

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

Impact of Curriculum and Assessment Reforms on School Counselling in Nigeria

Ehindero Serifat Adefunke

Faculty of Education, Department of Educational Foundations and Counselling,
Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria

Abstract:

The paper examines the cumulative impact of curriculum and assessment reforms (embarked upon in Nigeria educational system since 1968) on school guidance and counselling services. The foci of such reforms were access, quality, functional quality assurance mechanism, integration of a range of educational support services into the school curriculum, effective and efficient instructional delivery system and improved quality in student academic performance. The study sought to assess students' awareness of the impact of curriculum and assessment their knowledge of areas of such impacts and the reluctance and quality of the counselling services received relative to the curriculum and instructional challenges that encountered in their classroom. Appropriate research instruments were developed, validated and used to collect data from the subject. Results showed that most students are unaware of the impact of curriculum reforms on school guidance and counselling services. Students who indicated awareness reported that the services are unorganized as the counselling units are ill-equipped and hence not functional. The implications of the results are discussed.

1. Introduction

Substantial reforms of the curricula have been embarked upon in the Nigeria educational system leading to the present 9-3-4 system of education. In general, the major foci of such reforms have been in curricula assessment with emphasis on access, quality, standard, accountability, vocational and technical education including continuous assessment and educational counseling support services (NPE, 2007). The reforms are captured under an egalitarian philosophy and driven by the socio-economic and political dynamics of development. In the context of such reforms, the curriculum structure has been diversified and integrated, disciplines have been introduced to accommodate the wide range of students learning abilities and career/vocational interests and provisions are made for students with special needs. Continuous assessment format has been introduced and teachers have been trained accordingly to implement the products of the reform efforts.

In recent times however, a combination of factors seems to have made the dreams of the reforms unrealizable or unimplementable (Ehindero, 2014). Among these factors are unarticulated structures of the curriculum within a unitary system of education, the too 'bookish' nature of the content which marginalizes a sizable number of average and at-risk students, the lack of effective, non functional guidance and counselling support services to bridge the existing gaps in the unarticulated structure of the curriculum and classroom practice especially the gap between the theory and practice embedded in the reforms (Ehindero, 1999).

In particular, it seems also that students are unaware of the demands of the reform on them and their adjustment needs especially the requirements of the different school subjects, including how and what the continuous assessment format demands from and affect students' academic programme and learning environment. Some of the deficiencies are currently being reflected in poor performance of the products of the existing structure of the curriculum, dwindling students enrolment in some core subjects, examination malpractices and other distortions and aberrations in the implementation of the reform agenda.

Section 11 item 101(j) of the National Policy on Education (2007) states that;

'in view of personality maladjustment among school children career officers and counselors shall be appointed in post primary institutions.. Government shall continue to make provisions for training of interested teachers and Guidance and Counselling shall also feature in teacher education programmes' (pp.53)

Unfortunately, studies such as (Ehindero, 1999) show that in most secondary schools especially in southwestern Nigeria, counselling services are either lacking or ineffective as students who experience different forms of mal-adjustment problems and challenges under the reform agenda are prone to develop all types of behaviours and characteristics that are inconsistent with the core values of the reform. Basically, counsellors are concerned with the behaviour of the client, as behavior is the function of interaction of heredity and environment.. In this case, counsellors help clients define goals in behavioural terms, provide resources and encouragement in helping clients move towards goals and experiment with a variety of techniques for helping them with different problems. Hence, it appears that the expected impacts of the reform on the students as reflected in students' academic performance and in selected aspects of the students behaviours have not been realized probably due to factors not unconnected with the absence of counselling services and how counselling services, human resources and equipment for such services and other components of the reform are being implemented in

the schools It is important to emphasis that the guidance and counselling services are structured and integrated into the curriculum reform agenda to assist students meet the potential or possible challenges and problems associated with the implementation of the reform.

Consequent of all the above, the general purpose of this study is to examine the impact of curriculum and assessment reform on the counselling in selected secondary schools.

1.1. Objectives

Specifically, the study sought to,

- assess the awareness of students on the impact of curriculum reforms and assessment on counselling services
- assess students' knowledge of the possible areas of impacts of curriculum and assessment reforms on students counselling services
- determine whether or not counselling services received in schools meet the specific academic and developmental needs of students

1.1.1. Research Questions

- What is the level of students' awareness of the impact of curriculum and assessment reforms on school counselling services?
- Do students have knowledge of the impact of curriculum and assessment reforms on school counseling services?
- Do the counselling services provided in schools meet the academic and developmental needs of students as required by or contained/embedded in the reform?

2. Research Hypotheses

- There is no significant difference in level of awareness of students of the impact of curriculum and assessment reforms on school counseling services in terms of sex.
- There is no significant difference in counselling needs of students to cope with the impact of curriculum and assessment reforms in the selected schools in terms of age.

3. Methodology

The study assessed the awareness of students on the impact of curriculum reforms and assessment on counselling services. It assessed students' knowledge of the possible areas of impacts of curriculum and assessment reforms on students counseling services. The study also determined whether or not counselling services received in schools meet the specific academic and developmental needs of students. These were with a view to improving the assessment of reforms on school counselling in Nigeria. The study adopted survey research design. The population for the study comprised secondary school students. The sample size consisted of two hundred students and these students were purposively selected based on schools with standard counselling services. Questionnaire on reforms on school counselling was used to collect data for the study. Data collected were analyzed using percentages, T-test and ANOVA.

4. Results

Items	Response Pattern		Decision
	Yes	No	
1	117(60.6)	76(39.4)	Aware
3	158(81.9)	35(18.1)	Aware
12	97(50.3)	96(49.7)	Aware
13	92(47.7)	101(52.3)	Aware
15	117(60.6)	76(39.4)	Aware
16	173(89.6)	20(10.4)	Aware

Table 1: Students' Level of Awareness of the Impact of Curriculum and Assessment Reforms on School Counselling Services () percentages

The data presented in Table 2 shows that the responses of students to their level of awareness of the impact of curriculum and assessment reforms on school counselling services. 89.6%, 81.9%, 60.6% and 50.3% of the respondents agreed to all the items and that they are aware of the impact of the curriculum and assessment reforms on school counselling services.

Items	Response Pattern		Decision
	Yes	No	
2	145 (75.1)	53 (24.9)	Adequate Knowledge
5	157 (81.3)	35 (18.6)	Adequate Knowledge
6	130 (67.4)	63 (32.7)	Adequate Knowledge
7	62(32.1)	131 (67.9)	Adequate Knowledge
10	90 (46.6)	103 (53.4)	Adequate Knowledge
14	41 (21.2)	152 (78.8)	Adequate Knowledge

Table 2: Students' Knowledge of the Impact of Curriculum and Assessment Reforms on School Counselling Services () percentages

Table 2 shows the data regarding the level of students' knowledge of the impact of curriculum and assessment reforms on school counselling services. Data presented showed that 81.3%, 75.1% and 67.4% of the respondents had adequate knowledge of the impact of curriculum and assessment reforms on school counselling services.

Items	Response Pattern		Decision
	Yes	No	
4	155 (80.3)	38 (19.7)	Adequate
8	168 (87.0)	25 (13)	Adequate
9	70 (36.3)	123 (63.7)	Not Adequate
10	93 (48.2)	100 (51.8)	Not Adequate
11	103 (53.4)	90 (46.6)	Adequate

Table 3: Extent to which counselling services meet the needs of students
() percentages

Table 3 indicates that 3 of the counselling needs of the students such as; my teachers/school show interest in my school work; I cannot cope with my class work; and what I learnt in school is not related to the problem I face outside school) 87.0%, 80.3% and 53.4% were adequately met. While 2 of the counselling needs (I do not have enough books in some of my subjects and no facilities to practice what I learnt in the classroom) 14.0% and 10.4% were not adequately met. It was found that 3 of the counselling needs of the students, 87.0%, 80.3% and 53.4% were adequately met by the guidance services provided and 2 of the counselling needs of the students 14.0% and 10.4% were not met by the guidance services provided.

Sex	N	\bar{X}	SD	df	t	p
Male	88	8.68	1.89	191	0.598	>.05
Female	105	8.83	1.52			

Table 4: T-test showing the Difference in Male and Female Students' Level of Awareness of Students of the Impact of Curriculum and Assessment Reforms on School Counselling Services

Table 4 shows that there is a difference in the level of awareness of male and female students of the impact of curriculum and assessment reforms on school counseling services. The mean awareness of male students stand at ($\bar{X} = 8.68$), the mean for the female was ($\bar{X} = 8.83$). The test value ($t=0.598$, $df = 191$) indicates that there was no significant difference in male and female level of awareness of the impact of curriculum and assessment reforms on school counselling services.

Source	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	p
Between Group	5.948	2	2.974	1.977	>.05
Within Group	285.866	190	1.505		
Total	291.813	192			

Table 5: ANOVA showing the difference in the extent to which counselling services meet the needs of students in terms of age

The result presented in Table 5 shows the difference in the extent to which counseling services meet the needs of students in terms of age ($F = 1.977$, $df_1 = 2$ $df_2 = 190$, $p>.05$). Hence, it can be concluded that there was no significant difference in the extent to which counselling services meet the needs of students in terms of age.

5. Discussion

The school curriculum if formal consist of planned learning experience embedded with both intended and unintended students learning outcomes. In the Nigerian context the national curriculum operated in the secondary schools is centrally planned with virtually no real inputs from both the school teachers and counsellors. So involvement of both teachers and counselors in curriculum and assessment matters is through professional and quasi-legal requirement within the top-down approach to curriculum development in Nigeria. This situation puts the school counsellors in a tight corner in terms of performing his/her professional responsibilities vis a vis advising the students in the different aspects of curriculum and assessments impacts (-awareness, knowledge and the needs to cope with) on students. Infact, it is possible that teachers and school counsellors become aware of and involved in curriculum processes only through in-services training at the curriculum implementation stage.

Given the context above it is unexpected that the level of students' awareness of the impact of curriculum and assessment reforms on school counselling service is relatively high while some students are not aware of the guidance services in school because it is not well recognized by the authority. Students who were unaware of such impact is substantial in terms of the implications of their unawareness on the responsibilities of school counsellors who must now task-analyze the contents of the new school curriculum and its associated continuous assessment components to identify how they can be brought to the awareness of and management by the range of students in the school. The implication of this is compounded by the fact that a substantial number of secondary schools lack

functioning counselling services (Ehindero 2007). The awareness of the impact of the reform is one aspects of the reform. The results suggested that much efforts were made to enlighten students through the counselling services of the multiple (cognitive and affective) requirements of the curriculum and assessments reforms students who are either unaware or unknowledgeable or both about the impacts of, or requirement of curriculum and assessment reform are not likely to prepare for or cope with the core demands of such reforms.

Probably the most demanding professional responsibility of the school counsellor is helping students to cope (adjust to) with the academic and core challenges of a new curriculum and assessment format. It is important therefore that school counsellors should be involved in the curriculum processes because of the important services rendered by the school counsellor to the students, parents other stakeholders in education. Without mincing words, the counsellor perceives each student as a unique individual who has a right to acceptance, self-development, self-fulfillment and self-direction and who has a responsibility for making decisions and living with the consequences of these decisions (Gibbsai, 2000; Kauchak, 2011), so a large number of students need counselling to cope with the impact of curriculum and assessment reform. This inability to cope is most likely a result of a disarticulated/irrelevant curriculum structure or inefficient/lack of an adequate school counselling service or unit implications. The results of this study call for a close working relationship between the curriculum and assessment reforms and the school counsellors, such a relationship hardly exist in the secondary school system where individualistic ethos and competitive ideology even among colleagues dominate curriculum and assessment implementation strategies at the classroom level. Another implication of the results of this study is the need for an inclusive and participatory approach to curriculum and assessment reform process in which the inputs of teachers and school counsellors are solicited and recognized as critical at both the policy and implementation phases of curriculum and assessment reforms. As it is part of the responsibilities of the school counsellor to plan and develop a guidance programme and the curriculum in relation to students' needs, also provides individual and group counselling services in schools, colleges and universities to assist individuals in achieving more effective personal, social, educational and vocational development and achievement. The politicization of critical professional in-service training programmes for teachers and school counsellors to the demand of the reform, are often inappropriately implemented and when implemented, the criteria for the selection of participants are unusually politicized to the detriment of the core objectives and interest of students, teachers and counsellors. This could be so due to the non- recognition of the importance of Guidance and Counselling in schools from the federal level to local level.

6. References

- i. Ehindero, S. A. (1999) Evaluation of Counselling Services in Secondary schools in Osun State. Unpublished M. A. Thesis of Faculty of Education Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife.
- ii. Ehindero, O. J. (2014). Intellectual Foundations of Curriculum Development, Implementation and Innovation. Melrose Publishing Company Limited, Sango Otta.
- iii. Ehindero, S. A. (2003). An Assessment of the range of Guidance of Counselling Services in selected secondary schools in Osun State. *Ife Journal of Theory and Research in Education*, Vol, 7, No. 2, pp18-25.
- iv. Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004). National Policy on Education.
- v. Gibson, R. L. (2008). Introduction to Guidance and Counselling. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- vi. Kauchak, D. P. (2011). Introduction to teaching. Becoming a professional. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- vii. Mogbo, L. (2005). Guidance and Counselling Services. Signal Educational Services
- viii. Odemlam, E. A. & Uwais, B. Y. (2009). Importance of Guidance and Counselling in our schools.
- ix. Thoresen, C. E. (1966). Behavioural Counselling an introduction. *The Social Counsellor*, (14), Pp 13-21
- x. Shetzer, B. & Stone, S. C. (1981). Fundamentals of Counselling. Boston, Mass: Houghton Mifflin