Capacity-Building Needs of Counsellors Interacting with Underachievers in Secondary Schools in Anambra State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the capacity-building needs of school councellors interacting with underachievers in secondary schools. Two research questions were answered in the study. The study was conducted in public secondary schools in Anambra State using descriptive survey research design. The population for this study comprised all the 257 counsellors in the 257 public secondary schools in Anambra State while the sample for the study comprised 193 (one hundred and ninety-three) counsellors selected through proportionate random sampling technique. The researchers developed the instrument which was used for data collection. Three experts validated the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach alpha on data collected from a sample of 30 counsellors from 30 secondary schools in Enugu State. The reliability coefficient for the instrument was 0.84. The researchers collected data with the help of six research assistants who are teachers in secondary schools in the State. Mean ratings and standard deviations were used to answer the research questions. Findings indicated that counsellors need capacity-building on monitoring academic progress of the underachievers in the school; they need capacity-building on instructional supervision for the underachievers to enable them improve the academic

performance of the underachievers. It was therefore recommended among others that the counsellors should use inter-school counselling visitations to improve their counselling services for the underachievers in secondary schools.

Keywords: Capacity-Building; Capacity-Building Needs; Counselling; School Counsellors; Underachievers.

Introduction

Every school is obliged to work towards enhancing students' academic achievement. Partly in this regard, counselling units are established in secondary schools. These units are headed by professionals called counsellors. In the context of this study, the researcher defined counsellors as professionals who assist people in solving their myriad of problems (which could be educational, social, emotional, vocational and psychological in nature) and to also help them change their bad behaviours/habits in order to live a satisfied and meaningful life in the society. According to Carey and Dimmitt (2012), the one being helped is referred to as client. The client is helped to make good life out of a confusing state of life. For counsellors to do this, they need capacity-building.

The term, "capacity- building" is defined as a planned development of knowledge and skills through acquisition, incentives, technology or training aimed at improvement (Unigwe, 2009). In the same manner, Ogunsola (2011) defined capacity building as a process whereby people are strengthened, improved and upgraded to achieve their developmental objectives during their service year. From the above, capacity building is a process of continuous updating of personnel's knowledge, skills and interest in their chosen field. Counsellors therefore have capacity-building needs (Pham & Keenan, 2011).

Capacity-building needs in this study are the skills and competencies which the school counsellors must acquire above what they possess in order to make them perform better in their counselling responsibilities. Within the context of secondary school, Ogundokun (2012) defined capacity -building needs as professional development requirements for students. With reference to this study, capacity -

building needs include the skills and competencies the counsellors require in order to handle the underachievers in schools. Cooper (2000) and Pollock (2011) identified such needs as instructional supervision needs and students' academic progress monitoring needs.

Instructional supervision is necessary for maintaining a classroom environment and help to determine what students are learning and the progress they are making (Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association, 2016). This information provides the basis for making decision, planning instructional activities and experiences and distinguishing effective from ineffective procedures (Cooper, 2000). Copper is of the view that effective instructional monitoring helps practitioners take ownership of the teaching-learning process and enables them to implement new strategies to foster students' academic progress.

In education generally and secondary schools in particular, academic progress is the level of attainment of a person in an examination (Emetarom, 2004), that is, how an individual student is able to demonstrate his or her abilities in an examination after instruction. According to Ebong and Efue (2015), academic progress is the scholastic standing of a student at a given moment. This scholastic standing according to them could be explores in terms of the grades obtained in a course (subjects or groups of subjects). Academic progress is therefore the measure of success in education, in other words how well a student performs in the subjects he was taught in school after examinations (Pandey, 2008). Pollock (2011) opined that monitoring the academic progress of the students and giving them feedback is a skill every school counsellor must possess and can be acquired through careful observation and having special interest on the students in the class. This study therefore determined the capacity-building needs of school counsellors for counselling underachieving students in secondary schools in Anambra State**.**

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to determine the capacity-building needs of school counsellors for counselling underachieving students in secondary schools in Anambra State. Specifically, the study determined the:

1. Capacity-building needs of school counsellors for classroom instructional supervision of underachievers in secondary schools in Anambra State.
2. Capacity-building needs of school counsellors for academic progress monitoring of underachievers in secondary schools in Anambra State.

Statement of the Problem

The desire for high academic achievement among students is generally shared in Nigeria as in many other countries. Though, high academic achievement of students in school is the responsibility of all the stakeholders (teachers, parents, principals, counsellors among others), the school counsellors in particular play some key roles in determining the attainment of this goal in the educational system. It is expected that the school counsellors in handling of the affairs of schools will adopt some practices like instructional supervision and students academic progress monitoring but from personal observations and reports, one begins to doubt whether the school counsellors have been living up to expectations in providing quality counselling services to students especially the underachievers in the schools. Some of these observations and reports bother on most counsellors' inability to embark on practices that can improve the performance of the underachievers. This has resulted to underachievement among students in most secondary schools in Anambra State. For instance, some students are no longer committed to their studies, some join cult while a host of others engage in other indisciplinary behaviours like fighting and stealing in the schools. These occurrences pose serious threats to high academic achievement in secondary schools in the State.

These observations and reports seem to point to a case of underachievement among students in secondary schools in Anambra State. It is against this background that the researcher deemed it necessary to empirically determine the capacity-building needs school counsellors for counselling underachieving students in secondary schools in Anambra State.

Research Questions

1. What are the capacity-building needs of school counsellors for classroom instructional supervision of underachievers in secondary schools in Anambra State?
2. What are the capacity-building needs of school counsellors for academic progress monitoring of underachievers in secondary schools in Anambra State?

Research Method

The study was conducted in public secondary schools in Anambra State using descriptive survey research design. The population for this study comprised all the 257 counsellors in the 257 public secondary schools in Anambra State while the sample for the study comprised 193 (one hundred and ninety-three) counsellors selected through proportionate random sampling technique. The researchers developed questionnaire which was the instrument used for data collection. The questionnaire items are structured on a four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree – 4 points, Agree – 3 points, Disagree – 2 points and Strongly Disagree – 1 point. Three experts validated the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach alpha on data collected from a sample of 30 counsellors from 30 secondary schools in Enugu State. The reliability coefficient for the instrument was 0.84. The researchers collected data with the help of six research assistants who are teachers in secondary schools in the State. Mean ratings were used to answer the research questions. In analyzing the data, mean rating of 2.50 was used in taking decisions. Mean ratings from 2.50 and above were regarded as agreed while those below 2.50 were regarded as disagreed.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the capacity-building needs of school counsellors for classroom instructional supervision of underachievers in secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 1: Mean Ratings on Instructional Supervision Capacity-Building Needs for Counselling the Underachievers

S/N	Instructional Supervision Capacity-Building Needs for Counselling the Underachievers	$\bar{X}$	Sd.	Rmk
	In Counselling Underachievers, I Have Needs for:			
1	Using teachers' lesson notes to monitor their instructional delivery in order to ensure that the underachievers are carried along in class.	2.62	0.11	A
2	Reviewing teachers' instructional delivery periodically to ensure that the underachievers are accommodated in the learning processes.	2.51	0.10	A
3	Regularly watching the underachievers as they carry out class activities in order to ensure that their learning improves in the class.	2.61	0.09	A
4	Monitoring instructions regularly in order to identify issues for improvement in teaching the underachievers.	2.32	0.11	D
5	Using classroom visitation to check whether the teachers pay adequate attention to the underachievers.	2.53	0.09	A
6	Checking teachers' assessment of the underachievers in order to ensure qualitative assessment in class.	2.54	0.10	A
7	Using supervisory visits to guide teachers to create interactive learning environment for the underachievers in the class.	2.31	0.08	D
8	Dialoguing productively with teachers in their classes to identify ways their practices in the class could be improved for the benefit of the underachievers.	2.59	0.12	A
	Mean of Mean	**2.50**	**0.1**	A

Results in Table 1 indicated that all the items (except items 4 and 7) were above the cut-off mark of 2.50. The mean of means of 2.50 was also indicated. The standard deviation scores ranged between 0.08 and 0.12 with an overall mean of 0.1. This shows that the scores cluster around their mean and indicated that the respondents did not vary significantly in their ratings. The finding here is that school counsellors need capacity-building for the classroom instructional supervision of underachievers in secondary schools in Anambra State.

Research Question 2: What are the capacity-building needs of school counsellors for academic progress monitoring of underachievers in secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 2: Mean Ratings on Academic Progress Monitoring Capacity-Building Needs for Counselling for the Underachievers

S/N	Academic Progress Monitoring Capacity-Building Needs for Counselling for the Underachievers	$\bar{X}$	Sd.	Rmk
	In Counselling Underachievers, I Have Needs for:			
9	Ensuring that teachers keep accurate records of the underachievers to enable me guide them based on the records.	2.34	0.12	D

10	Requesting parents to monitor the academic progress of the underachievers at home.	2.33	0.09	D
11	Using feedbacks from previous examinations to check the academic progress of the underachievers.	2.37	0.11	D
12	Matching students' past academic records with current ones so as to counsel the underachievers appropriately.	2.56	0.11	A
13	Directing teachers in my school to use learning outcomes of the underachievers to guide them develop personal skills.	2.50	0.10	A
14	Guiding the underachievers in my school to develop workplace skills that will contribute to their future economic wellbeing based on their past academic records.	2.53	0.12	A
15	Using past results of students to ensure that poorly performed students are not promoted to next class.	2.52	0.11	A
16	Doing ability grouping so that the underachievers learn from the bright ones.	2.56	0.10	A
	Mean of Mean	**2.50**	**0.11**	**A**

The results in Table 2 indicated that the mean ratings for the items (except items 9, 10 and 11are above the cut-off mark of 2.50. It also indicated the mean of means of 2.50. In the same manner, the standard deviation of the respondents ranged between 0.09 and 0.12 with the overall Sd. of 0.11. The Sd. mean of means indicate that the school counsellors did not vary significantly in their ratings of the items. Similarly, the mean of means for the items is 2.50 which fall within the cut-off mark of 2.50. The finding here is school counsellors have capacity-building needs for academic progress monitoring of underachievers in secondary schools in Anambra State.

Discussion

The result of the study on capacity-building needs of school counsellors for classroom instructional supervision of underachievers indicated that secondary school counsellors in Anambra State need capacity-building in order to supervise classroom instruction of the underachievers. This capacity-building need covers such areas like using teachers' lesson notes to monitor their instructional delivery in order to ensure that the underachievers are carried along in class; reviewing teachers' instructional delivery periodically to ensure that the underachievers are accommodated in the learning processes; regularly watching the underachievers as they carry out class activities in order to ensure that their learning improves in the class; using classroom visitation to check whether the teachers pay adequate

attention to the underachievers; checking teachers' assessment of the underachievers in order to ensure qualitative assessment in class; dialoguing productively with teachers in their classes to identify ways their practices in the class could be improved for the benefit of the underachievers.

The findings of this study are in agreement with the findings of Bryan, Moore-Thomas, Day-Vines and Holcomb-McCoy (2011) that classroom instructional supervision has the potential to improve on the academic achievement of the underachievers. Therefore, when the classroom instruction of the underachievers is adequately supervised, there is the likelihood that the underachievers will improve academically. The findings also agree with the findings of Carey and Harrington (2019) that developing effective instructional supervision strategy is condition precedence for improving the academic performance of the academically poor-performing students. The school counsellors in such a situation (counselling underachiever) must ensure that the classroom instruction of the underachievers is adequately supervised.

The result of the study on capacity-building needs of school counsellors for academic progress monitoring of underachievers indicated that secondary school counsellors in Anambra State need capacity-building in order to monitor the academic progress of the underachievers. The academic progress monitoring capacity-building need covers such areas: matching students' past academic records with current ones so as to counsel the underachievers appropriately; directing teachers in my school to use learning outcomes of the underachievers to guide them develop personal skills; guiding the underachievers in my school to develop workplace skills that will contribute to their future economic wellbeing based on their past academic records; using past results of students to ensure that poorly performed students are not promoted to next class; doing ability grouping so that the underachievers learn from the bright ones.

The findings are in consonance with Pollock (2011) who found that academic progress monitoring has the potential of improving the academic performance of students. The school counsellors need to be empowered to be able to adequately

monitor the academic progress of the underachievers. They therefore need capacity-building in the areas identified in this study to enable them handle the students adequately.

Conclusion

The conclusion of this study is that school counsellors need capacity-building to be able to handle classroom instructional supervision and academic progress monitoring of underachievers.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. School counsellors should use inter-school counselling visitations to improve their counselling services for the underachievers in secondary schools.
2. School counsellors should undergo personal training in the areas of instructional supervision and academic monitoring to be able to handle under achievers in their schools.
3. School principals should recommend counsellors in their schools to the government for on-the-job training on instructional supervision and academic monitoring.
4. Institutions where counsellors are trained should introduce new courses on instructional supervision and academic monitoring for counsellors in-training.
5. There should be a functional collaboration between counsellors in tertiary institutions and those in secondary schools. This collaboration will give rise to cross pollination of knowledge and by extension, enhance the capacity of the school counsellors to handle the underachievers in their schools.

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