

GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING SERVICES: IT'S PRACTICALITY IN THE MANAGEMENT OF DISCIPLINARY CASES AMONG STUDENTS IN SELECTED PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN ZAMBIA (Conference ID: CFP/354/2017)

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Abstract

The study sought to establish how guidance and Counselling services are used in the management of various disciplinary cases among students in selected public universities in Zambia. This article is an extract from one of the objectives of an on-going PhD study. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design to collect, analyse and interpret both quantitative and qualitative data from 105 respondents. The study found that guidance and counselling helps to instil discipline among students and that it is used to manage disciplinary cases among students and promotes appropriate acceptable behaviours. On the basis of the study findings it is recommended that all public universities in Zambia should encourage students to access guidance and counselling services to help them to learn appropriate behaviours.

Key words: Discipline, behaviour, guidance and counselling, manage

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACK GROUND

The role of any guidance and counselling programme is to bring about the maximum development and self-realisation of human potential for the benefit of the individual and society. Makinde (1984) observes that the school counsellor is concerned with facilitating the optimum development of students. This is supported by Bennars (1994) and Mutie and Ndambuki (1999) who argue that the guidance programme is supposed to develop the learner's intellectual abilities, develop a balanced personality and to have a complete person intellectually, spiritually, morally and socially. A Guidance and counselling programme is therefore aimed at assisting students to harmonise their abilities, interests and values, thereby enabling them to develop their potential fully. Self-knowledge helps one to formulate life goals and plans which are realistic. According to Collins (2002) a good and effective guidance and counselling

programme is essential in every learning institution. An organised guidance and counselling programme will offer right environment for the growth and development of the student and offer quality education.

Personal or social guidance counselling is the process of helping an individual to know how to behave with consideration towards other people, UNESCO (2000). Primarily, personal and social guidance helps the individual to understand himself, know how to get on with others, learn manners and etiquette; pursue leisure time activities, practise social skills, develop family and family relationships, and understand social roles and responsibilities. Ndhlovu (2015) asserts personal and emotional guidance deal with stress related issues that include anger, interpersonal conflict, loneliness, or disillusionment. Thus persons with stress- related situations may be managed through the provision of guidance.

Further, Makinde (1988) as cited in Ndhlovu (2015) states that ‘at face value, the meaning of the word ‘guidance’ is derived from its root word ‘guide’ which means direct, steer, aid, lead, inform and interact. Thus as Ndhlovu notes, parents and guardians and other qualified persons are supposed to direct young people to make informed decisions that concern them as they face everyday situations. However, there is a knowledge gap in terms of the practicability of how guidance and counselling services are used to manage disciplinary cases among students in selected public universities in Zambia.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the escalating incidences of disciplinary cases among some students in public universities in Zambia little was known regarding how guidance and counselling services are used to manage disciplinary cases

among students in selected public universities in Zambia.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

The purpose of this paper is therefore; to bring out new established knowledge on how guidance and counselling services were used to manage disciplinary cases among students in selected public universities in Zambia.

1.4 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

Determine how guidance and counselling services were used in the management of various disciplinary cases among students in the selected public universities in Zambia.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTION

How are guidance and counselling services used in the management of various disciplinary cases among students in the selected public universities in Zambia?

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

At a time when there have been main concerns by society and government regarding the increasing numbers of demonstrations and riots among some students in public universities in Zambia, a study of this nature was necessary. Its findings may help university management and government to plan interventions, promote appropriate learning environment and ultimately improve conduct of students in public universities in Zambia. In addition, the study contributed to the body of knowledge on how guidance and counselling services were used in the management of disciplinary cases among students in selected public universities in Zambia.

1.7 STUDY SITES

The study was conducted in three public universities in Zambia namely University of Zambia (UNZA), Copper Belt University

(CBU) and Kwame Nkrumah University (KNU). These universities are located in Lusaka, Copper belt, and Central provinces of Zambia. The provinces were chosen based on the prevalence rate of student demonstrations and riots that have occurred for the period 2015 and 2016 academic years.

1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Due to the sensitive nature of the study, it was difficult to collect information from some target groups who did not want to present data which was considered 'damaging' to their institution's reputation, as a result, caution must be exercised when generalizing the results of the study. Nonetheless, the findings are reliable as the researcher validated them with the various categories of respondents.

2 METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design to collect, analyse and interpret both quantitative and qualitative data. This design was preferred because it allows the researcher to describe the facts and characteristics of a given phenomenon, population, or area of interest. A total number of one hundred and five (105) respondents participated in the study. This number included: 90 students, 12 counsellors and three Deans of Student Affairs (DOSAs). The benchmark for inclusion of this sample was that these Deans are responsible for the students' affairs, while the counsellors are responsible for providing the guidance and counselling services to all students. The students were included in the study because they had lived experiences of using the guidance and counselling services and would provide required data.

This study used purposive and simple random sampling procedures to select the sample. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the Deans of Students affairs and the counsellors from the university officials while simple random sampling was used to select the students. Using questionnaires, quantitative data was collected from students and counsellors and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to generate tables, graphs and percentages, while qualitative data was collected from Deans of Students Affairs (DOSAs) and students through interviews and focus group discussions. In line with Patton (1999 and 2002), it was decided to use these three sources of data so as to have a more holistic approach to determining the practicability of how guidance and counselling services were used to manage disciplinary cases of students, an approach which increases credibility in the findings. As such, the findings from these three sources are presented concurrently.

ETHICAL ISSUES

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Ethical Committee of the University of Zambia and also from the Ministry of Higher Education in Zambia. Consent was also sought from all the three universities and participants. Confidentiality and anonymity was ensured at all stages of data collection. The purpose of the study was explained and respondents were given a chance to decide on whether to participate in the study and were assured that their names would remain anonymous.

3. RESULTS

The study revealed that guidance and counselling can help to manage disciplinary

cases among students in public universities. It also revealed that demonstrations and riots can be minimised if students accessed guidance and counselling. Findings of the study are presented and discussed in detail below.

3. MANAGEMENT OF DISCIPLINARY CASES

Several ways of managing disciplinary cases of students in public universities were discovered and they included;

3.1 GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING HELPS STUDENTS TO AVOID ILLEGAL DEMONSTRATIONS

The study established that 86.7% of the 90 students responded that the use of guidance and counselling services were effective in helping them to avoid taking part in demonstrations, whereas 13.3% of them indicated that the services were not effective.

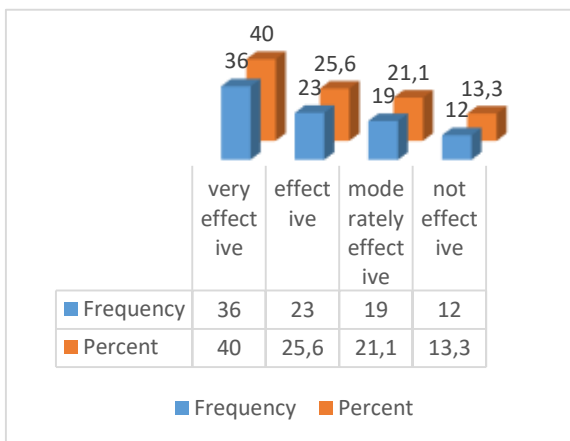


Fig 1: Students avoid participating in demonstrations

3.2 GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING HELPS STUDENT TO AVOID TAKING PART IN RIOTS

The results in figure 2 below show that 86.6% of the 90 students responded that if they were guided and counselled, they would not take part in riots in their public universities while 13.3% of the students indicated that chances of participating in future riots were still there.

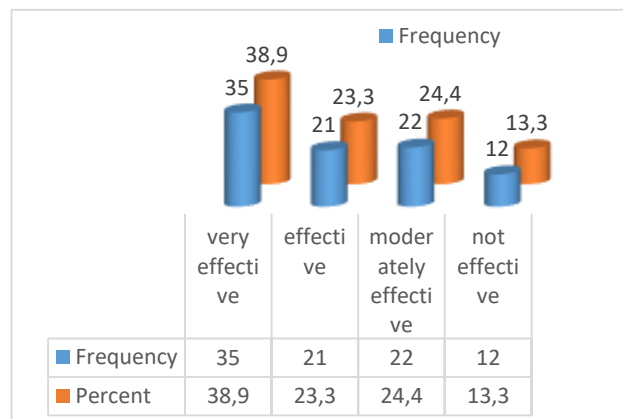


Fig 2: Students avoid taking part in riots

3.3 GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING HELPED STUDENTS TO MANAGE CONFLICT AMONGST THEM

Students sometimes have conflicts with other students, which have to be resolved. There is need for them to know how to handle conflict in positive ways. In regard to managing conflicts amongst themselves, figure 3 shows that the majority 76 (84.5%) of the 90 students indicated that guidance and counselling effectively helped them to manage conflicts between themselves. However, 15.5% of the students had contrary views.

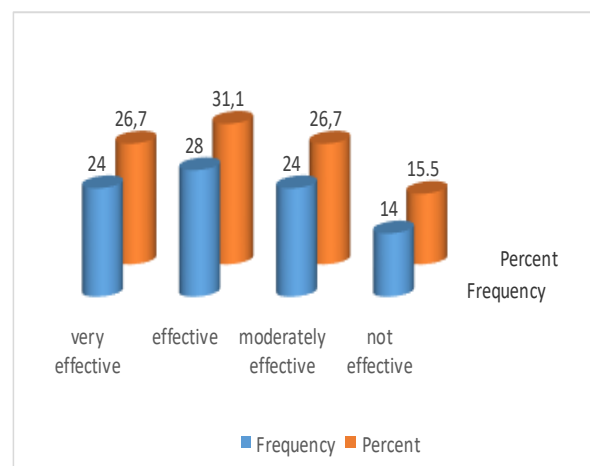


Fig 3: Manage conflicts through G & C

4. Discussion

In regard to details in Figure 1, and on the basis of this result, it is clear that guidance and counselling helped to manage disciplinary cases among students in public universities in Zambia. This finding is supported by Collins (2002) and Gatua, et al (2015); who revealed that through guidance and counselling students become disciplined and are thus able to deal with challenges and realities they face in their academic, social and physical environment. This would in turn help in behaviour change for the better. The researchers are therefore, of the view that it is through guidance and counselling that students remain disciplined, determined and focused in life.

Figure 2, shows that all the responses from the universities in the study revealed that the institutions experienced riots in the academic years 2015 and 2016. As such the students were asked to state whether the use of guidance and counselling services would help in making them avoid taking part in future riots. From the results, it shows that if the students received guidance and counselling, they would be less likely to take part in riots. Similarly, K'okul (2010) found that guidance and counselling helped minimise student riots in universities in Kenya. It is therefore, clear that guidance and counselling can help in the management of disciplinary issues among students. As also noted by K'okul (2010); any country's main objective is to create a generation that is morally, socially, physically and intellectually upright. In this regard, guidance and counselling becomes a viable tool to achieving such an objective. As regards to riotous behaviour by students and in consistent with Standa (2000), this paper argues that no country would want its resources wasted through riotous behaviour by students in public universities. The supporting views of scholars such as Standa (2000), Halim (2001), K'okul

(2010), and Rahman and Atan (2013) makes firm the thesis of this paper that guidance and counselling can help manage disciplinary issues by students. Similar arguments are expressed by Halim (2001) and Rahman and Atan (2013) who reported that in Malaysia guidance and counselling practices had an impact in resolving student's social problems and disciplinary related issues. In addition, the paper agrees with a philosophical argument by Samoei (2012) who argued that students become disciplined if they understand that there are some things they have to accept because they cannot change them. Similarly, guidance and counselling should help students to understand that rioting because students' allowances have not been paid or delayed, or due to power failure, is not the right behaviour and it is not justifiable.

The results in Figure 3 are based on the response by the majority of the students, it can be argued that students can handle or manage conflicts better if they access guidance and counselling. Similar view was expressed by Holden (1971) and supported by Samoei (2012) who asserts that counselling was intended to increase a client's sense of responsibility for his or her own life to help him or her make up his own mind and act upon his decisions and cope sensibly with situations. Figure 3 provides details of students' responses their rating of how guidance and counselling helped them to manage conflict among themselves

4.1 VIEWS OF DOSA AND STUDENTS ON THE PROCESS OF HOW DISCIPLINARY CASES OF STUDENTS ARE MANAGED IN UNIVERSITIES

DOSAS' RESPONSES

The Deans of Students Affairs (DOSA) were asked to elaborate on the process of how

disciplinary cases were managed in universities. According to the DOSAs, the process of managing disciplinary cases of students involved guidance and counselling. To this effect, one DOSA said, *'disciplinary cases are dealt with through the board of discipline, which usually recommend counselling for the affected students'*. Another said: *'The University adequately prepares students to act responsibly.'* Yet another said: *'cases are handled by disciplinary committee that gives a chance to students to explain themselves in regard to the presented issues, thereafter decisions are made which are communicated to affected student (s).'* Another DOSA further stated: *'Disciplinary cases are handled by disciplinary board who usually recommends counselling which prepares students or appropriate behaviour; Another DOSA stated: 'Counsellors assess cases by students and take appropriate referral.'* An analysis of these statements, bring out evidence that guidance and counselling is believed to help in the management of disciplinary issues by students. Whether the services are used effectively or not are a topic for future research but for now it suffices to argue that in the hearts of boards of discipline lie a positive belief in guidance and counselling. As regards to students' indiscipline, Chepkemei (2014) reveals that it is part of a very long tradition that has existed as long as the existence of humans. It is through guidance and counselling that education administrators have managed indiscipline among students. Good behaviour is a fundamental ingredient to moral value of students. The researchers therefore, argue that character formation is achieved through intense formal and informal guidance and counselling programmes. It is through guidance and counselling that students can remain disciplined and focused in life.

COUNSELLORS' RESPONSES

With regard to how disciplinary cases are managed, counsellors stated in questionnaires and I quote: *'There is a judicial system in place at this university it handles disciplinary cases; cases are determined as presented and students are given a chance to be heard;*

Another counsellor stated: *'Students who have cases that the counsellors refer to the disciplinary committee are advised based on the nature of the offense, some are counselled and others may be given a heavier punishment depending.'*

Other counsellors said: *'Disciplinary cases are given a hearing by the committee set in place by senate; students are given a hearing and given counsel;*

A further extract from counsellors' responses says: *'Guidance and counselling helps curb some future disciplinary case occurrences; 'Students are guided to avoid getting in trouble.'* *'There were mini riots in the academic year 2015/2016 and these cases have been dispensed.'*

STUDENTS' RESPONSES

The students also explained the process of how their disciplinary cases were managed in public universities. They said the process of managing disciplinary cases in their universities to some extent involved guidance and counselling. As a result, a few verbatim statements were picked to support this argument. One of the students had this to say in regard to how disciplinary cases were managed:

'If a student commits a minor offence, such a case is handled by counsellors but if the case is too much or beyond what counsellors may handle such as theft and fighting, a student is taken to the disciplinary committee at DOSA.'

Other students said, *'depending on how the case is, it can either be handled by the counsellors and sometimes lecturers but if*

there is need, a student is referred to the DOSA. Sometimes cases end with the student union leaders but sometimes with DOSA but many times offenders are just counselled by the counsellors or Chaplain.’ During the same FGDs one student said, ‘cases are handled differently; sometimes students are referred to the DOSA or just counselled by the counsellors. Union leaders also offer guidance but sometimes the chaplain can also counsel students. I have seen many students reform due to counselling they received at our university.’

An analysis of these findings shows that students were counselled and the students themselves testified that many of their friends had their behaviour changed. This implies that guidance and counselling can be useful in management of disciplinary cases among students. It is necessary to assist young people to be disciplined and be able to deal with challenges and realities they face in their ever changing environment. Further, young people need help in order that they can understand themselves, their academic social and physical environment, realise their potentials. It is equally important that they learn to identify opportunities in a world where chances for further training, employment and advancement continue to dwindle.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. CONCLUSIONS

In line with the study objective on how guidance and counselling can be used to manage disciplinary cases among students in selected public universities in Zambia, the study concludes that if students accessed guidance and counselling services, disciplinary cases, demonstrations and riots among students would reduce. The study has also shown that guidance and counselling helps students to be

tolerant and co-exist. As a result, to some extent they related well amongst themselves and resolved personal conflicts. Furthermore, the study concludes that demonstrations and riots could be avoided or minimised if students received counsel early enough. This scenario where riots and demonstration occur every academic year in some public universities could be as a result of students wanting to be heard and feeling that their needs and concerns are not urgently and adequately addressed.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the study findings it is recommended that,

- Guidance and Counselling be accessed by all students in public universities as it has the potential to shape and enhance positive behaviour among students.
- Public universities need to increase number of counsellors. This is because the number of students is too large to be attended to by the few counsellors in the universities.
- Public universities need to increase facilities and resources needed for provision of guidance and counselling services. This would enable more students to access the services.

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