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Principals Fostering Students' National Cohesion through Guidance and Counselling Education in Secondary Schools in Gwagwalada Area Council, Abuja

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Abstract

The paper focused on principals fostering national cohesion through guidance and counselling educational services in secondary schools in Gwagwalada Area Council, Abuja, Nigeria. Survey research design was used and two research questions were set to guide the study. The population of the study was eleven (11) principals (https://ftemis.org/list-publissschools(2022). The sample of the study was also eleven (11) principals, sampled through purposive sampling technique. The research instrument was validated by experts in the Department of Guidance and Counselling, University of Abuja, Nigeria. The reliability of the study was carried out by conducting a pilot study, test-retest method was used for data collection. The reliability coefficient index of 0.66 was obtained when analyzing the data using Crombach alpha. Mean statistics was used to analyse the research questions. The findings of the present study revealed that the principals have mastered the parameters to inculcate national cohesion into students and that they have trained students in guidance and counselling education to attain national cohesion in secondary schools in Gwagwaiada Area Council, Abuja. Based on the findings of the study, the researchers recommended that the principals should be well trained to have more in-depth knowledge in the parameters of national

cohesion and guidance / counselling educational services so as to help inculcate into the students the knowledge for national cohesiveness.

Keywords: Principals, Fostering Students, National Cohesion, Guidance and Counselling Education, Educational Services

Introduction

The school is significantly established to basically give formal education to students, to inculcate into them the ideals, habits, behaviour, cultural values and other social characteristics that will help them become useful citizens in the society. The understanding that students are coming from different ethno-cultural backgrounds makes it crucial that those socio-cultural diversities and differences in religion, customs, norms, behavioral patterns etc. should be considered when working on helping students to have the consciousness of national cohesiveness. Some students according to their ethnic backgrounds have developed discriminatory attitude against others. They believed that others are threats to their existence. The school leaders have to ensure that these students debunk their parochial attitude, to embrace all students in the unity of belonging together, this shows cohesiveness, Atiku (2017) averred that cohesion is having a sense of solidarity, togetherness, oneness and non-discriminating attitude.

Schools have to train the students to acquire the positive attributes of togetherness, love and unity so that they can attain national cohesion. One of the educational services which can help the schools achieve this laudable objective is by applying guidance and counseling educational services. This education will help the students to have adjustable behaviour to cope with others. Amie & Amie- Ogan (2019) and the World Health Organization (WHO) 1997 cited in Aho (2019) maintained that children through such education will be taught to develop life skills which will give them opportunity to respect individual worth and have a sense of belonging to one another. The researchers also asserted that the schools through this education could help students to be enlightened, civil, tolerant and be able to understand and live in peace with people. Ijuo & Ebuk (2020) affirmed that such education will avert violence, intolerance, mistrust, misconceptions, antagonism which can set students against one another. The researchers of this present study expect educational leaders in secondary schools to apply guidance and counseling educational services to avert negative discriminatory behaviour among students and to foster acceptable ones to encapsulate national cohesion.

Fostering student national cohesion through guidance and counseling services

Schools are expected to be a place that children are trained to imbibe the right types of attitude/behaviour and values as encapsulated in the national policy on education, the philosophy, national

objectives and goals of education (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013). As entrenched in the nation education policy, the philosophy of education is that individuals have to live in unity and harmony as one indissoluble democratic and sovereign nation founded on the principles of freedom, equality and justice. The national objectives emphasized the inculcation into individuals the national consciousness and unity. More so, the inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individuals/students in the Nigerian society and beyond, to respect the worth and dignity of the individuals and to promote moral and spiritual principles in inter-personal and human relations are keys to national cohesiveness (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013). These values when inculcated into students will definitely enhance national cohesiveness among them.

National cohesion is defined as having a sense of unity and oneness by citizens of a country to the extent that despite their diversities they see themselves as being one in forming a nation (Atiku 2017). This sense of solidarity, according to Atiku, will encourage them to invest economically, socially, politically and emotionally to the well-being of fellow citizens and for national cohesiveness. Hence, the principals should ensure that, the sense of unity and oneness for solidarity should be inculcated into students. National cohesion does not mean the absence of disagreements but those disagreements when they play out are resolved within the parameters laid down by the country's laws and regulations in a manner that preserves sense of oneness. Achievement of national cohesiveness in Nigeria is like impossible because of challenges. Achilike (2011) & Nnadozie (2010) decried that the Nigerian education system is bedeviled with social ills which are encapsulated in lack of ethical behaviour and national consciousness. Nzeako (2016) posited that one of the greatest problems faced by the Nigerian educational system which must be tackled is the breakdown in morals, ethical conduct, discipline, social responsibility and general civility. This to the researcher will make it difficult for national cohesion to be attained unless esponge. Chege (2016) pointed out that a major challenge to national cohesion is the determination of morals, values and ethics. Due to the fact that there are challenges educational leaders can apply guidance and counselling services to inculcate national cohesion among students.

One of these services is behaviour modification, Katamei & Onwono (2015) maintained that behaviour modification counselling service should be applied to students to adjust their behaviour to acceptable attitude. This counselling service will help the students to have a sense of moral value, spiritual values, dignity of persons, having a sense of belonging together, social harmony, unity which will promote national cohesion. Katamai & Onwono furhter maintained that the school leaders should apply this counselling technique to inculcate patriotism, equity, equality,

human dignity, integrity, transparency and non-discrimination in students. This should be done so as to promote national cohesiveness among these students.

Appraisal service in guidance and counselling will help the counsellor to identify deficiencies, weaknesses not only in academics but also behaviourally, in the areas of disunity and being discriminatory. Ebuk & Afu (2020) asserted that guidance and counselling enhance personal social relationship among students which can promote unity and lead to cohesiveness. World Health Organization (WHO) 1997 cited in Aho (2019) posited that children should be taught life skills for them to have ability to achieve adaptive positive behaviour to be disciplined and to care for others that this will help the students to have a sense of unity and cohesiveness. Evaluation services will enable the counsellor to assess the students academically and character wise, to observe whether they have acceptable character to promote unity and oneness among themselves. Follow up service must be carried out to ensure that the students when they achieve desirable moral and ethical character for national cohesion should also be able to maintain them.

Statement of the problem

Guidance and counselling services will help to modify students behaviour to acceptable ethical character. Such adjustable behaviour could be visible in their having a sense of unity, good morals, ethical conduct, being disciplined, caring, non-discriminatory etc. This can foster cohesiveness in students. The parameters of national cohesion have to be well mastered by the education leaders so that they will work towards achieving them through guidance and counselling services.

These parameters are to inculcate in students good behavioural character and morals which will help them to be unified, wherever they are, have a sense of belonging and to cohere together. The crux of the matter is for the school leaders to understand and master the national cohesion measures or paradigm, thereby applying appropriate guidance and counselling services to train students to adapt to them. This concern has motivated the researchers to carry out the study on "principals" fostering student's national cohesion through guidance and counselling services.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to examine principals fostering student national cohesion through guidance and counselling educational services, specifically, the researchers want to find out whether principals have:

1. mastered the parameters to inculcate national cohesion into students,
2. trained students in guidance and counselling education to attain national cohesion.

Research Question

Two research questions were set to guide the study:

1. Have the principals mastered the parameters to inculcate national cohesion into students?
2. Have the principals trained students in guidance and counselling education to attain national cohesion?

Methodology

The researchers applied survey research design for the study. This design enabled them to select representatives from the population for the study (Nakpodia 2010). The population of the study was eleven (11) principals from eleven secondary schools in Gwagwalada Area Council, Abuja, Nigeria (https://fctemis.org/list-publicssschools, 2022). The sample was eleven (11) principals sampled through purposive sampling technique. Questionnaire on "Principals Fostering Students' National Cohesion (PFSNC) was used to collect data for analysis. The instrument was validated by experts in the Department of Guidance and Counselling, University of Abuja. The reliability of the questionnaire was obtained by conducting a pilot study, three (3) principals in nearby schools not sampled for the study responded to the instrument. Data was collated from the instrument through split half statistical method. Pearson Product Moment and Spearman RHO Rank Order Correlation coefficient statistics were used to analyse the data. The reliability coefficient index score of 0.68 was obtained proving that the instrument was reliable. The statistics used to analyse the research questions was mean. Mean scores of 2.50 and above were adjudged agreed whereas 2.49 and below were adjudged as disagreed. Sectional mean scores of 2.50 and above were considered as accepted while sectional mean scores of 2.49 and below were adjudged as rejected.

Data Analysis

Research Question one: Have the principals mastered the parameters to inculcate national cohesion into students in secondary schools in Gwagwalada Area Council?

Table 1: Principals Mastering the Parameters to Inculcate National Cohesion into Students

N=11

S/N	Indicators of the principals Mastering the parameters to Inculcate National Cohesion into students	SA	A	D	SD	X	Decision
	You have mastered the parameters to inculcate national cohesion, into students by ensuring that students::						
1	Are in unity or maintained togetherness	4	3	2	2	2.82	Agreed
2	Have the sense of belonging	3	5	2	1	2.91	Agreed
3	Have the sense of equality, worth and dignity	4	4	1	2	2.91	Agreed
4	Respect others	5	3	2	1	3.09	Agreed
5	Have acceptable morals/ethics	3	5	1	2	2.82	Agreed

6	Are non-discriminatory even with religious bigotry	**5**	**3**	**1**	**2**	3.00	Agreed
7	Care for one another	3	4	1	3	2.64	Agreed
8	Have the sense of solidarity to protect the wellbeing of others	**5**	**3**	**2**	**1**	3.09	Agreed
9	Have the consciousness to live in unity and harmony with everyone.	**4**	**3**	**1**	**3**	2.73	Agreed
10	Have the sense of unity and oneness even in the face of ethnic diversities	**3**	**4**	**1**	**3**	2.64	Agreed
	Sectional Mean					2.60	Accepted

The table above revealed that all the respondents agreed with mean scores of 2.82, 2.91, 2.91, 3.09, 2.82, 3.00, 2.64, 3.09, 2.73 and 2.64 that the principals have mastered the parameters to inculcate national cohesion into students by ensuring that: students are in unity and that they maintained togetherness, have the sense of belongingness, equality, worth, dignity, respecting others, have acceptable morals/ ethics, are non-discriminatory even with religious bigotry, care for one another, have the sense of solidarity to protect the wellbeing of others, have the consciousness to live in unity and harmony with everyone and have the sense of unity and oneness even in the face of ethnic diversities. All the respondents accepted that the principals have mastered the parameters to inculcate national cohesion among students with the sectional mean score of 2.60

Question Two: Have the principals trained students in guidance and counselling education to attain national cohesion, in secondary schools in Gwagwalada Area Council, Abuja.

Table 2: Principals Training Students with Guidance and Counselling Education to attain National Cohesion

N=11

S/N	Indicators of Principals Training Students with Guidance and Counselling Education to attain National Cohesion	**SA**	**A**	**D**	**SD**	**X**	**Decision**
	You have applied guidance and counseling educational services to train students to attain national cohesion by:						
1	Modifying the students' behaviour to acceptable one	**4**	**3**	**3**	**1**	2.91	Agreed
2	Applying appraisal service to mould the students' character	3	4	**1**	**3**	2.64	Agreed

	against disunity and discrimination among themselves.						
3	Training the students to possess life skills to be disciplined and to care for others	**2**	**5**	**1**	**3**	2.55	Agreed
4	Applying evaluation service to ensure that the students are assessed, for them to have acceptable attitude towards their fellow students and people.	**4**	**3**	**1**	**3**	2.73	Agreed
5	Applying follow-up service to help the students achieve and maintain moral ethical standards to promote national cohesion	**4**	**4**	**2**	**1**	3.00	Agreed
	Sectional Mean					2.76	Accepted

The table above revealed that all the respondents agreed with the mean scores of 2.91, 2.64, 2.55, 2.73 and 3.00 respectively that the principals have applied guidance and counseling education to attain national cohesion among students by: modifying the students' behaviour to acceptable one, applying appraisal service to mould the behaviour of students' against disunity and discrimination among themselves, training the students to possess life skills to be disciplined and to care for others, applying evaluation services to ensure that the students are assessed for them to have acceptable attitude towards their fellow students and other people and also applying follow up service to help the students to achieve and maintain moral ethical standards to promote national cohesion. All the respondents accepted with the sectional mean score of 2.76 that the principals have trained students in guidance and counselling education to attain national cohesion, in secondary schools in Gwagwalada Area Council, Abuja, Nigeria.

DISCUSSION

The finding of research question one revealed that the principals had mastered the parameters to inculcate national cohesion among students in secondary schools in Gwagwalada Area Council. This research finding corroborated with the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013) stipulation that the heads of schools should make sure that right types of values, attitude, respect for individuals worth and dignity are inculcated into the students. This policy promotes acceptable ethical morals, spiritual principles in interpersonal and human relations among students.

Research finding of research question two proved that the principals have trained students through Guidance and Counselling Education to attain national cohesion in

Gwagwalada Area Council, Abuja, Nigeria. The findings of Ebuk & Afu (2020), World Health Organization (WHO) 1997 cited in Aho (2019) and Katanci & Onwono (2015) are in support of the present study finding. The researchers emphasized that Guidance and Counselling Education when taught to students will enhance their personal social relationship, help them to achieve adaptive positive behaviour to be disciplined and care for others. These to the researchers will promote national cohesiveness.

Conclusion

The researchers concluded from the finding of the study that the principals have fostered students' national cohesion through Guidance and Counselling education.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the researchers recommended that:

1. The principals should continue to train students through Guidance and Counselling Education so as to inculcate into them national cohesiveness values.
2. Principals in secondary schools in Gwagwalada Area Council, Abuja should avail themselves in conferences, seminars bothering on national cohesion to have more knowledge on how to impart into students unity and solidarity for national cohesiveness to build the nation.

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