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Problem Militating Against Effective Training Programme of Professional Counsellors in Nigerian Primary Schools and Way Forward

Adegboyega Gbenga Johnson
adegboyegagbenga75@gmail.com

Owobamigbe Kate David
kattyjamesdavid@gmail.com

Ogunode Niyi Jacob
ogunodejacob@gmail.com

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Abstract: *This article discusses the problems militating against effective training programme of professional counsellors in Nigerian public primary schools. Primary and secondary data were used to provide empirical supports to all points raised in the article. The identified problems militating against effective training programme of professional counsellors in Nigerian public primary schools and recommended way forward for the effective training programme of professional counsellors in Nigerian public primary schools in Nigeria.*

Keywords: *Counsellors, Education, Primary school, Professional, Problems*

1. Introduction

The Nigerian educational system is made up of early child education, primary school education, junior secondary school education, senior secondary school education and higher education. According to National Policy on Education (2013), basic Education is the education given to children aged 0-15 years. It encompasses the Early Child Care and Development Education (0-4) and 10 years of formal schooling. Early Child Care and Development Education however is segmented into ages 0-4 years, situated in daycare or creches, fully in the hands of the private sector and social development services, whilst ages 5-6 are within the formal education sector. Basic Education, to be provided by Government, shall be compulsory, free, universal and qualitative. It comprises: 1-year of Pre-Primary, 6 years of Primary and 3 years of Junior Secondary Education. The primary school education is one of the components of basic education. The National Policy on Education (2014) defined primary Education as the education given to children aged 6-12 years. The objective of primary school includes to inculcate permanent literacy, numeracy and the ability to communicate effectively; lay a sound basis for scientific, critical and reflective thinking; promote patriotism, fairness, understanding and national unity; instill social, moral norms and values in the child; develop in the child the ability to adapt to the changing environment; and provide opportunities for the child to develop life.

The realization of the objectives of primary school education hinges on availability of teaching and non-teaching staff. Among the non-teaching staff are the counsellors. The counsellor is an important figure in the school system. The role of a counsellor is critical towards the realization of the school objectives. The job of a school counsellor is to provide professional guidance and counselling to the students to enable the students achieve a better academic performance. The counsellors need continuous training and retraining programme to be at the top of this assignments. National Policy on Education (2013), stated that “no educational system may rise above the quality of its teachers”. This is in tandem with the National Policy on Education which stated that the purpose of teacher education is to produce highly motivated, conscientious and effective classroom teachers while boosting the spirit of creativity and enquiry and assisting them to adapt the current societal ways of life; making available teachers with sound professional and intellectual background which will be applicable in their daily teaching obligations and ensuring their adaptability in an ever changing society and the world at large and to enhance their commitment to the teaching profession. Counselling ‘a profession that requires continuing professional development, reflective thinking, responsibility, autonomy, creativity, and research and personal judgments. So, counsellors in the primary schools need constant training and retraining programme.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

This research is anchored on the human capital theory, which was proposed according to Okechukwu and Baribor (2021), by Schultz in 1961 and refined by Becker in 1994. According to the theory, education or training improves the performance of employees by imparting useful knowledge and skills. As a result, employees' future income is raised by increasing their lifetime earnings (Becker, 1994). A study of the net present value of the costs and benefits of training, according to the human capital theory, should be conducted before a decision to invest in training is made by an individual. During an initial period, it is assumed that individuals will invest in training and will receive returns on their investment during subsequent periods. He believes that human capital is similar to "physical means of production", such as factories and machines: one can invest in human capital (for example, by pursuing higher education, training, or medical treatment) and one's outputs are partially determined by the rate of return on the human capital one possesses. As a result, human capital serves as a means of production, in which additional investment results in increased production. Human capital, unlike land, labour or fixed capital, can be substituted but cannot be transferred like these other forms of capital (Okechukwu & Baribor, 2021; Monday, 2015). The implication of this theory is that the managers of primary school education in Nigeria understand the fact that human resources training is necessary/required for improving teachers and non-teaching performance in the primary schools. So, if the managers and administrators of primary schools in Nigeria want optimum performance of both teaching and non-teaching staff, they must invest in training and retraining of their employee (teachers, counsellors and non-teaching staff) to improve the overall job performance of teaching and non-teaching in schools

2. Concept of Framework

2.1 Concept of Professional Counsellor

School counsellors are certified/licensed educators who improve students' success by implementing a comprehensive school counselling programme. School counsellors design and deliver school counselling programmes that improve students' outcomes. They lead, advocate and collaborate to promote equity and access for all students by connecting their school counselling programme to the school academic mission and school improvement plan. They uphold the ethical and professional standard of their professional body and promote the development of the school counselling programme based on the following areas of the professional body National Model: define, deliver, manage and assess (ASCA, undated). Neyland,

Leslie, John, Jennifer, Kelly, & Nick (2018), observed that school guidance and counselling services prepare students to assume increasing responsibility for their decisions and grow in their ability to understand and accept the results of their choices. There are effective implementation of guidance and counselling in educational system of developed nations. The service of guidance and counselling in schools provide a good opportunity for students to cope with the demand of learning and personal development.

Iduwu (undated) submitted that the counsellor is a helping professional who is trained in human behaviour. He interprets human behaviour in such a way that he will be able to function effectively in the world around him. The guidance counsellor seeks to help individual of all ages and sex in their bid to solve their problems. He is always out to treat individuals with dignity and respect. The counsellor empathizes with individuals and confidentiality in his watch-word. He keeps his counselees' secrets secret. He is a career educator, who sees to it that individuals are properly guided in their choice of careers. Indeed, the counsellor is an adviser, a helper, a teacher, a parent, a confidant and a friend to the child.

Counsellors needs training and retraining programme to be able to provide professional guidance and counselling services to students. Training and training programme enhances counsellor' job performance to a large extent. Regular human resource training of the counsellors ensures sustainability of guidance and counselling programme in educational institutions. Effective professional development provides teachers and counsellors with adequate time to learn, practice, implement and reflect upon new strategies that facilitate changes in their practice. There are many factors responsible for poor quality output of counsellors in the Nigerian public primary schools. Some of them include inability to attending workshops, seminars and conferences, unpreparedness in terms of skills update and poor supervision. Counsellors should be motivated towards attending professional development programmes as to enhance counselling quality outputs.

2.2 Concept of Training Programme

There are many definitions on training. For Alao (2010), training is a specialized process through which one learns to perform direct tasks of varying complexity and acquire expected job behaviours. Training can be used to improve workers efficiency and gives them the opportunity to acquire advance skills and knowledge needed in executing job tasks in the organization. Reilly (2001), defined training as the development of a person's knowledge, skills and attitudes for the purpose of advancing his or her professional career. As an organized process, it modifies the attitude, skills and the behaviour of workers by learning experience to effectively perform various duties of the organization (Osborne, 1996). Stoner (2005), defined training as the process of imparting technical knowledge to non-managerial employees. Roberts and Wayne (2006) saw training and development as the heart of a continuous effort to improve staff capability and organizational performance in order to improve both.

Ogunode, Adah, Audu & Pajo (2020); Osiesi (2020) and Darling-Hammond, Hyler & Gardner (2017), outlined the features of effective professional development to include: integrates active learning; utilizes adult learning theory; it is content focused; uses models and modeling of effective practice; supports collaboration, typically in job-embedded contexts; offers opportunities for feedback and reflection; provides coaching and expert support and sustained duration.

2.2.1 Methods of Training

A. On-the-job Training (Informal Training)

It is during this type of training that the supervisor or superior officer takes time out of his or her schedule to coach or instruct the trainee. A job rotation programme, in which employees are permitted to move

from one unit or department to another, working on a variety of jobs and gaining a diverse set of skills, could be implemented. Job rotation is particularly common in-service industries such as banks, insurance companies, and other similar organizations. As an alternative to internships, which combine job training with related classroom instruction, on-the-job training can be provided through apprenticeships, in which the employee is trained under the supervision of a supervisor or a highly skilled co-worker. One major advantage of on-the-job training is that no special facilities are required, and trainees can begin working in the reproductive industry immediately after completing their training. However, the costs of replacing damaged equipment, disposing of waste materials, and dealing with dissatisfied customers or clients could be extremely high (Okechukwu & Baribor 2021; Akuezulo and Agu 2002; Nmadu 2013).

B. Off-the-job Training (Formal Training)

In most cases, off-the-job training takes place away from the workplace, but attempts are made to replicate actual working conditions. Other activities such as training seminars, lectures, and films, among other things, may be used to supplement off-the-job training in the classroom setting. An employee may work on actual equipment and materials in a realistic job setting during a vestibule training session, but in a different room than the one in which he or she will be working. A major reason for this is to avoid off-the-job pressure that could interfere with the process of learning. It is also possible to receive formal training in the form of day-release classroom training, in which employees are granted one or two days off each week or month to attend formal lectures and lectures on-demand (Okechukwu & Baribor 2021; Stoner, 2005).

2.2.2 The Needs for Counsellors Training in Educational Institutions

i. Increased Staff Performance: From the perspective of the organisation, performance is at the pinnacle of all training programmes and initiatives. Employees who have received proper training are capable of achieving greater results than employees who have not received proper training but have the equal physical ability. The success or failure of an organisation is determined by the performance of its employees. A well-trained workforce out performs its less-trained counterparts in terms of productivity.

ii. Higher Turnover Rate: Unmotivated employees who are unable to perform well are more likely to quit their jobs than employees who are capable of performing well in their current positions. The same situation applies to a staff that is not productive. He despises his job and will leave it at the first sign of provocation, no matter where it comes from.

iii. Higher Confidence: In the case of a trained individual, he has confidence in his ability to perform. He believes that he has complete control over his environment and is well-prepared to deal with the disappointments, frustrations, and inconveniences that may arise from time to time.

As a result, he learns to rationalise and accept responsibility for his own failures, rather than blaming the organisation. A well-trained employee derives intrinsic satisfaction from his or her work, which in turn increases his or her confidence. Organizations that have regular training programmes provide their employees with a sense of belonging and provide them with something to strive for.

iv. Better Coordination: Training aids in the coordination of men and materials on the battlefield. During the training programme, employees learn about the expectations and objectives of the organisation. It is demonstrated to them the ladder through which they can achieve their own objectives, resulting in goal congruency, which causes everyone to pull in the same direction. Coordination becomes a piece of cake.

2.3 Problems Militating against Effective Training and retraining of Counsellors

The problems militating against effective training programme of counsellors in Nigerian primary schools include; inadequate funding, corruption, political instability, poor planning of training and inadequate data.

1. Inadequate Funding

Inadequate funding of education is responsible for poor training programme of counsellors in the Nigerian educational institutions. Training and retraining programme is capital intensive. More funds are required to carry out training programme. Gregory, Ogunode and Jegede (2021), did a study and discovered that inadequate funding is one of the problem or constraints to effective teacher development in Secondary Schools in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Ogunode et al (2020) posited that inadequate funding is one of the major problems preventing effective implementation of staff development programme for primary school teachers in Nigeria. The inadequate funding of education in Nigeria is responsible for many problems affecting the educational development in the country. Staff development programme is one of the programme that the government of Nigeria have not showed much commitment. The annual budgetary allocation for staff development programme in the ministries of education across the three tiers of government have been grossly inadequate. Grants released by the government to Secondary school education are far below expectation. The reason for this is not farfetched, because different sectors are competing with education. What government allocates to education falls short of UNESCO's recommendation of 26% of a country's national budget. John (2017) opined that the funds from the federal government to the education sector and basic schools in specific are not enough.

2. Corruption

Another factor preventing effective training programme of counsellors in the Nigerian educational institutions is corruption. Funds released for implementation of capacity development programme is looted and diverted into private hands. Kanibin (2019) cited Okorosaye-Orubite (2008) who submitted that one of the workshops organized by the Universal Basic Education Board, about 800 million naira was outrageously spent on a one-day training workshop. This highlights the corruption reality on ground. It can therefore be deduced that rather than the workshop serves as a means to improve the educational sector through innovative brainstorming, it was used as means to line the pockets of those in charge of organizing the seminar. Ogunode et al (2020), submitted that corruption is another factor responsible for poor implementation of teachers' development programme at the basic schools across the federation. Funds allocated for implementation of teachers' development programme are been diverted by the official, administrators and political officeholders in some ministries, agencies and department of education in the country. Corruption practices have penetrated some ministries, agencies and department of education in the country. This development is affecting the development of education in the country because fraction of funds allocated for programmes like staff development, planning of education, consultancy services and other services are been diverted into private pocket.

3. Political Instability

Political instability in Nigeria is another major factor responsible for ineffective training programme of counsellors in the educational institutions in Nigeria. Ogunode et al (2020) viewed political instability refers to the changes of government or authority in power often. Political instability also means the situation whereby country changes its political leaders continuously. Political instability is another challenge facing effective implementation of teachers' development programme in Nigerian basic schools. Nigeria is known for practicing democracy which implies that every four years new government or administration comes on board while other are leaving. Every government or administration have its

political agenda to pursue for four years. Some political party agenda favour capacity development for staff. Policies and programme are developed to implement such policies and plan on capacity development for staff across the federation but when such party loss or are voted out of office, the new government discontinue such policies and plans and introduce new programme.

4. Poor Planning of Training

Poor planning of training programme at the school level is another major problem hindering effective training of counsellors in primary schools. Ogunode et al (2020) observes that lack of strategic action plans for effective staff development programme for the primary school education is another problem affecting effective staff development programme for teachers teaching at the primary schools in Nigeria. There has not been an action plan designed purposely to achieve the objective of staff development programme for teachers of basic school education in Nigeria. The inability of the government to developed strategic plans or road map for teachers' development at the basic schools is responsible for poor teachers' development at the basic schools across the country.

5. Inadequate Data

Lack of data on counsellors that have undergone professional development programme and have not been trained are rarely available in the ministries and agencies of government to enable for planning and decision taking. Ogunode et al (2020) acknowledged that lack of data/information on training need gaps for teacher at basic schools is another major problem affecting the implementation of teachers' development programme at the basic schools across the country. There are no data/information of training need gap for basic schools across the country. There are no information on subject teachers training needs or training gap for almost all subjects in the country. There are no also accurate data and information on those who have been trained for one decades across the local government, states and at the federation as a whole.

3. Way Forward

Based on the identified problems, the following were recommended:

- A. Adequate Funding:** Government should increase the budgetary allocation for education. Priority should be given to funding of human capital; development of counsellors at the primary school level.
- B. Corruption in the administration of primary school education in Nigeria** should be fought with all anti-corruption agencies in the country. Proper monitoring and evaluation should be designed for implementation of training programme at the primary school education.
- C. There must be definite and properly coordinated training needs and programmes targeted at continuous improvement of Counsellors in primary schools in Nigeria**
- D. Policies continuity** is one of the keys to the development of educational programme and policies. So, the government should ensure that all stakeholders in the country are involved in designing and formulating educational policies so that any government that comes on power will see the need to continue the policies since they are involved in the process of it designing and formulation.
- E. The government should develop an action plan for teachers' development programme.** The action plan should clearly state how many basic school teachers would be trained in a year. Where, when and on what subjects should be stated.

Conclusion

In conclusion, some major factors were identified as the problems militating against effective training programme of professional counsellors in Nigerian primary school. They include: inadequate funding,

corruption, political instability, poor planning of training and inadequate data/information. To address these problems identified, the presenters suggested a way forward: government should increase the budgetary allocation for education, corruption in the administration of primary school education in Nigeria should be fought with anti-corruption agencies, there should be definite and properly coordinated training needs and programme, all stakeholders should be involve in designing and formulating educational policies and government should develop action plan for teachers' development programme.

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