public secondary schools in Kogi central secondary schools.

LGA	No of schools	Private schools	%
Adavi	30	15	50
Ajaokuta	14	8	57.1
Ogorimagongo	3	0	0
Okene	23	7	33.3
Okehi	21	11	52.3

From table one above fifteen private secondary schools representing 50% of the schools are in Adavi local government of Kogi state. Others are Ogorimagongo, 0(0%), Ajaokuta 8(57.1%), Okene 7 (33.3%) while Okehi has 11 private schools representing 52.3% of the schools in that local government.

Table 2

Distribution of community and government schools in Kogi central senatorial district.

LGA	No of schools	Community and Government schools	%
Adavi	30	15	50
Ajaokuta	14	6	42.9
Ogorimagongo	3	3	100
Okene	23	15	66.7
Okehi	21	10	47.7

There are 15 community schools representing 50% of the total secondary schools in Adavi local government area of Kogi state. Ajaokuta 0(42.9%) of the schools in that area, Ogorimagongo 3, (100%) of schools in the area, Okene 16 and Okehi 10 representing 66.7% and 47.7% of the schools in those areas respectively.

Table 3

Distribution of counsellors in public schools in Kogi central senatorial district.

LGA	Counselors in Private schools	%
Adavi	3	17.6
Ajaokuta	3	17.6
Ogorimagongo	1	4.9
Okene	7	41.2
Okehi	3	17.6
Total	17	100

Table 3 above shows the distribution of counselors in public schools in Okene local government. Okene Local Government has 7, representing 41.2% of the total counselors in the local government, Adavi, Ajaokuta and Okehi have 3 each representing 17.6%, of the number of counselors in the central while Ogorimagongo has only 1 representing 5.9% of the counselors in the local government.

Table 4
Distribution of counselors in private schools

LGA	counselors in Private schools	%
Adavi	2	33.3
Ajaokuta	2	33.3
Ogorimagongo	0	0
Okene	0	0
Okehi	2	33.3
Total	6	100

Table 4 shows the distribution of guidance counselors among private secondary schools in kogi central senatorial district. 3 of the local governments have 2 guidance counselors each that is Adavi, Ajaokuta and Okehi with each representing 33.3% of the total number of counselors in private schools while Okene and Ogori have none.

Research question one

Table 5

Do you have trained counselors in your school and in tandem with school population?

LGA	No of schools	private and Government schools	%
Adavi	30	5	16.7
Ajaokuta	14	5	35.7
Ogorimagongo	3	1	33.3
Okehi	21	5	23.8
Okene	23	7	30.4
Total	91	23	

From the above table Adavi local government has thirty (30) secondary schools with only five counselors in the specify number schools representing 3.3% of the schools while none of them is functional.

In Ajaokuta local government, fourteen (14) secondary schools exist with only 5(five) professionally trained counselors in few of the schools (36%) with only 2 (two) of them operating professionally.

Ogorimagongo has three (3) secondary schools with only 1(33.3%) and not functional.

In Okehi local government area where 5(five) (24%) of the schools counselors exist in the 21 secondary schools only 2 (two) of them are functional.

Okene local government parades 23 (twenty three) secondary schools with only given counselors (30.4%) of the schools while only three (3) of them are functional.

Research question 2

Are the counselors functional?

Table 6

LGA	No of counsellors	Number of functional	%
Adavi	5	0	0
Ajaokuta	5	2	40
Ogorimagongo	1	0	0
Okehi	5	2	40
Okene	7	3	42.9

From table 6 above, Adavi local government secondary schools has 5 counselors none of them is functional. The same goes for Ogorimangongo schools, Ajaokuta and Okehi local government schools have 2 functional counselors each representing 40% of the number of counselors they have and lastly Okene local government with only 3 functional counselors representing 42.9% of the entire counselors in that local government.

Hypothesis Testing

H_0^1

There is no significant difference between the number of guidance counselors in public and private schools in kogi central senatorial district.

The chi-square statistics was used to test the hypothesis and the result is given below:-

Table 7:

Chi-square to determine the difference between the number of counsellors in public and private schools in Kogi central senatorial district.

LG	Counselor in public schools	Counselors in private schools	Toal	X ² collected	X ² table	df	Decision
Adavi	3	2	5	4.38	9.48	4	Accept
Ajaokuta	3	2	5				
Ogori	1	0	1				
Okene	7	0	7				
Okehi	3	2	5				
Total	17	6	23				

The result in table 7 shows a calculated chi-square value of 4.38. The table value of 9.49 is greater than the calculated chi-square value (4.38) df=4, P<.05 which indicates a non-significant difference. The null hypothesis is therefore upheld, that is:

There is no significant difference between the number of counselors in private schools and public schools in Kogi central senatorial district.

Discussion of findings

Research question one sought to find out whether there are professionally trained counselors in secondary schools in kogi state. Table 5 presents the picture of trained counselors in the secondary schools in kogi central and whether they are in tandem with the number of schools. It is unfortunate that of the 91 secondary schools in kogi central senatorial district, only 23 counselors are available in the school system which are grossly inadequate.

This is an evidence of the lip-service paid to the national policy on education concerning the services of guidance counselors in schools. On yearly basis, these professionals are churned out in large numbers from the various universities in Nigeria and yet they are not found employable in these schools. Counseling services are meant to complement the academic programmes in the life of the students so as to transform them to social and moral paragons. What becomes of these students, if these essential services are lacking or absent as a result of their non-employment in schools? Nigerian churn out lofty ideas but there are always the problems of implementation as evident in the lackadaisical attitude of the government in making provision for adequate counselors in schools.

Research question 2 has sought to find out whether the few counselors available are functional. It was discovered that out of the 23 counselors in the 91 secondary schools in Kogi central schools only 7 of them are functional. The necessary nurturing environment needed by this professionals are not provided in schools. Again, those who agree to practice have no progression. They cannot aspire to the highest position of principalship in the school. They see them as too popular among the students since students are always comfortable to confide in them as

“psychological mind surgeons”. Also, because of inadequate working tools, they may be redundant and that is why some of them opt for teaching.

This is, therefore, placing square pegs in round holes. How can the objective of counseling services in secondary school be attained in this situation?

The only hypothesis in this study states that there is no significant difference between number of counselors in private schools and those in public schools. It was analysed using chi-square statistics at .05 alpha level. With a calculated X^2 value of 4.38 and a table value of 9.48 of at .05 alpha level, the table value is greater than the calculated which indicates the acceptance of null hypotheses that is, there is no significance difference between the number of counselors in private schools and those of public schools. Most private secondary schools are established for the purpose of merchandise and not for giving quality education. Proprietors of private school want to maximize profits, therefore, employing the services of a ‘counselor is unthinkable to them. Recognitions are not given to the role of counselors in public secondary schools as typified with their number in public schools. Is the national policy no longer in vogue as the blue-print for education? Why? The private and public schools form integral part of the society. There is therefore, know way that the belief systems of the society will not interfere with the school system that is, good plans but poor implementation. Most community schools are established to satisfy the whims and caprices of politicians without recourse to quality, personnel, infrastructure and even curriculum. All of them do not see the need for counselors in such schools.

A policy of education is supposed to be a pathfinder on issues concerning education. A legal blue print that should serve as a guide in any course or action on education. Counselors churned out on yearly bases in the universities end-up finding their ways into paramilitary and other security departments like civil defence, road safety, the Nigerian police, Peace Corps and even the prison services. What a professional misplacement. Their absence in the school system has resulted in to general disorientation, disenchantment and disillusionment in the academic environment.

Conclusively, it is unfortunate that the provision made in the national policy of education as it concerns counseling in secondary school remain a mere paper – tiger in kogi central. If children get it right at the foundation level of formal education, they are likely to have a hitch-free tertiary level of education through the effective management of guidance and counseling service. For now, government has been paying lip-service to the availability, and functionality of guidance counselors in secondary schools in kogi central senatorial district which has further revealed a failed implementation of the national policy on education. The future of kogi central lies in the right type of education given and counseling services wear coat of indispensability in this matter.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made for the study:-

1. Adequate provision has to be made for functional guidance counselors in the Kogi central senatorial district secondary schools so as to make the objectives of secondary education achievable.
2. Qualified guidance counselors employed should be allowed to practice in these schools so as to fulfill this aspect of national policy
3. Private school operators should not be granted licenses to operate until they have made provision for guidance counselors in the proposed establishment.
4. Let the national assembly take this matter of functionality and availability of counselors in secondary schools as a matter of legislation for the future of Nigeria lies in a solid education in which counseling services serve as a major stakeholder.

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