

**NEED FOR GUIDANCE COUNSELLING SERVICES IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN
SOKOTO STATE, NIGERIA**

GUMBI SAMBO UMAR

gumbisambo@gmail.com

Department of Adult Education and Extension Services

Faculty of Education and Extension Services

Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto

&

MURIA BELLO DANKANI

Murjanatubelloumar72@gmail.com

Department of Adult Education and Extension Services

Faculty of Education and Extension Services

Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto

Abstract

Primary schools are established to prepare pupils to face challenges that will make them adjust their life and face reality. Therefore, at this level of education, there is need for guidance and counseling services to guide and advise them to choose their career which will lead them to be useful members of the society. As a result, this paper is titled needs for guidance and counseling services in primary schools entails the concept of primary education, concept of guidance and counseling, needs for guidance and counseling services and challenges of guidance and counseling such as inadequate funding and resources, stigma around seeking help, lack of trained counselors, cultural sensitivity and diversity, integrating technology in counseling. The paper suggested among others that Government and other stakeholders should engage school boards to collaborate and advocate for grants and more resources to run the affairs of guidance and counseling in primary school and Guidance and counselors should possess and implement the online counseling platforms, create digital library and interactive platforms where they can communicate and learn from other professional counselors, so that they can guide their clients in primary school.

Keywords: Guidance and counseling, primary school, Pupils, counselors

Introduction

For any service to meet its desired goal, it must be carefully and comprehensively planned, guidance and counseling inclusive. The need for guidance and counseling services in primary school cannot be overemphasize. However guidance and counseling is essential and a continuous process throughout pupils' career, because it is an integral part of the total educational programme throughout the school years. Guidance and counseling is a long-standing practices that assist individuals in achieving personal growth and development Adu & Nimo (2023) described as an enlightened process whereby people help people by facilitating growth and positive adjustment through self-understanding. This is a clear indication that pupils need to be guided and counsel for them to adjust their life, think positively and work towards achieving their dream. Akinade (2024) defines guidance and counseling as a process of helping an individual become fully aware of oneself and the ways in which he is responding to the influences of his environment. It further assists him to establish some personal meaning for this behaviour and to develop and classify a set of goals and values for future behaviour. Base on this, when pupils are provided with guidance and counseling services at primary school level, they will develop positive attitudes, rationale thinking, they will abstain from any social vices that will cost them opportunity to choose their career. There is no doubt guidance and counseling encompasses broader scope of support services for pupils. It is therefore, a process of helping pupils develop their full potential, overcome challenges and make informed decisions about their future.

However, education in Nigeria in its transition from pre-Covid to post-Covid-19 Pandemic is currently undergoing very rapid change by forcing parents and other stakeholders to give life a second thought by exposing children to entrepreneurial/ vocational activities that will prepare

pupils to acquire knowledge and skills that will make them self-reliant and useful members of the society. This can only be possible when guidance and counseling services are considered part and parcel of primary school activities.

Concept of Guidance and Counseling in Primary Education

Guidance and counseling in primary education is a collaborative process between students, teachers, and counselors to support students' academic career, and personal development, and to help them achieve their full potentials. (National Career Development Association, 2019). A face to face interaction between teacher, counselor and pupils in primary school that will enable the pupils realize their potentials. However, American Counseling Association, (2020) Guidance and counseling is a holistic and student-centered approach to supporting students' academic, social, emotional, and career development, and to promoting their overall well-being and life success. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Association, (2018). Guidance and Counseling in primary education is a range of activities and interventions designed to support students' learning, personal and social development and to help them make informed decisions about their future. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, (2015). Guidance and counseling in primary education is a process that helps students to develop the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to make informed decisions about their lives and to cope with the challenges of growing up. American School Counselors Association, (2012) Guidance and counseling in primary education is a comprehensive, developmental and systematic approach to supporting students' academic, career, personal, and social development. Therefore, Guidance and counseling in primary education is the process of helping and supporting primary school pupils develop their potentials and attitudes that will help them choose career and become useful members of the society.

Concept of Primary Education

Primary education is the foundation upon which all other levels of education rely on. When it is good, the whole system of education will be better. However, primary education is the first formal education a child encounters where he will be trained and guided on what to become and how to realize his potentials. Similarly, UNESCO, (2020) defined Primary education as the foundational stage of schooling, aim to provide children with the essential knowledge and skills necessary for lifelong learning and personal development, often supplemented by guidance and counseling to support emotional and social growth. Furthermore, Primary education serves as an introduction to formal education, focusing not only on academic skills but also on personal and social development through structured guidance and counseling initiatives (OECD, 2021). In relation to this, UNICEF, (2023) opined that Primary education is a critical stage that not only imparts knowledge but also ensures children receive comprehensive guidance and counseling to navigate challenges and enhance their well-being. However, World Bank, (2022) posited that Primary education encompasses academic instruction paired with supportive counseling

frameworks, designed to address the diverse emotional and social needs of young learners. Similarly, primary education involves structured support systems, including guidance and counseling, to foster a safe learning environment where students can thrive academically and personally. Cohen and Kuiry, (2022).

Guidance and Counseling service in Nigerian primary schools

The primary school age according to the Federal Ministry of Education Blueprint on Guidance and Counseling for Educational Institutions in Nigeria (2005) is between 6 and 12 years. This is an impressionable period and this runs into pre-adolescent stage during which a lot of developmental changes are taking place within the individual. The problems which are associated with these changes cannot be left unattended to till later date. This neglect may have a negative carryover effect on the concerned individuals. It is therefore the counselor who has been trained in the art of handling psychological problems that would be able to assess the degree of each child's problems and suggest or seek remedy or solution. The child in the primary school especially in the first two years battles over transition adjustment from home to school partly because he is faced with strange persons in the school. A situation, which if not properly managed can lead a child to become fearful and apprehensive. Maladjustment in a primary school child to his new environment may lead to truancy and the consequent social vices. The yawning gap occasioned by the absence of Guidance and counseling services at the primary school level needs to be closed to tackle children's developmental and adjustment problems early in life. The main Guidance and counseling needs in the Nigeria primary schools include.

Need for Guidance and Counseling in Primary School

1. Emotional and mental health support:

Primary school children are at a developmental stage where they begin to experience a range of emotions. Studies have indicated that school-based mental health services can significantly improve pupils' emotional well-being and academic performance (Reyes, Brackett, Rivers, White, & Salovey, 2021). Counseling can help address issues like anxiety and depression early on and assist the pupil to identify, manage with any disabilities he may have and encourage the pupil to develop along the area of his strength.

2. Academic guidance and support

Many children face academic challenges that can affect their self-esteem and motivation. Counseling can provide support through learning strategies and individualized attention, which has been shown to improve students' academic outcomes (Steen, Hensley, & Davis 2022). It is believed that when pupils are guided to realize their developmental needs, supported the pupils to see himself as a developing individual and help the pupil to identify and modify maladaptive behaviors.

3. Social skills development.

Developing social skills is essential for children's future interpersonal interactions. Guidance programs can help teach conflict resolution, empathy, and effective communication, fostering better peer relationships (Goleman, 2023). Therefore, primary school pupils are to be encouraged to cultivate right attitudes and values among themselves in order to develop their social skills which will help them become positive members of the society.

4. Crisis intervention and conflict management.

Pupils may face various crises and conflict at school or at home, guidance and counseling services are vital in supporting them to resolve it. At tender age, pupils find it difficult to manage their worries. However, with the help of guidance and counseling officers they will be guided and advised to manage the crisis which will help them in future.

5. Parental involvement and family support:

Collaborating with parents and guardians strengthens the support network for children. Guidance programs often include family outreach, which has been shown to enhance student success and well-being (Epstein & Sheldon, 2022). Effect a smooth transition from home to primary schools.

Challenges of guidance and counseling in primary school

1. Inadequate funding and resources

Many primary schools lack sufficient funding to develop effective counseling programs. This results in a shortage of trained counselors, materials, and support services necessary for addressing pupils' needs. (Smith 2023) Instructional objects: articles, workshops, seminars, case studies, etc. Collaboration objects: forums, chat, Eliminate/Collaborate, online meetings, etc. Practice objects: simulations, software, online labs, research projects, etc. Assessment/evaluation objects: partial evaluation, final certification, etc. In order to sum it all, other issues related to funding and resources are outdated, torn and insufficient textbooks, lack of digital resources, and software, leaking roofs, broken furniture, overcrowded classroom limited access to extracurricular activities and lack of counselors. All these are obstacles to guidance and counseling in primary schools.

2. Stigma around seeking help

Stigma, or negative attitudes and beliefs, surrounding mental health and seeking help, can lead to reluctance to seek treatment, social isolation, and even hinder recovery. This stigma can manifest as public where the general public demonstrate negative attitudes and stereotypes to those who seek counseling guidance and services, perceived, and self-stigma where a child develop fear and phobia, or even lack the knowledge of consulting the teachers and counselors in the school. Students often face stigma when seeking guidance or counseling, which can prevent them from

accessing necessary support. This issue is particularly pronounced in cultures where mental health is viewed negatively. Lee & Ramos, (2023).

3. Lack of trained counselors

A shortage of trained counselors, particularly in areas like school counseling, can lead to ethical breaches, cultural insensitivity, and legal liabilities, potentially harming both counselors and their clients. In line with this, Primary schools lack trained and specialized counselors that will guide the pupils to choose their career or make any decision that will impact their future. Classroom teachers in these schools serve dual functions of teaching and counseling the pupils, a significant number of these teachers guide and counsel pupils without understanding the nature and needs of their pupils.

There is a growing demand for professional school counselors, but many schools struggle to attract and retain adequately trained staff due to low salaries and high workloads. Johnson and Patel, (2024).

4. Cultural sensitivity and diversity

Counselors may not always be equipped to handle the diverse backgrounds of pupils. Cultural differences can pose challenges in communication and understanding students' unique needs. Nguyen, (2023). Moreover, lack of understanding of cultural background of pupils, language accessibility, and inclusive programmers, engaging families, addressing bias and holistic approaches results to current state of affairs of guidance and counseling in primary schools.

5. Integrating technology in counseling

The rise of digital platforms has changed how counseling is delivered, but not all counselors are trained to effectively use these tools, leading to challenges in adapting services for students. Brown and White (2024). However, among the challenges of guidance and counseling in primary school are the use of technology, teletherapy and Virtual Counseling, mobile applications online resources and workshops, digital counseling, communication platforms, parent engagement through technology and social media for awareness to update their knowledge and understand new trends and approaches to guide and counsel the pupils in primary schools.

Conclusion

The needs for guidance and counseling in primary schools cannot be overstated. As primary school pupils steer the challenges of childhood, they require guidance, counseling and support to develop academically, emotionally and socially. Effective guidance and counseling programmes help pupils develop indispensable life skills, build positive relationships, and overcome difficulties that hinder their outcomes. By providing primary schools with all the

necessary needs, pupils will have access to guidance and counseling services. Policy makers and other stakeholders will help pupils flourish which in turn have a positive impact on their academic and social achievement. Therefore, it is vital to prioritize the need and provision of guidance and counseling services, considering its roles and significance in promoting the holistic development of primary school pupils so that they can realize their potentials.

Recommendations

1. Government and other stakeholders should engage school boards to collaborate and advocate for grants and more resources to run the affairs of guidance and counseling in primary school.
2. Specialists in guidance and counseling should device a way of enlightenment campaign and sensitization, create a peer mentorship programmes for teachers, parents and pupils in primary schools.
3. Guidance and counselors should be recruited and employed to serve in various primary schools those employed should be trained to update their knowledge.
4. Counselors in primary schools should be competent and possess the inclusive skills and engage in community activities so that he/she will be familiar with values, beliefs and norms of the society.
5. Guidance and counselors should possess and implement the online counseling platforms, create digital library and interactive platforms where they can communicate and learn from other professional counselors, so that they can guide their clients in primary school.

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