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School Leaders Ensuring that Guidance Counsellors are trained in Professional Ethical Skills to become Professional Mentors in Secondary Schools in Gwagwalada Area Council FCT, Abuja, Nigeria

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Abstract

The paper focused on school leaders ensuring that guidance counsellors are trained to become professional mentors in secondary schools in Gwagwalada Area Council, Abuja. The researchers set two research questions to guide the study. Survey research design was used for the study. The population of the study was 2,128 teachers and 376 principals from 376 public secondary schools in 31 Local Government Areas in Akwa Ibom State. The sample of the study was 800 teachers, who were used to assess 200 sampled principals in the study. The research questionnaire was validated by experts in the Department of Educational Administration and Foundations, University of Uyo, AkwaIbom State. The reliability of the instrument was carried out by conducting a pilot study, twenty teachers (who were not part of the sample) responded to the questionnaire. Test-retest method was used to collect data for analysis. The reliability index of 0.78 was obtained through Crombach alpha statistics. Mean statistics was used to analyse the research questions. The findings of the study revealed that principals did not train guidance counsellors to acquire mentoring skills in professional ethics, curriculum content, pedagogical, and teacher/student relationship skills in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. Based on the study findings, the

researchers recommended that, school leaders in secondary schools should ensure that guidance counsellors undergo training on professional ethical skills to become professional mentors etc.

Keywords: School Leaders, Guidance Counsellors, Professional Ethical skills, Curriculum Content Skill, Pedagogical skill, Teacher/Student Relationship skill and Professional Mentors.

Introduction

Mentorship is vital at any level of education since it enables the new entrant teachers /guidance counsellors to understand the "nitty-gritty" of their jobs and carry it out succinctly to obtain results. There is need for teachers to be well trained as professional mentors so as to deliver instructions to students as expected and be of help to other new entrant teachers.

Mentoring is defined by Achor & Duguryil (2014) as professional relationship in which an experienced person (the mentor) assist an inexperienced person (the mentee) in developing specific skills and knowledge that will enhance the mentees' career and personal growth. Mentoring can be offered to colleagues who are in the same field but have differing experiences, knowledge and expertise. Mentoring is about supporting individuals to help them develop more effectively. Anagbogu & Nwokolo (2015) viewed mentoring as when individuals decide to work together to achieve skills for growth and development, in job and life generally. Professional mentoring according to Ojukuku & Sajuyigbe (2015) is a germane source through which professional skills can be acquired for effective job delivery. Uneifekwem and Ugwueze (2013) emphasized that teachers must be well groomed through mentoring so that they will help the students to overcome academic challenges and meet up with the expected academic standard.

Guidance and counselling is a major area in the educational system which has concern with matters pertaining to students' behaviour towards learning and relationships. The guidance counsellors when trained to attain professional ethical standard will be able to assist the school heads in mentoring the new entrant teachers and weak students who have maladaptive behaviour and are likely to fail. Guidance counsellors are needed in mentoring so as to provide quality guidance to the protégé (entrant teachers) to build productive career in their institutions. This implies that guidance counsellors should be well trained in professional ethics or conduct to become professional mentors in order to attain

and maintain continuous professional growth and to be able to meet up with high expectation needed from mentors in schools (Undigundaye & Basabe 2017 and Ugweze et al 2013). Sola (2018) averred that guidance counselling is regarded as an important field for mentoring in education, like mentoring, counselling is a deliberate pairing of a skilled or experienced person with unskilled or inexperienced person. The aim of this is that the unskilled or inexperienced individual will grow, develop, be knowledgeable, skillful and competent to handle academic issues. Hence, guidance counsellors have to undergo training in professional ethical skills to help them to be competent in mentoring fellow new colleagues and weak students in secondary schools.

Training Guidance Counsellors in Professional Ethics, Curriculum Content, Pedagogical and Teacher Student Relationship Skills

Guidance counsellors in secondary schools can be trained by their heads or principals to become professional mentors. Guidance and counselling education has already given them a right footing to stand as advisers to students and their fellow colleagues. Guidance counsellors are expected to have the knowledge to counsel students on academic, socio-personal, vocational issues and in modifying student maladaptive behaviour. Ugwueze et al (2013) posited that guidance and counselling teachers as mentors, can support the school heads to mentor new colleagues and weak students academically and behaviour wise. The heads of secondary schools should therefore ensure that guidance counsellors are develop professionally to have the knowledge of the curriculum content, pedagogical skills, leadership skills, teacher/student relationship, professional ethics/conduct, behaviour modification etc. (Omoh 2023, Wood cited in Walt 2016 & Igonoh 2010).

To groom guidance counsellors to become professional mentors the principals have to ensure that they are trained to maintain high standard professional practice in relation to teaching, planning, monitoring, assessing, reporting and providing feedback to students and teachers. They have to apply their knowledge and experiences to facilitate students wholistic development. They have to plan and communicate achievable objectives of the mentoring learning experiences to students, create environment where students can involve actively in the learning process to develop lifelong learning skills. The principals should ensure that the guidance counsellors receive orientation on code of conduct to maintain professional standards, they as teachers should maintain disciplinary behaviour among fellow colleagues and students, work cooperatively with colleagues especially the new entrant teachers in the interest of sharing, developing and supporting good practices and maintaining highest quality educational practices (Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) in Act 200 cited in Ijasetima 2021).

Guidance counsellors have to be trained in curriculum content knowledge to have understanding of the subject matte or the learning experiences and the procedure of activities (Cole 2005 cited in Omoh 2023). If the set educational objectives are to be achieved, the guidance counsellors must have the content knowledge and the understanding of how to breakdown curriculum to scheme of work and adequately deliver the learning experiences to the learners. Brungardi 2006 cited in Omoh (2023) maintained that curriculum content knowledge is about the actual subject matter that is to be taught and learned. A guidance counselor who is to be trained as a professional mentor must understand the rubrics of the subject matter and not just be conversant with only the theory. They should be trained to help the students to relay one idea to another and be able to be more practical to apply their knowledge to real life situations. Various researchers have emphasized that teachers or guidance counselors must be well trained in curriculum content which can help students to have understanding of the social realities, to obtain their life needs, experiences and aspirations which will suit their age and relate to their real life situations (Omoh 2023, Kimber 2009 cited in Omoh 2023, Offorna 2005 cited in Omoh 2023, and Shulnaria & Babatund 2017). The content knowledge involves teachers' lesson preparation, application of appropriate teaching methods, understanding learners' behaviours and helping learners to understand the learning experiences. So it is critical for guidance counsellors under training to become professional mentors to have mastery of subject for instruction through effective principal training strategies. Hence, the school heads should ensure that guidance counsellors who are trained as professional mentors must master the curriculum content, how to prepare lesson plan and note, select and use related instructional materials and review lesson plan before presenting the learning experiences. The principals have to ensure that the guidance counsellors are sensitized on how students should apply instructional content to daily living or life situations. They should also be groomed to be compliance with the syllabus/curriculum and organize the classroom properly for effective teaching and learning to take place.

Guidance counsellors have to be trained to develop their pedagogical skills so as to impact knowledge to learners at every level of education. They therefore need to be well tutored on various skills which will enable them to be effective to implement the curriculum content of the school. Achuonyg, Iwu, Ajuzie and Nzeakor (2013) posited that pedagogical (teaching) skills are those positive behaviours the teacher possesses which enhance efficiency and effectiveness during lesson delivery. These include teachers arousing the interest of learners to learn, having questioning skills, using examples and illustrations, non-verbal communication cues, useful repetitions when delivering learning experiences and providing reinforcements or rewards if necessary. Many scholars have viewed pedagogical skills in different perspectives, to them it is the knowledge about classroom assessment, methods for motivating students, personal

knowledge about students, their families, socio interaction, ability to organize and improve all kinds of educational activities to teach the students at low and high levels of education (Clark & Walsh 2002 cited in Omoh 2023 and Gwako 2006 cited in Owoh 2023). Abdulraheem & Amali 2013 cited in Omoh (2023) averred that technical or pedagogical skill make instructors to be aware of the preconceptions and backgrounds that students bring to each subject, that, it distinguishes professional guidance counsellors or teachers from those who are non-professionals. Hence, the training of guidance counsellors in pedagogical skills to become professional mentors is the step taken by the principals in the right direction.

Guidance Counsellors as teachers play critical roles in teacher/student relationship as far as the lives of students and teaching learning process are concerned. They have to interact with students, train them on how to interact or relate with other students in order to make positive outcomes. According to Omodan & Tsotetsi (2018) teacher/student relationship is one of the most important features in the context of learning, as far as student development, school activities and learning motivation are concerned. The principal must ensure that guidance counselling teachers are trained to have two ways cordial interactive sessions with students. The students in this case will be free to ask questions contribute to the teaching/learning in order to understand the learning experiences better. In the opinion of Chukwuemeka and Onyekwelu (2020) teacher/student relationship should be cordial, there should be open interaction and communication between the teachers and the students. The researchers maintain that cordial open interaction and communication between teachers and students will make the students to participate actively in class. This, unlike the authoritative attitude of the instructors which make students inactive recipients, creating hindrance to their cognitive and behavioural development will help them to be educationally effective (Babare 2018, Grossman & Macdonald 2018 and Noddings 2015). The school head has to ensure that the guidance counselling teachers are tutored to maintain friendly, cordial relationship between themselves and students. Train them to create conducive environment to motivate students to learn, use positive reinforcement, adopt activity based method of teaching / learning and treat students with love and respect etc. (Omoh, 2023).

Statement of the Problem

Guidance Counsellors who are trained in mentorship can become professionals who can support the principals in mentoring students and new entrant teachers. The onus of the matter is on the principals to train the guidance counsellors on the appropriate mentoring areas. In secondary schools, the principals can train or organize training for the guidance counsellors in the areas of their professional ethics, curriculum content knowledge pedagogical skills etc. This will help these guidance counselling teachers

to master the content of the learning experiences to be disseminated to students. It will help them to improve their instructional delivering strategy, enhance their relationship with students and create conducive environment for the realization of teaching learning objectives. To obtain pedagogical skills, the principals have to bequeath the guidance counsellors with the right teaching methods which will enhance their efficiency and effectiveness in lesson delivery. This include a set of inductions which will help to arouse the interest and attention of learners at the start of the lesson till the end of it. These instructors need to develop questioning skills, use examples and illustrations, non-verbal communication cues, reinforcement and useful repetitions.

The guidance counsellors should be trained to acquire skill in teacher/student relationship and on professional ethics. Teachers should be humane with students, should make the students to see them as mentors rather than adversaries (Noddings 2015). Teachers should be trained to relate cordially with the students, there should be open interaction and communication between them. Teaching and learning process should not be unilateral and authoritative, these teachers should be trained on how to allow the students to participate actively in classroom engagements. This will make the students to be actively and effectively involved in all educational practices effectively.

More so, the guidance counselling teachers should be trained to have full knowledge of the professional ethics so that they can apply effective methods to maintain high standard of teaching. They should apply their knowledge and experiences to facilitate students wholistic development, relate with old and new colleagues cordially, support one another and maintain good and high quality educational practices. Principals should understand that for guidance counsellors to become professional mentors they have to receive quality training on all the mentioning skills. The issue to be pondered on is, will the secondary schools' principals train guidance counsellors to be equipped with the necessary skills to be professional mentors? To answer this question, the researchers of this present study are motivated to carry out this present study.

Research Purpose

The purpose of the present research study is for school leaders to ensure that guidance counsellors are trained in professional ethical skills to become professional mentors. Specifically, the researchers want to examine whether principals have ensured that guidance counsellors are trained to achieve:

1. Professional ethical skill to become professional mentors in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.
2. Curriculum content skill to become professional mentors in secondary schools in Awa Ibom State.

3. Pedagogical skill to become professional mentors in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State
4. Skill in teacher/student relationship to become professional mentors, in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Questions

The study was set out to answer the following research questions:

1 How do the principals ensure that the school guidance counsellors are trained to achieve professional ethical skills to become professional mentors in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

2 How do the principals ensure that the school guidance counsellors are trained to achieve skill in curriculum content to become professional mentors in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

3 How do the principals ensure that the school guidance counsellors are trained to achieve pedagogical skill to become professional mentors in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

4 How do the principals ensure that the school guidance counsellors are trained to achieve skill in teacher/student relationship to become professional mentors in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Methodology

The researchers applied survey research design which aid them to sample representative respondents from the population (Nakpodia, 2010). The population of the study was 2,128 teachers from 376 public secondary schools in 31 Local Government Areas in AkwaIbom State (Udofia & Iton, 2014). The sample of study was 800 teachers (the 800 teachers were used in the study to assess the principals). The research instrument was "School Leaders Training Guidance Counsellors to become Professional Mentors (SLTGCPM). The research instrument was validated by experts in the Department of Educational Administration and Foundations in Akwa Ibom State University, Uyo. Pilot study was carried out to determine the reliability of the instrument, test- retest method was used to obtain data for analysis and Crombach alpha statistics was used to analyse the data. The reliability coefficient index of 0.78 was obtained. Mean statistics was applied to analyse data obtained from the research questions. The mean score of 2.50 and above were adjudged as agreed whereas the mean score of 2.49 and below were considered as disagreed. Sectional mean score of 2.50 and above were adjudged as accepted whereas sectional mean score of 2.49 and below were considered as rejected.

Data Analysis

Research Question One: How do the principals ensure that guidance counsellors are trained to achieve professional ethical skills to become professional mentors in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 1: Training Guidance Counsellors to achieve Professional Ethical Skills
N = 800

S/N	**Indicators on Training Guidance Counsellors to achieve professional Ethical Skills**	SA	A	SD	D	$\bar{X}$	Decision
	Principals in your school ensured that guidance counsellors were trained to:						
1	imbibe teachers professional code of conduct.	141	109	320	230	2.20	Disagreed
2							
3	Teach competently	280	238	110	172	2.78	Agreed
4	Sensitize and protect the rights of students	132	145	274	249	2.20	Disagreed
5	Display positive attitude towards students.	271	208	121	200	2.69	Agreed
6	Attend seminars on professional ethical standard.	119	108	276	297	2.06	Disagreed
7	Maintain discipline and integrity within and outside the school	150	115	277	258	2.19	Disagreed
	Sectional Mean					1.65	Rejected

In table above showed that the respondents disagreed with mean the scores of 2.20, 2.20, 2.06 and 2.19 respectively that principals in their school ensured that guidance counsellors were trained to imbibe the professional code of conduct, sensitize to protect the rights of students, attend seminars on professional ethical skill and to maintain discipline and integrity within and outside the school. Also, the respondents agreed with mean scores of 2.78 and 2.69 respectively that principals in their school ensured that guidance counsellors were trained to teach competently and display positive attitude towards students. All the respondents rejected that principals ensured that guidance counsellors were trained to achieve professional ethical skill to become professional mentors in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State with the sectional mean score of 1.65

Research Question 2: How do principals ensure that the school guidance counsellors are trained to achieve skills in curriculum content to become professional mentors in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 2: Training Guidance Counsellors to Achieve Skill in Curriculum Content N = 800

S/N	**Indicators on training Guidance Counsellors to achieve skill in curriculum content**	SA	A	SD	D	$\bar{X}$	Decision
	Principals ensured that guidance counsellors were trained to:						
1.	Prepare lesson plan and notes.	260	296	124	120	2.87	Agreed
2.	Review lesson plan for correction and improvement.	287	293	114	106	2.95	Agreed
3.	Revise the learning experiences or the subject content before teaching.	287	272	136	105	2.93	Agreed
4.	Have mastery of the subject of instruction to teach students for better understanding.	108	111	295	286	2.05	Disagreed
5.	Apply learning experiences to daily life/living.	C	134	229	297	2.15	Disagreed
6.	Prepare the lesson from the scheme of work according to the syllables.	106	10	277	287	1.62	Disagreed
7.	Organize class for better siting arrangement.	219	288	115	178	2.69	Agreed
8.	Present learning experiences systematically for students better understanding.	124	109	276	291	2.08	Disagreed
9.	Exhaust the curriculum content.	111	150	285	254	2.15	Disagreed
10.	Teach students to achieve excellent learning outcomes.	124	100	294	282	2.08	Disagreed
	Sectional Mean					**2.15**	**Rejected**

The table above revealed that the respondents agreed with mean scores of 2.87,2.95, 2.93 and 2.69 respectively that principals ensured that guidance counsellors were trained to: prepare lesson plan and notes, review lesson plan for correction and improvement, revise the learning experiences before teaching and organize class for better siting arrangement. The respondents disagreed with mean scores of 2.05, 2.15, 1.62, 2.08, 2.15 and 2.08 respectively that principals ensured that guidance counsellors were trained to have mastery of the subject of instruction to teach students for better

understanding, apply learning experiences to daily life/living, prepare the lesson scheme of work according to the syllables, present learning experiences systematically for students better understanding, exhaust the curriculum content and teach students to achieve excellent learning outcomes. All the respondents with the sectional mean score of 2.15 rejected that principals ensured that the school guidance counsellors were trained to achieve skills in curriculum content to become professional mentors in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Question 3: How do principals ensure that the school guidance counsellors are trained to achieve pedagogical skill to become professional mentors, in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State

Table 3: Training Guidance Counsellors to achieve Pedagogical Skill
N = 800

S/N	**Indicators on training Guidance Counsellors to Achieve Pedagogical Skill**	SA	A	SD	D	$\bar{X}$	Decision
	Principal ensured that guidance counsellor were trained to:						
1.	Adopt appropriate teaching strategies and skills.	136	119	280	265	2.16	Disagreed
2.	Present lesson activities appropriately.	119	179	271	231	2.23	Disagreed
3.	Use instructional materials adequately.	136	135	270	259	2.19	Disagreed
4.	Achieve efficiency and effectiveness in lesson delivery.	121	180	271	228	2.24	Disagreed
5.	Use examples and illustrations in non-verbal and verbal communication with students.	120	118	266	296	2.08	Disagreed
6.	Apply repetition and reinforcement where necessary.	140	121	287	252	2.19	Disagreed
7	Apply best methods to assess students	115	178	217	290	2.15	Disagreed
8	Employ all kinds of educational activities that can effectively develop students personality.	111	138	260	291	2.09	Disagreed

9	Disseminate knowledge for students to understand, remember and apply it for functional use and in daily living.	145	116	271	268	2.17	Disagreed
10	Understand and convey the learning experiences for effective instructional delivery.	123	112	267	298	2.08	Disagreed
	Sectional Mean					**1.95**	**Rejected**

The table above revealed that all the respondents disagreed with mean scores of 2.16, 2.23, 2.19, 2.24, 2.08, 2.19, 2.15, 2.09, 2.17 and 2.08 respectively that principals ensured that guidance counsellors were trained to: adopt appropriate teaching strategies and skill, present lesson activities appropriately, use instructional materials adequately, achieve efficiency and effectiveness in lesson delivery, use examples and illustrations in non-verbal and verbal communication with students, apply repetition and reinforcement where necessary, apply best methods to assess students, employ all kinds of educational activities that can effectively develop students personality, disseminate knowledge for students to understand, remember and apply for functional use and in daily living, understand and convey learning experiences for effective instructional delivery. All the respondents rejected that principals ensured that the school guidance counsellors were trained to achieve pedagogical skill to become professional mentors in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State with the sectional mean score of 1.95

Research Question Four: How do principals ensure that the school guidance counsellors are trained to achieve skill in teacher/student relationship to become professional mentor in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 4: Principals Ensuring that Guidance Counsellors are Trained to Achieve Skill in Teacher Student Relationship

N = 800

S/N	**Indicators of Training Guidance Counsellors to achieve skill in teacher/students relationship**	SA	A	SD	D	$\bar{X}$	Decision
	Principals ensured that guidance were trained to:						
i.	Create conducive learning environment that will motivate students to learn.	101	102	280	317	1.98	Disagreed
ii.	Have cordial interactive teaching and learning sessions with students.	278	304	99	119	2.93	Agreed

iii.	Allow students to participate actively by asking questions so as to contribute to class teaching/learning process.	88	50	400	262	1.96	Disagreed
iv.	Motivate students to participate actively in class.	113	120	330	237	2.14	Disagreed
v.	Be friendly and cordially related to students.	206	401	91	102	2.89	Agreed
vi.	Treat students with love and respect.	86	90	262	362	1.88	Disagreed
vii.	Adopt activity based method during teaching and learning process periods.	208	299	105	188	2.66	Agreed
viii.	Use positive reinforcement for them to continually have interest in learning.	104	128	267	301	2.04	Disagreed
ix.	Acquire mastery in their instructional relationship with students so as to help them understand the learning experiences.	155	106	251	288	2.16	Disagreed
x.	Respect and relate cordially with students' parents.	120	95	287	298	2.05	Disagreed
	Sectional Mean					**2.06**	**Accepted**

The table above revealed that the respondents disagreed to items 1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, and 10 with mean scores of 1.98, 1.96, 2.14, 1.88, 2.04, 2.16 and 2.05 respectively that principals ensured that guidance counsellors were trained to: create conducive learning environment that would motivate students to learn , allow students to participate actively by asking questions so as to contribute to class teaching/learning process, motivate students to participate actively in the class , treat them with love and respect, use positive reinforcement for them to continually have interest in learning, acquire mastery in their instructional relationship with students so as to help the to understand the learning experiences, respect and relate cordially with students' parents . The respondents agreed with mean scores of 2.93, 2.89 and 2.66 respectively that principals ensured that guidance counsellors were trained to: have cordial interactive teaching and learning sessions with students, be friendly and cordially related to them and adopt activity based method during teaching and learning process/periods. All the respondents with the sectional mean score of 2.06 rejected that principals ensured that the school guidance counsellors were trained to achieve skill in teacher/student relationship to become professional mentors in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of research question one, two, three and four revealed that the principals did not ensure that guidance counsellors were trained to achieve professional ethical skill, teacher student relationship, curriculum content skill, pedagogical and teacher

student relationship skills in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. Researchers have proved that training guidance counsellors in processional ethics will enable them to acquire and maintain high standard professional practice in teaching, monitoring, planning, assessing and giving feedback to students. It will aid instructors in developing the students wholistically, aid them relate cordially with colleagues and students etc. Omoh (2023) and Idasetuma (2021) studies corroborated) with the present study, the researchers emphasied that instructors (guidance counsellors) should have in depth knowledge on teachers' professional ethical standard/ conduct, the pedagogy, curriculum content skills and relate cordially with students that if not that they will not be able to achieve the teaching objectives. Secondary school leaders should ensure that guidance counsellors have mastery of the professional ethical standards so as to achieve the objectives and goals of instruction delivery (Chukwuemeka, Amantic and Shulnaria & Babatunde 2017, Achionygwu, Ajuzie and Neakor 2013 cited in Omoh 2023).

Conclusion

The researchers concluded based on the findings of the study that the school leaders did not ensure that guidance counsellors were trained in professional ethical skills to become professional mentors in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State.

Recommendations

Based on the study findings, the researchers recommended that:

1. The secondary school management should organize training, seminars, conferences, symposia for all the teachers especially the guidance counsellors / counselling teachers in skill acquisition in; professional ethical conduct, curriculum content, pedagogical and teacher student relationship skills. This will help them not only to make the students to achieve excellently in their academics but also to help them meet up with the requirement of their professional ethical standards.

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