

## Evaluation of the Status of Guidance Services in Secondary Schools in Rivers State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

The study investigated the status of guidance services in some Secondary schools in Rivers State. Out of the two hundred and fifty (250) public schools in Port Harcourt, only twenty (20) have at least a practicing counsellor. Fourteen schools with practicing counsellors were sampled in this study. The two Federal Government and University Demonstration Schools in Port Harcourt were also included in the study. Data was collected through the administration of a questionnaire on guidance services. Data analysis revealed Guidance and Counselling services in Rivers State are faced with many obstacles which jeopardize effective delivery of the services, thereby resulting in educational wastage instead of the expected quality outcome. Funds for provision of basic guidance services are lacking. Most of the vital counselling services needed for quality education are the least regularly performed in schools e.g. use of psychological tests and keeping of cumulative record folders. Only 18% of the schools sampled indicated that the objectives of the National Policy on education with respect to guidance and counselling services have been realized to some extent. If the stated objectives of Education in the National Policy on Education are to be achieved, the current status of guidance services needs to be reviewed and positive steps taken towards its improvement.

**Keywords:** Evaluation, status, guidance services.

### Introduction

Educational Services facilitate the implementation of educational policy, like attainment of policy goals and the promotion of effectiveness of the educational system (FRN 2004), Guidance and Counselling service is an essential educational support service without which the aims of Education cannot fully be realized, it compliments the pedagogic processes. Guidance program, which provides students with information, skill and necessary services in the early school years, has been found to be effective in preventing problems from occurring later in school years (Bergin et al; 1990). Counselling is a service under the guidance program. For the purpose of this study, the term 'Guidance' can be defined as assistance given to the learner by the instructor in order to facilitate his/her achievement in the learning process. Alutu (2006) asserted that to facilitate learning the instructor should consciously adopt instructional strategies that will allow for guidance of the learners. Guidance and Counseling is a process of helping people by assisting them in making decisions and changing behaviour. The purpose of a guidance and counseling service is to impart specific skills and learning opportunities in a proactive and preventive manner which ensures that all students can achieve school success through academic, career, and personal/social development (American School Counselor Association, 1997). As students achieve developmental competencies, their perceptions of themselves and their opportunities should become better defined.

Formal guidance began in Nigeria towards the end of 1959 at St. Theresa's College, Ibadan. The need for guidance arose when students of the College completed their secondary education and the staff realized that the graduates will either need assistance on how to gain entrance into higher education or seek employment, so the teachers decided to seek for avenues to provide guidance for the school leavers. In an attempt to meet the needs of the graduates, they invited resource persons from various walks of life to give information to the students about their work experience and the world of work. Their approach is in line with the basic principles of guidance as stated by Okon (1984) that guidance activities should be based upon the needs and total development of the pupils and students. Guidance is a general term, which involves counselling as a major service. In this study, reference is being made to guidance as a specialized school function which although has always been known to be a function performed by any teacher but to the trained counsellor is a function that should be left to only trained personnel if its aims would be realized.

This study focuses on the basic guidance services rendered by a trained counsellor in the school system. These include academic counselling services, orientation services, placement, information service, careers week programme, Appraisal/testing services (continuous assessment), and cumulative record keeping services, consultancy services (with parents, guardians/teachers), excursion services, referral services and the use of standardized psychological tests.

The foregoing are the major services expected to be carried out by counsellors in the schools in an organized manner for the total benefit of the school child, the educational system and the society at large.

At present in Rivers state, only about one third of the public schools have at least one counselling staff. The Ministry of Education is making effort to recruit counsellors in the schools that have none. The State Ministry of Education now created a department - the Education Resource Centre (ERC), under which is the guidance and Counselling unit. The State Government through the Ministry of Education is making effort to integrate counseling into the school curriculum. The Counselling Curriculum designed by the Counselling Association of Nigeria (Adegoke, 2004), noted that counseling should be viewed as an integral and comprehensive school programme rather than a peripheral one. Adegoke, (2004) and Alutu and Etiobhio (2006) posited that there is need to introduce classroom Guidance and Counselling as early as possible so as to prevent social vices among youths. They noted that educational reforms which include guidance and counseling as a subject to be taught and examined have the potentials for promoting effective learning in schools. In the revised National Policy on Education (2004), Section 1(5), it is clearly stated that Nigeria's philosophy of education is based on the integration of the individual into a sound and effective citizen. In addition, it laid emphasis on the provision of equal educational opportunities for all citizens of the nation at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, both inside and outside the formal school system. Indeed, the National Policy on Education in our society is directed towards ultimately improving the quality of life of its members. Edem (1982) described the Educational Policy as thinking at a high level of abstraction, which express educational goals and the means of achieving them. In order to achieve qualitative education, the quality of instruction at all levels of education should be oriented towards the inculcation of the following values stated in Section 1(8) of the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004, pg 8):

- 1) Respect for the worth and dignity of the individuals
- 2) Faith in man's ability to make rational decisions;
- 3) Moral and spiritual values in inter-personal and human relation;
- 4) Shared responsibility for the common good of society
- 5) Respect for the dignity of labour; and
- 6) Promotion of the educational, physical and psychological health of all children.

In addition, the blue print on Guidance and Counselling for Educational Institutions in Nigeria, KM 13 (2001, pg 42) stated that in order to achieve the stated objectives of secondary education the ideal counselor/student should be 1:300. The above values and guidelines have the indices of quality in all its ramifications, the inculcation of these values into the students can be adequately realized through a unique programme of services provided by guidance specialists in the school system; in the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education. The objectives of Guidance and Counselling at Junior and Senior Secondary School levels as stated in the Blue print on Guidance and Counselling for educational institutions are to;

- equip the students with the skills of making appropriate and satisfying choices;
- enable the students develop positive self image;
- assist the students to effect smooth transition from one educational level to the other;
- assist teachers, other school staff members and parents in understanding the needs and problems of each student;
- school administration in improving educational opportunities and programmes;
- mobilize all the available resources of the school, home and community for the satisfaction of students' educational, vocational and psycho-social needs;
- equip students with problem-solving and decision making skills;
- encourage students to develop good interpersonal relationship;
- assist students develop adequate time-management skills;
- help students cope with examination anxiety;
- tutor students for higher achievement;
- encourage students to develop adaptive skills to cope with change in family and home Life. (FME, 2001:15).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Guidance services as essential educational support service was recognized, and given a place in Nigeria's new educational system 6-3-3-4. In the National Policy on Education, section 11 (101), it was noted that there is need for guidance services for the young school child in view of their varied background and likely career choice problems. The government also realized that qualified personnel are scarce and that efforts should be made to produce adequate manpower. There is need therefore to access whether the stated objectives have been realized. Over 2 decades after the inception of the 6-3-3-4 system, the guidance services in our post-primary institutions seem not to be clearly crystallized. There is urgent need to carry out a study such as this to assess the status of this important service in the implementation of the new system of education.

### Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- 1) What is the ideal counsellor/student ratio?
- 2(a) Which guidance services are most regularly performed by practicing counsellors?
- 2(b) Which guidance services are most regularly performed by practicing counsellors?
- 3) How many students utilize the services of counsellors on a weekly basis?
- 4) Do practicing counsellors have basic amenities to carry out their duties?
- 5) Has the objectives of the national policy on Education with respect to guidance services been achieved?
- 6) What are the obstacles encountered by counsellors in the performance of guidance services in schools?

### Research Design

This research is descriptive in form and adopts the ex-post facto design. It seeks to know the state of the art in the discharge of guidance services by practicing counsellors.

### Population and Sample

The population of this study comprises all secondary schools in Port Harcourt excluding private schools. There are 250 (two hundred and fifty) public secondary schools, two Federal Government Colleges and two University Demonstration Secondary Schools. The Federal schools and University Demonstration schools were selected for this study. Out of the 250 (two hundred and fifty) public schools in Port Harcourt only 20 schools have at least one practicing counsellor. The research adopted purposive sampling procedure to study only school with practicing counsellors. A sample of ten percent (10%) of the target population is representative (Gay, 1987). In line with this 12 out of 20 schools participated in this study. Altogether, 14 schools were sampled, one federal, one University demonstration and 12 public Secondary schools. In all, 20 counsellors responded to the questionnaire on guidance services.

### Instrument

The researcher designed the instrument for this study, Guidance Services Questionnaire (GSQ). Test experts with the research questions reviewed the items on this instrument, it was pre-tested on 10 practicing counsellors to establish its validity, and the instrument was found to be valid. The instrument is made up of 15 items. Questions based on research questions 1-3 were elicited with a checklist while questions based on research questions 4-6 required subjects to fill in their responses.

The researcher administered the questionnaire on guidance services personally from school to school. The completed questionnaire was collected and their responses were collated, ratio and percentages were used in presenting the results.

### Results

The results of this study were presented in five tables. Table 1 shows the Counsellor/Student ratio. Table II (A & B) most regularly and least regularly performed guidance services in the schools studied.

**TABLE 1: Counsellor-student ratio**

School	Pop. of Student	No. of Practicing Counsellor	Counsellor Students Ratio	No. of Trained Counsellors not Practicing
School A	2,400	3	1:480	5
School B	1,360	1	1:680	8
School 1	600	1	1:600	3
School 2	870	1	1:870	2
School 3	500	1	1:500	2
School 4	720	1	1:720	1
School 5	488	1	1:488	2
School 6	860	1	1:860	2
School 7	1,873	2	1:936	2
School S	800	1	1:800	3
School 9	1,700	1	1:1,700	2
School 10	1,200	2	1:600	2
School 11	600	1	1:600	1
School 12	750	1	1:750	2

**TABLE IIA: Most Regularly Performed Guidance Services<sup>8</sup>**

Service	No. of schools in which such services are regularly rendered	Percentage of Schools in which services are regularly rendered
Academic Counselling	5	42%
Vocational Counselling	2	18%
Personal-social counseling	1	8%
Orientation	1	8%
Placement	1	8%
Appraisal testing	1	8%
Excursion	1	8%

**TABLE IIB: Least Regularly Performed Guidance Services**

Guidance Service	No. of schools in which such services are regularly rendered	Percentage of Schools in which services are regularly rendered
Use of psychological test	3	21%
Excursion	3	21%
Constancy service with Parents/guardians / teachers	1	4%
Referral	1	4%
Appraisal testing services/continuous assessment	1	4%
Cumulative record keeping	1	4%
Careers week programme	1	4%

**TABLE 111: No of Students Utilizing Guidance Services per Week.**

School	Academic Counseling	Vocational Counselling	Personal/Social Counselling
School A	90	50	24
School B	30	25	47
School 1	40	27	27
School 2	50	40	7
School 3	40	40	7
School 4	10	5	4
School 5	25	25	7
School 6	150	160	37
School 7	100	150	47
School S	30	20	7
School 9	40	20	7
School 10	100	20	47
School 11	100	10	47
School 12	40	2	7

**Table IV: - Basic Amenities for Counselling Effectiveness**

School Folders	Counselling room (Up-To Date)	Clerk	Typist	Career Library	Cumulative Record
A	No	Yes	Yes	None	No
B	Yes	None	None	None	No
1	Yes	None	None	None	No
2	Yes	None	None	None	No
3	Yes	None	None	None	No
4	Yes	None	None	None	No
5	Yes	None	None	None	No
6	Yes	None	None	None	No
7	Yes	None	None	None	No
8	Yes	None	None	None	No
9	Yes	None	None	None	No
10	Yes	None	None	None	No
11	Yes	None	None	None	No
12	Yes	None	None	None	No

### Discussion of Findings

#### Research Question 1: What is the ideal counsellor-student ratio?

Table 1 on the population and sampling fertile study shows that the proposed None of the sampled schools have a reasonable number of students to one counsellor, when compared with the ideal ratio of 1:300 (FME 2001). With the ratio displayed on Table I, it is clear that no effective counselling can exist in schools whose counsellor-students ratio are 1:870, 1: 936 or 1:1,700 as the case maybe. This basic information in fact underscores our hope of attaining quality education through the specialized services of the counsellors. At best, counsellors can organize group counselling and if saddled with other administrative duties will not have room for one to one counselling for students that are in dire need of such services. Data presented in Table 1 shows that the number of trained but not practicing counsellors out number the practicing counsellors in almost all the schools sampled.

#### Research Questions II A & B: Which guidance services do practicing counsellors most regularly perform? Which guidance services do practicing counsellors least regularly perform?

The results on Table II (A) show the major guidance services rendered by the school counsellors and the number of students that patronize the services. In summary, academic counselling services is the one most regularly performed by counsellors. Students with difficulties in reading, comprehension, study habit and examination preparation skills, slow learners and chronically failing students can be assisted through academic counselling. These are crucial aspects in the children's learning process that should be addressed to achieve the desired quality.

The least regularly performed services as shown in table 11(B) are consultation with students' parents and guardians, excursion programmes and use of psychological tests. There is need for constant consultation of the parents and guardians of the students towards the welfare of the school child. Properly planned excursions help to widen the child's horizon, not only by way of acquisition of occupational information but in socio-cultural and scientific development.

#### Research Question III: How many students utilize the services of Counsellors on a weekly basis?

Table III shows the number of students assisted by Counsellors in various aspects of guidance services per week. In general, most of the schools studied attend more to students with need for academic counselling. Subsequently, vocational and personal-social counselling comes next in the hierarchy of needs. However, most Counsellors remarked that they were not able to carry out these functions satisfactorily because they were saddled with classroom teaching and general administrative duties assigned to them by their principals.

#### Research Question IV: Do practicing counselors have basic amenities to carry out their duties?

Table IV shows the basic amenities available for counselling. It is interesting to note that out of the 14 schools studied, only one school does not have a counselling room to a Counsellor. Obviously this is because the school has up to five practicing counsellors. Even though they are better staffed than other schools yet they cannot deliver counselling service effectively without the privacy of a counseling room. A room to a Counsellor is a very basic requirement for any effective guidance service. Due to the high demands of the counsellor function embedded in the 6-3-3-4 system of education, at least a clerk and a typist should be attached to the

counselling unit of the school for work efficiency. Out of the fourteen schools sampled, only one school has such facility. Career library and up-to-date cumulative record folder were conspicuously absent in all the schools studied. These certainly will jeopardize greatly the performance of the expected role of the counsellors in our educational system. As mentioned earlier, there are numerous counselling services that counsellors should carry out to facilitate the solution of educational, vocational, personal and socio-psychological problems of youths. These problems once resolved will lead the individual to attain the desired quality of education.

**Research Question V: Has the objectives of the National Policy on Education with respect to guidance services been achieved?**

Question 15 of the questionnaire asked the respondents' opinion as to whether the objectives of the National Policy regarding guidance services are achieved. Out of the twenty (20) practicing counsellors who responded to the questionnaire in the 14 schools sampled, only two counsellors could indicate that the objectives have been realized to a great extent, this accounted for 14% of the sample, 86% of the respondents indicated 'Not at all', 'Not fully', 'partially', 'Not yet', 'Not Completely'. These responses have great implication toward the quest for quality in our educational system. There seem to be incongruity between the lofty plans in the establishment guidance services as stipulated in the National Policy and the situation that prevails in our schools at present.

**Research Question VI: What are the obstacles encountered by counsellors in the performance of guidance services in schools?**

This paper identified some of the obstacles encountered by the counsellors in the performance of their duties and the solution they proffered. These obstacles hinged from lack of fund for very basic services to total non-acceptance or recognition of the usefulness of counsellors in the educational system. Counseling as a profession is relatively new compared to teaching, and unless, the government and, the Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) give their full support to this new and indispensable service in our school system, not much will be achieved. Our dream of qualitative education would hardly be a reality if adequate provisions are not made for both intellectual and personal growth which teachers alone cannot render effectively.

**Obstacles encountered by Counsellors in the performance of Guidance Duties:**

- (1) Principals do not cooperate with counselors and some and keep away relevant information from them.
- (2) Due to shortage of teachers in Edo State, the State Ministry of Education directed that all Counsellors be re-deployed as teachers-counsellors.
- (3) Funds to run counselling programmes are hardly provided.
- (4) Most students are resistant to counselling, there is need for more enlightenment.
- (5) General lack of understanding of the need for counselling by principals, staff and students.
- (6) No provision for Counselling in the school timetable in almost all the schools, at present the Federal school in the state has allowed such provision officially.
- (7) Counsellors are generally seen as 'Threats' or 'intruders' in the school system, (heir services are not appreciated.
- (8) Counsellors are saddled with teaching assignment and others general administrative duties instead of spending time on issues concerning individuals or group of students.

**Recommendations**

Federal and State Ministries of education should mandate principals to accept counsellors posted to them specifically for counseling function and source for subject teachers. Adequate fund should be budgeted for counselling services in our schools. Training of Counsellors at first-degree level should be encouraged by government in Universities not offering the course. Full support of principals and others staff will improve the services. Counselling Association for Nigeria (CASSON) should work towards professionalization of counselling to accord it due recognition as a noble profession. Public enlightenment on the importance of counselling should be intensified at governmental level, more seminars and workshops should be organized in counselling. Guidance and Counselling should be allotted lime on the school time table.

**Conclusion**

The new National Policy on Education at its inception evolved lofty plans of integrating the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains in appraisal of students Today, emphasis is more or less on the cognitive domain due lo lack of adequate manpower and fund to run specialized guidance services. Use of Psychological tests (which most counselors attested are their least regularly performed services) are supposed to be important instrument to diagnose the hidden potentials of students, which will assist in the placement after JSS III and at the completion of SS III examination. The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) adopted education as "instrument par excellence" for the achievement of national objectives, if our emphasis is on 'quality' and not 'quantity' then the services of the counselors, which are important educational services, should be given its rightful place in our school system. The present trend of relegating guidance service to the background in our



educational system has resulted into much wastage in our educational system. In order to attain the desired quality in our education, counsellor education should be introduced in all our higher institutions so that adequate number of specialists in guidance and counselling will be trained at first-degree level. The practice of training teachers who have taught for many years to obtain the qualification as counsellors at Master's level has not been useful to the system. Such products often return to the school system to fill the gap of teaching they left behind as evidenced on Table 1.

Effort of government should be directed towards the training of more teachers and specifically counsellors if our desire for quality in our educational system will be achieved. It is clear from the results of this study that shortage of trained teachers in schools affects the services of counsellors who are often used to fill the gap to the neglect of their counselling duties. The impact of guidance and counselling in terms of awareness is felt in most of our schools but its recognition, acceptance and utilization as a vital service in the school system is still far from being a reality.

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