



**CONTRIBUTIONS OF PROFESSIONAL COUNSELLORS IN
PROMOTING EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AND LEARNING
DELIVERY IN NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL SYSTEM**

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Abstract

Professional counsellors are useful human resources that support teaching and learning delivery in the Nigerian secondary school system. They do this by assisting students to solve their educational, social or personal, career and vocational problems for attainment of high academic achievements. The role of professional counsellors in promoting excellence in teaching and learning experiences in secondary schools cannot be overemphasized because no meaningful and quality learning can be possible without solving students physical, psychological, social and emotional needs. Students will definitely face difficulties in the course of their learning and beyond, which affects their academics if neglected; and this, warrants excellent contributions from professional counsellors to enable students pull through their difficulties. This paper then, discussed the contributions of professional counsellors in promoting excellence in teaching and learning delivery in Nigerian secondary school system. The concepts of excellence, teaching and learning, secondary school system and professional counsellors were described in the paper. Further discussed in the paper were the professional counsellors' skills requisite for promoting excellence in teaching and learning in Nigerian secondary schools; roles of professional counsellors in teaching and learning delivery in Nigerian secondary schools; areas of professional counsellors' contributions for promoting excellence in teaching and learning delivery; and challenges jeopardizing professional counsellors' efforts in making significant contributions for promoting excellence in teaching and learning in the Nigerian secondary schools. Possible way forward enhancing professional counsellors'

contributions for promoting excellence in teaching and learning delivery in Nigerian secondary school system were finally indicated in the paper.

Keywords: *Professional Counsellors, Contributions, Promoting, Excellence, Teaching and Learning, Delivery, Secondary School System*

Introduction

The Nigerian secondary school system is one of the most important level in the students' education. Secondary schools are established with several objectives in order to prepare students for higher education. All the teaching and learning offered in the secondary schools assist to equip students with the necessary information, knowledge and competences that will enable them meet up with their developmental task for a successful vocation or career in future. In the process of teaching and learning delivery, students encounter challenges or problems which affects their academic, personal, social and vocational developmental task. Students in the secondary schools will definitely face difficulties in the course of their learning and beyond, which affects their personality when neglected. This course warrants excellent contributions from professional counsellors to enable students pull through their difficulties. The Lovely Professional University (2012) noted that currently, secondary schools are facing various types of educational problems such as high percentage of failures and dropout, wastage and stagnation, among others. These problems require proper guidance and counselling services through the significant contributions of professional counsellors in the schools. Professional counsellors are required in order to promote excellence in teaching and learning for all students which includes the gifted, intelligent, average, backward, handicapped and delinquent children. The Federal Republic of Nigerian (2013) pointing out the importance of professional counsellors highlighted in the National Policy on Education (NPE) that the guidance and counseling services, are important education services that are essential for successful implementation of the Nigerian educational system. The Federal Republic of Nigerian further advocated setting up guidance and counselling services in all post-primary schools (that is, secondary schools) with professionally trained counsellors to administer such services, not any teacher. Professional

counsellors in the Nigerian secondary schools fulfill many roles within the sphere of student's education, and their responsibilities may change depending upon the level at which they work. Professional counsellors are trained educators with an additional focus on mental health and development. This provides them with the skills they require to face the challenges of their chosen work environment (Best College Review, 2020). According to the American School Counselling Association (ASCA, 2010), school counsellors perform certain roles and tasks in the school. They are involved in developing school guidance curriculum, student planning, individual and group counselling, consultations, referrals, psychoeducation, intervention, and advocacy. The responsibilities of the professional school counsellor include helping students in the areas of academic achievement, personal, social development, and career development. As professionals with requisite skills, they are often the first ones to see a problem with a student (ASCA, 2010). School counsellors must be competent and willing to work with an extremely diverse group of individuals. In an empirical study on bullying victimization conducted by Cornell and Mehta (2011), they concluded that professional counsellors' ability to identify victims of bullying were positively correlated with the student self-reports of bullying. This confirms that professional counsellors are often on the leading edge of knowing what is happening with and to their students. Since guidance and counselling is an important educational tool in shaping the orientation in a student from negative ideas that is planted in the students by his/her peers; hence, the need for the contributions of a professional school counsellor to assist the student in molding their future through counselling therapy. The professional school counsellor, according to Egho (2013) is seen as a role model and highly respected by students. The professional counsellors by their training are expected to be friends with the student, listen to the student's complains, short comings and proffer guidance to the student in a quest of molding the student in the right part to take in their life pursuit. These are special qualities and skills of professional counsellors. Therefore, the total development of a child can only take place in an environment conducive for teaching and learning (Egbo, 2013). It is in recognition of the above statement that professional counsellors' contributions which are important for the promotion of excellence in teaching and learning in the Nigerian secondary schools are given prominent

attention in this paper. The thrust of this paper is therefore to discuss the contributions of professional counsellors in promoting excellence in teaching and learning delivery in Nigerian secondary school system. Discussions in the paper concerning the topic have been made in different sections in order to look at the professional counsellors' skills requisite for promoting excellence in teaching and learning in Nigerian secondary schools; roles of professional counsellors in teaching and learning delivery in Nigerian secondary schools; areas of professional counsellors' contributions for promoting excellence in teaching and learning delivery; and challenges jeopardizing professional counsellors' efforts in making significant contributions for promoting excellence in teaching and learning in the Nigerian secondary schools. Also, the possible way forward enhancing professional counsellors' contributions for promoting excellence in teaching and learning delivery in Nigerian secondary school system were discussed in a different section of the paper. Several concepts such as excellence, teaching and learning, secondary school system and professional counsellors were explained in detail in the paper.

Excellence

Excellence as describe within the context of this paper is connected to something with high degree of superiority when compared with something similar. For Cooke (2018), excellence can be associated with high quality. It has to do with certain attributes which includes relevance, appropriate, rational and resilience. Excellence can also be described as what works best in a given context. According to the Free Dictionary by Farlex (2020), excellence entails the state, quality, or condition of excelling, or superiority, greatness and goodness. It involves the highest attainable rating of something. Other definitions of excellence are: it is the quality of being excellent; state of possessing good qualities in an eminent degree; exalted merit; superiority in virtue. Something in which one excels. An excellent or valuable quality; that by which any one excels or is eminent; a virtue. Tan (2014) defined excellence as the condition of surpassing some standards of expectation. It is the dream of educational practitioners and school administrators for teachers to achieve excellence in the workplace. To achieve people excellence, school organizations need to focus on the growth and development of individuals or

students. For secondary education system then, to remain functional so as to achieve its goals, excellence is requisite in teaching and learning delivery.

Teaching and Learning Delivery

Teaching simply refers to as instructions or counselling given to learners. According to Smith (2018), teaching is the process of attending to people's needs, experiences, and feelings, and intervening so that they learn particular things, and go beyond the given. Teaching for Smith (2018) involves a lot of things which include imparting knowledge to or instruct (someone) as to how to do something; or cause (someone) to learn or understand something by example or experience. Teaching involves creating an environment and engaging with others, so that they learn particular things. It can equally be defined as engagement with learners to enable their understanding and application of knowledge, concepts, and processes. It includes design, content selection, delivery, assessment, and reflection. To teach is to engage students in learning; thus, teaching consists of getting students involved in the active construction of knowledge. A teacher requires not only knowledge of subject matter, but knowledge of how students learn and how to transform them into active learners. In teaching, the explicit or core areas the teacher or counsellor needs to be aware of includes knowing the subject matter or pedagogical content, engaging people using expertise and different teaching methods, teaching involves people to develop their ability to go beyond the data to new and possibly fruitful predictions. Excellent teaching, then, requires a commitment to systematic understanding of learning. The aim of teaching is not only to transmit information, but also to transform students from passive recipients of other people's knowledge into active constructors of their own and others' knowledge. The teacher cannot transform without the student's active participation, of course. Teaching is fundamentally about creating the pedagogical, social, and ethical conditions under which students agree to take charge of their own learning, individually and collectively. Learning on other hand simply refers to the acquisition of knowledge in order to bring about changes in the learner. **Learning** can be defined as the activity or process of gaining knowledge or skill by studying, practicing, being taught, or experiencing something. According to the Institute of Education, University of

London (2002), learning entails a reflective activity which enables the learner to draw upon previous experience to understand and evaluate the present, so as to shape future action and formulate new knowledge. Features of learning highlighted by this definition includes that learning is an active process in which the learner relates new experience to existing meaning, and may accommodate and assimilate new ideas; past, present and future are connected, although a linear connection is not assumed: un-learning and re-learning may be implied; and the learning process is influenced by the use to which learning is to be put and how the learning informs action in future situations is vital. From all the above explanations of learning, it can be deduced that learning is more than a passive process of knowledge acquisition, with predictable and measurable outcomes. This includes the belief that all efforts of learning should lead to success; learning experiences should preferably be a challenging task, involve problem-solving and self-instructions when engaged in the task; assist learners to believe in one's ability to improve and learn; and promote healthy competitions for educational goal accomplishment. With effectiveness of the teaching and learning delivery, promoting excellence is attainable. Effective teaching and learning must, however, lead to the attainment of excellence in students' achievement. During teaching, teachers' make use of teaching skills, master new knowledge, develop new proficiency, which in turn, help to improve students' learning. Excellence in teaching and learning delivery therefore will bring about realization of positive outcomes and likewise attainment of all educational goals and objectives.

Nigerian Secondary School System

The Nigerian secondary school system which is also known as the post-primary education is officially offered to students immediately after the primary schooling from the ages of 12 years. The K12academics.com (2020) described the secondary school system as a form of education received after six years of primary schooling. Students spend six years in secondary school, that is 3 years of JSS (Junior Secondary School), and 3 years of SSS (Senior Secondary School). By Senior Secondary School Class 2 (SS2), students are taking the GCE O' Level's examination, which is not mandatory, but most students take it to prepare for the Senior Secondary Certificate Examination. The Senior

Secondary School ends on the WASSCE. Junior Secondary School is free and compulsory. It leads to the BECE, which opens the gate to Senior Secondary School. SSS curriculum is based on 6 core subjects completed by 2 or 3 elective subjects. Core subjects are English; mathematics; Economics; one major Nigerian language; one elective out of biology, chemistry, physics or integrated science; one elective out of English literature, history, geography or social studies; agricultural science or a vocational subject which includes: Commerce, food and nutrition, technical drawing or fine arts. After the BECE, students can also join a technical college. The curriculum also lasts 3 years and leads to a trade/craftsmanship certificate (K12academics.com, 2020). The secondary school system as highlighted in the National Policy on Education (NPE) by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013) is made up of two level of the junior secondary school and senior secondary school. Each has its objectives for effective delivery. The goals of the junior and senior secondary school have been culminated as follows: provide the child with diverse basic knowledge and skills for educational advancement; develop patriotic young people equipped to contribute to social development and the performance of their civic responsibilities; inculcate values and raise morally upright individuals capable of independent thinking and who appreciate the dignity of labour; and inspire national consciousness and harmonious co-existence irrespective of differences in endowment, religion, colour, ethnic and socio-economic background; provide holders of the basic education certificate, junior Arabic and Islamic Studies certificate with opportunity for education of a higher level, irrespective of gender, social status, religious or ethnic background; provide entrepreneurial, technical and vocational job-specific skills for self-reliance, and for agricultural, industrial, commerce and economic development; offer diversified curriculum to cater for the differences in talents, disposition, opportunities and future roles; provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and commerce at sub-professional grades; develop and promote Nigerian languages, art and culture in the context of world's cultural heritage; inspire students with a desire for self-improvement and achievement of excellence; raise morally upright and well-adjusted individuals who can think independently and rationally, respect the views and feelings of others and appreciate the dignity of labour (FRN, 2013, P.12 & 17). Achievement of the goals and objectives of Nigerian

secondary school system demands that excellence is highly promoted in the teaching and learning delivery. Of course, promoting excellence in teaching and learning will require the rendering certain educational services like guidance and counselling in order to support the delivery of teaching and learning. However, guidance and counselling services can only be successful if only professional counsellors through their significant contributions are highly utilized in the process. Therefore, the Nigerian secondary school system cannot effectively function without the contributions of the professional counsellors. Who then are professional counsellors in the Nigerian secondary school system?

Who is a Professional Counsellor?

Every teacher is not a professional counsellor in the Nigerian secondary school system. Professional counsellors in the Nigerian secondary school system are teachers who by their qualifications and certification obtained a degree in the field of guidance and counselling. Such a professional teacher should possess some counselling expertise and skills, likewise, must have been a registered member with the Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON). The American School Counselor Association (ASCA, n.d.) defined a professional school counsellor as one who is certified/licensed educator who improve student success for ALL students by implementing a comprehensive school counselling programme. Professional counselors are equally regraded as certified/licensed educators with the minimum of a master's degree in school counselling and are uniquely qualified to address the developmental needs of all students through a school counselling programme addressing the academic, career and social/emotional development of all students. School professional counsellors however are an important part of the educational leadership team and provide valuable assistance to students regardless of whether they work in an elementary school or middle school, high school or beyond. They help all students in the areas of academic achievement, career, and social/emotional development, ensuring today's students become the productive, well-adjusted adults of tomorrow (American School Counselor Association - ASCA, n.d.). A professional counsellor as defined by Kimiru (2014) skilled person who having acquired a set minimum academic qualification, holds credentials widely

recognized and honored by the members of the counseling profession, and adheres to standards of behavior in counseling that are established and endorsed by members of the counseling profession. Miller (2018) described professional counsellors as licensed mental health therapists who provide assessment, diagnosis and counselling to people facing a variety of life stresses and psychological problems. They help people with relationship issues, family problems, job stress, mental health disorders such as depression and anxiety, and many other challenging problems that can impact feelings of well-being and happiness. For professional school counsellors to be effective in their counselling roles and responsibilities, they should enjoy helping students and teachers in the teaching-learning environment, which is possible when they possess specific attributes and skills.

Professional Counsellors' Skills Requisite for Promoting Excellence in Teaching and Learning in Nigerian Secondary Schools

The Counselling Tutor Limited (2020) explained several skills in which counsellors can utilize during counselling programmes to help promote excellence in teaching and learning in the secondary schools. According to the Counselling Tutor Limited (2020), professional counsellors use counselling skills to help them better understand and listen to clients. Through **active listening**, rapport is built, trust forms and the speaker feel heard and understood by the counsellor or listener. Therefore, the core listening skills are basic counselling skills, or practiced techniques, that help the counsellor to empathetically listen to the speaker. These skills involve: active listening, being aware of nonverbal communication and building rapport. The core counselling skills necessary for promoting excellence in teaching and learning are further described below by the Counselling Tutor Limited (2020).

Attending: attending in counselling means being in the company of someone else and **giving that person your full attention**, to what they are saying or doing, valuing them as worthy individuals.

Silence: silence in counselling gives the client control of the content, pace and objectives. This includes the counsellor *listening to silences as well as words*, sitting with them and recognizing that the silences may facilitate the counselling process.

Reflecting and Paraphrasing: reflecting in counselling is part of the ‘art of listening’. It is making sure that the client knows their story is being listened to. This is achieved by the helper/counsellor by both **repeating and feeding a shorter version of their story back to the client**. This known as ‘**paraphrasing**’.

Clarifying and the Use of Questions: questions in counselling are classed as a basic skill. The counsellor uses open questions to clarify his or her understanding of what the client is feeling. **Leading questions are to be avoided** as they can impair the counselling relationship.

Focusing: focusing in involves making decisions about what issues the client wants to deal with. The client may have mentioned a range of issues and problems and focusing allows the counsellor and client together to clear away some of the less important surrounding material and **concentrate on the central issues** of concern.

Building Rapport: building rapport with clients in counselling is important, whatever model of counselling the counsellor is working with. Rapport means **a sense of having a connection with the person**.

Summarizing: summaries in counselling are longer paraphrases. They **condense or crystallize the essence of what the client is saying and feeling**. The summary ‘sums up’ the main themes that are emerging.

Immediacy: using immediacy means that the therapist reveals how they themselves are feeling in response to the client. According to Feltham and Dryden (1993: 88) as cited by the Counselling Tutor Limited (2020), immediacy is ‘the key skill of focusing attention on the here and now relationship of counsellor and client with helpful timing, in order to challenge defensiveness and/or heighten awareness’. All these counselling skills have further been illustrated and represented in a diagram by the Counselling Tutor Limited (2020) in figure 1.



Figure 1: Basic Counselling Skills (Source: Counselling Tutor Limited (2020). *Effective counselling skills*.

<https://counsellingtutor.com/basic-counselling-skills/>.)

For Miller (2018) professional school counsellors should possess requisite skills such as: effective communication skills, acceptance skills,

empathy, problem-solving skills, rapport-building skills, flexibility, self-awareness, and multicultural competence skills. These skills have been further described below by Miller (2018).

Communication Skills: Effective counsellors should possess certain excellent communication skills before embarking on a counseling career. Counsellors need to have a natural ability to listen and be able clearly explain their ideas and thoughts to others.

Acceptance Skills: being nonjudgmental and accepting are important attributes in any of the helping professions. But professional counsellors should be able to "start where the client is at." This phrase is often used in counselling to describe the ability to relate to clients with an open, nonjudgmental attitude – accepting the client for who she is and in her current situation. Counsellors need to be able to convey acceptance to their clients with warmth and understanding.

Empathy Skills: counselors help people through some of the most difficult and stressful times of their lives. They must be able to display empathy – the ability to feel what another person is feeling. Empathy means that you are truly able to imagine what it is like to stand in someone else's shoes. Compassion and empathy help clients feel understood and heard.

Problem-Solving Skills: according to Miller (2018), it is not up to a counsellor to solve her clients' problems, no matter how much he or she might want to help. But counsellors must have excellent problem-solving skills to be able to help their clients identify and make changes to negative thought patterns and other harmful behaviours that might be contributing to their issues.

Rapport-Building Skills: counsellors must possess a strong set of interpersonal skills to help establish rapport quickly with clients and develop strong relationships. They must give their undivided attention to clients and be able to cultivate trust. Professional counselors need to be able to place all of their focus on what their clients are saying and avoid being distracted by their own personal problems or concerns when they are in a session.

Flexibility Skills: flexibility in counseling is defined as the ability to adapt and change the way you respond to meet your clients' needs. Professional counsellors do not have to stay rigid and stick to a predetermined treatment path when the clients require a different approach. Being flexible is one of the most important attributes of a professional counsellor.

Self-Awareness Skills: self-awareness is the ability to look within and identify your own unmet psychological needs and desires, such as a need for intimacy or the desire to be professionally competent. This ability prevents the counsellor's issues from affecting or conflicting with those of their clients. Self-awareness has a major impact on a counsellor's effectiveness in the school.

Multicultural Competency Skills: counsellors help people from all walks of life including students in the school organization. They must display multicultural competency and adopt a multicultural worldview, says Hutchinson. Multicultural competency means that the counsellor tries to relate to and understand their clients regardless of their race, ethnicity, religious or political beliefs or socioeconomic background (Miller, 2018).

Professional counsellors therefore possessing all the above counselling skills will aid them to play important roles which is necessary or requisite for them in promoting excellence in teaching and learning delivery in Nigerian secondary schools. Hence, the need to discuss the roles of professional counsellors in the teaching and learning delivery.

Roles of Professional Counsellors in Teaching and Learning Delivery in Nigerian Secondary Schools

Professional counsellors through the counselling services play important roles in the teaching and learning delivery in Nigerian secondary schools. Given that students will definitely face difficulties in the course of their learning and beyond, which seem to affect their academics if neglected; this is where excellent contributions of professional counsellors are requisite in order to enable students solve all their educational, social or personal and vocational difficulties or problems. Professional counsellors help students with issues such as bullying, disabilities, low self-esteem, poor academic performance, and relationship troubles. They evaluate students' abilities, interests and personalities to help them develop realistic academic and career goals. Mogbo, Obumneke-Okeke and Anyachebelu (2011) identifying the role of counsellors in counselling programmes posited that trained counsellor offer help to an individual in a one to one or one to many encounters. In counseling, information is given but it deals more intensely with personal and emotional issues. The individual is assisted to understand his feelings, thinking and behaviours

particularly behaviours that make the individual to live a happy life. It is more private and confidential. Professional counsellors will help a student to take an honest look at himself, locate his areas of strengths and weaknesses academically, consider those feelings, thought and behaviour patterns in the context of laws, rules and regulations approved by the society. Counsellors makes a student to consider alternatives in the light of existing facts and information to make an informed, wise, and personal decision. They assist students' growth helping them to think independently and become self-reliance. The individual/student understands what he can do with his head, hands and soul that are of great benefits to him and the society. Counsellors through counseling makes the individual to be self-directed and self-actualized, hence he can solve his problems when assisted (Mogbo, Obumneke-Okeke & Anyachebelu, 2011).

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2020) identifying appropriate roles of the professional counsellor stressed that they assist individual student academic planning and goal setting; support school counselling classroom lessons based on student success standards; organize short-term counselling to students and referrals for long-term support; enhance collaboration with families, teachers, administrators and community for student success; they act as advocacy for students at individual education plan meetings and other student-focused meetings; and provide data analysis to identify students issues, needs and challenges. For effective teaching and learning delivery in secondary schools, professional counsellors listen to students' concerns about academic and emotional or social problems as it affects their education; help students process their problems and plan goals and actions; mediate conflict between students and teachers; improve parents and teachers' relationships for the benefits of students; facilitate drug and alcohol prevention programmes which might prevent students' education; refer students to psychologists and other mental health resources; and work on academic boards to improve learning conditions (All Psychology Schools, 2020). Further expatiating on the appropriate roles and activities of a professional counsellor, the American School Counsellor Association (ASCA, 2020) further highlighted that real professional counsellors in promoting excellence in the teaching and learning processes assist in: advisement and appraisal for academic planning;

orientation, coordination and academic advising for new students; interpreting cognitive, aptitude and achievement tests; providing counseling to students who are tardy or absent; providing counseling to students who have disciplinary problems; providing short-term individual and small-group counseling services to students; consulting with teachers to schedule and present school counseling curriculum lessons based on developmental needs and needs identified through data; interpreting student records; analyzing grade-point averages in relationship to achievement; consulting with teachers about building classroom connections, effective classroom management and the role of non-cognitive factors in student success; protecting student records and information per state and federal regulations; consulting with the school principal to identify and resolve student issues, needs and problems; advocating for students at individual education plan meetings, student study teams and school attendance review boards, as necessary; and analyzing disaggregated school wide and school counseling programme data. The Best College Review (2020) described the roles of counsellors as helping children to grow and tackle their emotional, intellectual, and social needs. School counsellors also play active part in helping individuals to develop healthy relationships with their peers, cope with academic challenges, and create a resilient sense of self during this critical developmental period. As children grow, so too does the role of counsellor to include academic career planning and troubleshooting on an individual basis. Counsellors will also engage in small group or class counselling in order to mitigate negative trends perceived by teachers and administrators, such as bullying or violent behaviours and inappropriate activities. They provide resources for children displaying tendencies that may put them in academic jeopardy and actively intervene in cases of abuse, emotional and psychological disturbance, or unaddressed cognitive issues (Best College Review, 2020). For older students in a secondary educational environment, counsellors help them cope with the mounting pressure to succeed academically. The high school environment is rife with intense social and psychological currents. During this time, individuals are identifying and adopting systems of ethics that are unique to them. While earlier periods are often mapped onto the systems of adults in their lives, children begin to experiment with different social concepts and ethical frameworks during this time.

Counsellors, therefore, assist them in this exploration via direct or indirect involvement. School guidance counsellors, furthermore, work with many different parties in and around the educational cosmos. While they have specific duties to directly interface with students, they also collaborate with the adults in students' lives. School administrators rely on the specialized education of these counsellors to craft the overall mood of the school in question. They also address specific disturbances by crafting behavioural management plans for individuals or performing needs assessments to identify problems and provide solutions. Data gathering and interpretation is a cornerstone of the counsellor's job, whether assisting in the administering of standardized testing, gifted or general placement tests or behavioral assessments for individuals and groups (Best College Review, 2020). While career planning may be most nebulous at the elementary level, counsellors also guide students in this capacity. As children grow, this aspect of counselling becomes more focused and concrete. During the early years, counsellors help to provide opportunities for learning and exploring different fields. At later points, they work directly with students and teachers to help individuals find the educational paths that will take them where they want to go. During secondary school education and beyond, professional counsellors focus on career guidance intensifies further. They may directly consult with students to find solutions to specific problems, address career goals, and provide for academic needs. The training these individuals (that is; professional counsellors) receive is perhaps more complex than any other role within the educational spectrum. While they may focus on a specific developmental stage in the lives of children and students, they are certified both as educators and as mental health practitioners. The responsibilities of a school counsellor are all geared towards creating a healthy developmental environment and assisting individual students in their quest to succeed (Best College Review, 2020). Oye, Obi, Mohd and Bernice (2012, p.29) observed that in any school setting the roles of the professional guidance counsellor include the following:

- i. Taking charge of establishing school guidance programme;
- ii. Coordinating the guidance programme in schools;
- iii. Define objectives of the school guidance programme for the benefit of the principals, teachers, parents, and the students;
- iv. Helping to disseminate career information of the students;
- v. Playing major role in the identification of the guidance needs of the students;

vi. Supervising the building and maintenance of students' cumulative records in schools; vii. Providing relevant data for the placement of students in the transition from junior to senior secondary schools; viii. Assisting parents in relating student's interest, attitudes and abilities to current future educational, occupational opportunities and requirement; ix. Providing counseling service to the students regarding their educational, vocational and personal social concern; xi. Assisting students and parents to understand procedures for applying to higher institutions and for financing student' education; and xii. Functioning as a resource person to teach in exhibited classroom. Given all the important roles of professional counsellors, there are certain counselling areas or programmes in which professional counsellors contributions have been recognized in order to promote excellence in teaching and learning. this has been discussed in details in the next section below.

Areas of Professional Counsellors' Contributions for Promoting Excellence in Teaching and Learning Delivery in Nigerian Secondary School System

Professional counsellors make their significant contributions in different areas of counselling programmes which takes place in the Nigerian secondary school system. Professional counsellors' contributions in this paper have been disclosed and discussed based on the different guidance and counselling programmes/services operating within the secondary school system, as they include: academic or educational guidance and counselling, social or personal guidance and counselling, vocational guidance and counselling. The Lovely Professional University (2012) describing the various guidance and counselling services stressed that in educational or academic guidance and counselling, problems that could be of learning, teaching and that of education generally are handled here. It is a conscious effort to assist in the intellectual growth of an individual. Educational or academic guidance and counselling is therefore, a process of assisting the individual student to reach optimum educational development. It is a process concerned with the assistance given to students in their choices and adjustments with relation to schools, curriculums, courses and school life. Educational guidance and counselling is concerned principally, with matters relating to schools, courses, curricula and school life, rather than

vocational, social or personal matters. It is a process concerned with bringing about a favourable setting for the individual's education and includes the assistance in the choice of subjects, use of libraries, laboratories, workshops, development of effective study habits, evaluation techniques and adjustment of school life with other activities. Counsellors who confine themselves merely to choices are merely scratching the surface. Very little is achieved unless every student is provided with an environment conducive to his own best development. Educational guidance and counselling is directly concerned with the aspects of students learning. In the student life, educational guidance and counselling is very important. The chief aim of educational guidance and counselling as further indicated by the Lovely Professional University (2012) is to develop the ability of coordinating with the school environment in the students and to create necessary awareness and sensitivity so that they may select for themselves proper learning objectives devices and situations. Educational guidance and counselling is intended to aid the individual in choosing an appropriate programme and in making progress in it. Hence, for the social development of human being, education and educational guidance and counselling is required at each step. Continuous changes in the various social aspects are occurring, such as: social ideology, aims of education, methods of achieving these objectives, social needs, social values, and traditions etc. In addition to these changes in social aspects, there are influences of psychological researches on education, an individual and the society. And, as a result of these researches, revolutionary social and educational changes are being observed, such as, at present, education according to the student's aptitude, ability and interest, is being insisted. But, practically, providing such education faces many difficulties. In such conditions, the need of academic or educational guidance and counselling can be realized (Lovely Professional University, 2012). Assistance is to be provided by professional counsellors to the students so that they may adjust in the schools with curricula and school life. Areas in which the professional counselling contributions are requisite is to solve the problems of wastage and stagnation, assist students in appropriate selection of courses or subjects, support students in making adjustment in school, provide information regarding future education, create awareness about the job opportunities, make students busy in learning process, assist in the

change in teaching methods and school administration as it affects teaching and learning, identify the reasons for increasing percentage of delinquents and help the students in making a satisfactory transition from home to school (Lovely Professional University, 2012).

When the student enters a school, he faces a novel situation. In his home he is free to do as he likes. In the school he finds life regimented. For some time, he finds it even difficult to adjust. If he is unable to adjust without the assistance from a professional counsellor, he gets troubled. At this stage, the student needs assistance from the professional counsellor. Professional counsellors in the Nigerian secondary school system will also make significant contributions in the areas of helping the student in solving difficulties in learning and to make necessary adjustments. They also help potential dropouts to stay in schools. The school learning may be uninteresting. The school environment may not be conducive to their growth. The professional guidance counsellor, however, tries to analyze the causes of the malady and checks students from dropping out. This saves stagnation and wastage also (Lovely Professional University, 2012). Furthermore, the professional guidance counsellor helps students to make educational choices and plans for future. Students have to be guided as to suitable course and curricula in keeping with their abilities and interests. Students also need to be guided by professional counsellors to make educational plans and making progress in them. Educational plans are made with the consideration to the occupation one would like to choose the capacities one has, and the responsibilities one will have to shoulder in future. Secondary education has a dual role to play in (a) preparing boys and girls for the pursuit of higher education, and (b) equipping them to enter life confidently and earn their living. A professional guidance counsellors' contribution helps in this process. The professional counsellors will definitely assist students in making optimum development (Lovely Professional University, 2012). In personal social guidance and counselling, problems including personality and life in general which might jeopardize students' education are taken care of there. The Lovely Professional University further observed that the personal social guidance and counselling helps individual to solve his or her personal problems. This programme aims at social and emotional well-being of the students. In every school are found quite a few students who are emotionally maladjusted and are

unable to make satisfactory social adjustment. They, for that reason, fail to make full use of their potentialities. Some may have developed undesirable habits so as to become a problem to their parents and teachers. Professional guidance counsellors in this regard, make an effort to spot out these maladjusted and the problem-children in the school. Through the diagnostic psychological testing and the sociological information from the home and the school an attempt is made to find out the root cause of the trouble. The counselor could arrange counseling interviews with the student and try to rehabilitate him or her. In case the cause of the problem lies with the home environment, the counselor works with the parents and tries to change their attitudes towards the child. Assistance will be given to any individual by the counsellor to resolve his emotional problems and to assist him to control his emotions. Controlled emotion is the most significant characteristic of a mentally healthy individual. An individual having control over his emotions when threatened with conflicts and frustrations is able to maintain a mental balance by working against stress. The students who are in the adolescent period of their growth and development exhibit heightened emotionality. At times they lose their control over very trivial matters. They become extremely emotional when the situation causes intense feeling. Several factors like failure in love, unsatisfactory academic performance, maladjustment at home and with peers cause emotional problems. These problems when affected could hinder the students' learning in school, and this calls for the contributions of a professional counsellor not just any teacher to handle the situation. Therefore, professional counsellor renders assistance and contributions to solve the students social/personal problems by helping the student to form desirable attitudes towards his self, parents, teachers, class fellows and others. Sympathy and affection should be used by the school counsellor for achieving this end. The school counsellor will also help the students to build a good physique through a regular medical check-up; help in making emotional adjustments for the students; help in the development of the students' self-discipline; help the students to solve the problems concerning physical health and likewise, to solve problems concerning sex, emotionality, and mental health. The school professional counsellor furthermore in social or personal counselling will help the adolescents in making both family and social adjustments including adjustment with the

school; assist in helping to organize wholesome recreational activities in the school for students; and to provide the opportunity for community service (Lovely Professional University, 2012).

Vocational guidance and counselling handles problems from work and training, career choice making and adjustment. According to the Lovely Professional University (2012), it is the assistance rendered in meeting the problems relating to the students' choice of vocation, preparing for the vocation, entering the job, and achieving adjustment to it. It also aims at helping individuals in the following specific areas like making individuals familiar with the world of work and with its diverse requirements and to place at the disposal of the individual all possible aids in making correct appraisal of his strength and weaknesses in relation to the job requirements offered by his environment. The recognition of the fact that education coupled with excellent teaching and learning should equip the individual to enter an occupation and be able to make a living, makes vocational guidance and counseling an integral part of the educational process. Thus, guidance and counselling in the educational setting cannot be comprehensively and purposefully rendered without including professional counsellors' contributions towards vocational development. In our country Nigeria, natural resources are not being properly utilized because of lack of professional counsellors' services. For the planned development of a nation like Nigeria, conservation of human resources and manpower planning is very important. A careful balance has to be struck between the manpower needs and the various educational and training programmes. To meet the rapidly rising demands of various types of personnel for the various developmental projects, the younger generation of the country will have to be systematically guided by professional counsellors into courses of training which will equip them for urgent national needs (Lovely Professional University, 2012). Additionally, the hiatus between education and employment has rarely been as wide and so disturbing as it is today. Higher academic education is far too general and diffused to be of practical value to the vast majority of young men and women. Most of Nigerian young men and women have no clear objectives or career targets at the secondary education level. They go through university courses of learning without acquiring much knowledge or preparing themselves for an uncertain future. Every year, Nigerian colleges and universities send thousands

of hopeful youngsters into the labour market virtually unemployable despite their fancy degree and diplomas. Employer often complain that of the hundreds of applications that come in response to a single vacancy, at least 80 per cent have no relevance to the job specifications. Few students pursue their education with a clear idea as to what they would eventually like to become. People register at the employment exchange with scant idea about the sort of work they would like to take up. The employment of workers ill-suited to their jobs leads to a higher rate of labour placement or to the retention of persons who are inefficient. This is a huge wastage of scanty resources. The contributions of professional counsellors at the early stage of secondary education may help in reducing this wastage and thus ensure efficient use of manpower. Thus, a well-organized guidance and counselling programme with the services of professional counsellors is essential for creating occupational awareness among secondary school students and youths of the country in order to avoid future damages or problems when they get into higher education such as the colleges or universities.

The secondary school students through assistance of professional counsellors must be made aware of the various types of jobs available in the employment market so that they may be able to opt those courses during the secondary stage. Therefore, assistance has to be given by professional counsellors for making a right choice of the courses at the secondary school stage (Lovely Professional University, 2012). Besides, the choice of a career is undeniably one of the most crucial decisions one makes in life, and this starts from the secondary school stage. The irony is that such an important decision is often made quite early in the life of an individual and is sometimes made without giving as much thought to it as is often given to such things as buying a pair of shoes or clothes. The choice of work determines how an individual's time is going to be spent, what type of people he will associate with, what kind of place he will have to work and live in and a host of each very important things. Naturally, a career should be chosen with utmost care, thought and planning. Often in the matter of vocational choice, an individual may find himself unequal to the task, or in a dilemma to choose one or the other or be totally in the dark. All such individuals require a professional counsellor's assistance called vocational guidance counseling. If vocational guidance and counseling were made an integral part

of the total educational process, it would be most meaningful and helpful to support the programme with the efforts of professional counsellors so as to become useful to the students or recipients. Hence, the contributions of a professional counsellor under career or vocational guidance and counselling are to; assist an individual or student in making a choice of occupation in accordance with his innate endowments. The counsellor prepares an individual towards selected occupation or profession; and provides services in accordance with his educational background and future trainability. The crux of the professional counsellor's efforts in vocational guidance and counselling lies in the successful support given to students in his placement area for his own happiness and job satisfaction as well as to become a useful member of society (Lovely Professional University, 2012).

Challenges Jeopardizing and Impeding on Professional Counsellors' Significant Contributions Promoting Excellence in Teaching and Learning in Nigerian Secondary Schools

There are certain factors acting as challenges jeopardizing and impeding professional counsellors' efforts in making significant contributions towards promoting excellence in teaching and learning delivery in the Nigerian secondary schools. Low (2009) looked at these challenges in four dimensions namely internal, external, systems and personal challenges. According to Low, the internal challenges are concerned with clientele groups, teachers' attitudes towards counselling and pupils' willingness to seek counselling. External challenges are issues outside the school which include culture and globalization; system challenges are things within the programme which include law establishing its practice in schools, referral procedure and resource planning while personal challenges include skills and techniques of the counsellor including training, supervision, and attitude towards the school system. Hatch (2008) stated that professional challenges in school counselling could be understood using three theories namely, organizational theory, institutional theory and political theory. This author sees organizational theory as how effective and efficient an organization is in accomplishing its goals and achieving the results the organization intends to produce. Hatch that school counselling programmes have not been perceived as having fixed divisions of

labour and sets of rules that have been proven to govern the behaviour of school counsellors. He says that a few guidance and counselling programmes operate with clear formal structures, programme definitions or clear priorities. In school guidance and counselling, lack of planning, accountability or evaluation has led to fragmented and inconsistent programmes. Hatch (2008) is of the view that when applying the organizational theory to school counselling programmes, there should be a means of ensuring that school counsellors are effective in performing activities in such a way that desired educational objectives are achieved.

In support of Hatch (2008), Anagbogu, Nwokolo, Anyamene, Anyachebelu and Umezulike (2013) and George (2004) maintained that school counselling must demonstrate its effectiveness if it is to survive. Institutional theory, according to Hatch (2008) explains an organization's effort to institutionalize structural elements and processes that establish rules, policies and procedures. Therefore, institutional theory when applied to the school situation the theory explains that school counselling practice shows that rationalized myths exist in the school counselling profession. This means that different schools have different programmes for their schools which are often guided by current internal and external cultural norms and pressures when making decisions regarding services and programme content rather than using the data generated from the checklist to inform students' needs. It is believed that from the institutional theory perspective, sharing results of counseling programmes enhances the legitimacy, because when school counsellors share results with policy actors within the school, the policy actors come to understand the school counsellors' vital role as contributors to student learning. For the political theory, Anagbogu, Nwokolo, Anyamene, Anyachebelu and Umezulike (2013) defined politics as a form of social conflict rooted in group differences over values about the use of public resources to meet private needs. It is said that political decisions often hinge on two important weighted components namely, value versus resource. If a programme is highly valued, it is said to have earned social capital and resources are more likely to be allocated to implement it year to year. Applying political theory to the school counselling profession, his view is that counselling profession lacks ability to show that the value of the programme is worth their resource and has resulted in loss of positions, role definition and programmes.

School counsellors have felt marginalized and isolated for many years. They have referred to themselves as outsider in school leadership and governance and are often directed by administration to perform tasks that they view as outside of their responsibility (Anagbogu, Nwokolo, Anyamene, Anyachebelu & Umezulike, 2013). Watanable and Herr (2006), Daniel (2009), Udom (2010) and Joseph (2012) in their studies discovered that, professional counsellors are faced with serious challenges like lack of acceptance, lack of instruments for psychological tests for appraisal and placement purposes, lack of vocational information, economic, cultural and language barriers. Also, teachers see counsellors as rivals and that they also perform the services of the counsellors. Counselling services are the services rendered by the counsellor to an individual or group of persons in an organized institution or setting. A professional counsellor is one that is academically trained in the field of guidance and counselling in a recognized tertiary institution. Therefore, the educational counselling service of the counsellor takes care of all aspects of educational matters as applicable to schools setting (Brown and Joshua, 2011).

In summary, the whole facts gathered from the above authors explanations showcases that some internal and external factors which includes inadequate funding of guidance and counselling programmes by the government, misplaced priority for school guidance and counselling services, leadership problems, too much teaching workload for counsellors or use of counsellors in teaching other subject other than practicing their own field of study, use of non-professional counsellors (such as ordinary teachers without the rightful counselling qualification and skills), poor incentives for school, politicizing counselling in school, poor supervision of guidance and counselling activities in schools, non-involvement of stakeholders like parents in guidance and counselling programmes, inadequate guidance and counselling facilities and material resources, inadequate time allocated to guidance and counselling services, inadequate/lack of professional counsellors participation in on-the-job or in-service training and retraining programmes, negative attitude of students towards guidance and counselling services, among others, are challenges impeding or jeopardizing professional counsellors' efforts towards making significant contributions in promoting excellence in teaching and learning

delivery in the Nigerian secondary schools. All these challenges require a way forward which has been disclosed in the next section.

Possible Way Forward enhancing Professional Counsellors' Contributions for Promoting Excellence in Teaching and Learning Delivery in Nigerian Secondary School System

Today's school counsellors are vital members of the education team who help all students in the areas of academic achievement, career, and social/emotional development. Most school stakeholders like parents, administrators and the general society often wonder just what it is that professional school counsellors do on a daily basis. Gone are the days when professional school counsellors sit in their office simply handling out school applications, making schedule changes for students who want to drop a class or waiting for a crisis to occur before they can respond. Professional counsellors' duties and responsibilities in the secondary school goes beyond official matters or classroom teaching. Secondary school students carry out personal, social, academic, and vocational developmental tasks; therefore, the principal role of professional counsellors is to help the students accomplish successfully the developmental tasks of the developmental stages they are in (American School Counselor Association, ASCA, 2020). Professional counsellors can perform their responsibilities or roles effectively only when all the anomalies or challenges jeopardizing their significant contributions towards promoting excellence in teaching and learning delivery are corrected. However, there are possible way forward which will enhance professional counsellors' contributions for promoting excellence in teaching and learning delivery in the Nigerian secondary school system. These will include adequate support for guidance and counselling programmes in the secondary schools by the government, school administrators, parents and other non-governmental institutions through adequate funding and provisions of guidance and counselling facilities and resources. When resources are adequately provided in the secondary schools, this will enable professional counsellors work efficiently in the school. Sometimes professional counsellors are over-burden with too workloads which affects their work as counsellors; this could be handled only when school administrators' relief them from teaching to support them to only handle problems relating to students'

maladjustments or counselling matters. Only professional counsellors should be allowed to handle guidance and counselling in the secondary schools. As such, there is need to employ adequate professional counsellors in the secondary school system. This will bring in professionalism into the guidance and counselling programmes in schools. Also, professional counsellors need to constantly upgrade and update their knowledge and skills through regular in-service training and retraining in order to boost their competences. Others will include tackling leadership problems as it affects the effectiveness of school guidance and counselling programmes in school, encouraging both teachers and students to accept school counselling programmes and also parents should also be frequently involved in school guidance and counselling programmes in order to gain their full support. When all these anomalies and challenges are corrected, that is only when the contributions of professional counsellors especially in promoting excellence in teaching and learning can be felt.

Conclusion

Professional counsellors are among the important human resources in the Nigerian secondary school environment that help each student to meet and solve his or her problems. They assist students to solve their academic, personal, social, and vocational problems as they affect their learning. Given the important roles and dispositions of professional counsellors, yet their presence and contributions are not actively felt in the secondary school system because of some challenges or anomalies jeopardizing their efforts in the secondary schools. In order to accomplish instructional objectives in teaching and learning and likewise promote excellence in instructional delivery, priority attention and focus needs to be paid to the professional counsellors that handle the guidance counselling programmes so as to enable counsellors make significant contributions towards the development of students within the Nigerian secondary school system.

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