

COUNSELLORS' ROLES AND PRODUCTIVE CHILD EDUCATION IN CROSS RIVER STATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

This study investigated counsellors' roles and productive child education in Cross River State Secondary Schools. The study went on to find out the differences in the perception of counselors of their roles in the three education zones and in urban and rural areas. Three research questions and two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. A questionnaire was constructed and used for data collection. Fifty seven (57) counsellors from the three education zones were randomly selected for the study. Data collected were analysed using simple percentage, t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The findings of the study showed that school counsellors perceived their roles negatively because of lack of recognition and non-provision of necessary materials. Significant differences were found on the basis of the three education zones (Calabar, Ikom and Ogoja) and urban and rural secondary schools. Based on this outcome, the State Government, public school administrators and the community are implored to recognize secondary school counsellors and provide fund to purchase the necessary equipment for effective and efficient implementation of guidance programmes.

Counselling is a process in which one person assists another person in a person to person or face to face encounter (Olayinka, 1993). Counselling is to assist individuals in making choices, which are satisfying and socially effective. This assistance may take many forms, like educational, vocational, social, recreational, emotional and moral.

Counselling is a part of guidance programme; it is a more personalized process. It is either a one to one relationship or involves a group of about two to ten persons. Counselling is a relationship characterized by mutual respect, effective communication, genuine and complete acceptance of the client by the counsellor and concentration on the needs, problems and feelings of the client.

People engage in counselling, teaching among others work to satisfy various needs. Also, people take to different jobs for sustenance. Although the wish of every counsellor in Cross River State is to achieve success in his or her work places, most people presently working in secondary schools tell tales of woes and frustration, which could be interpreted as work dissatisfaction.

The most important personnel in the career guidance programme in school is the counsellor. The roles of the counsellors in the guidance programme have been recorded in books such as *Guidance and Counselling in Nigerian Schools* by Olayinka, M.S. According to Shertzer and Stone (2000) roles are identified as planning and designing implementation and evaluation. Planning and designing involve activities and service to facilitate career development needs of students and participation in the design of school and non-school activities which extent to the goals and objectives of the career guidance programme.

The implementation functions are: individual and group counselling; conducting students assessment; disseminating occupational and educational information, operating student service activities; conducting career awareness, exploration and experience programme; consulting with parents, teachers and administrators on students, conducting information service for parents and the community; conducting staff development training and providing direct input and technical assistance to persons implementing career education programme.

The evaluation roles are: evaluating the effectiveness and value of specific career guidance activities and service as well as dissemination of findings to appropriate quarters (Omotosho, 1996).

Productive child education is viewed as quality child education. It is seen as underscoring the need for quality in the child's education. Without quality process one cannot arrive at quality outcome. In civilized societies, children grow up largely through schools where they receive formal education. In Cross River State, what is in vogue as formal education is the western type of education. The reason is that pioneer students in Cross River State in Nigeria were brought up by the British.

The current awareness and reflection on productive child education has deep historical roots. In Nigeria therefore, the incessant review of education policy; and

curriculum adjustment reflects an insatiable desire to raise quality and make education productive. One of the social forces that suppose to moderate productive child education is a counsellor.

Olayinka (1989) stated that counsellors should assist students in selecting their subjects which is relevant to their vocational aspiration. This is to show how important counsellors are to the school system. According to him if they are left unguided, students are prone to choose subjects without considering their interest ability and aptitude and without relating them to their future career. It is on this basis that counsellors' perception of their roles is investigated.

Statement of the Problem

The secondary school counsellors are well trained counselling personnel with clearly defined roles. Their mandate at the secondary education level include provision of career guidance and assistance to students to overcome their day to day academic challenges as well as provision of necessary information that will expose students to vocational knowledge preference and choices. But the counsellors in Cross River State Secondary Schools are not given the opportunity to carry out roles. They are only asked to teach and these roles are indispensable in students' career exploration and choices. There are also indications of mal-adjustments and restiveness of youths who have passed through secondary education.

It is against this problem stated above that the present study sought to find out the roles of secondary school counsellors in productive childhood education in Cross River State.

Purpose of the Study

The study intends to find out the perception of counsellors' roles in secondary schools. Specifically the study investigated whether there is any difference

1. between the perception of counsellors roles by the counsellors.
2. in how school counsellors perceive their roles in the school?
3. in the urban and rural counsellors perception of their roles?

Research Questions

The following research questions have been posed to guide the study.

1. To what extent do school counsellors perceive their roles in the school?
2. To what extent does significant difference occur in the perception of counsellors roles by the counsellors in the education zones?
3. To what extent does significant difference occur between urban and rural counsellors of their roles?

Null Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance to guide the study.

1. There is no significant different in the perception of counsellors roles by counsellors in the education zones (Calabar, Ikom and Ogoja).
2. There is no significant difference in the urban and rural counsellors' perception of their roles.

Methodology

Descriptive research survey design was used in carrying out the study. Descriptive survey design is a research design mainly concerned with findings, describing and interpreting “what is” (Best 1990). The design does not aim at discovering new phenomena, but is concerned with conditions or relationship that exist; practices that prevail; beliefs, point of view or attitude that are held; processes that are going on; effects that are being felt, or trends that are developing (Best 1990). Also Isangedighi, Joshua, Asim and Ekuri (2004) noted that descriptive research design typically employs questionnaire and (or) interview when attempting to determine opinions, attitudes, preference and perception of people that are of interest to research.

The study was carried out in Cross River State Secondary Schools. Cross River State is one of the thirty six (36) States of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Cross River State is situated within the tropics. The State shares common boundary with Cameroon Republic in the East, Benue State in the North, Enugu and Abia States in the West and Akwa Ibom State in the South. Three languages are spoken in Cross River State namely:-Efik, Bekwara and Ejaghem. Other smaller groups are the Ekois, Mbembe, Yakurr, Boki, Yala/Yache, Ukele, Mbube, Bete and Utugwang. The work force of the people is largely small scale farmers, government workers and private entrepreneurs. The State has more than 240 pre-primary schools, 648 primary schools and 150 post primary schools. Six higher institutions are established in the State. These are Cross River University of Technology, Cross River State College of Education, Akamkpa, School of Health Technology, Calabar, Institute of Technology and Management, Ugep, (State schools) and University of Calabar, Calabar and Federal College of Education, Obudu (Federal Schools). The State is divided into three education zones namely: Calabar, Ikom and Ogoja.

The population of the study consisted of two hundred (200) counsellors from secondary schools in Cross River State. The research adopted fifty seven (57) counsellors, which were randomly selected from the public secondary schools in the State for the study.

The questionnaire method of data collection was employed in the study. A self constructed questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. The questionnaire was titled counsellors' perception of their roles. The items in the questionnaire outlined information on counsellors' perception of their roles in secondary schools.

Three experts in Guidance and Counselling and Psychology subjected the instrument to face validation. To determine the construct validity of the items in the questionnaire, trial testing was done using twenty (20) counsellors who were randomly selected from the secondary schools in the State which were not used in the study.

The reliability of the questionnaire was established using Cronbach Coefficient Alpha Reliability. This method of reliability measure was preferred to others because it lends itself to the measure of reliability when the items in the questionnaire are not measured dichotomously and when trial testing is administered once. The reliability estimates for the instrument were 0.82, 0.88 and 0.89. These values were considered high to justify the use of the instrument for the study.

The instrument was administered on all the respondents with the help of research assistants. A total of sixty questionnaires were administered, while fifty seven questionnaires were at last collected on return as being properly completed and were used for analysis. Simple percentage, t-test and Analysis of Variance were employed to analyse the responses obtained from the respondents.

Results

The results indicated that 23 (40.4%) Counsellor who took part from Calabar while 19 (33.3%) and 15 (26.3%) were from Ikom and Ogoja education zones respectively. It was further discovered that 37 (70%) counsellors were from urban and 20 (30%) counsellors were from rural secondary schools.

Null Hypotheses I

There is no significant difference in the perception of counsellors' roles by school counsellors in Calabar, Ikom and Ogoja Education Zones.

Table 1: Results of One-Way ANOVA on counsellors' perception by Education zones

Source	Df.	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F. Ratio	Critical Value	t-
Between groups	2	25.71	612.85			
Within groups	54	3280.33		10.08	3.15	
Total	56	4506.04	60.75			

Table 1 compares Counsellors' perception of their roles. The table shows that the f-ratio of 10.08 is higher than the critical value of 3.15 at 0.05 alpha level. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Null Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the urban and rural counsellors' perception of their roles.

Table 2: Results of t-test analysis on respondents' perception by location.

Location	N	Mean	SD	Df.	Critical t-value	Critical t-value
Urban	37	35.47	5.12	55	6.44	2.0
Rural	20	47.70	9.25			

The data in table 2 compares counsellors' perception of their roles in urban and rural secondary schools. The calculated t-value of 6.44 is more than the critical value of 2.0 at 0.05 alpha level. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The study found that school counsellors under the services of the Cross River State Government did not perceive their roles positively. This is because they are not well recognized as practicing counsellors. The result of the analysis also indicated that they do not have their own offices to carry out guidance programmes. They do not have equipment and materials to operate with. Under such situations, they could not be effective and lack efficient perception of their roles. This could also mean poor implementation of guidance programmes.

Adana (2000) stated that realization of the benefits from guidance programmes will remain a dream without realistic provision of infrastructural facilities for school counsellors. This can only explain why school guidance in Cross River State is still facing teething problems.

The result of hypothesis one revealed a significant difference in the respondents' perception by education zones. This means that guidance programmes in Cross River State secondary schools were faced with various problems. According to Adana (2000) logistic problems involving absence or shortage in the supply of facilities required for effective functioning in discharging counsellors' duties could hinder effective implementation of guidance programmes. The finding in this study supported that statement.

The results of hypothesis two found significant difference between counsellors perception in urban and rural secondary schools in favour of urban areas. One expected that since secondary schools in urban and rural areas are controlled and monitored by Cross River State Government the same guidelines should be followed by counsellors in all the secondary schools. The findings in this study negated that opinion. This could mean that counsellors in urban areas are exposed to more facilities than those in the rural secondary schools.

It can also be observed that counsellors in urban secondary schools could be exposed to seminars, conferences and meetings that can improve their personal and professional growth. This could also improve their ability to improvise in the absence or shortage of facilities for practice.

Conclusion

From the findings of this study, one can draw conclusion that secondary school guidance programmes in Cross River State have not been effectively monitored. Counsellors lack facilities and materials that could enhance effective and efficient performance of their duties. This makes it difficult to provide necessary guidance services like educational guidance, vocational knowledge, preference and choice to students.

Recommendations

Following the outcome of the study, the following recommendations were made to assist in solving the problem.

1. Cross River State Ministry of Education should recognize counsellors by posting them to secondary schools to perform only guidance roles.
2. Government should provide fund to purchase materials necessary for effective guidance programmes.
3. School administrators should accept counsellors and provide them with office accommodations necessary for the performance of their duties. They should also allow counsellors to practice fully and not combine it with teaching.

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