

## Assessing Counselors for Quality Curriculum Delivery Among Special Need Students of Tertiary Institution in Nigeria

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### Abstract

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This study investigated the counselor's quality for curriculum delivery among special need students of tertiary institutions. Descriptive survey design was used in carrying out the study. The population of the study was 280 counselors made up of 243 special need students and 37 professional counselors. There was no sampling because the population was small. Structured questionnaire was developed by the researchers. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. A mean of 2.5 and above was acceptable while any mean less than 2.5 was rejected. The findings of the study indicated that quality counseling brings about effective curriculum delivery for special need students in tertiary institutions through teacher preparatory, managing/directing, implementation of curriculum, motivation and facilitation. The major recommendations were focused on the need for NGOs, Federal Government and philanthropists to join hands to procure special gadgets for special need counselors and improve physical structures in higher education for effective teaching and learning processes

**Keywords:** *Counselors, Quality curriculum delivery, Students, Tertiary institution*

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### **Background to the Study**

Counseling services are core in the development and the deployment of pupils and students into areas that are relevant to their personality make up and potentials. It is a profession that a nation can employ for grooming productive work force and improving their human resource base. Counseling services assist pupils and students with disabilities, special needs and competencies or gifting to make informed educational, personal and occupational choices right from their primary school level up to the tertiary institution level, the services must be carried out in a strategic manner in order for the purpose for which the services are intended to be achieved. It is important to note that if there is not mechanism or models in place to tailor and guide the way counseling services are rendered, the services rendered may not yield the desired result(s). There is a need for a “due process” model that can serve as guide to counsellor in carrying our services in manners that are acceptable to the Counseling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) and profitable to the pupils and students.

Biswalo (1996) defines counseling as a process of helping an individual to accept and to use information and advice so that he/she can either solve his/her present problem or cope with it successfully. He further stated that counseling depends heavily on information and that many professionals' terms counseling as a TALKING CORE. British Association for counseling and Psychotherapy (2002) stated that Counselling takes place when a counselor sees a client in a private and confidential setting to explore a difficulty a client having, distress they may be experiencing or perhaps their dissatisfaction with life or loss of a sense of direction and purpose. Idowu (1986) opined that counseling is the process by which a person with a problem is helped by a professional counselor to voluntarily change his behaviour, clarify his attitude, ideas and goals so that his problems may be solved. Counselor can be further defined as a professional relationship that exists between a counselor and a client with an aim to develop the learners.

Curriculum is the mechanism through which the educational system inculcates into the learners, knowledge, skills and attitudes which the society has prescribed; it is the very heart of the school system. Onyiliofor (2010), notes that curriculum as a concept has been differently viewed by individuals, professionals and lay persons. Viewed from its generic form, curriculum is a plan of learning. This understanding entails three major questions: what to learn, how best to learn and teach and how best to enable teaching and learning? (World Bank, 2006).

Esu (2010), laments that the Nigerian curriculum has failed to empower its products with the needs skills to face life after graduation, and to be actively engaged. While Febreesim (2008), argues that curriculum is basically the content of what a government wants her learners (citizens) to learn through the instrumentality of the school”. The researchers defines curriculum in higher education context as a blueprint packaged to meet the needs, interest, desires of the 21<sup>st</sup> century students/special need students, community, society, and the entire world for which the curriculum is meant. Furthermore, it is also a systematic, well-planned content, specific material instruction, programme that the

school offers which qualifies the students for graduation and certification which lead the students into world of professional or occupational field, and lead them for future expansion whereby they are employers of other graduates because of the skills they learned in the school. These skills include initiative skills, positive mindset, creative skills, managerial skills, organizational skills among others. The researcher further observes that higher education curriculum embodies all the learning experiences of the students, programme of instruction and other activities offered to students within and outside the school (extra-curricular activities like excursions, hobbies, among others) which on graduation enable the students to be courageous, independent, problem solver, self-actualized and able to harness not only the cognitive, but also effective and psychomotor role. By affective, the researcher means taking into consideration caring and feeling of the students in the environment the students find themselves. A successful delivery of the curriculum depends on the quality of the teachers/professional counselors who are engaged in making crucial decisions about what to teach, mode of teaching, how is to be taught. They need to be given appropriate training so that they can effectively carry out this very important task.

In Nigeria and globally, curriculum delivery means curriculum implementation and every other necessary thing a counselor does with the students to bring about change in the students, give informed decision, create ideas of their own, solve their own problems and account for every success and bear any risk or un certainty without any friction. All these will be happening within the four walls of the classroom and counseling chamber putting every manner of instructional materials in an enabling environment. Offorma (2009), opines that during curriculum delivery, the teacher usually employs various pedagogical materials such as text, pictures, objects, recorded, cassette, video and television, computer and internet facilities to ensure effective implementation of the plan. Amadi (1993), asserts that curriculum implementation is “that stage in the curriculum where all the relevant curriculum inputs are brought into direct contact with the learners through a wide variety of activities, so that learning experiences and mastery can be maximized at minimum cost. In most Nigerian higher education, curriculum delivery is very critical. This is because of the following obvious reasons: most of the classroom and infrastructure are in a dilapidated state, no enabling environment, no conducive environment, no special gadgets for the special need students, hostels do not have ramps, no adequate expert teacher to handle special needs students, no equipped counseling chamber for the professional counselor to perform maximally. Just as Adesina (1988), remarks that “since teachers are the product of the school... you cannot have good teachers until you have good schools or good schools until you have good teachers”. Ikegbunam (2012), observes that teacher education was considered as expensive venture and the teaching profession has neither been popular nor attractive to brilliant students.

In this 21<sup>st</sup> century, many countries are repackaging their curriculum and delivery strategies as well as building quality mechanism for all students, including the special need students. For effective lecturing and counseling which will affect higher academic

achievement and higher manipulation of skills, which will actually help these SNS for self-independence, self-reliance and sustainable development on graduation. Therefore, every higher education that has not got these necessary infrastructure and physical facilities for SNS convenient and free movement should do so. These include ramps in hostel and classroom, side walk road, zebra crossing, among others. For the deaf and dumb, WIMAX technology (technology employed for easy communication and a host of other assistive technologies that are very crucial in the training of SNS and for use by SNS in improving their learning capabilities (for easy communication). These assistive technologies are for all the SNS. There are cushions and wedges, contour seats, standing tables, positioning belts, among others. For the orthopedically impaired students, wheelchair, clutches, mechanical/automatic bike. Among the visually challenge, Braille machines and papers. ICT gadgets like touch typing technology, voice input devices, play back audio devices, among others. The government, faculty of education, philanthropists and the teaching professionals owe the student/SNS quality education since they are also human beings and important people in the society. The vehicle to development of any nation is found in education. Government and the teaching professionals have the power to deliver this key to every citizen to operate with, especially SNS, notwithstanding. Therefore, the above mentioned group should equip the SNS with these assistive technological facilities.

In this paper, special need students (SNS) refer to all handicapped and physically challenged visually impaired, disable students in Nigeria's higher education. Encyclopedia Britannica (2009) in Adejumo (2010), posited that the special need students are those who differ socially, mentally or physically from the average to such an extent that they require modifications of usual school practices. These include students with emotional, behaviour or cognitive impairments, mental retardation, hearing, vision or speech disabilities, gifted students with advanced academic abilities and students with orthopedic or neurological impairment. Furthermore, the physically challenged include people with Parkinson's disease, polio myelitis, multiple sclerosis, system disease (the one that affects a number of organs or tissues or affects the body) dwarf, albinism (Disabilities World, 2008). Other disabilities include visually handicapped, the blind, the partially sighted and short sighted people with low vision and those that suffered from astigmatism, blurred sight and loss of vision (Onyiliofor, 2004).

It will be noted that Ikpaya (1989) and Onyiliofor (2010) see special education as specifically designed instruction which is structured to meet the unique needs of the exception individual. It may require some addition to or modification of the text existing normal school programmes in order to enable the exceptional individuals to realize mazimum potential. These special need students encounter a lot of problems ranging from psychological problem, emotional problem, social problem, academic problem, placement problem, career problem, vocational problem, examination malpractice, bad study habit, non-assertive behaviour, cultism, burnout, sexual harassment and problem of poverty (Oyiliofor, 2011). According to Onyiliofor (2010), most of the students both normal and special need students are indigent to the core. Some parents/guardians

cannot even afford school fees, hostel fees, textbook fees, pocket money. Who may be able to afford for the procurement of specialized instructional gadgets for effective learning.

All individuals, including those with special needs have a right to be given proper and holistic attention including some vital constructive guidance and counseling principles by which to live and the only people to inculcate this principle are the trained professional counselors. Counseling draws upon the past of an individual and brings it to bear on the present of the same individual in order to fashion a future that ensures self-realization and self-actualization of such individual. Odebunmi (1992) sees counseling in three categories – vocational counseling, social-personal counseling and educational counseling. Counseling is assistance, an individual who is trained gives to another to enable him understand his potentials, interest, abilities, strength and weakness (Ifelunni, 2003). Anamaeze (2002) presents counseling as a personal relationship between the counselor and a counselee in which the counselor helps the counselee to learn more satisfying attitudes and behaviour necessary for solving his problems. A counselor is expected to read the mind of his or her client to ascertain the suitable means in counseling him or her (Onyiliofor, 2010).

There are many helping professionals like architect in the construction profession, lawyer's and the legal profession, and social workers in welfare profession, among others. The helping professional in this study is a professional counselor who has either a first degree, or masters, doctorate (Ph.D) and some are professors of guidance and counseling. The role of the professional counselor in this 21st century is to be a key to effective curriculum delivery of the SNS in Nigeria's higher education; to bring about radical change in their poor feelings of unacceptance in the various institutions in Nigeria as their feelings of being marginalized with the completely wiped the various institutions in Nigeria as their feelings of being marginalized will be completely wiped out. The professional counselor makes them to have a positive mindset; and that they are just the same except for their various challenges and disabilities. And they can stand up to this disabilities knowing too well that there is ability in disability, and they can perform even better than the normal students academically, vocationally, economically, socially, entrepreneurially, among others. Malami (2007), is totally in support of this assertion by insisting that an effectively trained professional counselor's role is to help the SNS in adjustment, placement, total development, proper choice of course, vocational development, readiness to face new challenges, self-employment, behavioural and emotional problems, period of turmoil and confusion, proper time use and eradication of indiscipline. Professional counselors also inculcate skill to the special need students which will help them be on their own after graduation and also help them to compete with their counterparts abroad. Such skills are initiative, positive mindset, collaboration skill, team spirit, and managerial skills, organizational, problem solving skill and accountability skills, ICT skills, among others.

In Nigeria, the society expects many things from teachers/professional counselors. Special need students expect them to relay ideas and information effectively. Parents and students' relatives expect teachers to discipline their classes, to instill moral values and

promote academic achievement; curriculum reformer expect teachers/professional counselors to adopt new pedagogy in teaching/counseling, and new syllabuses (Blajemore and Cooksey as cited in Olumuo, 2009). Therefore, since the Nigerian society is expecting more from the teachers/professional counselors, it is pertinent that only the qualified teachers/professional counselors and specialized teachers will be employed in Nigerian higher education in order to produce productive special need students that will turn around the country in a productive way and not wait for white collar jobs. So the quack, disgruntle cheats and unqualified teachers/counselors will be avoided in Nigeria's higher education, just like the United States, German, Canada, Australia among others where teachers/professional counselors are licensed before they are allowed to practice (Nwokocha, 2012).

Based on the foregone, the question that becomes germane is how do teacher/professional counselors' qualities bring about effective curriculum delivery among special need student in Nigerian higher education?

In general, the purpose of this study is to determine how counselors' quality brings about effective curriculum delivery among special need students in tertiary institution. Specifically, the study sought to determine; (1) the various ways quality of counselors bring about effective curriculum delivery among special need students; (2) find out various ways counselor enhance curriculum delivery among special need students in tertiary institution.

### **Research Questions**

Two research questions were designed to guide the study.

1. In what ways does quality of counselor bring about effective curriculum delivery among special need students in tertiary institutions?
2. What are the various ways counselors bring about effective curriculum delivery among special need students in tertiary institutions?

### **Methodology**

The survey design was used in carrying out the study. The choice of this design was informed by the fact that the purpose of the study was descriptive on how counselors, quality bring about effective curriculum delivery among special need students in Nigeria's higher education.

The researcher covers federal college of education (Special Oyo), federal college of education, Abeokuta and Michael Otedola College of Primary Education, Noforija, Epe, Lagos State, Nigeria. The population of the study was 280 counselors made up of 243 special need students (student counselors) and 37 professional counselors. There was no sampling because the population was few. Structured questionnaire was constructed by the researcher.

The questionnaire was face-validated using 5 experts. Two in guidance and counseling in Federal college of Education, Abeokuta, Ogun State, two in Guidance and counseling in Federal College of Education, Oyo Special, Oyo State, and one in measurement and evaluation in Federal College of Education, Abeokuta, Ogun State. The questionnaire was trial tested using nine special needs students in Federal College of Education, Oyo Special, Oyo State, outside the target sample. The internal consistency of how teachers'/professional counselors' quality and licensing bring about effective curriculum delivery among special needs students in Nigeria's higher education was determined using Cronbach Alpha. It yielded a reliability co-efficient of 0.89 which was considered higher enough.

The instrument was administered with the help of nine trained research assistants assigned to collect data from the various institutions. This was to ensure maximum return of copies of the questionnaires. Mean and standard deviation were used for answering the research questions. Acceptance point of the items was 2.5 and above while any mean less than 2.5 was rejected.

## Results

**Table 1:** In what ways does counselors' quality bring about effective curriculum delivery among special need students in Nigeria?

S/N	Items	X	SD	Remark
1.	Teachers preparation is one of the ways by which qualities is brought to counselor for effective curriculum delivery among special need students in tertiary institution.	3.88	2.08	Strongly Agreed
2.	Managing/directing is a veritable way by which quality is brought to counselors for effective curriculum delivery among special need students in tertiary institution.	3.80	2.01	Strongly Agreed
3.	Implementation of curriculum is a very good way quality is brought to counselors for effective curriculum delivery among special need students in tertiary institution.	3.89	2.10	Strongly Agreed
4.	Motivation is a very good way quality is brought to teacher professional counselor for effective curriculum delivery among special need students in tertiary institution.	3.80	2.01	Strongly Agreed
5.	Facilitation is another best way quality is brought to counselors in bringing effective curriculum delivery among special need students in tertiary institution.	3.71	1.78	Strongly Agreed
6.	Importer of knowledge is one of the best ways quality is brought to counselor for effective curriculum delivery among special need students in tertiary institution.	3.79	1.80	Strongly Agreed
7.	Tutelage and guidance is another good way quality is brought to counselor for effective curriculum delivery among special need student in tertiary institution	3.79	1.80	Strongly Agreed
8.	National development is one of the ways quality is brought to counselor for effective curriculum delivery among special need student in tertiary institution.	3.65	1.69	Strongly Agreed
9.	Focused leadership is one of the ways quality, is brought to counselor for effective curriculum delivery among special need students in tertiary institution.	3.67	2.00	Strongly Agreed
10.	Higher academic achievement is a major way by which quality is brought to counselor for effective curriculum delivery among special need students in tertiary institution.	3.90	2.12	Strongly Agreed

From table 1, items 1,2,3,4 and 5 obtained mean score ranging from 3.71 to 3.88 shows that teacher preparation, managing/directing, implementation, motivation and facilitation are the various ways that give quality to counselors which bring about effective curriculum delivery among special need students in tertiary institution.

Also, item 6,7,8,9 and 10 obtained mean score ranging from 3.79 to 3.90, and they indicate that respondents strongly agree that importer of knowledge, tutelage and guidance, national development, unused leadership and higher academic achievement brings quality to counselors which bring about effective curriculum delivery among special need students in tertiary institution.

**Table 2:** What are the various ways counselors brings about effective delivery among special need student in tertiary institution curriculum?

S/N	Items	X	SD	Remark
1.	Entrepreneurial skill is one of the ways counselors bring about effective curriculum delivery among special need students in tertiary institution.	3.78	1.78	Strongly Agreed
2.	Professionalism of counselor brings about effective curriculum delivery among special need students in tertiary institution.	3.88	2.08	Strongly Agreed
3.	Quack/untrained teachers is never, never ways counselor brings about effective curriculum delivery among special need students in Nigeria higher education.	1.00	0.05	Strongly Agreed
4.	Internship is another good way counselors brings about effective curriculum delivery among special need students in Nigeria higher education.	3.65	1.79	Strongly Agreed
5.	Further studies abroad/qualified teacher is one of the ways counselors bring about effective curriculum delivery among special need students in Nigeria higher education.	3.72	1.80	Strongly Agreed
6.	Workshop/Conference is another best way counselor brings about effective curriculum delivery among special need students in Nigeria higher education.	3.68	1.71	Strongly Agreed
7.	Seminars are the best way of counselors brings about effective curriculum delivery among special need students in Nigeria higher education.	3.44	1.26	Strongly Agreed
8.	Symposium is the way licensing of counselors brings about effective curriculum delivery among special need students in Nigeria higher education.	3.12	0.31	Strongly Agreed
9.	Exchange programmes are good way counselors brings about effective curriculum delivery among special need students in Nigeria higher education.	3.68	1.75	Strongly Agreed
10.	Changing from one's career is never a good way counselors brings about effective curriculum delivery among special need students in Nigeria higher education.	1.00	0.05	Strongly Agreed

From table 2, item 1,2,4,5 and 6 have mean scores ranging from 3.68 to 3.71. this shows that the respondents strongly agree that entrepreneurial skill, further study abroad, professionalism of counselors, internship and workshop/conference are various ways in which counselor bring about effective curriculum delivery among special need students in Nigeria's higher education.

Also, items 7, 8 and 9 have mean score ranging from 3.44 to 3.68, they show that the respondents strongly agreed that exchange prorammes, symposium and seminars are ways in which counselors bring about effective curriculum delivery among special need students in Nigeria's higher education.

However, items 3 and 10 have a mean score of 1.00 respectively. This means that the respondents (strongly disagreed) that quack/unqualified teachers and changing from one career to another are ways in which counselor brings about effective curriculum delivery among special need students in Nigeria's higher education.

### **Discussion**

Teachers' preparation, managing/directing, implementation of curriculum, motivation and facilitation are the various ways that give quality to counselors which bring about effective curriculum delivery among special need students in Nigeria higher education. This finding is in line with the researcher's view stating that a counselor is someone who has undergone a teacher preparatory programme and is charged with the responsibility of managing and directing the learning, programme and behaviour of the students. Nzewi, Okpara and Akudolu (1995) is in support of the above assertion by stating that a teacher is a curriculum implementer, motivator of learning, facilitator of learning and guide for learning.

Importer of knowledge, tutelage and guidance, national development, focused leadership and higher academic achievement (Okwo and Ogbonna, 1999) are in consonance with this assertion, saying that the teachers influence is so pervasive that nobody can honestly claim never to have directly or indirectly come under a teacher's tutelage and guidance. While the researcher states that counselor has been safe-delivering, all other professionals who ultimately contribute to the overall social, economic and national development of the country. Oboegbulam (2010), declares that quality of education is the life wire of development of any nation because it provides the human capital that drives the economy as well as provides focused leadership that steers the country's developmental effort. While Nwokocha (2012), is in agreement by stating that quality education is quality of teacher.....quality of education provides the manpower needs of a nation.

Entrepreneurial skills, further study abroad, professionalism of teacher/professional counselor, internship and workshop/conference are various ways counselors bring about effective curriculum delivery among special need students in Nigeria's higher education. However, the researcher succinctly states that quality education is education that has focus on entrepreneurship to equip students with requisite skills for survival in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Nwokocha (2012), suggests that the new teacher education policy and the emergence of teaching regulatory bodies across the world are clear evidence of a clear emphasis of professionalism in the teaching profession. The researcher emphasizes that in order for teachers/professional counselors to acquire more quality, and competency, they must be sent for internship, further studies abroad, for collaboration, workshop, conferences, seminars, symposium among others. While quack/untrained teachers and changing from one career to another are never a good way licensing of teacher/professional counselor brings about effective curriculum delivery among special need students in Nigerian higher education.

## **Conclusion**

Conclusively, the regulatory body (TRCN) should ensure that qualified teachers are licensed on graduation before they are accepted for practice in all levels of education, just like their counterparts do in United States of America and other western world. This will check the infiltration of quacks, untrained teachers etc. So as to rise the standard of education. The counselor has to be intelligent, humble, loyal, empathetic, lively, importer of knowledge, motivator, facilitator, and manager/director, implementer of curriculum and of enviable and impeccable character; if he/she is to be an important agent in building the nation. If the professional regulatory bodies (such as TRCN) do all their jobs well for counselors before practice like their counterpart abroad; the qualified teachers/professional counselors will work hard to socialize, revitalize, reengineer and empower the younger one to be good citizens, good leaders of tomorrow and agent of eradicating corruption that the truism that Nigeria is the giant of Africa will not be a mockery but a reality.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations are made.

1. Government and the various faculties in higher education should endeavour to send quality teachers/professional counselor to conferences, seminars, symposium, further studies abroad, workshops to update themselves professionally; so as to be at par with their counterparts abroad. Special packages should be given to them while on training as incentives.
2. Government should collaborate with the stakeholders in the education sector to formulate curriculum and new educational policies. They must ensure that they involve the following stakeholders, students/special need students, teachers/professional counselors, parents, head of department, Deans of faculties, policy makers, among others in the formulation of formidable school curriculum.
3. The special need students should be exposed to workshops at least twice a year. They will also be sent to international collaboration once a year so as to be able to compete favourably globally. In all these training, incentive packages should be given to them" as well as scholarships.
4. NGOs, Federal Government, Philanthropists and other various agencies should join hands to procure specialized gadgets for the special need students, professional counselors and improve physical structures in Nigeria higher education to ensure effective teaching and learning

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