

Developing A School-Based Counselling Programme in Nigerian Schools in the 21st Century

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Abstract

School-based counselling services provide assistance and information to learners so that they make better educational and career choices suitable for their developmental process. Counselling services look at the holistic development of the learner by taking into account the psycho-social, intellectual, emotional and physical aspects within the context of his environment. Nigeria continues to undergo substantial changes in its occupational, social, and economic structures in line with the attainment of sustainable development goals. In response to these and other continuing societal and individual needs and challenges, educational -leaders and policymakers are in the midst of reforming the entire educational enterprise. Counselling services in schools have also continued to undergo reforms, changing from a position-services model to a comprehensive programme firmly grounded in principles of human growth and development. The objective of this paper was to examine how school-based counselling in Nigeria could be enhanced to ensure sustainable national development. Using the exploratory method, the paper examined the challenges and the opportunities available for school-based counselling in Nigeria. Recommendations were made in defining the way forward as regards effective the organization and utilization of school-based counselling for development in 21st century Nigeria.

Keywords: Developing, School-based Counselling, vocational guidance

Introduction

School-based counselling services are crucial to the success of lifelong learning activities, providing assistance and information to learners so that they make better educational and career choices suitable for their developmental process. Through counseling services, students develop a clear understanding of themselves, their attitudes, abilities, aptitudes, ambitions, resources and limitations. They are also guided into various entrepreneurial activities, training, advancement and other benefits for sustainable self-reliance and self-worth. Students are able to achieve and live fulfilled lives, and contribute meaningfully to the development of their country in all spheres of life once they receive appropriate counselling services.

Counselling services look at the holistic development of the learner by taking into account the psycho-social, intellectual, emotional and physical development aspects of the learner within the context of the learner's environment (Ihuoma, 2017; Baker & Gerler, 2001).

In the early 1900s, school guidance and counselling was called vocational guidance. Vocational guidance had a singular purpose and was seen as a response to the economic, educational and social problems of those times. It was concerned with the entrance of young people into the world of work and the conditions they would find there. Economic concerns focused on the need to better prepare workers for the workplace, whereas educational concerns arose from the need to increase efforts in schools to help students find purpose for their education as well as their employment. Social concerns emphasized the need for changing school methods and organization as well as exerting more control over conditions of labour in child-employing industries (Gysbers., & Moore, 1981). (Gysbers., & Henderson, 2006).

Counselling has been with man from time immemorial, and has been found to be effective in producing long term results and positive effects. Even in the vicarious non formal indigenous education system, counselling still took the pride of place. The provision for guidance and counseling in the Nigeria National Policy on Education has been an issue of concern to professional counsellors for some time now. A critical appraisal of this provision reveals an obvious non-recognition, ignorance and neglect of the crucial contributions of counselling to the achievement of the goals and objectives of the National Policy on Education (Ihuoma, 2017). It is therefore, an issue of great concern to observe the terse provision made for counselling in organized formal education settings in Nigeria (Egbochuku, 1999). This paper was examined under the following subheadings

- Concept of Counselling
- Foundational Premises of Comprehensive Guidance and Counselling Programmes
- Theoretical Foundation of the Programme
- Guidance and Counselling and Development in 21st Century Nigeria
- Challenges and Opportunities for Developing School-Based Counselling in Nigeria
- Conclusion and Recommendation

Concept of Counselling

Counselling is a process of helping individuals or groups of people to gain understanding of who they truly are. Counselling is a reflection of a professional relationship between a trained counsellor and a client (Egbochuku, 1999, Alutu, 2006,). Durosaro and Adeoye (2010) defined it to be a process whereby a person was helped in a face-to-face relationship while Agrawal (2006) explained counselling as an enlightened process whereby people helped others by encouraging their growth. Conceptually, counseling is a process designed to help clients understand and clarify personal views of their life space, and to learn to reach their self-determined goals through meaningful, well-informed choices and a resolution of problems of an emotional or interpersonal nature. It believes that every human individual has the potential for self-growth, self-development and self-actualization

Foundational Premises of Comprehensive Guidance and Counselling Programmes

As the guidance and counselling movement (then called vocational guidance) began to unfold in the United States at the turn of the 20th century, educational guidance became a priority along with vocational guidance. During the late 1920s and early

1930s, efforts were made to identify what the activities of guidance and counselling should be, and to establish the standard set up for it.

Just as we need to understand how guidance and counselling in our schools evolved, so too do we need to understand the premises on which the programme model is based. These premises under-gird the organization and management of guidance and counselling in the schools and serve as the point of departure for developing and managing school guidance and counselling programme. The premises are as follows:

1. *Guidance and counselling is a programme.* Its characteristics are similar to those of other programmes in education and include student standards: activities and processes to assist students in achieving these standards; professionally certificated personnel; materials and resources; programmes, personnel; and evaluation of results.
2. *Guidance and counselling programmes are developmental and comprehensive.* They are developmental in that guidance and counseling activities are conducted on a regular, planned, and systematic basis to assist students in their academic, career, and personal– social development. Although immediate and crisis needs of students are to be met, a major focus of a developmental programme is to provide all students with experiences to help them grow and develop. Guidance and counselling programmes are comprehensive in that full ranges of activities and services are provided.
3. *Guidance and counselling programmes feature a team approach.* A comprehensive, developmental programme of guidance and counselling is based on the assumption that all school staff are involved. At the same time, it is understood that professionally certified school counsellors are central to the programme. School counsellors not only provide direct services to students but also work in consultative and collaborative relations with other members of the guidance team, members of the school staff, parents and members of the community.
4. *Guidance and counselling programmes are developed through a systematic process of planning, designing, implementing, evaluating and enhancing.* This process ensures intentional delivery of a programme designed to address established priorities.
5. *Guidance and counselling programmes have established leadership.* This ensures accountability for the programme and for the quality of the performance of programme staff.

Theoretical Foundation of the Programme

According to *Random House Webster's Unabridged Dictionary* (2001), a theory “is a more- or less verified or established explanation accounting for known facts or phenomena” (p.1968). It is “a coherent group of general propositions used as principles of explanation for a class of phenomena” (p. 1967). In keeping with this definition of theory, Henderson (2005) presented a brief history of school counselling theory. He identified seven fundamental questions to be answered by theory, and then described 27 major principles that provided answers to the seven fundamental questions. The 27 principles became the “principles of explanation for a class of phenomena” (p. 1967). In this case, comprehensive guidance and counselling programmes from nursery to secondary school. They are presented below.

Principle 1: As with other dimensions of their development, all children and adolescents benefit from the assistance in accomplishing the age-appropriate tasks related to their academic, career and personal–social development.

Principle 2: All children and adolescents can benefit from interventions designed to assist their academic, career and personal–social development.

Principle 3: Some children and adolescents need more assistance in accomplishing the age-appropriate academic, career, and personal–social developmental tasks. These children and adolescents benefit from preventive or remedial interventions specially designed to assist them in achieving tasks appropriate to their developmental level.

Principle 4: School counsellors are qualified to make contributions to all of children's and adolescents' development in the areas of academic (educational), career, and personal–social development.

Principle 5: School counsellors can design and deliver interventions to meet students' developmental needs and design, and deliver interventions to meet students' needs for prevention and remediation, thereby helping to close gaps between specific groups of students and their peers.

Principle 6: School counsellors' interventions in students' academic, career and personal–social development assist students in acquiring and applying skills, attitudes and knowledge which promote development in those three dimensions of human growth and development.

Principle 7: School counsellors can assist and enhance other adults' work with students' academic–educational, career and personal–social development, and remove personal barriers to individual student's success.

Principle 8: School counsellors work with others in the school system on behalf of students to support the accomplishment of the system's mission and assist in the removal of systemic barriers to students' success.

Principle 9: The work of school counsellors should be organized as a programme.

Principle 10: The delivery system which divides programme activities into the four programme components of guidance curricula, individual student planning, responsive services and system support is the most effective and efficient means for organizing the programme.

Principle 11: The four programme activity components described as the delivery system for the model school guidance and counselling programme include all the means to affect students' academic, career and personal–social development: guidance curricula, individual student planning, responsive services and system support.

Principle 12: School guidance and counselling programme activities can be designed to effectively have an impact on all students' academic, career and personal–social development which help those students whose healthy academic, career and personal–social development is threatened or interrupted.

Principle 13: Intentionally designed interventions targeting identified needs or specified goals and objectives are more effective than interventions that are not intentionally designed.

Principle 14: A systematic approach to developing the school guidance and counselling programme (i.e., planning and building the foundation, designing the delivery system, implementing and monitoring the programme, holding program staff accountable, and evaluating the programme) ensures its effectiveness and relevance.

Principle 15: Collaborative, cooperative planning with parents or guardians, teachers, administrators, staff and community members in developing a school guidance and

counselling programme results in the programme being effective and an integral part of the total school mission

Principle 16: Effective local school guidance and counselling programmes are designed with the awareness of local demographics and political conditions, and on the basis of needs assessment based on locally gathered data.

Principle 17: Establishing priorities for and recognizing parameters within the programme are critical to the effective management and implementation of school guidance and counselling programmes.

Principle 18: There are organizational procedures that school counsellors can use to manage the implementation of their programmes for effectiveness, efficiency, and relevance to the school.

Principle 19: Accountability for students' results, school counsellor performance, and programme completeness is essential to ensuring the effectiveness and relevance of school guidance and counselling programmes, and it requires the collection and use of data.

Principle 20: Leadership for school guidance and counselling programmes is a responsibility shared between school counsellors and principals.

Principle 21: Having benefited from school counsellors' interventions, children and adolescents are more ready to learn academically and to be successful in school.

Principle 22: Explicit statements of the results desired for students ensure that the achievement of those results is better.

Principle 23: Evaluation of students' results, school counsellors' performance, and programme completeness is essential to ensuring the effectiveness and relevance of school guidance and counselling programmes, and it requires the collection and use of data.

Principle 24: Evaluation of students' results is based on established standards for the measurement of student development, growth, and change.

Principle 25: Evaluation of school counselors' performance is based on established standards for school counselling practice.

Principle 26: Evaluation of programme completeness is based on alignment with established models of comprehensive guidance and counselling programmes and local programme designs.

Principle 27: The purpose of evaluation is improvement.

Individually, each principle describes a determining characteristic of a comprehensive guidance and counselling programme. Taken together, they constitute the guiding principles that characterize and operationalize the total programme. When viewed holistically, they represent the principles for guiding the overall planning, design, implementation, evaluation, and enhancement of the programme (Henderson, 2005).

Guidance and Counselling and Development in 21st Century Nigeria

It is generally accepted that education is the road-map of any sustainable national development. It is the most valuable investment that can bring about rapid economical, socio-cultural, political, scientific and technological development in any country. We reaffirm that NPE's (2004) statement that "Education in Nigeria is an instrument for effective national development. Education shall continue to be used as a weapon to bring about a fundamental change in the intellectual and social well-being of any society".

The holistic view of education is to help an individual to be first useful to himself and then contribute meaningfully to the development of his community. Through personal or group counselling, the potential and limitations in individuals can be pointed out. This helps to reduce aggressive and delinquent behaviour tendencies which ultimately

reduce riots and students' disturbances in schools, and guide individuals in their choices of subjects or careers. Students make better career choices which agree with their interests and abilities rather than insisting on becoming engineers, doctors or lawyers because their parents want them to be so, and ultimately drop out of school because of academic deficiencies (Bella, 2012).

Bella (2012) further argued that guidance and counselling could help the individual to develop his abilities to make the best possible adjustment within his new environment so that he could make useful contributions to the school and his immediate society. In the new system of education (6-3-3-4), only good guidance counsellors can help children with their choice of subjects, careers and schools or universities. Students themselves look up to the schools to help them realize their aims in life, parents expect the schools to develop the intellectual abilities of their children and they even expect the schools to build up the moral, social and career aspirations of their subjects. It is only through proper guidance and counselling in the school that these obligations can be met.

The importance of guidance and counseling to the educational development of the developed countries of the world cannot be over emphasized. In fact, in some of these developed countries hardly would one be able to distinguish the central objectives of education from that of counselling services. They work hand in hand to achieve educational objectives. Warnath (1965) asserted that school guidance was designed to assist students to develop and accept an integrated picture of themselves, and of their roles in the world around them, to test those concepts against reality; and to convert the concepts into reality with satisfaction to themselves and to society. Similarly, the American Psychological Association sees counselling as being designed to help individuals towards overcoming obstacles to their personal growth, wherever these may be encountered and towards achieving the optimum development of their personal resources (Egbo, 2015).

In the Nigerian context, scholars of varied backgrounds identified the importance of school-based counseling to the successful implementation of the 6-3-3-4 system of education. Some of these scholars submitted that in the absence of guidance and counseling, the central objectives of education cannot be realized. In the same vein, Awokoya (1980), realizing the importance of guidance and counseling to education asserted that without it in schools the whole programme of education would be meaningless.

The first official policy document which made a direct reference to school guidance and counselling in Nigeria was the 1981 version of the National Policy on Education. The government endorsed its total commitment to and support for the counselling movement by stating inter alia "In view of the apparent ignorance of many young people about career prospects, and in view of personality maladjustment among school children, career officers and counsellors will be appointed in post-primary institution ... Guidance and Counseling will also feature in teacher education programme" (FGN. 1981, p.30).

The 1981 version of the NPE has since undergone a number of revisions with the latest one which was published in the year 2014. The highlights of the Policy are to provide an elaborate background for schooling adolescents in the Junior Secondary Level by exposing them to various manipulative skills. The new National Policy on Education is therefore, aimed at providing entrepreneurship development among schooling adolescents by equipping them for appropriate adjustment in the field of work, and motivating their curiosity and drive for business enterprise. Students who were not capable of continuing at Senior Secondary Level should benefit maximally

from this innovation and proceed for appropriate apprenticeship training at the end of their Junior Secondary School education. On the other hand, guidance and counselling as an integral part of the new Policy aims at providing special services which will assist students attain self-understanding to harness their latent potential for proper educational, personal-social and vocational development and adjustment (Ihuoma, 2018).

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF, 2005) viewed guidance and counselling as part of the curriculum. In this view, guidance and counselling functions can be carried out through the curriculum by integrating guidance philosophy and practices through curricular offerings thereby adopting a proactive and preventive approach. To address the developmental needs and concerns of students at different stages of schooling, a professionally trained person, a counsellor or a teacher-counsellor is required to work within and with the system. The purpose of guidance and counselling services is to help each student develop as an individual in his own right, make choices and set goals on the basis of his strength. By attending to the special needs and requirements of students who belong to different social, economic and cultural backgrounds, guidance and counselling helps them engage in the educational process and thereby, benefit from the curricular experiences (Alutu, .2006, Ihuoma, 2017).

The school, besides the family, is a major influence on children's personal-social development. Teachers, in order to foster personal-social competence, need to develop an understanding of their students and ensure that they are treated fairly, are valued, and are exposed to a wide range of personal and social learning experiences. Learning and understanding about self is as important as learning about various school subjects. Every child has the potential to develop self-understanding which includes understanding of abilities, interests, behaviours, attitudes, values, conflicts, anxieties, likes, dislikes, impulses / emotions, goals and one's role in society (Adegoke,2004, Amede & Ihuoma, 2018).

Guidance and counselling not only helps students to develop an understanding of one self and of others, it also supports students to deal with their personal- social, academic and career related matters. It facilitates the development of effective study habits, motivation, identifying learning or subject related problems, helping students to see the relevance of school years in life and in the future, and developing skills, right attitudes and interests to help make a choice of a career, etc. Guidance and counselling, thus, promotes the holistic development of every student. This signifies the need for every teacher to become a 'guidance minded' teacher and carry out his functions with guidance aim.

Counselling equips the individual with the necessary tools for effective problem-solving when a problem arises in the future. It renders helping services with the skills and methods of an individual for a more meaningful perception of his problem. In view of this, educational counselling is therefore, a applied counselling within the educational setting which provides students the skills to approach and solve their educational problems with a self-solution that is geared towards meeting the demands, expectations, norms and morals of society.

Guidance counsellors also have an important role in advocating broad based career plans which focus on the student's interests and abilities, and that will increase future career options. Vocational exploration activities implemented at the elementary- and middle-school levels can prepare students with special needs, for example, students with mental retardation to make career choices in young adulthood. Again, through career exploration activities, the salient features of a career as a fire fighter for a

student with moderate mental retardation are the opportunity to gain respect through wearing a uniform, the perceived social opportunities with fellow firefighters, and the enhanced self-esteem through identification with valued community members (Lazarus & Ihuoma, 2011).

From the foregoing, it may be stated that the guidance and counselling policy and administration in Nigeria is one requiring a re-articulation of the necessary framework to re-invent the required strategies for the advancement of the profession in schools. Essentially, policy provisions, especially in the NPE and the Blueprint need to be reviewed to make room for workable strategies. As recognized in the NPE, counselling has important purposes in Nigerian education. This, rather than the few pages it occupies in the Policy document should be accorded a full section. Cognisance therefore, needs to be taken to enhance professionalism which will inform effective specialized administration as well as the incorporation of more current programming prescriptions (Ihuoma, 2017, Eyo, et al, 2010).

Challenges of and Opportunities for developing School-Based Counselling in Nigeria

There are challenges of and opportunities in developing school-based counselling in Nigerian schools. These are examined below:

Ambiguous Role Definition

Perhaps, the most significant challenge for school counsellors is the ongoing debate of role definition. The ambiguity in role definition stems from the name Guidance and Counselling. Individual counsellors still struggle with priorities amid calls for the reexamination of both school counsellor preparation and practice. These calls for reexamination have ranged in motivation from the need for an active response, educational reform, concern for the neglected and extensive needs of at-risk students to the belief that school counsellors are neither being prepared for nor utilized in ways that best meet the needs of all students. National agendas which are focused on academic achievement and school violence encourage school counsellors to be involved in educational, vocational, personal and mental health issues (McMahon, 2001). There is therefore, the need for proper designation to resolve the role ambiguity.

Increasingly Diverse Student Populations

A second challenge which faces school counsellors is the increasingly diverse student populations in the schools. The changing demographics of society have been widely noted. As these changes are realized in school settings, counsellors may find that psychological and educational theories and practices, developed largely from a Eurocentric perspective, may not represent the worldviews of or be the best approaches for their students and families. Considerable progress has been made in the area of addressing multiculturalism within schools, but statistics continue to show gaps in academic achievement along racial and ethnic lines as well as differences in those individuals who actually seek counselling services (Sue & Sue, 1999).

An additional factor which increases the level of complexity of this issue is that diversity in schools today is not limited to race and ethnicity. The term, diversity actually describes a far broader range including socioeconomic status and students with disabilities. School counsellors will need to be culturally competent and culturally responsive to a wide range of students in order to effectively attend to their needs (Lee, 2001).

Increasing Reliance on Technology

A third challenge for school counsellors is the increasing reliance on technology. Technological advances provide a wide array of opportunities to make the world of work operate more efficiently and effectively, and there is ample opportunity for school counselling to take advantage of technology in the delivery of preventative and developmental school counselling programmes as well. Yet, while computers and the Internet have the potential to be used to help a variety of counselling tasks, most counsellors either have limited technology skills or, even with skills, only use their computers for basic duties such as record keeping, scheduling and word processing. Many practising school counsellors report a lack of comfort and expertise in working with computers and specifically the Internet. In fact, preparation programmes have only recently begun to require technology competence, and in-service programmes which are focused specifically on school counselling applications are rarely available (Abaa & Ihuoma, 2019; Owen & Weikel, 1999).

Accountability within the Educational Systems

School counsellors are also being challenged to demonstrate in measurable terms the effectiveness of their work. Baker (2000) noted that accountability meant demonstrating that something worthwhile was happening. In a public-school setting, this principle may be manifested in procedures used to show the taxpayers that they are getting their money's worth. In such situations, counsellors are challenged to develop evaluations of their efforts and the opinions of their consumers while also being accountable for the use of their time. Baker (2000) also noted some of the reasons counsellors could be resistant to conducting programme evaluation. They included the amount of time and money required for a thorough evaluation, the belief that such data collection required sophisticated statistical skills, and the lack of appropriate role models. Recent discussions where the author has been involved have also pointed to the lack of adequate frameworks for comprehensive accountability.

Conceptually, school counseling programmes have historically been linked to desired student outcomes (Lapan, 2001). Today, as administrators, policymakers and legislators require increased evidence that supports the effectiveness of a variety of funded programmes, counsellors are not immune. Instead, they are being asked to show data which demonstrate positive student outcomes associated with the school mission. Increasingly, this includes information related to grades, course-taking patterns, test scores, attendance, and behaviour referrals. The challenge is that school counsellors are to develop their own plans for holding themselves and their programmes accountable, not only for consumer satisfaction, but also for more effectively meeting the needs of students and enhancing and facilitating learning (McMahon, 2001)

Reframing Challenges as Opportunities

While the previous section on challenges does not provide an exhaustive list, it does indicate the complexity of issues which face school counsellors in the 21st Century. These challenges, however, must not be allowed to overshadow the opportunities that these issues and this particular time in the profession's development provide. In reality, the history of school counselling provides a rich backdrop of transition to today's comprehensive, developmental and collaborative programmes.

By meeting the challenges, the school counselling profession has an opportunity to ensure that school counsellors obtain the skills necessary to meet the changing needs of students, develop stronger professional identities, implement more appropriate school counselling programmes, and become more accountable for their programmes. Individual school counsellors and the profession at large will need to face the challenges with confidence, optimism, commitment, and creativity in order to ensure that school counsellors continue to feel productive in their careers and that students develop the skills and acquire the knowledge they need to succeed in school and in life. Transforming these challenges into opportunities will require that school counsellors and school counsellor educators and supervisors collaborate in order to: (a) determine appropriate roles and areas of programme focus, (b) design and engage in necessary professional development, and (c) demonstrate accountability for outcomes (McMahon, 2001).

Determining Appropriate Roles and Areas of Programme Focus

Professional school counselling has a rich history of recognizing societal changes, assessing changing needs, and altering services to meet those perceived needs. There is no reason to believe that this trend will change, rather, it seems that society is changing more rapidly than ever before. School counsellors, then, must be ready to adapt their priorities and interventions to meet society's changing needs while maintaining the sound base of their purpose and mission (Herr, 2001). This means that a part of the school counsellors' professional identity must accept that roles will change over the years, be aware of and responsive to the changing needs, and continue to grow as professionals in order to maintain quality programmes. School counsellors and school counselor educators must work in collaboration to effectively identify and respond to students' needs. Perhaps the greatest favour school counsellors, counsellor educators and supervisors can do for the profession is to consider this collaboration a professional responsibility, and embrace the dialogue concerning the appropriate focus of school counselling programmes (Amede & Ihuoma, 2018; McMahon, 2001).

Boundary setting.

School counsellors, in developing effective programmes, are expected to set appropriate professional boundaries within school systems. With the increasing demands placed on them, it is crucial that school counsellors focus their role on the school to effectively and efficiently meet the academic, career, and personal/social needs of students. This means that school counsellors must educate and reeducate the people they work with concerning the appropriate and inappropriate roles and tasks of school counsellors and be able to limit the time spent performing non-counselling duties and participating in ineffective or inefficient interventions. School counsellors must demonstrate to school administrators the cost effectiveness of spending more time performing duties related to counselling and students' development. In addition, school counsellors will need their best human relations and assertiveness skills to maintain these professional boundaries within what is often a political environment.

Professional Development

Another critical component in transforming challenges into opportunities is professional development for practising school counsellors. Professionalism is considered to be a process that continues after formal education as professionals identify with their jobs. Becoming a master school counsellor is a lifelong process

(Brott & Myers, 1999). In order for them to continue to adapt to the needs of the community and to continue to develop professionally, school counsellors must take part in two types of continuing education: specific skill development and supervision. Professional skill development is necessary for school counsellors to learn more about specific skills that will help them to more effectively meet the needs of students but which they may not have acquired during their formal education. These skills may include counselling-related skills such as cultural competency training or updating their understanding of presenting issues such as sexual orientation. Preparation may also include skills that are not directly related to counselling but which may make their jobs easier.

Skill building alone will be inadequate, however, school counsellors must also participate in continued clinical supervision in order to enhance their professional development. Receiving supervision in addition to participating in skill-building experiences can help reinforce new skills and also generalize the skills to school counsellors' daily routines. Supervision can also help school counselors identify school-wide issues and develop plans to address these concerns (Brott & Myers, 1999). Furthermore, by providing someone to listen to and understand school counsellors' on-the-job concerns, supervision can help alleviate job stress and fight burnout (Baker & Gerler, 2001). Finally, supervision can play an important role in the continued evolution of school counsellors' professional identity (Brott & Myers, 1999).

Becoming a culturally responsive school counsellor.

In order for school counsellors to work effectively and ethically with diverse populations, they will need to become culturally responsive (D'Andrea & Daniels, 2001; Lee, 2001). Many practising school counsellors need to enhance their cross-cultural skills and receive supervision regarding cultural competence. Given the diversity that exists across so many dimensions in students today, steps have to be taken to ensure that school counsellors have the attitudes, knowledge and skills to effectively work with their increasingly diverse populations and to provide leadership in creating culturally responsive schools. School counselling preparation programmes must study the effectiveness of the current model of cross-cultural education to ensure that the school counsellors entering the workforce meet or exceed the criteria. In addition, school counsellors in the field must motivate themselves to seek additional education and supervision in order to meet the needs of their diverse student population. Counsellor educators can help this process by developing collaborative working relationships with school counsellors.

Using technology to support the school counselling programme.

School counsellors could also enhance their professional development by learning how to utilize technology in their school counselling programmes. Advances in technology present an opportunity to meet the needs of students more efficiently and effectively. Using technology to build more effective and efficient school counselling programmes will require extensive and specialized professional skill development and supervision.

This will provide support for using new skills and addressing related ethical issues. To maximize the impact that skill development and supervision can have on programmes and student outcomes, school counsellors will also need to advocate with their business and community partners to enhance opportunities for all students and their

parents to have access to technology outside of the school setting (Abaa & Ihuoma, 2019; Ihuoma & Akande, 2020).

Answering the Call for Accountability

As counsellors refine their own professional identity and competence, and as responsive programmes are developed, outcomes will have to be evaluated. This may provide the very opportunity needed for solidifying the advancement of the profession. As Lapan (2001) suggested, clearly defining school counselling programmes and assuming responsibility for student outcomes placed school counsellors in the position of shaping more effective school environments and providing students unique development-enhancing opportunities. For school counsellors and school counsellor educators and supervisors, developing accountability models and frameworks may also provide the most effective vehicle for clearly defining site-based school counselling programmes and setting related boundaries.

Site-based accountability will require that school counsellors, in collaboration with other stakeholders:

- ❖ Clearly understand the needs of students within the school through the review of qualitative and quantitative data
- ❖ Design the school counselling programme based on those needs, the mission of the school, and student competencies
- ❖ Determine relevant factors (e.g., test scores, grades, attendance, course-taking patterns, etc.) to be monitored
- ❖ Implement the programme as intentionally designed
- ❖ Evaluate the programme based on targeted factors
- ❖ Revise the programme as needed based on the review of appropriate data

As noted by Baker (2000), accountability involves evaluating programmes and demonstrating that something worthwhile is happening. At the state or national level, a clearinghouse for site-based programme evaluation results could provide stronger support through meta-analysis for school counselling programmes and school counsellor positions. More significantly, intentionally designing and evaluating programmes and using those results to improve programming will likely improve the quality of experiences and outcomes for students.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The importance of career development education in the professional lives of educational counsellors was emphasized in this paper. The paper highlighted the key ways in which career development education could serve as a powerful motivational tool for students, especially at-risk students who had not had an opportunity to internalize the way in which success in school could empower students in their adult years.

The need for school counsellors to become more proactive and less reactive followed as one of the core assumptions of the transformation that reshapes educational counselling. The key aspects of this move towards prevention and proactive engagement include the following: the need to focus on all students and not simply on these students who present themselves for counseling; the advantages of integrating the educational counselling process with the academic goals of the school; and the importance of focusing on all of the student and not just some parts of his experience. The school counsellors would be both culturally and technologically competent and responsive. They would use their cross-cultural competency in challenging systems

and in relating personally to a wide range of individuals. They would seek enhanced educational and personal experiences and outcomes for all students. They would use technology to streamline processes to minimize administrative duties and time for students, and for coordinating the programmes. In sum, they would intentionally and jointly design responsive school counselling programmes. They would hold themselves accountable rather than wait for someone else. They would evaluate their programmes and share the results with the school community, and use the results to enhance the programmes to more effectively meet student needs and support students' learning, thereby accelerating all round development.

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