

REDUCING THE INCIDENCE OF ACADEMIC FAILURE IN NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS THROUGH COUNSELLING



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Abstract

It is evident that Nigerian Secondary students performed poorly in their Senior Secondary School Examination (SSCE) both in West African Examination Council (WAEC) and National Examination Council (NECO). The writer attributed the problem to lack of functional guidance and counseling as one of the contributing factors. Therefore to reduce the incidence, effective counselling may be rendered to students in secondary schools. It is in view of this therefore, the paper looked at the school curriculum, Nigerian school settings, the type of students and teachers in the schools, causes and factors of academic failure, poor subject choice, poor study habit, inadequate teaching and learning materials among others. and areas where counseling is needed. The paper concludes that counseling is a vital tool in reducing the incidence of academic failure. Therefore, it recommends that government and other stakeholders should ensure the appointment of school guidance and counselor in every secondary school as enshrined in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013).

It is beyond any contention that individual differences between and among any two or more individuals even between the indistinguishable twins, there must be differences in either physical appearance, behaviour, aptitude, interest, talents, attitude to school, locus of control, parental attitude towards school, socio-economic / cultural background, teachers personality and ability as well as methods of teaching, school and school environment among others are determinant factors for academic success or failure. Stakeholders in education such as parents, educational administrators, teachers among others are criticizing the massive failure of secondary school students, indeed it is a well articulated fact reported by schools examination results (SSCE, NABTEB, WAEC, NECO), news papers, radio, television, among others. Even though parents, teachers, educational administrators use some specified limit to judge the academic success or failure of students in school, some attribute it to teachers, others to the school

facilities, parental socio-economic status, cultural background. Success or failure in school is determined by many factors within the school, family and individual student.

Academic Failure

Failure is a state or condition of not meeting a desirable or intended objective. Success or otherwise achievement is whatever everyone wants to achieve and identify in life. Poulson, Eppler, Satterwhite, Wuensch and Bass (1998) have indicated that individuals who have high level of faithful devotion to acknowledge ultimate reality are less likely to engage in risky behaviour than individuals who have low level of faithful devotion to acknowledge ultimate reality. Students who engage in risky behaviours such as poor study habit, cultism, drug abuse, non-challant attitude, poor memory, poor innemotivation, influence of bad friends, laziness, inadequate practice, indiscipline, over confidence, poor confidence, wrong choice of subjects among others do not have the same level of academic achievement as those who don't engage in risky behaviour. Mulk and Addleman (1992) have asserted that moral reasoning is also more likely to affect academic success.

Academic success or failure is the chief basis for an individual student's achievement in Nigeria schools. Education has been widely recognized as a dynamic instrument of change, socially, economically and technologically. Okegbile (2000), asserted that until late sixties, formal secondary school education was the terminal point in Nigeria's Educational system and secondary was the major source of manpower. Today in spite of increase in the number of tertiary institutions, secondary education remains the main terminal point for many who are unable to secure admission into tertiary institutions due to academic failure. Academic success as a concept remains the main determinant of the individual student's achievement in formal education measured directly through reports, examinations, rating and acquisition of qualifications. It is predictable indirectly through numerous factors which are found to be related.

There are some factors known to influence academic success which may include competence, which is the feeling of self-worth and ability in successful undertaking of academic task, hope for success which is the achievement motive tending the individual towards achieving excellence and outstanding performance in academic studies. Instrumental motivation which is the motive of the individual to achieve success in academic. Researches on reasons for academic failure so far revealed that locus of control, poor attitude to school, poor study habit, poor motivation, poor adjustment, lack of ability, poor teaching, inadequate facilities and poor climatic environment have manifested positive relationship with academic failure. (Akingboye 1974, Emeka 1984). From psychological point of view academic failure is a behavior deviation that is symptomatic of maladjustment (Chauhan 1983). Salawu (1997) stated that students in secondary schools differ in various ways as a result of variables of their home

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background such as socio-economic status, parental attitude to school and parental child rearing practices. These home background variables were found to be positively related to student's academic success or failure.

Kpanja (2009) suggested that some ways that can lead students out of academic failure, the first to acknowledge the overriding need for academic success, there is no way one can achieve academically if one has not set the goal at the beginning. Having set the goal, one must have a burning desire to overcome the challenges and to achieve the set goals Possessing a positive and desperate attitude towards a set goal is granted to achieve it.

School Curriculum

A curriculum consists of a number of subjects which give pupils a body of knowledge and skill, co-curriculum activities which create and develop growth and behaviour. All of these help the pupils to develop emotionally, morally, physically and mentally.

The school curriculum is sub-divided into three main groups, namely core-curriculum which is related to the subjects such as English, Mathematics and social studies taught in school, co-curriculum activities which include programmes like clubs, sports and games and the hidden curriculum which includes factors such as the punctuality of pupils. Pupils honesty and moral value, although if it is possible to reveal some aspects of hidden curriculum. However, we must note hence that there usually many influences on the way pupils behave, on what they learn and on the interest they develop which we can never plan for in the curriculum or never even find out. Nevertheless there is a lot we can do to try to influence what happens to our pupils (Okwelum, 2013).

The Concept of Counselling

The concept of counseling has been defined in different ways by different scholars Geldard, (1989); Gelso and Fretz, (1992); Inskipp, (1997) and Stone, (1980) see counselling as:

- i. Helping people to help themselves to live their lives more effectively
- ii. A purposeful relationship in which one person helps another to help himself/herself
- iii. A purposeful, shared activity aiming to help clients help themselves and to develop their own strengths and resources
- iv. A way of helping people to find and use their own resources for coping with difficult situations.
- v. A process involving an interaction between a counsellor and a client in private through which a satisfactory resolution may be obtained

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- vi. A broad name of a wide variety of procedures for helping individuals achieve adjustment, such as the giving of advice, therapeutic discussions, the administration and interpretation of tests, and vocational assistance.
- vii. A process of clarifying a problem held by another person(s), enabling him take appropriate responsibility for that problem, and then assisting him to arrive at some of the resolutions.

Counselling indicates a wide range of procedures including giving advice, encouragement, information, test interpretation and psychoanalysis. Counselling according to English and English cited in Sambo (2009) is a relationship in which one person endeavors to help another to understand and adjust problem. They point out that, areas of adjustment are often indicated (example, educational counselling, vocational counselling, personal social counselling). Reference is usually made to helping normal counsellee but creeps imperceptibly into the field of psychotherapy, while everyone undertakes counselling the word is preferably resisted to professionally trained persons.

Gesinde in Kolo (1997) viewed the concept counselling as “an in depth interaction between two or few individuals with the intent of assisting the client to better understand himself in relationship to his or her present or future problems”. It should be noted that counseling is more crucial to one’s understanding of himself and the world around him. In counseling the clients emotions or feelings are of serious concern. Reduction of academic failure through counselling from creation to eternity, people only have been raised people of tremendous assistance to others. God in His Wisdom foresees that no human being can live a successful life without consistent and effective assistance from another human being. In the past and from different cultures these people (helpers) are either referred to as elders, healers, future tellers, wise men and women super natural, Imams or Pastors (Stone, 1997).

The existence of these helpers as stated above has in the recent time given rise to a new set of professional helpers termed variously as clinicians, psychotherapists or counsellors and their work turned out to be counselling. In a school setting, counselling helps clients (students) to know them-selves and the world around them that is school, facilitation of behaviour change through application of workable behaviour modification techniques, promotion of decision making by creating conditions that enhance clients abilities in taking personal decisions. Improvement of clients inter-personal relationship with others. Enhancement of individuals coping skills in dealing with difficult situations, facilitation of clients potentials in the process of self discovery (Egbule, 2002).

With the above mentioned goals of counselling in a school setting, one can realize that counseling is aimed at grooming students for academic success not failure. Through counseling relationship in which counsellors endeavor to help students understand that, lack of desired goal, non-challent attitude, excessive non-scholastic

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activities, wrong choice of subjects, lack of confidence, over confidence, poor study habit, procrastination, playfulness, poor memory, poor attention, poor inner motivation, hatred of subject teachers, absenteeism, truancy, rote learning, influence of bad friends, indiscipline, inadequate practice, lack of text books, laziness to school and reliance on 'expo' are factors that contribute to academic failure.

However it should be noted that, the roles of counselling in any school setting be it primary, secondary or high institution of learning, the roles of counselling are concomitant with general objectives of the school programme at large. Counsellor's assistance to the students for maximum development of their potentials and well adjusted personality in their potentiality in the society as the core objective of counseling the school system (Inwuana 1991).

At secondary school, especially senior secondary school level, students will be faced with the final decision about continuing their formal education after secondary or going to work if the decision has not been taken. It is the primary function of school counsellor to plan and define the objective of the programme, identify needs of the student and map out action for the programme. He equally co-ordinates all aspects of counselling programme in the school which are geared toward preventing academic failure. The counsellor through counselling develops decision making skills in students by helping them to cope with academic challenges and prevents all attitudes that can contribute to academic failure. The method of counselling can either be the individual or group method.

Factors Responsible for Academic Failure among Nigerian Secondary School Students

Many factors within students, within the family and within the school come together and serve as catalyst to secondary school students' academic failure ; factors that are within an individual student may include non challant attitude, lack of desired goal by the student, wrong choice of subject, over confidence, poor confidence, poor study habit, playfulness, poor memory, poor attention, poor time management, poor self-concept, poor inner motivation, hatred for school subjects and subject teachers, absenteeism, truancy, rote learning which is a type of learning when you learn something without thinking about it carefully or without understanding it, other factors are indiscipline, inadequate practice and reliance on 'expo', that is examination malpractice.

Factors within the family that are responsible for academic failure among secondary school students of Nigeria are socio-economic background, socio-cultural background, influence of parents in subject choice, lateness to school, and examination

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malpractice other- wise known as reliance on 'expo', other factors within the school are lack of text books, influence of bad friends especially class mates or school mates that engage in drug abuse, alcoholism, truancy among others, procrastination that is deferment or adjustment of academic activities by the school or authority concerned. Poor time management is also another factor that can lead to academic failure among Nigerian secondary school. In school, proper time management should be done or else some academic activities will suffer. Inadequate academic arrangement or organization can lead to hatred of school subjects and teacher which are among the client elements of academic failure.

How Counselling Can Reduce the Incidence of Academic Failure among Nigerian Secondary Schools

Counselling has wide range of procedures which include giving advice, encouragement, information, test interpretation and psychoanalysis. In other words it is a relationship in which one person endeavors to help another understand and adjust problem they point out. It is an in-depth interaction between two or few individuals with the intent of assisting the client to better understand himself in relation to his or her present or future problems, with the above explanation on counselling through counselling interactions (sessions with clients) the counsellor would be able to inculcate the sprit of good or correct choice of subjects, identification of desired goals and how to achieve that goal, self composure, and study habits, and how to avoid rote learning, good and proper attitude to school and school subjects as well as constant practices in subjects that require practice such as Mathematics, physics, accountancy, short hand, computer studies among others.

Through counselling the counsellor can sensitize the parents and entire family numbers of Nigerian secondary school students that individual students should be allowed to choose subjects in accordance with their interest, aptitude, ability as well as their yearning and aspiratoin. Through counselling the counselors can show the students the dangers associated with bad friends, latness to school and how detrimental it is to relie on 'Expo' examination malpractice.

Conclusion

Counselling as an in depth interaction between two or few individuals with the intention of assisting the client to understand himself or herself in relationship to his or her future problems is a very vital tool in reducing the incidence of academic failure which originated from many factors within the school, family and individual student.

Counselling and counsellors in particular will sensitize secondary school students to develop scholastic attitude to school subjects of their interest, choose right subjects as well as aculturing good attention, proper self-concept, good and positive inner motivation, through counselling services such as educational counselling which is

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a relationship that is concerned with skillful and methodological way and manner of helping students have a better and more meaningful perception of his or her problems with a view of solving them. Thus educational counselling helps the students not only to know how to avoid academic failure but also to be so equipped to acquire necessary tools for effective problem solving in future as the need arises.

Conclusively academic failure may come from any or all key sources of educational problems these include problem from the individual make-up, problem from the environmental contingency, problem from the student build- up, study habit and problems associated with utilization of acquired educational skills.

Recommendations

In the light of the preceding discussions on reducing the incidence of academic failure in secondary schools through counselling, the following recommendations are hereby proffered.

1. Public and private schools, that is government and other stakeholders should ensure the appointment of school guidance and counsellors as enshrined in the National Policy on Education.
2. Government and other stakeholders should establish full fledge functioning guidance and counselling centers in all the secondary schools of the federation, in order to make students understand their abilities, interest, aptitude as well as the world around them.
3. Counselling and counsellors in particular should rise up and address the issues that contribute to academic failure such as reliance on expo, poor self concept, poor study habit among others.
4. Regular and proper guidance and counselling should be given to secondary school students with the intention of inculcating good study habits, self-concept, retentive memory, proper inner motivation, association with good friends, adquate practice, self discipline, among others so as to have better acadamic achievement.
5. Government should empower and give autonomy to guidance and counselling for all students of institutions of learning.
6. Enlightenment campaign at grassroots (country side) on the importance as well as value of guidance and counselling could as well be encouraged.

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