

Full Length Research Paper

Counseling environment as predator of guidance practice effectiveness in Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme

E. E. Ebebuwa-Okoh

Department of Guidance and Counselling, Delta State University, Abraka, Delta State, Nigeria. E-mail: ebenuwaokoh@yahoo.com.

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The study examined the relationship between counseling environment and guidance practice effectiveness. Three research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. They were tested at point 0.05 level of significance. The sample size for the study was 59 respondents. The instrument for the study was a 43 item questionnaire titled "Counselling Environment and Guidance Practice Effectiveness" (CEGPA). The instrument has face and content validity. The reliability coefficient for the instrument was 0.70. Regression statistical tool was used to analyze the data. The findings show that the three components of counseling environment significantly relate and predict guidance effectiveness. Also there was no significant difference in guidance effectiveness based on gender and location. Recommendations were made based on gender.

Key words: Counseling environment, guidance practice effectiveness, Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme.

INTRODUCTION

Education is widely understood as an instrument for change, enculturation with the motive of equipping an individual to be productive to self and environment (Enoch and Okpede, 2000; Ugoji, 2008). It is a clog in the wheel of development upon which any nation rides. The ingredients of development of any society depend on the quality of knowledge and the environment she provides for her recipients.

It was in appreciation of the enviable role of Education in development of both human and non-human resources of the nation that led to the launching of Universal Basic Education (UBE) headed by President Olusegun Obasanjo in 1999. The mission of Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, who developed the 9-year Basic Education curriculum, is to create enabling environment where educational activities can foster interaction between private and public sector. The primary goal of UBE is that every learner should acquire appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life-skills as well as the ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for

life-long learning; as a basis for scientific and reflective thinking. This is the right of every person.

To achieve the above goal, guidance is a vital tool that cannot be neglected in the implementation of the UBE program. This is because guidance provides services programs and activities that assist client (learners) to identify their problems, enhance their potentials, develop social and coping skills in order to adjust themselves and become productive in the society. The function of guidance in the life of her client is fundamental in the success of our educational goals which is a fulcrum of national development.

The success of guidance practice in the life of the learner cannot be effective, if the counseling environment is not positive. Ejide (2002) and Bulus (2000) simply put, that a positive environment is one that is not void of both human and material hindrances to learning (counseling) but is capable of sensitizing and stimulating the entire counseling process. Counseling environment is like a knob that works through the clients cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domain with activities and facilities

geared towards promoting relatively permanent change in the client behavior values, convictions, dispositions within and outside the school setting. Positive counseling environment is like salt that sweetens the pot of guidance practice. A soup without salt, no matter the nature of ingredients the best cannot come out. It is when the environment is conducive that the educational goals can be achieved through guidance practice. The underlying theoretical basic is that there is correlation between stimulating environment and mental development (Ainsworth, 1969). Further, Ejide (2002) explained that positive environment provides the clients with broad range of experiences which broadens the mental capacity of the clients and enhances their creativity skills and competences. Therefore the environment portends the surrounding of the clients where counseling process occurs.

The counseling environment is made up of three components: The physical, social and psychological/emotional. The physical environment consists of the physical facilities such as the provision of standard counseling office with equipment like furniture, computers, psychological tests, audio and visual (I), laboratories for example. The social environment has to do with the activities such as orientation, career forum, group counseling, story telling, plays, music and dance therapy, study habit induction and others. All these are to enhance their potentials, develop social and coping skills, in order to become productive. There are the emotional/psychological components; this is the disposition of the counselor in the course of counseling relationship. It involves listening, genuineness, unconditional positive regard, empathy, confidentiality, questioning skills, reassurance, friendliness, acceptance and constructive expression of negative personality, all these are to make the clients relaxed, feel worthy and have sense of belonging; so that his best can be unfolded. Under these conditions the client will be in a position to state all his problems without hindrance. Then the counselor and the client can work through the clients' problem effectively. Integration of all these factors strengthen the inner mind of the individual and enable him imbibe values and principles that will make him stand up to the challenges the day provides. There is no doubt that positive counseling environment is very crucial to the quality of counseling outcome. It is also paramount to effective guidance practice within the school setting. This is because the environment provides factors, conditions and elements that enhance good counseling relationships which in turn encourage effective guidance practice. Here the counselor and the school manager create a positive environment so that the client can be pleasantly disposed towards the utilization of the services that counseling renders. Counselling is promoted in a conducive environment. The effectiveness of the counseling environment depends on how conducive, friendly and relaxed it is. When these conditions are met then the

individual can achieve his optimal potentials. The usefulness of positive counseling environment to guidance practice is the gap that this study intends to fill.

Statement of the problem

In Nigeria, there are many applaudable failed educational initiative because guidance practice has not been given her rightful position. It should be noted without planning (guidance) cannot succeed. Since guidance occupies a central role in the implementation of UBE program, the provision of positive counseling environment must be addressed. It is against this backdrop that the researcher is motivated to empirically assess how the environment can enhance guidance practice.

The problem of the study is therefore: to what extent does positive counseling environment enhance guidance practice in the UBE programme, considering the counselors' gender and experience.

Research questions

- 1) What is the relationship between physical, social, psychological, environment and guidance practice effectiveness?
- 2) What is the significant difference between/in guidance practice effectiveness based on gender?
- 3) What is the significant difference between/in guidance practice effectiveness based on location?

Hypotheses

- 1) There is no significant relationship between physical, social, psychological, environment and guidance practice effectiveness.
- 2) There is no significant difference between/in guidance practice effectiveness based on gender.
- 3) There is no significant difference between/in guidance practice effectiveness based on location.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the method of survey research. The target population comprised all practicing counselors in Delta state. Simple random sampling was used to select respondents.

The research instrument used in this study is titled positive counseling environment and guidance practice effectiveness inventory (PC EGPI). The questionnaire has three main parts: A – respondents' bio-data; B – positive counseling environment, and C – guidance practice effectiveness.

Part B is made up of three sub headings: physical, social and psychological. Each of the sub heading is made up of ten items, while part C has 14 items. The instrument was designed such that the participants could respond to the items on 4 point written scales: Very Often= 4, Often=3, Rare=2 and Very Rare= 1. In the same vein, Strongly Agree=4, Agree=3, Disagree=2 and Strongly

Table 1. Intercorrelation matrix, means and standard deviation of the independent (physical, social, psychological) and guidance practice effectiveness.

Variables guidance practice effectiveness	Guidance practice effectiveness 1	Physical environment	Social environment	Psychological
Physical	0.339	0.1		
Social	0.495	0.404	1	
Psychological	0.422	0.170	0.401	1****
X_	51.25	30.53	39.40	35.05
SD	6.25	5.81	4.41	3.27

N =60, All co-efficient are significant at 0.05 level.

Table 2. Summary of regression analysis of sample data.

Model	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Regression	753.69	3	251.188	9.065	000
Residual	1551.68	56	27.71	9.065	
Total	2305.250	59		9.065	

Multiple R =0.572; R-Square=0.327; R-Square (adj) =0.291; Standard error=5.6390.

Disagree =1. Cronbach- α procedure is used to obtain the correlation coefficient R. This confirms the reliability of the instrument.

Data analysis

The data was analyzed using frequency counts, mean and percentage to answer the research questions. The t- test ANOVA and regression were used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 alpha levels.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations and inter correlation matrix of the independent (counseling environment) and dependent (guidance practice effectiveness) variables. A look at Table 1 reveals that there are significant relationships between (physicals, social, psychological) and guidance practice effectiveness at 0.05 level of significance.

Table 1 reveals that there are significant positive relationships between physical (0.339), social (0.489) and psychological (0.422) and guidance practice effectiveness at 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that there is positive and significance relationship between counseling environment and guidance practice effectiveness.

The three independent variables accounted for only 29.1% of the variance in guidance practice effectiveness. The Table 2 also shows that the analysis of variance for the regression data produced an F-ratio of 9.028 significant at 0.05 level. This means that all the variables significantly predicted guidance practice effectiveness

among counselors that participated in this study even though other factors account for the remaining 70% the variance in guidance practice effectiveness.

Table 3 shows, for each independent variables, the standardized regression weight (B), the standard error of estimate (SEB), that t-rate associated social and psychological counseling environment are significant at 0.05 levels. Table 3 shows the independent predictive powers of each of the independent variable. From the table, the most potent with beta value 0.506 for psychological followed by social which is 0.458 and finally physical which is 0.176. Social and psychological environments are significant at 0.05 levels. Collinearity analysis show their independence in prediction.

Table 4 shows that there is no significant difference in guidance practice effectiveness mean scores of male and female respondent (t =0.171; NS). This means that hypothesis 3 is accepted and as such gender has no significant influence on guidance practice effectiveness. Also results on Table 4 show that there is no significant difference between rural and urban respondent's guidance practice effectiveness (t = 0.861, NS). Therefore this hypothesis is accepted.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results show that the three component of counseling environment predicted guidance practice effectiveness. This can be interpreted to favor effective practice. This shows that good environment bring desired changes in the client. The study confirms Bulus (2000) who opined that positive environment sensitizes and stimulates entire counseling process. Thus improved counseling school services in conducive working environment can in turn lead to achieving educational goals. Further examination of the results reveal that social counseling environment which involves counseling interactive activities between clients and counselors favor guidance practice effectiveness because it underscores the deep sentiments which is attached to interaction. This is because interaction in a counseling relationship provides assistance outside counseling session and being

Table 3. Testing significance of regression work.

Variables	B	SEB	Beta	t-ratio	P-ratio	Collinearity	
						Tolerance	VIF
Physical	0.176	0.129	0.164	1.366	0.177	0.836	1.196
Social	0.458	0.183	0.323	2.502	0.015	0.722	1.385
Psychological	0.506	0.229	0.264	2.208	0.031	0.838	1.193
Constant	9.807	8.330		1.177	0.244		

Table 4. Significance between rural and urban respondent's guidance practice effectiveness.

Variable	N	X	SD	t-obs	t- crit	Decisions
Sex						
Males	27	52.81	5.602			
Females	33	49.97	6.541	0.171	1.96	NS
Location						
Rural	34	51.85	6.463			
Urban	26	50.85	5.995	0.861	1.96	

NS =Not significant at 0.05 level of =58

accessible to clients. These activities and physical factors such as educative pictures, films, video and decorations are complementary factors for effectiveness. One of the qualities of a counselor is to assist clients to cultivate the spirit of critical thinking. This at least is the goal of effective practice. Also the social counseling environment which is part of the counseling activities helps to improve clients' cognitive, educational and personal-social life. The use of music experience during counseling session is a counseling activity that also improves the quality of life in various domains. The interaction emphasis on personal responsibility, self awareness, recognition of the needs of others and upon open and honest therefore, helpshelps them to develop integrity and confidence.

No significant difference was found between male and female practicing counselors practice effectiveness. This finding supports their earlier studies by Ossai (2004), Ebeuwa-Okoh (2007, 2010) whose studies reveal no gender differences. The plausible for this finding is that both male and female have the same training experience and as such have similar tendencies in practicing their profession.

There is no significant difference based on location. The reason for this finding shows practicing counselors receive training from same source; so in practice their performance is independent of location; hence it is acquisition of skills that matters and the nature of problem handled.

Conclusions

This paper revealed that conducive counseling environment is a salt for guidance practice. The

practitioners also attested irrespective of gender and location that the counseling environment sensitizes and stimulates the entire counselling process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) The stakeholders in educational setting should provide funds on regular basis to purchase materials and facilities needed for effective counseling.
- 2) Seminars and workshops should be organized periodically for guidance counselors to keep abreast with current guidance practices.

Implications for counselling

The findings from this study have revealed predictions of guidance effectiveness due to conducive counseling environment. The implications are that for guidance practice to be effective in achieving the goals of the UBE, the facilities needed for guidance practice must be adequately provided. The policy makers in the education sector should ensure the provision of necessary facilities and training of counselors from time to time. Also social and welfare packages should be implemented for counselors. Fringe benefits, salary advances, etc should be given to serve as motivators that engender commitment to their work.

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