

**Role of Guidance Counsellors in School Settings: Tertiary Institution Perspective**

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**Abstract**

The paper discusses the role of guidance counsellors in school settings: tertiary institution perspective. Counseling in the tertiary level sometimes overlap with that of the secondary school level. This is because most adolescents get into the university, polytechnics and Colleges with the adult group. Guidance means a programme designed to help an individual understand himself/herself and his/her environment in relation to his/her abilities and limitations. Guidance is a broad programme, which embodies other services aimed at helping an individual to resolve his/her educational, vocational and person-social problems. These services include counselling service, information service placement service, appraisal service, referral service, evaluation and follow-up service. Counselling service is a process in which an individual who is helpless (client) is assisted by an uninvolved individual (counsellor) to overcome his/her helplessness through information, interaction, decision making and conducive environment. A guidance counsellor is a trained professional, who by his training, applies psychological principles in assisting persons with psychological problems; counsellors should possess certain qualities, some of the qualities which are: empathy, genuineness, confidentiality, altruistic, accepting, emotional stability, human oriented, and non-judgmental. The role of guidance counsellor is divided into educational, vocational and personal-social. School counselling requires a professional relationship that defines the inter-relation between the school counsellor and the client.

*Keywords:* role, guidance and counseling, counsellor.

**Introduction**

In Nigeria, the undefined role of the school counsellors continues as a major professional and educational issue and obstacle. It is well known that in many Nigeria schools, guidance counsellors are given other responsibilities which may hinder their professional roles as the school counsellors.

The undefined role of the school counsellors in Nigeria has created confusion among parents, teachers and students. In some schools, counsellors are made to focus much of their time on record keeping, with little time for comprehensive career exploration and planning. With these unrelated assignments of counsellors, many guidance needs of the students such as educational, vocational and personal-social problem of the students are not met. In that, Guidance programmes are necessary and need to be implemented and recognize in all educational levels.

All states in Nigeria have Ministry of Education which gives guidelines stating the roles of guidance-counsellors in the school system. As our country Nigeria is experiencing dramatic changes in her economy, family, school and life generally, schools will lead other social institutions in dealing with the socio-emotional, economic and family problems of the students; any educational reform in the educational sector will definitely focus on early intervention and school counsellors will take the lead in the preventive measure.

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time on record keeping, with little time for comprehensive career exploration and planning. With these unrelated assignments of counsellors, many guidance needs of the students such as educational, vocational and personal-social problem of the students are not met. In that, Guidance programmes are necessary and need to be implemented and recognize in all educational levels.

### **Guidance and Counselling**

Guidance means a programme designed to help an individual understand himself/herself and his/her environment in relation to his/her abilities and limitations. According to Uzoeshi (2013), guidance is a broad programme, which embodies other services aimed at helping an individual to resolve his/her educational, vocational and person-social problems. These services include counselling service, information service placement service, appraisal service, referral service, evaluation and follow-up service. Guidance services assist students achieve maximum benefits from educational institutions (Anagbogu, 2000).

However, counselling service which is one aspect of guidance programme, in other part is an integral part of the entire guidance programme. Counselling service is However the heart of guidance. According to Ordu (2012), counselling" means consultation, discussion, deliberation, advice, exchange of idea or a process of decision supports in times of trouble or need information given and test interpretation.

Uzoeshi (2013), counselling service is a process in which an individual who is helpless (client) is assisted by an uninvolved individual (counsellor) to overcome his/her helplessness through information, interaction, decision making and conducive environment. He furthered stated that in counselling, the client is provided with friendly atmosphere which helps him/her to be less stressed and be able to talk about his/her problem.

### **The Nature of Guidance Counselling**

It is worthy to note that in counselling, there is always a trained professional (counsellor), who finds solution to the client's problem (Uzoeshi 2013). a guidance counsellor is a trained professional, who by his training, applies psychological principles in assisting persons with psychological problems to learn how to make adjustment in their personal, vocational or educational lives. The counsellor uses his/her expertise to help the client overcome his/her problem in order to function effectively in the society. His working tools are human beings, whom he/she assists to be in their environment. Through love, care, empathy, confidentiality, patience, honesty, respect and trust, he/she helps clients to resolve their problems and become effective in their environments. The problem could be educational, vocational or personal-social. A guidance counsellor in other words, is a helper of mankind, (Ozoeshi, 2013).

In order to be effective counsellor, the school counsellor should possess certain qualities, some of these qualities are:

- ❖ **The Guidance Counsellor is Empathic:** This means that the counsellor should perceive the client's problem the way the client perceives it. The counsellor should be able to put his/her leg in his/her client's shoe. Empathic quality makes the client understand the counsellor's willingness to help without judging, lecturing or stimulating anxieties purposelessly. The counsellor therefore is expected to view his/her client's problem as his/her own.
- ❖ **The Counsellor is a Genuine Person:** This implies that the counsellor is objective, honest, realistic affected, authentic, sincere, unadulterated, definite and viable in dealing with the client. The counsellor is not false artificial, fake and insincere in his/her relationship with clients.

- ❖ **The Counsellor is Confidential:** This means that the counsellor is expected to keep every secret revealed to him/her by the client while interacting with him/her. The counsellor is one who keeps secret information revealed to him/her. This will encourage the client to open up and talk more about his/her problem.
- ❖ **The Counsellor is Altruistic:** Here, the counsellor is willing to help clients at any point in time. He/She has the interest of others uppermost in his/her mind. This quality also means that the counsellor is generous, charitable and benevolent while relating with clients. He/She helps clients without being selfish and cruel.
- ❖ **The Counsellor is Accepting:** This means that the counsellor accepts every client that comes to him/her without discrimination. Every client is accepted as he/she is, unconditionally. He/She respects the dignity and worth of every client. Just as, a mother accepts her children unconditionally irrespective of their deficiencies, the counsellor accepts every client without prejudice.
- ❖ **The Counsellor is Emotionally Stable:** This implies that the counsellor should at any point in time control his/her emotions. The counsellor should have every situation under control and should not allow his/her emotion to over-ride the issue at stake. For example, the counsellor is not expected to cry with the client in the counselling session.
- ❖ **The Counsellor is Human Oriented:** Here the counsellor is expected to be human loving since he/she deals with human beings. He/She should at every time attract people to himself/herself. The counsellor's ability to listen to clients, establish harmonious relation with them and care for them, makes him/her human oriented.
- ❖ **The Counsellor is Non-Judgmental:** This means that the counsellor should be neutral and impartial while dealing with clients. He/She is not supposed to take sides. For example, if the counsellor is counselling a couple, he/she is not expected to take side with any of the couple.

### **The Roles of Guidance Counsellors in Tertiary School Setting**

Counseling in the tertiary level sometimes overlap with those of the secondary school level. This is because most adolescents get into the university, polytechnics and Colleges with the adult group. Proper guidance and counselling rendered at the secondary school may help many students to adjust well at the tertiary level. According to Unachukwu (2008) who states that the followings are the roles of dance counselor in school:

- Resolution of educational problems
- Assisting to resolve vocational problems
- Assisting to resolve socio-personal problems
- Assisting parents and the community at large
- Building a conducive living atmosphere
- Acting as the technical leader of a guidance committee
- Construction and administration of test instrument
- Organization and coordination service,
- Helping to place students.
- Collecting, analyzing and recording of information
- Caring out research activities

However, the role of guidance counsellor is divided into educational, vocational and personal-social, each of these areas supplements the other in assisting the client or students solve his/her problems.

**Educational Guidance in School:** The need for educational guidance in school is needed at tertiary level in order to help students to form effective study habits, make good grades,

ameliorate examination anxieties, reduce examination malpractices, and so on. Educational guidance is that which is provided by the counsellor, the aim of which is to ensure a sound academic development of the student.

Educational information is another guidance service commonly provided by the school guidance counsellor. It involves collection, collation, analysis, and synthesis and utilization of information in assisting individual to have a valid and reliable knowledge of the education.

According to Denga (2019) as cited in counseling and human development Journal, Guidance and counseling service in this area focuses on issue of pertaining in educational furtherance, choice and success generally, lack of skills to select and pursue particular educational typical problems include those of subject and course selection, lack of skills to pursue particular educational programmes in academic situations, problems of examination anxiety, how to score a high grade, formation of effective study habit, how to be aware of entry qualifications into educational institutions that involve Computer technology and the like. According to Onyemerekeya and Ugwuegbulam (2005), Principals, Vice-Chancellors, Registrar, Provost, Dean of Students' Affairs, students, ministries of education, both state and federal, examination boards e.g WAEC, Newspaper, Journals, Magazines, News Letter are all sources of Educational information.

Oniyama et al. (2009) also pointed out that among the three guidance services Educational/Academic service is which is mainly concerned with the assistance given to students to enable them excel in their academic problems. In educational guidance the following areas should be emphasized to help students overcome their educational problems:

- selection of right subject combinations,
- developing effective study habits,
- overcoming examination anxiety,
- passing exams with high grades,
- Vocational making effective use of libraries,
- obtaining information regarding further studies,
- acquiring effective reading skills,
- knowledge entry qualifications into educational
- institutions
- enhancing confidence while speaking in class

**Vocational Guidance in School:** Vocation is a Latin word which means “calling” to a profession. It is synonymous with career, occupation and profession. They are used interchangeable. Experts are agreed on the facts that vocational guidance is the core of guidance, infact, in today's world; many have come to associate guidance with vocational counselling, it is worthy to note that guidance first started as "Vocational Guidance" before it spread to educational and personal-social guidance in the United States of America in 1908 by a man known as Frank Parsons, who founded the vocational Bureau at Boston to provide vocational assistance to the American youths who were maladjusted in terms of career choices. The vocational Bureau advised youths on appropriate career choices that matched their talents. Because of Frank Parsons's efforts in vocational development, he is today regarded as the "Father of Guidance". According to Oniyama et al. (2009), in thinking about career, three types of questions are asked:

- i. What information about occupation do you have? You cannot be interested in something you do not know anything about.
- ii. For which of the occupations do you have the right academic personal, physical and mental qualifications. That is, what can you offer to the world of work?

iii. What satisfaction are you seeking from your career? What can the world of work offer you?

In counselling, efforts are made to stress various factors that affect career choice such as abilities, motivation, education, skills, parental pressures, high salary, societal influence, environmental factors, value and interests. However, it is the responsibility of the counsellor to redirect and assist these students that their vocational paths in life become defined and are not jeopardized. Vocational guidance needs in schools include:

- Choosing occupation that matches one's talent,
- Making realistic and appropriate vocational choices.
- Choosing career of one's interest,
- Providing information on conditions of service about every occupation,
- Highlighting the job hazards of every occupation,
- Developing effective job seeking skills, and
- Understanding self-potentials in relation to a particular career

**Personal Social Counselling in School:** Another aspect of guidance programme provided in the school system is the personal-social guidance, which focuses on the clients' problems relating to personality adjustments. Its aim is to assist the individual to develop a healthy attitude towards self and others as most students, when they leave their homes for a new environment, have traumatic experiences and in the process become maladjusted and lose confidence in themselves and in their abilities, because of various personal-social problems such as parental conditions at home, academic problems, marital problems, family, emotional, sexual, and other sources of discomfort, these factors would invariably influence occupational interests and decisions, Anagbogu (2005).

Some students find it difficult to discuss their problems with their colleagues for fear of being abused; clients with such problems will prefer to discuss their problems with a person who is trustworthy and who can keep the information confidential; these personal-social problems of adjustments result in unhappiness. Examples of these problems are:

- poor inter-personal relationship,
- marital conflicts,
- sexual difficulties,
- drug abuse,
- inability to approach the opposite sex,
- low self-concept,
- juvenile delinquency,
- lesbianism,
- broken homes, etc.

### **Conclusion**

School counsellor remains a growing and special area of counselling profession that focuses on the need of the students and school personal in some cases as such School counselling requires a professional relationship that defines the inter-relation between the school counsellor and the client (Oromah 2014).

It is instructed to note that guidance counsellors assist students achieve maximum benefit from educational institutions. From all indications, it is very glaring that guidance service is a broad programme which embodies other services aimed at helping the students or any other individual to resolve his/her educational, vocational and personal social problems, these services include counselling service, placement service, appraisal service, referral service, evaluation and follow-up service

### **Suggestions**

1. The role of the counsellors should be properly defined by the government and the authority to avoid conflicts between the teachers and guidance counsellors in the performance of the functions.
2. Government and school authority should create awareness of the roles of the guidance counsellors through symposia, seminars and workshops for both the students, parents, teachers and the guidance counselors to explore and enhance possible areas of conflicts and co-operation
3. Guidance counsellors should conduct seminars, and workshops in the schools and the Local Government Areas to convince both students, teachers and parents of their roles in the schools
4. And also Government and school authority should create awareness through the communication media such as Radio, Television, Newspapers and Magazines. These should be used to transmit information on roles and the importance of the guidance counsellor in our schools; This will help eradicate the negative perception of the role of the guidance counsellors in our schools at all level.
5. School authorities should also establish an adequate counselling unit in every level of school

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