

## STUDENTS' AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE OF EDUCATION REFORMS FOR EFFECTIVE COUNSELING SERVICES IN ENUGU STATE

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### Abstract

The study examined the impact of educational reforms on effective counseling services. The study adopted survey research design. The population for the study was 2000 students from public secondary school in Enugu State. The sample size consisted of 193 students. Research made Questionnaire (ERFECS) on reforms on effective counseling services was used to collect data for the study. Data collected were analyzed using percentages, T-test and ANOVA. The findings of the study revealed that the respondents (students) agreed to all the items and that they are aware of the Impact of education Reforms on effective Counselling Services. Secondly, the respondents (students) had adequate knowledge of the impact of education reforms on effective counseling services among others. Based on the findings, the study recommended that Government should take cognizance of changes in the curricular design, holistic system approach, and imposition of effective dynamic institutional operation, actualizing a relevant; functional and quality education system; include functional guidance counseling services in Nigeria education system, building the capacity of the citizenry to the demand of the labour market, changes in educational pedagogy and improvement in the organization and management of our education setting through enforcing relevant strategies and platform for good results.

**Keywords:** Education, Education reforms, Effective Counselling, Counselling Services

### Introduction

Education is a key index of development hence providing good teaching, training, and learning especially in schools or colleges. Education enlightened the nation through improved or worthwhile knowledge and skills acquisition. Thus, the main purpose of education is the aid one service and function effectively in his/her environments. Though Nigeria education sector had been faced with myriad of problems which encompass economic, social, environmental, political and cultural factors. Some of these factors are in attribution to inadequate funding, poor structured curriculum, poor in-structural material. Poor classroom setting, poor motivation among teachers which may result to poor commitment among teachers, computation, dearth of infrastructural facilities (dilapidated building) examination malpractice (corruption), menace of cultism and bottleneck administration. Ibid as cited in Chiedozie (2021) factored many inadequacies that exist in Nigeria education setting which include overcrowded classroom, poorly equipped libraries and workshops, frequent industrial strikes, lack of trained personnel, poor teaching method, and inadequate curriculum. Challenges of education in Nigeria include inadequate funding, low teacher quality, poor infrastructure, outdated curriculum (Chinedu, 2023). Uchenna (2020) identified inadequate funding, inadequate infrastructural facilities, inadequate professional teachers, corruption, insecurity problem, poor supervision, poor learning outcome, and poor implementation of basic education policies.

The above listed challenges and problems may crumble the efficiency and effectiveness of education achievement hence creating room for economic and social quagmire. The challenges and problems may also give rise to poor human capital development, poor capital formation with poor economic growth and development. However, to ameliorate all these challenges in Nigeria education sector there is need to do total over hauling of our education sector through education reforming.

Education reform is a deliberate and significant made to change already existing educational policy, laws, standards methodology and idea in order to reflect to the societal needs and present values. Vanguard, 2023 indicate the need for a holistic approach to education reform in Nigeria as it will greatly improve the quality of education, increase access of education and promote innovation and technology in education. The overall objective of education reforms are to nurture an education system to improve the quality of education at all levels, make education system relevant and functional for the acquisition of skills for everyday life (Bisong as cited in Amadioha, 2015). Kpolovie (2012), states that educational reform deals the injection of new ideas, methods and techniques or strategies into educational systems so as to improve the efficiency and overall development of the system. Education reform takes cognizance of changes in the curricular design, holistic system approach, and imposition of effective dynamic institutional operation, actualizing a relevant; functional and quality education system; building the capacity of the citizenry to the demand of the labour market; changes in educational pedagogy and improvement in the organization and management of our education setting. Aims and objectives of educational reform may not be achieved or actualized without a relevant, functional and quality education system.

Quality education is a function of education reform, it boost efficiency, competitiveness and employability (Chigbu, Suleh, Grace & Mokuwelu, 2023). Oghiaghephan (2014) states that quality education encompasses teaching and learning of knowledge, proper product and technical competency with its focuses on building of skills, trades for metal, moral and aesthetic development. Thus, quality education is fundamental for societal development. Hence, quality education can be sustained when its values, principles and processes are adhered to by then learners, teachers and counselors (Agbajor, & Alordiah 2014).

A counselor is a person whose vocation inclines towards building the reputation, inspiration, aspiration, personality and skills of students through counseling (Chigbu, Nwobi, Ngwaka & Mokuwelu, 2021). Counseling is the act of assisting a client to have a positive perception about things (Ekpang and Ebuabana, 2016).

Counseling services is a practice meant to enhance individual's needs through the provision of adequate educational, vocational, and personal social-social information. Counseling services comes inform of individual and group counseling. Both counseling services are used to attain self understanding and direction. Counselling services is a significant means of functionalizing and sustaining education through its array of qualitative services meant to make education goals meaningful and achievable to their recipients. The importance of guidance and Counselling in educational services in Nigerian education system cannot be over emphasized. Counselling is unique and second to none in providing assistance to teachers, students, parents, school administrators and curriculum planners in fulfilling the policies of education as it applies to each of them (Ifeoma & Obiora, 2023). The counselling process remains one of the exclusive ways of sustaining the age long system of education that has been nurtured to build useful and self productive citizens that can transfer a nation into an acceptable level of development. This implies that education reforms may have great impact on effective counseling services.

Omalare Omolola (2022) examined inclusive counseling as a viable instrument for promoting peace and stability towards academic attainment of secondary school students in Lagos state. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design with population of all secondary schools in Ibeju Lekki local government in Lagos state. The research findings revealed that, counseling services play a major role in enhancing social and emotional adjustment among the students in secondary schools in order to promote peace and enhance their academic attainment.

A study researched by Vipene Haliru (2022) was focused on the effectiveness of guidance and counseling services on students' discipline in public senior secondary schools in Port Harcourt metropolis. The study adopted a descriptive survey comprised principals, Teachers, counselors and students of public secondary schools in two local government areas in Rivers state. The mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while the Z-test statistics were used to test the null hypotheses. The study concluded that students are helped to become aware of the many occupations to consider after learning schools and students are also helped by counselors to receive outside support concerning personal issues.

A project work was carried out by Nyutu, (2020) on the effectiveness of counseling services on academic performance and retention rate of undergraduate students in selected universities in Kenya. The study used a quasi-experimental design and phenomenological design with target population of 514 first year undergraduate students taking bachelors of medicine and surgery programme and 6 counsellors in two public universities in Kenya. Data collected indicated a result that counseling equipped students with knowledge and skills that helped them deal with developmental issues that often interfered with knowledge and skills that helped them deal with developmental issues that often interfered with their studies hence higher retention rate. Also, the study revealed that students who seek counseling services perform academically better than those who do not.

Olando, Beatrice & Peter (2014) carried out a study on the effectiveness of guidance and counseling services on adolescent self concept in schools within Khwisero district, in Kakamega country. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design with a target population sample of 240 students, 6 principles, 6 teacher counselors and 3 education officials from 8 schools. The study findings revealed that there was positive correlation between effective guidance and counseling services and promotion of positive adolescent self concept.

Similarly Suleiman, Olanrewaju & Suleiman (2019) researched on improving guidance and counseling services for effective service delivery in Nigeria Secondary Schools: implications for stakeholders in education. The study revealed that the counselors need to depend on other professional both within the school and the community to assist in the provision of certain specialized services for students.

An article paper by Ifeoma and Obioral (2023) aimed at exploring Guidance and counselling as an instrument of attaining educational reform and sustainable development in Nigeria. This paper examined the concept of educational reforms in Nigeria, the concept of sustainable development, the concept of guidance and counseling. The role of guidance and counseling for achievement of educational reform and sustainable development and the various strategies for improving guidance and counselling for sustainable development and educational reforms were also highlighted. This paper concludes by establishing that guidance and counselling is very relevant in meeting the needs of education reforms and sustainable development and

therefore recommend among other things that, there is the need for capacity building and professional development for members of the Counselling Association of Nigeria to abreast modern trend comparable with any standard in the world.

Stella, (2016) wrote on Reforms in Guidance and Counselling for Effective Educational Progress in Nigeria. The paper examines the concept of Guidance and Counselling, the rational and need for Guidance and Counselling, roles of the school guidance Counsellor and factors militating against counselling services in schools. Various ways of reforming Guidance and Counselling were highlighted. This paper concludes by establishing that Guidance and Counselling is very relevant in meeting the needs of education reforms at the Basic Education level and therefore recommend among other things that, there is the need for capacity - building and professional development for members of the Counselling Association of Nigeria to abreast modern trend comparable with any standard in the world.

A study by Okoroji, Ugwu & Anyanwu (2015) evaluate the role of school counselling services and student performance in secondary school in Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria. The study adopted descriptive research design and employed both primary and secondary data. The population studied consists of nine government schools. The sample size was determined using Taro Yamani's statistical technique and stratified sampling technique was used to select population of study. Out of 200 copies of the questionnaire distributed to the respondents, only 190 (95%) of it were returned. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to analyze the data at five point-likert scale of; strongly agreed, agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree. Study found that there is positive relationship between effectiveness of school counselling services and students performance in secondary education. Study recommends that teachers and students should be educated on the roles of the school counsellors to avoid misconception about them.

Ehindero (2015) examines the cumulative impact of curriculum and assessment reforms on school guidance and counselling services. The study sought to assess students' awareness of the impact of curriculum and assessment their knowledge of areas of such impacts and the reluctance and quality of the counselling services received relative to the curriculum and instructional challenges that encountered in their classroom. Appropriate research instruments were developed, validated and used to collect data from the subject. Results showed that most students are unaware of the impact of curriculum reforms on school guidance and counselling services. Students who indicated awareness reported that the services and unorganized as the counselling units are ill-equipped and hence not functional.

Based on the results of the above researched works, the researchers are still biased on the possible impact of education reforms on effective counseling services, could education reforms have an impact on effective counseling services or effective counseling services have an impact on education reforms. Hence, the present study investigated the impact of education reforms on effective counseling services in Enugu state.

### **Research Questions**

The following research question guided the study:

1. What is the level of students' awareness of the impact of education reforms on effective counselling services?
2. Do students have knowledge of the impact of education reforms on effective counseling services?

## Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was formulated and tested at .05 level of significant.

1. There is no significant difference in level of awareness of students of the impact of education reforms on effective counseling services in terms of gender.

## Methodology

The study assessed the impact of education reforms on effective counselling services. It assessed students' knowledge of the possible areas of impacts of education reforms on effective counseling services. The study adopted survey research design. Survey research design according to Alio (2008) and Nworgu (2015) is one in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group. The design was used in order to collect the opinion of the respondents regarding the impact of education reforms on effective counseling services in Enugu state. The population for the study comprised of 2,000 secondary school students. The sample size consisted of one hundred and ninety three and these students were purposively selected based on schools with standard counselling services. Research made Questionnaire (ERFECS) on reforms on effective counseling services was used to collect data for the study. Data collected were analyzed using percentages, T-test and ANOVA.

## Results

**Table 1: Students' Level of Awareness of the Impact of education Reforms on effective Counselling Services (%) percentages**

Items	Response Pattern		Decision
	yes	No	
1	117(60.6)	76(39.4)	Aware
3	158(81.9)	35(18.1)	Aware
12	97(50.3)	96(49.7)	Aware
13	92(47.7)	101(52.3)	Aware
15	117(60.6)	76(39.4)	Aware
16	173(89.6)	20(10.4)	Aware

The data presented in Table 1 shows that the responses of students to their level of the Impact of education Reforms on effective Counselling Services. 89.6%, 81.9%, 60.6% and 50.3% of the respondents agreed to all the items and that they are aware of the Impact of education Reforms on effective Counselling Services.

**Table 2: Students' knowledge of the impact of education reforms on effective counseling services (%) percentages**

Items	Response Pattern		Decision
	Yes	No	
2	145 (75.1)	53 (24.9)	Adequate Knowledge
5	157 (81.3)	35 (18.6)	Adequate Knowledge
6	130 (67.4)	63 (32.7)	Adequate Knowledge
7	62(32.1)	131 (67.9)	Adequate Knowledge
10	90 (46.6)	103 (53.4)	Adequate Knowledge
14	41 (21.2)	152 (78.8)	Adequate Knowledge

Table 2 shows the data regarding the level of students' knowledge of the impact of education reforms on effective counseling services (%) percentages. Data presented showed that 81.3%, 75.1% and 67.4% of the respondents had adequate knowledge of the impact of education reforms on effective counseling services.

**Table 3: T-test showing the Difference in Male and Female Students' Level of Awareness of Students of the Impact of Curriculum and Assessment Reforms on School Counselling Services.**

Sex	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	t	P
Male	88	8.68	1.89	191	0.598	>.05
Female	105	8.83	1.52			

Table 3 shows that there is a difference in the level of awareness of male and female students of the impact of education reforms on effective counseling services. The mean awareness of male students stand at ( $\bar{X} = 8.68$ ), the mean for the female was ( $\bar{X} = 8.83$ ). The test value ( $t=0.598$ ,  $df = 191$ ) indicates that there was no significant difference in male and female level of awareness of the impact of education reforms on school counselling services.

### Discussion of Findings

The result from research question 1 revealed that the respondents (students) agreed to all the items and that they are aware of the Impact of education Reforms on effective Counselling Services. Students are very much aware of the impact of education reforms for progressive counseling services, as government can positively influence good counseling environment and counseling practices through educational reformations. Given the context above the finding is in line with that of Ehindero, (2015) who states that the level of students' awareness of the impact of curriculum and assessment reforms on school counselling service is relatively high. Therefore, it is important for counselors to be well informed on the core components of the education reforms in order to pull students on the lime light through counseling services.

Data presented in table two showed that the respondents (students) had adequate knowledge of the impact of education reforms on effective counseling services. Students are very much knowledgeable on the need of counseling services to their overall development; this inversely implies they have good knowledge of the effect of education reforms on effective counseling services. In the study by Okoroji, Ugwu, & Anyanwu (2015) students perceived roles of guidance and counseling services as helpful and supportive. This simply implies that students are fully knowledgeable on the impact of education reforms to effective counselling services as they see their roles to be helpful and supportive. In the consonant to the above finding, Gibsai, 2000 & Kauchak, 2011 in their findings state that counsellor perceives each student as a unique individual who has a right to acceptance, self-development, self-fulfillment and self-direction and who has a responsibility for making decisions and living with the consequences of these decisions, so a large number of students need counselling to cope with the impact of education reform. This inability to cope is most likely a result of a disarticulated/irrelevant curriculum structure or inefficient/lack of an adequate school counselling service or unit implications. The results of this study call for a close working relationship between the curriculum and assessment reforms and the school counsellors, such a relationship hardly exist in the secondary school system where individualistic ethos and

competitive ideology even among colleagues dominate curriculum and assessment implementation strategies at the classroom level.

### Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study and discussions that follows, it was concluded that Students are very much aware of the impact of education reforms for progressive counseling services; students had adequate knowledge of the impact of education reforms on effective counseling services. It was also concluded that there is a difference in the level of awareness of male and female students of the impact of education reforms on effective counseling services. Thus, the researchers deduced that education reforms will be championed when professional counselors are dedicated in discharge of their duties.

### Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study.

1. Government should take cognizance of changes in the curricular design, holistic system approach, and imposition of effective dynamic institutional operation, actualizing a relevant; functional and quality education system; include functional guidance counseling services in Nigeria education system; building the capacity of the citizenry to the demand of the labour market, changes in educational pedagogy and improvement in the organization and management of our education setting through enforcing relevant strategies and platform for good results.
2. School guidance counselors should develop holistic strategies for implementation of their roles for proper education reforms and human capital development.
3. Governments, federal and state ministries of education should include guidance counseling services in the education reform policy for better counseling services.

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