

The Post-training Needs of School Counsellors and its Influence on Practice in Selected Public Secondary Schools of the Mezam and Mfoundi Divisions of the North West and Center Regions of Cameroon

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Abstract: There is high recognition that knowledge, skills and attitudes are critical in effective counselling practice and this is the rationale for counsellor's training and development. This study examined the post-training needs of school counsellors and its influence on practice. The concurrent nested mixed-method research design was used. Quantitative data was collected through descriptive survey with the aid of a questionnaire while qualitative data was collected using an interview guide. A sample of 249 randomly selected school counsellors were recruited from secondary schools in Mezam and Mfoundi Divisions of Cameroon. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical tools; frequency counts, graphs, percentages and the Pearson test and regression analysis was used to test hypotheses. Thematic analysis with the aid of themes and quotations was used for qualitative data. Findings showed a significant, positive and strong influence on practice ($R\text{-value}=0.611^{**}$, $p\text{-value}=0.000<0.05$). Implications are that the quality of training being offered to counsellors be intensified and improved. It was recommended that school counsellors be trained to be multiskilled, the training be intensified with emphasis on practicum; appropriate and adequate programs be organized and appropriately delivered by those who master the content at divisional and regional levels for counsellors to upgrade their skills.

Key points: Post-training Needs, School Counsellors, Training, Practice, Secondary Schools, Mezam and Mfoundi Divisions.

INTRODUCTION

School counsellors have an enormous impact on student achievement and attainment (Education Trust, 2007). From the courses students take to the goals they set and paths they pursue, school counsellors are powerful forces in their schools and in the lives of students (Education Trust, 2007). The importance of providing school counselling within school has gained more attention recently (Tolan and Dodge, 2005). Tolan and Dodge (2005) opines that school counsellor education programs are designed to provide students with the knowledge and skills to become competent professional school counsellors. In this light there is a need for school counsellor training programmes which will equip school counsellors and school counselling students with the skills and competencies needed to practice effectively (McEachern, 2003). In the school counselling profession, competence includes the ability to provide a variety of counselling-related tasks and activities including one on one counselling, group counselling and academic support often through the facilitation of counselling services (ASCA, 2005).

According to Kozlowski and Huss (2013), school counsellors have unique, specialized training needs that differ from those of clinical mental health counsellors. They are licensed by state educational agencies. They must be ready to function in a variety of roles to support all students"

academic, career, and personal/social development (Studer and Oberman, 2006). In addition, they work in complex educational systems, have large case loads, and manage school counselling programmes. Their jobs encompass much more than individual and group counselling and the traditional training models are not keeping up with the needs of today's school counsellors (Studer and Oberman, 2006). School counsellors need clarification of their unique role on a school campus while learning how to manage an overwhelming number of referrals and student needs, how to manage the influences of teachers, how to maintain their own skills apart from teachers, how to implement counselling programmes as well as how to integrate themselves and the counselling programmes into the school system (ASCA, 2016; Kozlowski and Huss, 2013). In fact the American School Counsellor Association (ASCA, 2016) states that school counsellors should possess proficient skills in programme development, programme leadership, collaborative practices, as well as appropriate referral procedures (ASCA, 2016).

In order to ensure that school counsellors are well-trained to meet the needs of students, various organizations have established standards and guidelines such as; the American School Counsellors' Association (ASCA), the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and the Council for the Accreditation of Counselling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP).

According to Walley (2009), school counsellor education programmes are expected to offer preparation in certain areas of knowledge and skills that encompass a range of issues faced by students today. To him the primary means through which school counsellors obtain (at least minimum) professional knowledge and skills is through completion of a school counsellor preparation programme. The ASCA School Counsellor Competencies outline the knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes that ensure school counsellors are equipped to meet the rigorous demands of the profession and the needs of students (ASCA, 2012). Brott (2006) opines that it is of critical importance that counsellors know what is needed from them and their professional abilities. According to Uttenthal and Brown (2006) perceptions play a large role when counsellors consider the best way to utilize their skills in practice. They opine that significant numbers of school counsellors believed that, as a result of their training course, they had a more positive attitude at work, and enjoyed better relationships at work.

Lee (2005) observed that present day school counsellors have post training needs due to the fact that schools are often forced to confront a number of significant issues that affect the psychosocial, emotional, and intellectual development of their students. Therefore, school counsellor training must adequately prepare future practitioners to meet the unique needs of today's school children.

SavitzRomer (2012) states that in the face of these increasing inequities in schools, professional development (PD) for school counsellors is important. PD for high school counsellors is mandatory to meet the 5-year renewal requirement as a certified counsellor (ASCA, 2016). According to the ASCA (2016), counsellors are mandated to complete 200 hours of PD every 5 years from either of the following entities: workshops, staff development, institutes, seminars, or conferences. Despite these provisions it seems school counsellors still perform their duties with some difficulties (SavitzRomer, 2012). This study seeks to examine the skills acquired by school counsellors during training and its influence on their practice.

BACKGROUND

According to Ogbodo (2020), the genesis of guidance and counselling can be traced back to the origin of man in society. She further opines that long ago, man has always sought guidance from persons he/she feels is in a position to help. Through traditional (informational) ways, the contribution of religious leaders, elders, priests, Imams, friends and well-wishers towards meeting the guidance needs of people in their societies have been highly eventful and impactful. She however states that, modern guidance and counselling began in the United States of America (USA) under Frank Parsons in 1908, and since then it has spread to various Countries and Continents. Guidance and counselling have grown worldwide acquiring a steady reputation as it meets the educational, vocational and personal/social needs of various recipient countries. In addition, he further states that factors such as; expansion of professionalization and specialization, the

Philanthropic and Humanitarianism Movement, religion, the need for mental hygiene, increased student number in American schools and social change have helped in the growth of the counselling profession.

Furthermore, Ogbodo (2020) opines that the modern concept of guidance and counselling started years back with an emphasis on human development through education. This was reflected in the works of early Greek Philosophers like Plato (427-337) the first great counsellor of the early civilization who was recognized as the first to organize psychological insights into a systematic theory and his student Aristotle 480-BC who made many significant contributions to the field of psychology. One of which is the study of people interacting with their environment (Denga et al., 2009) cited in Ogbodo (2020). After these persons many others have engaged in guidance and counselling roles and activities especially in its comprehensive form. With the rise of industrialization and modernization, the traditional guidance could no longer cope with much of the complexities in the societies, hence the birth of guidance and counselling to overcome obstacles to their personal growth.

In relation to the history of the training and practice of counselling in schools, school counselling began as vocational guidance in the early 1900s (Gysbers, 2010). It was established in schools as a position occupied by administrators and teachers. No organizational structure was provided other than a list of duties. In the 1920s school counselling began to change, shaped by the mental hygiene, psychometric and child study movements. As a result, a more clinically oriented approach to school counselling emerged. He further states that this signaled a shift away from economic issues to psychological issues with an emphasis on counselling for personal adjustment.

Gysbers (2010) further postulates that, during the 1930s, discussions took place concerning the various personnel responsible for school counselling, the duties they performed, and their selection and training. According to him, a major mile-stone occurred with the creation of a new organizational structure called pupil personnel services. Within that structure, the concept of guidance services emerged. The field of school counselling had moved from a position with a list of duties to a position with a list of duties organized by guidance services all under the overall structure of pupil personnel services.

Furthermore, Gysbers (2010) states that the 1940s and 1950s saw the expansion and extension of counselling in the schools. The literature during years 1941–1945 focused on contributions to the war effort. After 1945, attention returned to the need for counselling in the schools and on ways to improve the services provided. The selection and training of school counsellors also received attention and support with the passage of the Vocational Education Act of 1946 and the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958. In addition, the American School Counsellor Association was established in 1952.

Moreover, Gysbers (2010) opines that a major issue being debated in the 1960s and 1970s concerned the nature of school counselling. He states that it was pondered if it was more psychological in nature featuring counselling as a major intervention or was it more educational in nature featuring a broader array of interventions including counselling but also information, assessment, placement and follow-up activities? He opines that although school counselling at the elementary level had been discussed previously, it wasn't until the 1960s that it became a reality. According to him, the NDEA, amended in the 1960s, stimulated training practices and procedures that set elementary school counselling apart from secondary school counselling. The 1960s and 1970s also witnessed increasing concern about the services model of school counselling (Gysbers, 2010). Calls for change came from a variety of sources ending up in the development of a comprehensive programme approach to school counselling. Gysbers (2010) states that the concept of a program for school counselling began to take form in the 1960s and 1970s and then became a major way to organize and manage school counselling in the schools in the 1980s, 1990s and into the 21st century. To him, during this time many states developed state models. Training programmes to help personnel in school districts to plan, design and implement comprehensive school counselling programmes also were initiated (Gysbers, 2010).

Gysber (2010) is of the opinion that the role and functions of school counsellors was of concern during the 1980s and 1990s. According to him, some writers advocated the role of human development specialist; others recommended the role of change agent. Predominating roles were coordinating, counselling and consulting. Tied to the role and function issue was the issue of terminology. Is it guidance, guidance and counselling or school counselling?

Although progress was made in developing, implementing and evaluating comprehensive school counselling programmes in the first decade of the 21st century, discussion continued about programme purposes and the work of school counsellors (Gysbers, 2010). Should the focus be educational (academic), vocational (career) or social/emotional (mental health)? Some writers focused on academic achievement and career but not social/ emotional or mental health. Other writers urged the opposite with mental health issues needing more attention. Still other writers urged the adoption of a holistic approach emphasizing attention to all three areas. He further opines that during this same decade discussion about programme purposes and school counsellors' roles continued with some writers emphasizing an advocacy change agent focus. Others talked about the need to emphasize collaboration. Still others recommended school counsellors do more indirect work and less direct work with students. Finally there was a movement for school counsellors to become more data-oriented, using data to identify school concerns and student needs (Gysbers, 2010).

Furthermore, Gysbers (2010) states that the development and implementation of school counselling programs across the country grew in the first decade of the 21st century. To him, this growth was stimulated by the publication of the ASCA National Model in 2003 and its adoption by many states and school districts. A second edition was published in 2005, followed by a third edition in 2013 and the fourth edition in 2019.

In addition Gysbers (2010) states that as the second decade of the 21st century began, an ongoing issue for school counselling was accountability. According to him, although this has been part of professional discussion since the 1920s, and much work was done over the ensuing years, there is a renewed sense of urgency today concerning accountability. The literature makes it clear that evaluation is here to stay and needs to be designed and carried out to not only demonstrating effectiveness but also to improve the work of school counsellors.

What will the next 100 years be like? No one knows for sure, but if the next 100 years are like the first 100 years, school counselling will continue to evolve. The forces that shaped school counselling so far will continue to do so, and discussion about purposes and organization will continue. So, while no one knows what the future holds, current literature suggests that at least for the near future students and their parents in school districts across the country will continue to benefit from having fully implemented school counselling programmes. Embrace the past, welcome the future (Gysbers, 2010).

School Counsellors Training

Gibson and Mitchell (2008) define counsellor training as a license or certificate offered to an individual to perform a unique and needed service to fellow human beings after undertaking courses in counselling. According to them, professional school counsellors must be fully trained and qualified to meet the needs of the client population they are designated to serve. They further state that school counsellors are certified/licensed educators with a minimum of a master's degree in school counselling, making them uniquely qualified to address all students' academic, career and social/emotional development needs by designing, implementing, evaluating and enhancing a comprehensive school counselling program that promotes and enhances student success.

In addition, Gibson and Mitchell (2008) opine that school counsellors are employed in elementary, middle/junior high, high schools and universities; in district supervisory positions; and counsellor education positions. They recommend that school divisions should ensure that persons fulfilling the role of counsellor are adequately trained and should have completed a programme in counselling, including supervised practice in guidance and counselling. Once trained, the counsellors should

then employ their knowledge, skills and understanding to draw up a procedure that is ample enough to include and cater for the various needs of individual pupils/students within the school framework.

Brott (2006) opines that the training of school counsellors should emphasize both program development and outcomes. In addition Brott (2006) is of the opinion that it is imperative for counsellor educators to structure the professional identity development of counsellors in training through guided learning experiences. School counsellors in training should become familiar with methods to implement comprehensive school counselling programs (Murphy and Kaffenberg, 2007) cited in Kozlowski and Huss (2013). Two ways trainees traditionally become familiar with implementing counselling programs are in practicum and internship experiences. What is problematic about practicum and internship experiences for school counsellor trainees is that counsellor educators typically attribute more importance to concepts that fit within traditional training models, such as individual and group counselling, than they do to concepts outside the traditional counsellor training framework (Colbert et al., 2006) cited in Kozlowski (2013).

Gartner (1976) cited in Gertner (2007) asserts that the training and education of practitioners is the predominant factor influencing the nature of the service provided. He noted that the central issue in professional education and training is how to make that preparation most effective. In turn, they assert that the primary factors influencing professional preparation effectiveness include: curricular content, faculty expertise and pedagogical skill, teaching methods employed, relationship of curriculum to both theory and practice, location of training, and how the training is related to professional practice as well as the larger societal developments. It follows that integration of Gartner's recommendations necessitates highly focused curriculum components, one based on widely endorsed training content and practices for the various skill sets to be developed by preparation program participants.

To further expatiate, McEachern (2003) opined that the mission of graduate counsellor education programs is to train students to be effective and competent counsellors. To him, school counsellor education programs are expected to offer preparation in certain areas of knowledge and skills that encompass a range of issues faced by students today. In order to ensure that school counsellors are well-trained to meet the needs of students, various organizations have established standards and guidelines. The views of these organizations regarding the training of school counsellors are discussed below:

The Council for the Accreditation of Counselling and Related Educational Programmes (CACREP) and Counsellors Training

According to Gertner (2007), counsellor preparation in general and school counsellor preparation in particular currently is guided primarily by the (counsellor education) program accreditation standards of the Council for the Accreditation of Counselling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). Since 1981, the CACREP (2001), a national accrediting agency, has assumed the very important charge of establishing minimum standard training curriculum and practices for school counsellors. Its incorporation as an independent body resulted from a culmination of years of work by the ACA toward defining the sets of knowledge and skills required for admission into the profession and to advocate that these requirements be adopted by the preparation programs offering counselling and student development practice degrees (Bobby and Kandor, 1995) cited in Steward et al., (2008). Periodically contacting counsellor educators and practitioners within the school setting to receive feedback and recommendations for guideline revisions (Schmidt, 2000), the CACREP consistently provides the essential training guidelines that are most meaningful to the current needs of students.

Evidence of a commitment to maintain the critical link between training and service delivery is evident in the clearly established relationship between the eight core knowledge areas for all counsellors (that is, Professional Identity, Social and Cultural Diversity, Human Growth and Development, Career Development, Helping Relationships, Group Work, Assessment, and Research and Program Evaluation) and the school counselling program models that have been adopted by a

number of schools across the nation to provide a balance between intervention responses and proactive prevention programming (Steward et al, 2008).

CACREP advocates for training model which is developmental in nature, has a guidance/career component, highlights attention to individual differences within student populations (that is, race/ethnicity, culture, and socioeconomic status) and acknowledges the importance of individual and group counselling competence, consultation, and program development and evaluation (LA Fountain and Baer, 2000) cited in Steward et al., (2008).

According to CACREP (2009) standards for school counsellors focus on eight areas: foundations, counselling, prevention and intervention, diversity and advocacy, assessment, research and evaluation, academic development, collaboration and consultation and leadership. All of which, are important when training professional school counsellors (PSCs) to work in a school environment. However, CACREP Standards expect that PSC's should: Demonstrate self-awareness, sensitivity to others, and the skills needed to relate to diverse individuals, groups, and classrooms (CACREP, 2009); provide individual and group counselling and classroom guidance to promote the academic, career, and personal/social development of students; understand curriculum design, lesson plan development, classroom management strategies, and differentiated instructional strategies for teaching, counselling, and guidance-related material; conduct programs designed to enhance student academic development; implement differentiated instructional strategies that draw on subject matter and pedagogical content knowledge and skills to promote student achievement; understand the school counsellor's role in student assistance programmes, school leadership, curriculum, and advisory meetings; plan and present school-counselling-related educational programs for use with parents and teachers (for example parent education programmes, materials used in classroom guidance and advisor/advisee programmes for teachers). While PSC's continue to be called to facilitate classroom guidance lessons, there will also be a call for counsellor educators to provide effective training for them within their graduate programmes (CACREP, 2009).

Regarding the training of school counsellors, CACREP (2001) states that the standards require that graduates are knowledgeable about issues that may affect the development and functioning of students (e.g. abuse, violence, eating disorders, attention deficit hyperactive disorder, childhood depression, and suicide). CACREP requires counsellor education programmes to provide instruction pertaining to the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the development of school counselling comprehensive programmes (e.g., ASCA National Model for School Counselling Programmes, 2005). In addition, counsellor education programmes must include educational materials about various systems that affect students at school and home in order to be aware of the multitude of issues that affect academic success (CACREP, 2001).

Furthermore, Holcomb-McCoy (1998) suggests that in order for school counsellors to be effective when working with an urban population they must have gone through training that; address urban education and issues, must study multicultural issues extensively, understand how to coordinate counselling for the entire school community and have leadership skills to initiate collaborative efforts with other school personnel, have skills and knowledge to develop programs that support and encourage families to participate in the education of their children, and have skills to assist students with possible emotional disorders and dysfunctional behaviors and also provide treatment and prevention. In addition, Holcomb-McCoy (2005) claims that school counselling programmes are most effective when there is a balance between intervention responses and proactive prevention. In line with this, Paisley and Benshoff (1998) cited in Walley (2009) state that although there is variability in training for school counsellors, incorporation of specific areas of knowledge into counsellors training programme is necessary to ensure that school counsellors are prepared to practice appropriate interventions.

The ASCA National Model and School Counsellors Training.

The American School Counsellor Association (ASCA) positions that school counsellors are best prepared through master's-level and doctoral-level programmes that align with the philosophy and vision of the ASCA National Model (2019), the ASCA School Counsellor Professional Standards

and Competencies (2019), the ASCA Standards for School Counselling Programme Preparation (2019), the ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success (2014) and the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counsellors (2016). These programmes emphasize training in the implementation of a school counselling programme that enhances student achievement and success.

The rationale is that school counsellors are assuming an increasingly important role in education, and school counselling preparation programmes are vital to the appropriate development of that role. School counsellors significantly contribute to outcomes used to measure the success of students and schools; therefore, students in school counsellor preparation programs need direct training and supervision in leadership and the implementation of a school counselling programme (Cinotti, 2014) cited in ASCA (2018).

The ASCA National Model (2019), the ASCA Ethical Standards (2016), the ASCA School Counsellor Professional Standards and Competencies (2019) and the ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors (2014) have significantly influenced school counsellor preparation and practice. These initiatives have placed significant attention on the preparation of school counsellors, ensuring graduates are well-prepared to design, implement and assess a school counselling programme that is proactive, accountable and aligned with the school's mission. Effective school counselling preparation programs provide coursework and training that teaches school counselling students to design and implement a school counselling programme. According to ASCA National Model (2019) these programs help school counselling students develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to: Understand the organizational structure and governance of the educational system, as well as cultural, political and social influences on current educational practices. Address legal, ethical and professional issues in schools. Understand developmental theory, counselling theory, career counselling theory, social justice theory and multiculturalism.

The ASCA National Model (2019) also asserts that training programmes should enable school counsellors to: Understand mental health and the continuum of services, including prevention and intervention strategies for addressing academic, career and social/emotional development to enhance student success for all students. Deliver effective instruction, appraisal and advisement, and counselling. Collaborate and consult with stakeholders (for example families/guardians, teachers, administration, and community stakeholders) to create learning environments promoting student educational equity and success for all students. Identify impediments to student learning, developing strategies to enhance learning and collaborating with stakeholders to improve student achievement. Ensure equitable access to resources promoting academic achievement, social/emotional growth and career development for all students. Use advocacy and data-informed school counselling practices to close achievement and opportunity gaps. Understand how the school counselling programmes relate to the educational programme. Understand outcome research data and best practices as identified in the school counselling research literature. Understand the importance of serving on school leadership teams and acting as educational leaders (ASCA National Model, 2019).

Furthermore, the ASCA National Model (2019) prescribes that field-based experiences are essential to the preparation of school counsellors. These experiences should provide training that aligns with the school counsellor preparation programme and further develops the student's knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to implement a school counselling program. Field-based experiences are supervised by a licensed or certified school counsellor in the pre-K–12 setting and a university supervisor with the appropriate school counsellor educator qualifications.

School counselling preparation programmes are facilitated by school counsellor educators who have the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to prepare school counsellors to promote the academic, career and social/emotional development of all students. School counsellor educators have appropriate preparation, including knowledge of the ASCA National Model, the ASCA School Counselling Professional Standards & Competencies, organization and administration of pre-K–12 schools, counselling children and adolescents, and current issues and trends in school counselling. School counsellor educators should hold an earned doctoral degree in counsellor education,

counselling psychology, educational leadership or closely related field. Adjunct faculty/instructors will minimally have an earned master's degree in school counselling and have school counselling experience. All university instructors should have experience as an employed school counsellor in the field.

Summarily, ASCA stipulates that school counsellor preparation programmes should emphasize development of the knowledge, attitudes and skills essential for the implementation of effective school counselling programmes. These programmes align with the philosophy and vision of the ASCA National Model (2019), the ASCA School Counsellor Professional Standards & Competencies (2019), the ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors (2014) and the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counsellors (2017), creating a programme empowering all students to succeed and achieve in their preK–12 experiences. School counsellor educators have the appropriate education, training, experience and commitment to prepare school counsellors able to respond to the changing expectations and dynamics of students, families, schools and communities.

School Counselling Practice

According to ASCA (2005), the practice of counselling means rendering or offering to render to individuals, groups, organizations or the general public any service involving the application of principles, skills, techniques, methods or procedures of the counselling profession, including appraisal activities, counselling, consulting and referral activities. Ojo (2005) opines that there are three main ways through which counselling can be carried out:

Directive Counselling: Under directive counselling the counsellor issues certain instructions to the counsellee or he is directed to do certain things e.g he is asked to behave in a particular manner, asked to abstain from alcohol or drug, asked to respect his colleagues and superiors.

Non Directive Counselling: Under non directive counselling counsellor does not issue directions but observe the behaviour and attitude of the counsellee towards his work and his colleagues and superiors and subordinates. If he errs then counsellor comes to his rescue and corrects him realizing him that he was wrong. He will not issue him any instructions or will not direct him.

Eclectic Counselling: Eclectic counselling is a combination of directive and non-directive technique depending upon the situational factors. This approach in counselling is best characterised by its freedom to the counsellor to use whatever procedures or techniques seem to be the most appropriate to any particular time for any particular client. This counselling is one where one who is willing to utilize any procedures which hold promise even though their theoretical bases differed markedly. This counselling recognizes that each theory may contain some truth and that so long as a final decision between theories can't be made practical necessity justifiably takes precedence over orthodoxy. The counsellor in this counselling may start with directive technique but switches over to non-directive counselling if the situation requires. He may also start with the non-directive technique and switches over to directive techniques if the situation demands. So the counsellor in this counselling makes use of directive and non-directive counselling and also of any other type which may be considered useful for the purpose of modifying the ideas and attitudes of the counsellee. Ojo (2005) further state that counselling takes place in two major ways, namely: individual counselling and group counselling.

Individual Counselling: This is referred to as one-to-one counselling. It occurs between the trained counsellor (therapist) and his client (counsellee). The goal of this is to help the client to understand himself, clarify and direct his thought, in order to make a worthwhile decision. Through this, clients' problems are alleviated. Ojo (2005) remarked that it is mainly to bring about change in the client either by altering maladaptive behavior, learning the decision-making process or preventing problems.

Group Counselling: also known as classroom guidance, large group counselling or a psychoeducational group is as an integral part of a school's counselling programme (Dinkmeyer and Owens, 1969; Geltner, 2007; Gladding, 2008; Gysbers, 2001) cited in Gonzalez (2011). This is a counselling session that takes place between a trained counsellor and a group of people. The

number of clients in a group should not be more than seven, or at least ten, in order to have a cohesive group and an effective well controlled counselling session. Members of the group are clients/counselees whose tasks or problems that are meant for resolution are similar. During group counselling, a free atmosphere is allowed and freedom of speech is encouraged. The counselees are free to express themselves individually as counselling progresses so that problems to be resolved would be open for all to consider and benefit from. All counselees express their feelings and the counsellor during group counselling is to help remove the masks covering the problem. He helps open up the problem with the professional competence and knowledge he possesses. The counsellor is not just a member of the group; he is to direct the affairs and situations (Ojo, 2005). School counsellors serve a vital role in maximizing student success (Lapan, Gysbers, and Petroski, 2003). Through leadership, advocacy and collaboration, school counsellors promote equity and access to rigorous educational experiences for all students. School counsellors support a safe learning environment and work to safeguard the human rights of all members of the school community (Sandhu, 2000) and address the needs of all students through culturally relevant prevention and intervention programs that are a part of a comprehensive school counselling programme (Lee, 2001). The American School Counsellor Association recommends a school-counsellor-to-student ratio of 1:250. In reality this ratio is not respected as most school counsellors are often over loaded.

Egbo (2008) opines that the rationale for guidance and counselling in schools is based on the belief that prevention is always better than cure in every aspect of life. She therefore noted that counselling no doubt has the key for the prevention of almost all the problems associated with learning therefore the need to understand the services provided under the school guidance programme. The school should make arrangements to enlist the support of the parents and introduce them to the idea of guidance and counselling. Therefore, in an effective guidance and counselling programme, various guidance and counselling services are offered to assist students in personal development and psychological growth towards maturity. It takes a well-trained guidance counsellor to effectively implement a guidance and counselling programme, with its various guidance and counselling services which are offered to assist students in personal development and psychological growth towards maturity. According to Schertzer and Stone (1976) cited in Tita-Nghamun, these services include:

Orientation Services: Orientation service is provided to new comers and those who go to a new class or new course in the school set up. It is a well-known fact that new students in a school or those who gain promotion into higher classes are heterogeneous in nature as they are from different family backgrounds, from different socio-economic status, from different areas, and from different abilities, interests, aptitudes and skills (Obinaju, 2011) cited in Tita-Nghamun (2016). Orientation service is normally meant for students to enable them to know school courses, rules, regulations, different facilities given to the students by school and to know the clear image of the school. On the same line school also keeps record of the students about their bio-data including identification, socioeconomic background, capacities and abilities, interest for courses etc.

Assessment Services: Appraisal involves the collection, administration, interpretation and clinical usage of variety of test devices in order to provide effective counselling services to both pupils and students in a given institution (Akinade, 2012) cited in Tita-Nghamun (2016). This involves a teacher counsellor collecting, analysing and using a variety of objective data that can enhance better understanding of pupils/students related issues. A teacher counsellor without adequate and reliable information of a pupil/student will have difficulties in assisting him/her (Makinde, 1984) cited in Tita-Nghamun (2016). It is therefore important to collect and make available a variety of information through observation, interview, testing, history, and social adjustment data about each child so that they can be in a position to plan a satisfying educational, vocational and social programme.

Individual Inventory Service or Appraisal Service is an important type of guidance service which may be recognized often as “pupil's” inventory service. It is very much essential for pupils as it enables the student to know “himself” at the time of taking any decisions regarding his education

and career. Really the pupils or student proceeds in his educational set-up as he/she has made proper choice regarding concerned subject or courses according to his own abilities, interests, aptitudes, attitudes and skills. The adequate and accurate data are collected for the same purpose Egbo (2008).

Educational and Occupational Information Services: These services have the aim of providing students with better knowledge of educational, vocational and social opportunities that can be used to make better- and well-informed decisions. In universities and secondary schools, students need at all times to make decisions about their education, career and social life. Mutie and Kochhar (1992) cited in Tita-Nghamun (2016) observe that students need information related to job opportunities, training opportunities, and academic qualifications. They further opine that students must not only be exposed to such information but must also have an opportunity to react to it in a meaningful way with others.

Counselling Service is designed to help an individual student analyze himself/herself by relating their capabilities, achievements, interests and mode of adjustment to what new decision they have to make Gichinga (1995) cited in Tita-Nghamun (2016). This service is very critical for the students because they need it to solve career, academic, personal and social problems which they encounter in life. The service is designed to facilitate self-understanding through individual or group relationships. Kyungu (1994) cited in Tita-Nghamun (2016) supports this by observing that effective guidance and counselling in secondary schools and other learning institutions has become extremely important in guiding students on the relationship between health and the environment, life-earning skills, the knowledge and attitudes that lead to success or failure in life. Effective counselling service should assist in improving the self-image of the students and facilitate better achievement in academic performance.

The Placement and Follow-up Service is very essential at the end of secondary school education, where students need to decide on the next step after secondary school. This service assists students in selecting subject combinations required for particular courses and choosing the right careers. Makinde (1984) cited in Tita-Nghamun (2016) states that placement service is designed to aid an individual to select and utilize opportunities within the school and in the labour market. Follow-up services are needed follow or trace a student after school and to the world of work. School counsellors develop a systematic plan for maintaining contacts with former students.

The Referral Service: Tita-Nghamun (2016) opines that this is the act of transferring an individual to another person or agency providing different kind of assistance. Referral is made for the purpose of specialized assistance. Many referrals occur simply because the problem is beyond the scope of the services provided. He further opines that referral service is intended to channel up students who need special care into specialized institutions which can better help them.

Collaboration Service: Collaboration in any organisation is vital as it enhances efficient and effective delivery of services. In the provision of guidance services, the different units of the Ministry of Secondary Education, at all levels, need to work together in order to achieve the common goal which is developing a learner into a responsible citizen in all spheres of life.

Consultation Service: In its endeavour to provide effective guidance services, the school guidance services unit at all levels makes consultations with other units within the Ministry of Secondary Education at the various levels.

Coordination Service: The school guidance and counselling service unit coordinates guidance activities in conjunction with other sections. Coordination is vital in the implementation of guidance activities because it yields effective results.

Gysbers (2006) in line with the above-mentioned counselling services opines that evaluation of guidance and counselling programs consists of making systematic judgments of the relative effectiveness with which goals are attained in relation to specified standards. They state that in evaluating a function like guidance and counselling services, the counsellor attempts to determine to what extent the objectives of the service have been attained. Evaluating the effectiveness of a school's guidance and counselling services is very important. Evaluation is the means by which

school personnel can better judge the extent to which these objectives are being met (Popham, 2010).

School Counsellors Post-Training Needs

Lee (2005) observed that present day school counsellors have post training needs due to the fact that schools are often forced to confront a number of significant issues that affect the psychosocial, emotional, and intellectual development of their students. According to the bioecological model of development (Bronfenbrenner, 2001), children are a product of the reciprocal interaction between their genetic inheritance, behavior, and their environment. Within this ecological framework, development is a joint function of the characteristics of the person, the environment, as well as events over the course of time. Events or conditions within a child's social context, such as the family or neighborhood contexts can affect aspects of his or her social, emotional, and cognitive development. Therefore, school counsellor education programs must adequately prepare future practitioners to meet the unique needs of today's school children.

HolcombMcCoy (1998) opine that school counsellors in school districts are affected by the diversity of students, lack of resources to serve the needs of the students, high family conflict, violence, and the high rate of school drop-out. Holcomb-McCoy and Mitchell (2005) found in their study that school counsellors perceived low family functioning, academic achievement, and poverty as the most prevalent issues facing students in schools today. To them, school counsellors must be equipped to deal with the current and emerging issues that affect school children today. School counsellor education programs must adequately prepare future practitioners to meet the unique needs of school children. In addition, the community and family must take an active stance in reforming today's education (Ascher, 1988).

Furthermore, Forbes (2007) wrote that based on current societal trends, counsellors in schools must begin to look beyond the classroom for support in providing services. Despite the stressors they face working in urban communities; counsellors must be able to support the personal and social development of their students that takes place off school grounds (Paone, and Lepkowski, 2007). Recent literature has encouraged school counsellors being trained as evidence-based practitioners (Chwalisz, 2003). Evidence-based school counselling involves using proven research methodology to guide their work with students.

In addition, counsellor education accreditation agencies such as the Council for the Accreditation of Counselling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) lists a number of core components of effective counsellor training, including: theories of counselling, appraisal in counselling, counselling in schools, clinical instruction (practicum and internship in counselling), group work, career development, legal and ethical issues and foundations of counselling (Brott, 2006). However, the challenges faced in schools today may exceed common developmental models and accreditation agency training standards (Green and Keys, 2001), leaving practitioners unprepared.

Counsellor educators must understand the challenges of training professional school counsellors. More specifically, the training of school counsellors should be done in a way that does not hinder their ability to offer the most effective services to all students focusing on specialization at the expense of versatility (Brott, 2006). Counsellor trainers must assist students with understanding of the unique and varied challenges school counsellors face today. According to Studer (2006) the jobs of school counsellors encompass much more than individual and group counselling, and the traditional training models are not keeping up with the needs of today's school counsellors. Unlike clinical counsellors, school counsellors need clarification of their unique role on a school campus while learning how to manage an overwhelming number of referrals and student needs, how to manage the influences of teachers, how to maintain their own skills apart from teachers, how to implement counselling programmes as well as how to integrate themselves and the counselling program into the school system (ASCA, 2010; Kozlowski, 2010). In fact the American School Counsellor Association (ASCA) states that school counsellors should possess proficient skills in program development, program leadership, collaborative practices, as well as appropriate referral procedures (ASCA, 2010).

ASCA (2005) has pushed for accountability in the school counselling profession. Accountability is often mentioned as the must in training school counsellors (Brott, 2006). In addition to the American School Counsellor Association, The Education Trust (2007) has put forth statements insisting that school counsellors take active roles to ensure academic success for all students. In order to accomplish this goal, counselor educators must understand the training gaps in counsellor education programs, the realities of working in an urban setting, as well as the post-training needs of school counsellors. Given the extensive issues that urban school counsellors may encounter, advocacy by the counsellor is a must. Butler (2003) recommends that school counsellors be trained to act as their own advocates during their masters programs. They insist that often times, school counsellors' training programmes ignore social justice, school change and advocacy. This is done when training programmes fail to teach their students about social justice and advocacy skills.

Objective

To examine the post-training needs of school counsellors and its influence on their practice.

Research Question

How do the post-training needs of school counsellors influence their practice?

Research Hypothesis

Ho1: The post-training needs of school counsellors have no significant influence on their practice.

Ha1: The post-training needs of school counsellors have a significant influence on their practice.

METHODOLOGY

The concurrent nested mixed-method research design was used in conducting this study. To collect quantitative data, the descriptive survey design with the aid of a questionnaire made up of closed-ended items was used. Qualitative data was collected through the phenomenological approach with the aid of an interview guide made up of open-ended questions.

This study was carried out in Mfoundi and Mezam Divisions of the Center and North West Regions of Cameroon respectively. Specifically data was collected from resident school counsellors from these two regions.

The population of this study consisted of all resident school counsellors of the Center and North West Regions of Cameroon. These two regions were chosen purposefully because they have the characteristics of the population under study. The two regions also have training institutions for school counsellors. Also, the researcher wanted to have respondents from the two subsystems of education in Cameroon. The North West Region has a total of 209 resident school counsellors spread over government secondary schools in its seven divisions. The Center Region has a total of 710 resident school counsellors who are found in the different government secondary schools of its ten divisions. The target population consists of all resident school counsellors of both sexes of the Mfoundi and Mezam Divisions. Mezam Division has a total of 108 resident school counsellors while Mfoundi Division has a total of 305 resident school counsellors. The accessible population consists of resident school counsellors of selected government secondary schools of the Mezam and Mfoundi Divisions of the North West and Center Regions respectively.

Table 1. School Counsellors in the North West Region

S/N	DIVISION	NUMBER OF COUNSELLORS
1	BOYO	20
2	BUI	25
3	DONGA-MANTUNG	15
4	MENCHUM	16
5	MEZAM	108
6	MOMO	11
7	NGO-KETUNJA	14
	TOTAL	209

Source: Data base of guidance counsellors for the North West Regional Delegation for Secondary Education (2023)

Table 2. School Counsellors in the Center Region

S/N	DIVISION	NUMBER OF COUNSELLORS
1	HAUT-SANGA	58
2	LEKIE	50
3	MBAM-et-INOUBOU	40
4	MBAM-et-KIM	20
5	MEFOU-et-AFAMBA	50
6	MEFOU-et-AKONO	102
7	MFOUNDI	305
8	NYONG-et-KELLE	30
9	NYONG-et-MFOUMOU	25
10	NYONG-et-SO'O	30
	TOTAL	710

Source: Data base of guidance counsellors for the Center Regional Delegation for Secondary Education (2023)

The sample for this study was drawn from the accessible population of 262 resident school counsellors, 80 from Mezam Division and 182 from Mfoundi Division. Due to the limited number of counsellors in the 25 accessible schools in Mezam Division, the sample size constitutes all 80 counsellors in the 25 accessible schools and all 169 from the 182 counsellors in the 16 schools in Mfoundi division. In total, the sample size of the study consists of 249 counsellors out of the accessible of 262 counsellors in the 41 accessible schools in both divisions.

The sample size for the study was estimated directly using sample calculation for one proportion for survey study with the help of EpiInfo 7.0 using a higher design effect of 1.6 and not 1.0 used by the Krejcie and Morgan table which only estimated the minimum sample size of every given population for survey studies. Thus, using a higher design effect of above 1.0, it enabled the researcher to collect adequate information/data from respondents thus increasing the internal and external validity of the study and its findings. It also enables the researcher to confidently generalize the findings of the study to the population. Below is the formula used for the sample size estimation with the support of EpiInfo 7.0, a statistical software design by Center for Disease Control in USA.

Where:

N = Total number of participants

Z = Z value corresponding to the confidence level, =95%

d = absolute precision =5% (It should be noted that the smaller the precision, the higher the sample size and the more reliable the findings). A precision value of 5% was then considered acceptable for a good statistical significance.

P = expected proportion in the population =50% for optimal sample size estimation.

Design effect = 1.6 (By this, the sample gotten at 1.0 was multiple by 1.6).

The researcher used both probability and non-probability sampling techniques to get the sample of this study. For the target population of this study, the convenient and purposive sampling techniques were used. To select the accessible population for school counsellors, the researcher did simple random sampling of the public secondary schools within Mezam and Mfoundi Divisions. This was to ensure that all the schools within the selected divisions had the probability of being included in the population of the study. After getting the schools from which respondents were drawn, the researcher did purposive and convenient sampling to get data from the counsellors within the schools selected. Purposive and convenient sampling were used here because some counsellors in the selected schools were on leave and some were not on seat so the researcher worked with those

she met on seat. To get the required number of respondents, the researcher added more schools so as to get more respondents to replace those who were absent in the schools with the accessible population. Also, in Mezam since some of the schools chosen were not functional, the researcher had to do online delivery to the counsellors in those schools who then responded to the instrument. The research instruments used to collect data were the questionnaire and interview guide.

The data collected from the field was first processed using EPIData 3.1 whereby, all the participants' responses were keyed, in accordance with each of the test items. During this process of data entering, the demographic information and the test items were coded with numbers to facilitate the data entering and the questionnaires were also assigned with serial numbers. The reason for coding and trace the individual responses of participants and to carry out any verification in areas of uncertainty if need arise. After the data was completely entered for all the participants, the data base was exported to SPSS version 25 for further consistency, data range and validation checks with the purpose to first identify invalid codes (data cleaning) with the aid of exploratory statistics such as frequency count, and outliers.

After the data were thoroughly checked for possible errors, the quantitative data were analyzed using the descriptive and inferential statistical tools. The descriptive statistical tools used are frequency count, percentages and multiple responses set which aimed at calculating the summary of findings for each variable for a quick comprehension of the overall findings. Furthermore, to examine the skills acquired by school counsellors during training and its influence on practice, the Pearson's test was used because the data for the variables were approximately normally distributed for many of the variables based on the statistics of the test of normality assumption trend of the data. The testing for normality assumption of every data is very important in order to know the right statistical tests to be applied when computing correlation analysis to void committing type 1 or 2 hypotheses error.

On the other hand, the qualitative data derived from open ended questions was analyzed using the thematic analysis approach with the aid of themes and quotations. The themes refer to the umbrella words which captured the main idea of the participants' statements and the quotations are the direct words from the participants. Finally, findings were presented using frequency distribution and thematic tables and on charts with all inferential statistics presented at 95% level of confidence interval with alpha set at 0.05 levels, accepting 5% margin of error.

FINDINGS

The Practice of School Counsellors

Ten structured items were used to measure counsellors' opinion on their practice and the findings are presented on table 3 below.

Table 3. Counsellors' Appraisal of their Field Practice

Statements	Stretched				Collapsed	
	SA	A	D	SD	SA/A	D/SD
My training did not adequately prepare me to render orientation services in school	60 (24.4%)	123 (50.0%)	47 (19.1%)	16 (6.5%)	183 (74.4%)	63 (25.6%)
I am unable to effectively carry out assessment service towards my clients	48 (19.5%)	121 (49.2%)	71 (28.9%)	6 (2.4%)	169 (68.7%)	77 (31.3%)
I do not render educational and occupational information services effectively	52 (21.1%)	157 (63.8%)	30 (12.2%)	7 (2.8%)	209 (85.0%)	37 (15.0%)
My training did not equip me to effectively provide counselling services to my client	42 (17.1%)	158 (64.2%)	33 (13.4%)	13 (5.3%)	200 (81.3%)	46 (18.7%)

I do not satisfactorily carry out placement and follow-up service.	33 (13.4%)	76 (30.9%)	120 (48.8%)	17 (6.9%)	109 (44.3%)	137 (55.7%)
I do not adequately offer appraisal service to my clients	25 (10.2%)	87 (35.4%)	123 (50.0%)	11 (4.5%)	112 (45.5%)	134 (54.5%)
Follow-up, research and evaluation service I offer to my clients is not done sufficiently	16 (6.5%)	66 (26.8%)	149 (60.6%)	15 (6.1%)	82 (33.3%)	164 (66.7%)
I do not sufficiently render consultative services to my clients	32 (13.0%)	135 (54.9%)	66 (26.8%)	13 (5.3%)	167 (67.9%)	79 (32.1%)
My training did not adequately equip me to effectively do referrals.	36 (14.6%)	120 (48.8%)	79 (32.1%)	11 (4.5%)	156 (63.4%)	90 (36.6%)
I do not satisfactorily carry out coordination service.	25 (10.2%)	103 (41.9%)	107 (43.5%)	11 (4.5%)	127 (51.6%)	118 (48.0%)
Multiple Responses Set (MRS)	368 (15.0%)	1146 (46.6%)	825 (33.6%)	120 (4.9%)	1515 (61.6%)	945 (38.4%)

Table 3 shows counsellors’ appraisal of their field practice. In aggregate, based on counsellors’ opinion on practice, 61.6% of them said that their training did not adequately prepared them for practice while 38.4% said training adequately prepared them for practice. Specifically, majority of counsellors 183 (74.4%) accepted that their training did not adequately prepare them to render orientation services in school while 63 (25.6%) disagreed. Also, 169 (68.7%) counsellors accepted that they are unable to effectively carry out assessment service towards clients while 77 (31.3%) disagreed. In the same trend, majority of counsellors 209 (85.0%) said they are unable to effectively render educational and occupational information services while 37 (15.0%) said they could effectively do that.

Again, 200 (81.3%) counsellors also opined that their training did not equip them to effectively provide counselling services to clients while 46 (18.7%) said it effectively equipped them. Furthermore, 109 (44.3%) counsellors also indicated that they do not satisfactorily carry out placement and follow-up services while 137 (55.7%) said they do. Findings also showed that 167 (67.9%) counsellors accepted that they do not sufficiently render consultation services to their clients while 79 (32.1%) disagreed to this. Similarly, 156 (63.4%) counsellors opined that their training did not adequately equip them to effectively do referrals while 90 (36.6%) said they were effectively equipped for referrals. Finally, 127 (51.6%) counsellors said they do not satisfactorily carry out coordination services while 118 (48.0%) of them does that satisfactorily. The overall finding on counsellors’ practices is also presented on figure 1 below.

Figure 1. Counsellors’ Appraisal of their Field Practice

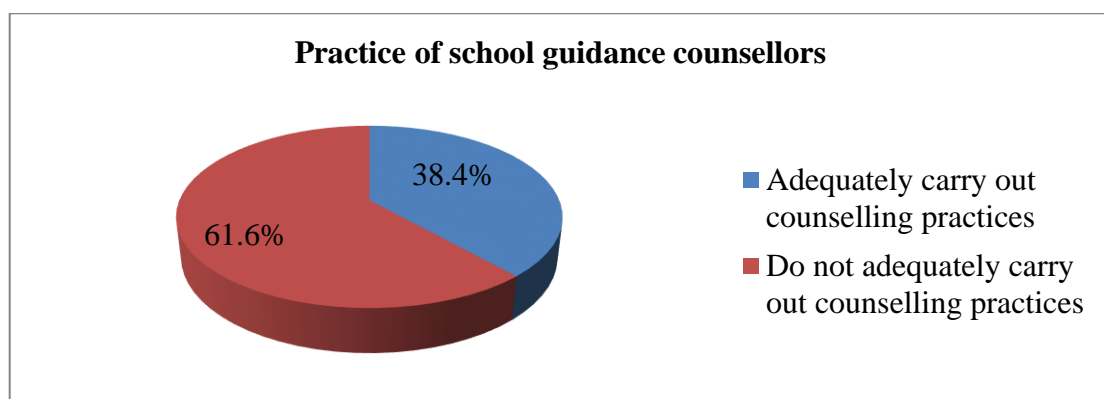


Figure 1 shows school counsellors’ appraisal of their overall practice. In aggregate, 61.6% of counsellors admitted that they do not practice adequately while 38.4% said they do practice adequately.

Table 4 specifically compares counsellors’ opinion on their practice by demographic information. This is to enable us know the opinion for each category of participants as concern the practice of counselling.

Table 4. Comparing Counsellors Practice by Demographic Information

Demographic data			Practice		Total based on MRS
			Adequate	Inadequate	
Sex	Male	n	273	407	680
		%	40.1%	59.9%	
	Female	n	672	1107	1779
		%	37.8%	62.2%	
Age group	Below 36 years	n	237	522	759
		%	31.2%	68.8%	
	36-45 years	n	566	784	1350
		%	41.9%	58.1%	
	46-55 years	n	135	165	300
		%	45.0%	55.0%	
	56 years and above	n	7	43	50
		%	14.0%	86.0%	
Years of training	Below 2000	n	62	128	190
		%	32.6%	67.4%	
	2000 to 2005	n	67	73	140
		%	47.9%	52.1%	
	2006 to 2010	n	119	131	250
		%	47.6%	52.4%	
	2011to 2015	n	388	522	910
		%	42.6%	57.4%	
	2016 to 2020	n	298	572	870
		%	34.3%	65.7%	
	Above 2020	n	11	88	99
		%	11.1%	88.9%	
Training institution	ENS Bambili	n	84	205	289
		%	29.1%	70.9%	
	ENS Maroua	n	137	253	390
		%	35.1%	64.9%	
	ENS Yaoundé	n	357	463	820
		%	43.5%	56.5%	
	ENSET Bertoua	n	238	492	730
		%	32.6%	67.4%	
	ENSET Douala	n	7	43	50
		%	14.0%	86.0%	
	HTTTC Yaoundé	n	30.3	69.7	99
		%	20.0%	80.0%	
	ENSET Kumba	n	11	19	30
		%	40.0%	60.0%	
Years of practice	Less than 5 years	n	116	283	399
		%	29.1%	70.9%	
	5-10 years	n	579	861	1440
		%	40.2%	59.8%	
	11-15 years	n	116	154	270
		%	43.0%	57.0%	
	16-20 years	n	66	84	150
		%			

	Above 20 years	%	44.0%	56.0%	
		n	68	132	200
Highest qualification	DIPOCO	%	34.0%	66.0%	
		n	662	1048	1710
	Master's	%	38.7%	61.3%	
		n	283	466	749
		%	37.8%	62.2%	

Table 4 compares counsellors' practice by demographic information. Comparing the counsellors' practice by demographic data, findings showed that irrespective of their sex, age group, training institution, year of training, years in practice and highest qualification, many of the counsellors with percentage ranging from 52.1% to 88.9% do not adequately carry out the counselling practice which is above 50%.

Rsearch Question

How do the post-training needs of school counsellors influence their practice?

Ten close ended items were deduced to capture counsellors' opinion on their post-training needs and the findings are presented on table 5 below.

Table 5. Counsellors Opinion on Post-Training Needs

Statements	Stretched				Collapsed	
	SA	A	D	SD	SA/A	D/SD
As a counsellor I constantly need to upgrade my skills in an ever changing world	198 (80.5%)	42 (17.1%)	6 (2.4%)	0 (0.0%)	240 (97.6%)	6 (2.4%)
ICT is one area where I constantly need to upgrade my skills	148 (60.2%)	85 (34.6%)	11 (4.5%)	2 (0.8%)	233 (94.7%)	13 (5.3%)
Cross-cultural knowledge is a major concern for me	77 (31.3%)	123 (50.0%)	46 (18.7%)	0 (0.0%)	200 (81.3%)	46 (18.7%)
Knowledge of diversity which is ever present in our society is one of my major concerns	77 (31.3%)	132 (53.7%)	32 (13.0%)	5 (3.0%)	209 (85.0%)	37 (15.0%)
Change in the demographic profile of society requires that I constantly upgrade my knowledge on children, adolescent , adults and the development of the ageing	135 (54.9%)	97 (39.4%)	11 (4.5%)	3 (1.2%)	232 (94.3%)	14 (5.7%)
Advocacy is one skill I need to learn as a counsellor	81 (32.9%)	123 (50.0%)	38 (15.4%)	4 (1.6%)	204 (82.9%)	42 (17.1%)
I still lack the skill necessary to work with parents	22 (9.8%)	58 (23.6%)	107 (43.5%)	59 (24.0%)	80 (32.5%)	166 (67.5%)
Empathy is a trait I do not have	4 (1.6%)	26 (10.6%)	106 (43.1%)	110 (44.7%)	30 (12.2%)	216 (87.8%)
Genuineness is a trait I still lack	3 (1.2%)	17 (6.9%)	102 (41.5%)	124 (50.4%)	20 (8.1%)	226 (91.9%)
I still have bias for certain categories of clients who come to me	5 (2.0%)	29 (11.8%)	80 (32.7%)	131 (53.5%)	34 (13.9%)	211 (86.1%)
Multiple Responses Set (MRS)	750 (30.5%)	732 (29.8%)	539 (21.9%)	438 (17.8%)	1482 (60.3%)	977 (39.7%)

Form table 5, based on post training needs, in overall, 60.3% of counsellors accepted to have several post-training needs while 39.7% have less post training needs. Specifically, majority of counsellors 240 (97.6%) accepted that they need to upgrade their skills. Similarly, 233 (94.7%) of the counsellors accepted that ICT is one the areas they need to upgrade while 13 (5.3%) disagreed. Also, 200 (81.3%) of the counsellors accepted that cross-cultural knowledge is a major concern for them while 46 (18.7%) disagreed.

Furthermore, majority of counsellors 209 (85.0%) opined that knowledge of diversity is one of their major concerns while 37 (15.0%) disagreed. Again, majority of the counsellors 232 (94.3%) accepted that the change in the demographic profile of society requires that they should constantly upgrade their knowledge on children, adolescent, adults and development of the ageing while 14 (5.7%) of them disagreed. Also, 204 (82.9%) of the counsellors accepted that advocacy skill is one thing the need to learn as counsellors while 42 (17.1%) of them disagreed. Furthermore, 80 (32.5%) of the counsellors lack the necessary skills to work with parents while 166 (67.5%) do not. Again, 34 (13.9%) of the counsellors are bias in their counselling while 211 (86.1%) are not. Also, 20 (12.2%) of the counsellors accepted to lack empathy while 216 (87.8%) did not. Finally, 20 (8.1%) of the counsellors are in need of genuineness while 226 (91.9%) do not. The overall finding on post training needs is also presented on the figure below.

Figure 2. Counsellors Opinion on Post-Training Needs

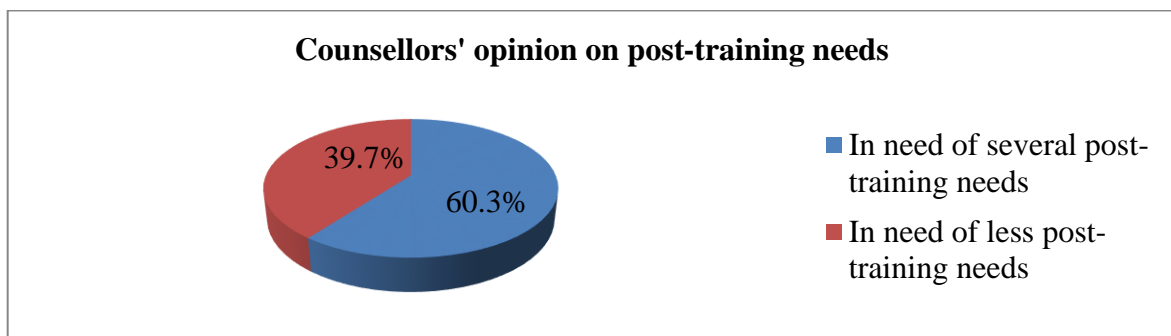


Figure 2 shows the school counsellors opinions on their post-training needs. From the findings, 60.3% of the counsellors indicated that they are in need of several post-training needs while 39.7% indicated that they were in need of less post-training needs.

Table 6 specifically compares counsellors' opinion on their post training needs by demographic information. This is to enable us know the opinion for each category of participants as concern their post-training needs; that if they are the same or different.

Table 6: Comparing Counsellors Opinion on Post-Training Needs by Demographic Information

Demographic data			Post-training needs		Total based on MRS
			Several	Few	
Sex	Male	n	417	263	680
		%	61.3%	38.7%	
	Female	n	1065	714	1779
		%	59.9%	40.1%	
Age group	Below 36 years	n	471	289	760
		%	62.0%	38.0%	
	36-45 years	n	809	540	1349
		%	60.0%	40.0%	
	46-55 years	n	171	129	300
		%	57.0%	43.0%	
	56 years and above	n	31	19	50
		%	62.0%	38.0%	
Years of training	Below 2000	n	116	74	190

	2000 to 2005	%	61.1%	38.9%	
		n	76	64	140
	2006 to 2010	%	54.3%	45.7%	
		n	152	97	249
	2011 to 2015	%	61.0%	39.0%	
		n	524	386	910
	2016 to 2020	%	57.6%	42.4%	
		n	544	326	870
Above 2020	%	62.5%	37.5%		
	n	70	30	100	
Training institution	ENS Bambili	%	70.0%	30.0%	
		n	185	105	290
	ENS Maroua	%	63.8%	36.2%	
		n	226	164	390
	ENS Yaoundé	%	57.9%	42.1%	
		n	469	350	819
	ENSET Bertoua	%	57.3%	42.7%	
		n	436	294	730
	ENSET Douala	%	59.7%	40.3%	
		n	41	9	50
	HTTTC Yaoundé	%	82.0%	18.0%	
		n	70	29	99
	ENSET Kumba	%	70.7%	29.3%	
		n	19	11	30
Years of practice	Less than 5 years	%	63.3%	36.7%	
		n	269	131	400
	5-10 years	%	67.3%	32.8%	
		n	852	587	1439
	11-15 years	%	59.2%	40.8%	
		n	155	115	270
	16-20 years	%	57.4%	42.6%	
		n	88	62	150
	Above 20 years	%	58.7%	41.3%	
		n	118	82	200
Highest qualification	DIPOCO	%	59.0%	41.0%	
		n	1059	651	1710
	Master's	%	61.9%	38.1%	
		n	423	326	749
		%	56.5%	43.5%	

Form table 6, comparing the counsellors' opinion on post training needs by demographic data, findings showed that irrespective of their sex, age group, training institution, year of training, years in practice and highest qualification, many of the counsellors with percentage ranging from 54.3% to 82.0% indicated that they need several post-training needs. In fact with reference to year of training, majority of counsellors trained in the year 2016 to 2020 and above 62.5% to 70.0% and below 2000; 61.1%, and between 2006 to 2010; 61.0% need several post-training needs more than those trained from 2000 to 2005 and 2011 to 2015. Furthermore, based on training institution, 63.8% of counsellors trained in ENS Bambili, 57.9% of counsellors trained in ENS Maroua, 57.3% of counsellors trained in ENS Yaoundé, 59.7% of counsellors trained in ENSET Bertoua, 82.0% of counsellors trained in ENSET Douala, 70.7% of counsellors trained in HTTTC Yaoundé need several post-training needs and 63.3% of counsellors trained in ENSET Kumba. Furthermore, by year of practice, more of counsellors in practice for less than 5 years 67.3% need several post-

training needs slightly more than those who have been practicing for several years. Finally, based on highest qualification, counsellors with DIPCO 61.9% need several post-training needs slightly more than those with Master’s Degree 56.5%.

Verification of Hypothesis

H01: There is no significant relationship between the post-training needs of school counsellors and their practice.

Ha1: There is a significant relationship between the post-training needs of school counsellors and their practice.

Table 7. Perceived Impact of Post-Training Needs on Training on Practice

Test	Statistical parameters	Post-training needs	Counsellors' practice
Pearson test	R-value	1	.611**
	p-value		.000
	n	246	246

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From table 7, statistically, post-training needs of counsellors was found to have a significant, positive and strong impact on their practice (R-value =0.611 **, p-value= 0.000< 0.05). The positive sign of the correlation value implies that counsellors are more likely to be effective in practice when their post-training needs are provided and less likely to be effective in practice when their post training needs are not provided. Therefore, the hypothesis that states there is a significant relationship between the post-training needs of school counsellors and their practice was accepted.

In addition to the close ended items, counsellors were given the chance to personally identify their post-training needs and their responses are presented on table 8 below.

Table 8. Counsellors Identification of Post-Training Needs

Themes	Quotations
Psychological testing	“We need to understand and use psychological tests”. “Know how to administer tests and know and study some of them”. “Yes, I do. I have a need in psychological testing because we were not trained on that”. “Yes, how to administer tests”. “I need more knowledge on psychological testing because counselling is a continuous process and one needs to adapt to new situations better”. “Psychological testing”. “Yes, I need to have mastery of psychological testing, clients’ assessment, referral pathways and theories in problem solving”. “Today, counselling entails a lot of case follow- up. I still need more knowledge on psychological testing”.
Knowledge in psychology	“Knowledge in psychology will enable me understand clients, be patient and calm in stressful situations and also have active listening skills”. “Training on managing psychological cases and overall procedure on individual case management”.
ICT	“We need ICT skills” “ICT training”. “I need training in ICT, psychological support and disaster management”. “Making effective use of ICT in my practice”.

Office space and logistics	“Yes, in my place of practice there is lack of space and this makes confidentiality with my clients difficult” “I need more logistics to carry out my practice”.
Seminars and workshops	“Because from time to time, some of the skills can be forgotten. So there is always need for seminars and workshop to bring back to light some of the skills that were learnt during training”.
Placement	“Identifying placement resources around me for clients”.
Specialisation	“With the changing world, there is need for some specialization”.
Contextualisation of training	“Most often what obtains in the field is different from what was obtained in the school. The training should be adapted to our context and experiences”
Equipment / tools	“We need effective counselling tools and equipment such as counselling aids, tests batteries”.
Referral skills	“Referral skills”. “Carrying out and following up referrals”.
Marital counselling skills	“Yes, when friends or couples have marital problems, I find it difficult to help. I need training on marital counselling”.
Ethical issues	“I still need to acquire more when it comes to ethical issues in counselling”.
Management of drug addiction	“Techniques in handling severe cases of drug addiction”.
Mental health issues	“I need training on mental health”.

From Table 8, asking the counsellors interviewed about their post-training needs, many of them said they need to be trained on psychological testing as depicted in the statements “Yes, I do. I have a need in psychological testing because we were not trained on that”, “I need more knowledge on psychological testing because counselling is a continuous process and one needs to adapt to new situations better”, “Psychological testing”. Also, some of them said they need to be trained on knowledge in psychology as depicted in the statement “Knowledge in psychology will enable me understand clients, be patient and calm in stressful situations and also have active listening skills”. Again, another post training need mentioned is ICT as depicted in the statement “I need training in ICT, psychological support and disaster management”, “Making effective use of ICT in my practice”. Furthermore, some need office space and logistics, seminars and workshops, and skills to carry out placement. Again, some of the counsellors said there is need for specialization in training, contextualization of training to reflect the needs of Cameroon and provide equipment and tools. Finally, some counsellors need referral skills, skills on marital counselling, skills on ethics and skills to manage drug addiction and mental health issues.

In addition to identifying the post-training needs, the counsellors were also asked whether or not provision of their post-training needs would improve on their practice and their responses are presented on table 9 below.

Table 9: Counsellors’ Opinion if Provision of their Needs would improve their Practice

Themes	Quotations
Enhanced confidence and competence	“Yes, it makes you feel confident and competent”. “My practice will improve because there is no counselling without psychological testing and follow-up”. “Yes, my competence in counselling will greatly improve. I will gain skills and knowledge on referral services”. “With adequate counselling tools and equipment effective and adequate counselling will be done”. “Yes, I will adequately and with competence carry out my duty”. “To an extent, it will enhance my confidence in handling

	different counselling services”.
Effective management of clients	<p>“I will be able to effectively manage and overcome mental and emotional issues, actively listening to clients, creating coping strategies and developing treatment plans’.</p> <p>“Yes, it will help my clients feel at ease when we are having sessions”</p> <p>“Yes, this will enable me to better solve problems in our context”.</p> <p>“Yes, I will effectively manage a child knowing the results of the tests”.</p> <p>“Yes, my practice will improve because I will be able to better manage my clients”.</p>
Better diagnosis and file management	<p>“This will enable me to better carry out diagnosis and management of files using computers”</p> <p>“Yes, my practice will greatly improve because I will be able to effectively do diagnosis and many problems faced by clients will be handled”.</p>
Enhanced communication	“Yes, this will help to reduce the many sessions with clients because I can easily communicate through computer rather than meeting the client face-to-face”.
Enhanced efficiency	“Yes, because workshops and seminars will increase efficiency with respect to dealing with problems faced by adolescents”.
Boast self-esteem	“It will boast my self-esteem as a counsellor being grounded on ethics”.
Improved output and results	“Yes, I will be sure of expected results because of the new techniques learnt”.

As indicated on Table 9, asking the counsellors interviewed if providing their post training needs would improve on their practice, all of them said their practice would improve upon provision of their post training needs. Many of them said it would enhance their competence and enhance confidence during practice as depicted in the statements *“My practice will improve because there is no counselling without psychological testing and follow-up”*, *“Yes, my competence in counselling will greatly improve. I will gain skills and knowledge on referral services”*, *“With adequate counselling tools and equipment effective and adequate counselling will be done”*. Furthermore, some respondents said it they will effectively manage their clients upon provision of their post-training needs as depicted in the statements *“I will be able to effectively manage and overcome mental and emotional issues, actively listening to clients, creating coping strategies and developing treatment plans’*, *“Yes, it will help my clients feel at ease when we are having sessions”*.

Again, some respondents said they would better do diagnosis and file management when their post-training needs are provided as depicted in the statements *“This will enable me to better carry out diagnosis and management of files using computers”*, *“Yes, my practice will greatly improve because I will be able to effectively do diagnosis and many problems faced by clients will be handled”*. Furthermore, some counsellors said provision of their post training needs would enhance their communication as narrated *“Yes, this will help to reduce the many sessions with clients because I can easily communicate through computer rather than meeting the client face-to-face”*. To some, they said it would enhance their efficiency at work *“Yes, because workshops and seminars will increase efficiency with respect to dealing with problems faced by adolescents”*. Finally, some counsellors said provision of their post-training needs would boast their self-esteem and improve on output and results as depicted in the statement *“It will boast my self-esteem as a counsellor being grounded on ethics”*. *“Yes, I will be sure of expected results because of the new techniques learnt”*.

DISCUSSIONS

This item intended to find out the post-training needs of school counsellors which interfere with their effective practice. The findings of the study also showed that majority of counsellors accepted to have several post-training needs while few have less post training needs and, further analysis showed that post-training needs of counsellors was found to have, significant, positive and strong impact on their practice. The positive sign of the correlation value implies that counsellors are more likely to be effective in practice when their post-training needs are provided and less likely to be effective in practice when their post training needs are not provided. Furthermore, when the counsellors were asked about their post-training needs, many of them said they need to be trained on psychological testing, trained on knowledge in psychology, ICT, placement, referrals, communication, marital counselling, ethics, management of drug addiction cases and mental health issues, provision of equipment, contextualisation of training and providing of good office space and logistics.

Thus, the above findings showed that counsellors do not only need to be trained on some counselling services but, they also need training on professionalism and to be able to handle the plethora of problems facing in the current school milieu of which some were never part of their training curriculum. In fact, all of the counsellors as depicted in the findings said their practice would improve upon provision of their post training needs in that their competence and confidence would be enhanced, clients will be effectively managed, diagnosis and file management would be better carried out, communication skills would be enhanced, and their self-esteem and output and results will be improved.

The post training needs that the school counsellors sampled in our study mentioned tie with some of the post training needs in the study of Owens, Pernice-Duca, and Thomas (2009) who found out that in addition to workshops, the counsellors needed skills on dropout prevention, helping unmotivated students, violence prevention, and conducting needs assessments. Counsellors felt if they could find ways to address these areas, they could later focus on future career goals of these low performing students. The issue of violence prevention is so much evident in our schools today largely influenced by hard drug consumption by some students. The issue of needs assessment tie with that of psychological testing which is geared towards better understanding of the needs of clients for proper corrective actions to be taken.

Furthermore, the issue of multicultural awareness depicted in the study, Chao (2013) cited in White (2019) as post training need of the counsellors sampled for the study corroborate with the findings of our study whereby some counsellors proposed that their training should empower them to better handle client of diverse cultural backgrounds. These findings not only signify a difference between awareness and knowledge, but also signify counsellors' success with diverse students is based on various levels of training within distinct cultures. Furthermore, in another study carried out by Curry and Bickmore (2012) cited in White (2019) which studied in-service for school counsellors' personal and professional needs, the findings showed that all counsellors expressed the absence of valuable training to improve their work and thus request some post-training needs to improve on their practice.

Lee (2005) observed that present day school counsellors have post training needs due to the fact that schools are often forced to confront a number of significant issues that affect the psychosocial, emotional, and intellectual development of their students. This is clearly reflected in the findings of our study whereby our schools have reported cases of children with emotional problems, drug addiction and mental health problems that warrant counsellors to attend to their needs.

According to the bio-ecological model of development (Bronfenbrenner, 2001), children are a product of the reciprocal interaction between their genetic inheritance, behavior, and their environment. Within this ecological framework, development is a joint function of the characteristics of the person, the environment, as well as events over the course of time. Events or conditions within a child's social context, such as the family or neighborhood contexts can affect aspects of his or her social, emotional, and cognitive development (Bronfenbrenner, 2001).

Therefore, school counsellor education programs must adequately prepare future practitioners to meet the unique needs of today's school children. The job demand for counselling is becoming complex due to challenges and happenings in the contemporary society and therefore, we expect training institutions to upgrade their curriculum and offer broad training to students counsellors while keeping on sight the contextual realities for a holistic training of counsellors.

According to the Person-Centered Theory, which focuses on the human interaction between the counsellor and the client, the theory is understood as a process of helping clients discover new and more satisfying personal meanings about themselves and the world they inhabit. Makinde (1984) cited in Tita-Nghamun (2016) opined that students will drive towards growth, health and adjustment through human interaction but, only possible when certain conditions prevail. In the case of school counselling, these conditions should portray counsellors' demonstration/ competence in the counsellor-client orientation. Students have been reported to have many problems and counsellors are expected to help the students out.

However, the students cannot be effectively helped out when the counsellors' training is lacking in several aspects. Inadequate training received by counsellors will always be a limiting factor to their effective practice via interaction with students. As reflected in the findings of our study, the counsellors have indicated that provision of their post training needs will not only boost their self-esteem, but it will also enhance their competence, confidence, and ensure quality interpersonal relationship with students. A counsellor cannot solve a child's problem without interaction and therefore, it is imperative that quality training be offered to student counsellors to ensure that in the field of practice, their interpersonal interaction with clients/ students should always bring out the students from their problems face.

Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to find out the post-training of school counsellors and its influence on practice. From the primary data collected and analysed, the findings showed that majority of the counsellors indicated that they have several post-training needs which influenced their practice and thus needed that these needs should be attended to in order to improve on their practice. The findings equally revealed that post-training needs have a significant influence on school counsellors' practice. On this note, it is imperative that the quality of training being offered to student counsellors in training institutions in Cameroon be improved.

The job of a counsellor in contemporary times has been very demanding and as such, training needs to be of high standard to empower the counsellors to effectively address the various situations in the field. Baker and Gerler (2001) opined that guidance and counselling programs in schools had significant influence on improving discipline, enhancing students' grades, strengthening social skills, helping students make wise decisions on career development and college choices and developing positive study habits and study skills. In line with Baker and Gerler (2001), Hearne and Galvin (2015) also stated that guidance and counselling provision is seen as a whole school responsibility to support the needs of their students. Therefore, this being the case need for improvement in the quality of training in our training institutions need not be over emphasized.

Recommendations

Training programmes should be organized at the level of the Divisional and Regional Delegations for Secondary Education for school counsellors to upgrade their skills in the use of ICT in counselling. With the changing times it is expected that an efficient and effective practicing school counsellor should do all to be ICT savvy. Counsellors need ICT knowledge in carrying out psychological testing, research on various counselling skills, research on record keeping, research on careers just to name these few indicated by school counsellors as areas in which they are needy. Moreover, through the use of ICT, school counsellors and counsellor educators with expertise in practice could create professional development webinars and other platforms for sharing expertise, addressing concerns, and answering questions about effective classroom management for school counsellors.

It is also recommended that school counsellors be provided with the adequate and necessary facilities to practice such as a convenient counselling office space and office logistics especially in this era where the client upholds his/her privacy. Also, school counsellors should be equipped with other skills such as marital counselling, management of drug addiction, mental health counselling skills through seminars and workshops so as to effectively cater for their clients.

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