

Track 4: Education: Curriculum design and Quality matters

Sub Theme: Trends and implications of School guidance and Counselling

PAPER TITLE: An assessment of the impact of guidance and counselling in four urban secondary schools in Zimbabwe: A case study of Harare Metropolitan Province, Zimbabwe.

Dr. Webster Chihambakwe

Senior Lecturer, Department of Counselling

Faculty of Applied Social Sciences

Zimbabwe Open University

Chihambakwebster71@gmail.com; websterchihambakwe@yahoo.co.uk

ABSTRACT

This study assessed the impact of guidance and counselling in four urban secondary schools in Zimbabwe: A case study of Harare Metropolitan Province. The study was conducted at four urban secondary schools in Harare Metropolitan Province. The research methodology that was used to conduct the study was qualitative in nature. The research method used was a case study within the interpretive paradigm. Purposive sampling technique was used in this study and the sample consisted of fifteen (15) participants who were selected from the school heads, class teachers, and school children. Data generation was done using the in-depth face to face interview, observations and analysis of relevant documents to the study. The research findings from this study were presented in the form of themes that emerged. These themes were divided into themes concerning the positive aspects of the guidance and counselling services in the new education curriculum in secondary schools in Zimbabwe and those concerning the negative aspects of its impact. Themes that emerged include: the need to capacitate the school teachers with requisite qualifications in professional guidance and counselling. Recommendations from this research were on policy makers in government to come up with legislation that effectively complement the new education curriculum design.

Key words: *assessment, guidance, counselling, and secondary school.*

1.0 Background to the study

Guidance and counselling has been in existence since the twentieth (20) century. The change of societal and family values, traditions as well as disintegrated community; gave birth to the bases for psychological and social issues affecting students in institutions of learning (Wambu and Fisher, 2015). Mapfumo and Nkoma, (2013) noted that students experience immense socio-economic and psychological pressures in today's world, which disturb their learning process. These negative societal trends have underscored the increasing demand for the services of professional teacher counsellors to provide a comprehensive guidance and counselling programme in secondary schools that is targeted at addressing the needs of students. In response to this demand, guidance and counselling programme was implemented in the United States and it became prominent in American schools after the World War 1 (Corsini, 1987). In support to this noble cause, Taylor (1971) posited that school counselling was also implemented in British schools in reaction to the changes in society, in family life and in schools which created conditions where greater attention to individual needs was necessary. The concept of guidance and counselling in Africa, though relatively new in educational systems has been embraced by most governments (UNESCO, 2001). Considerable progress has been made in setting up administrative structures for the provision of guidance and counselling services in educational institutions to enhance personal, educational and vocational development of the students. Therefore, guidance and counselling has been conceptualised as a programme of activities which has provided African countries with the gateway out of the existing numerous problems in the present age of complex scientific and technological development (Okobiah and Okorodudu, 2004).

Globally, students experience social, personal and academic problems at school and at home. These problems include living in distressed families, for example, where parents are divorced or separated, where family conflicts occur and where diseases such as HIV and AIDS are rampant. These problems negatively affect the students in their school endeavours. Students are affected when their parents and relatives suffer from HIV and AIDS. They are distressed as they care for ailing and dying parents or relatives (Nziramasanga, 1999). The HIV and AIDS pandemic has turned millions of students into orphans with an uncertain future (UNESCO, 2002). Apart from HIV and AIDS, Robinson (1996) argues that social experimentation in drugs and sexual relationships has left some casualties among students, most of whom indulge in prostitution, truancy, poor discipline and other misdemeanours (Robinson, 1996; Nziramasanga, 1999). The outcome of the above social problems has been summarised by Lines (as cited in Davis, 2003) who views the school as a hive of activity where teenage difficulties and peer group tension arise. In the light of these social problems, schools should be more involved in conducting students' needs assessments and developing comprehensive guidance and counselling services (Kameen, Robinson and Rotter, 1985). Nziramasanga (1999) states that because of many pressures imposed on the family, parents tend to have little time with their children to give them the necessary guidance. The parents expect the school to provide solutions to their children's indiscipline in secondary schools. UNESCO (2002) adds that African adults have become more concerned with earning money and are less occupied with many traditional practices that formerly contributed to the upbringing of young people. Rapid sociological changes emanating from modernisation and urbanisation do stress students to a larger extent? There is also an increase in the divorce rate and in the number of single-parent families all over the world which is also a stress factor for students (Yuk Yee and Brennan, 2004).

Gora *et al.* (1992) argue that the increase in diverse student social problems and the current economic situation have made the need for effective counselling services even

more critical than in the past. According to Mapfumo (2001), students experience immense psychological pressures in today's world. Madhuku (2005) concurs with Gora *et al.* (1992) and Mapfumo (2001) when she states that there are a number of socio-economic and psychological problems which disturb the learning process of students. In other words, the growing number of social, economic and family problems has resulted in an increased need for school peer counselling services. Robison *et al.* (1991) have found that rapid developmental changes occur at a time when environmental stressors, for example, parental and teacher pressures on young people to excel in school, peer pressure to experiment with drugs, peer relationships, loneliness and pressure to make career choices are at their peak. McGuiness (1998) adds that adolescents bring the following problems into the classroom: uncertainty about sex roles, a feeling of dependence and simultaneously a desire to be autonomous, and difficulty in making and sustaining significant relationships. Thus, adolescence is an intense time to change, where many battles for self are won and lost (Bruce and Cockreham, 2004). Students experiencing the above-mentioned problems need information, understanding and guidance to help them adjust to all the changes (Chireshe, 2006).

Few studies have been carried out in Zimbabwe that focused on the assessment of the impact of guidance and counselling services in secondary schools. Related studies conducted were done by Badza, (2005) where she studied the perceptions held by students and teachers towards the implementation and effectiveness of guidance and counselling in Mwenzi East district secondary schools, while Chivonivoni (2006) investigated the state of school guidance and counselling in Chiredzi North. Maturuve (2004) studied the problems faced by school counsellors in the implementation of the guidance and counselling programme in Masvingo District, and Chireshe (2006) assessed the effectiveness of school guidance and counselling services in Zimbabwean Secondary Schools while doing his doctoral studies. The situation on the ground has seen adolescents in diverse cultures around the world historically benefitting from the presence of such

paraprofessional counsellors both within the school system as well as from those provided within the community (UNESCO, 2009). Psychosocial challenges faced by students are mainly resolved by their families, more or less as private family affairs. Parents and relatives counseled their children on all matters of life, personal projects management and ways of solving daily problems (Biswalo, 1996). Traditionally, guidance and counselling has always been done without any formal training or knowledge obtained from formal school system but rather through experience, age and wisdom (Amukoa, 1984).

In most African families, the general guidance and counselling was the duty of senior members of the family, parents, uncles, aunts, and grandparents. Today, due to the pressure of the socio-economic and political factors, guidance and counselling has become eroded and outdated as people in their communities have become more individualistic (Amir and Latiff, 1984; Chang, 2000; Cook, Heppner and O'Brien, 2002). Rural to urban areas migrations of people, from country to country, modernisation and urbanisation have all resulted in a sense of isolation among the youth who have lost traditional familial social networks (Chang, 2000). Traditional cultures, beliefs, values and social relations in the traditional societies have been eroded by international cultural influences through television, social media, music and other toxic influences (Brewer, 1981; Wash, 2004). All these changes leave the youths and the society at large confused about which models should be followed, hence the need for guidance and counselling services at secondary school level (House and Hayes, 2002). Guidance and Counselling services provide decision making ideas, direct and advice adolescent students in their relationships, between health and the environment, knowledge, skills and attitudes that lead to success in life (Bulus, 1986; Makinde, 1987; Muti and Ndambuki, 2003).

Nziramasanga (1999) revealed that because of many socio-economic and political pressures imposed on the family today, parents tend to dedicate little time to their children to allow for the necessary guidance. The study by UNESCO (2002) concurs with

Nziramasanga (1999) findings that Native African parents today have become more concerned with earning money such that they have simply become less occupied with their traditional roles and practices that formerly contributed to the positive upbringing of their children. According to Makinde (1984), modern parents put excessive expectations on schools to provide solutions to issues related to indiscipline of their children. Given the scenario that children spend most of their time (8 hours to be exact) in schools and an average of about four hours with their parents at home, their personal and social development has become the responsibility of the institutions of learning so much that guidance and counselling services have become an integral need for the secondary education programmes. Guidance and Counselling services have become even more critical now than ever before. From this context, this study is underpinned on the notion that educational institutions require a more formal-professional structure of guidance and counselling programmes to be initiated by professional teacher counsellors (Gysbers and Henderson 2001; Mapfumo,2001; Owino, 2005; UNESCO, 2002; Van-Niekerk, 2001).

Consequently, Zimbabwe secondary schools have been assigned the mandate by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education to provide personal, social, educational and career-guidance and counselling to students. However, for all concerned parties to embrace the new philosophy regarding career-guidance and counselling services there is need for literature to put into perspective *what works with career-guidance counselling services, how do we know it works and with what results?* This study was one step towards achieving that objective, because it sought to establish the impact guidance and counselling services in four urban secondary schools in Zimbabwe in the provision of students with personal, social, educational development and career guidance.

1.1 Statement of the problem

Guidance and counselling services were introduced in Zimbabwean Primary and Secondary Schools in order to address the personal, social and academic development of students as well as assisting them to make realistic career choices and decisions. However, the success of this service in Zimbabwe has remained in doubt since there are limited studies and the existence of anti-social behaviour such as teenage pregnancies, teenage prostitution and abuse of alcohol, cheating in examinations has been reported in secondary schools. The researcher has in addition noticed the existence of poor study habits, substance abuse and difficulty in coping with examination anxiety among adolescent learners. Hence, the need by the researcher to embark on this study was backed by the following question “What has been the impact of guidance and counselling in secondary schools.”

1.2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to make an assessment on the impact of guidance and counselling in four urban secondary schools in Zimbabwe: A case study of Harare Metropolitan Province.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The study aimed at achieving the following specific objectives:

- 1.3.1 To assess the impact of guidance and counselling programme in four urban secondary schools in Harare Metropolitan Province, Zimbabwe.
- 1.3.2 To determine the professional qualifications of the teacher counsellors handling guidance and counselling programme in schools.
- 1.3.3 To explore the role of school administration in the enhancement of guidance and counselling programme.

1.4 Research Questions

The study addressed the following research questions:

- 1.4.1 What is the impact of guidance and counselling programme in secondary schools?
- 1.4.2 What are the professional qualifications of the teacher counsellors handling guidance and counselling programme in schools?
- 1.4.3 What is the role of the school administration in enhancing guidance and counselling programme?

1.5 Significance of the study

Secondary school students face various challenges that if not well handled can affect their academic achievement. Therefore, in order to adequately address these social problems/challenges, emphasis has been placed on the existing programmes within the secondary schools, that is, guidance and counselling. Detailed studies are needed to assess the impact of guidance and counselling programme in secondary schools focusing on their academic performance. This study was based on the premise that it is important to understand the impact to which the guidance and counselling programme has been used in addressing the social problems that secondary school students encounter. This study would assist in providing useful information that could be useful in redesigning and giving impetus to the guidance and counselling programme by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, school administrators, teacher counsellors and students so as to boost their academic performance.

Teacher Counsellor

The teacher counsellor would use this study to make an assessment on the impact of guidance and counselling towards students academic performance in their respective schools.

Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education

The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education would also benefit from this study when they evaluate whether guidance and counselling programme is an effective measure in addressing the challenges facing secondary school students in the country.

School Administrators

School administrators would benefit from this study when they make an assessment of their contribution to guidance and counselling programme and its influence on academic performance of students in their schools. When guidance and counselling programme is well conceptualized by the Ministry of Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and implemented by the teacher counsellor with the support of the school administrators, the students will benefit by improving their academic achievements and self-actualization.

1.6 Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

The study focused on the impact of guidance and counselling programme in four urban secondary schools in Zimbabwe: A case study of Harare Metropolitan Province. The study focused on the new education curriculum design in Zimbabwe. The study was conducted at the four secondary schools in Harare Metropolitan Province. The research methodology that was used to conduct the study was qualitative in nature. The research method used was a case study within the interpretive paradigm. Purposive sampling technique was used in this study and the sample consisted of fifteen (15) participants who were selected from the school heads, class teachers, and school children. Only Form Four students were involved in this study because they have been in the school for a higher number of years and were about to complete their secondary education. Hence, they were in a better position of assessing the impact of guidance and counselling programme more objectively and they also have an established academic trend spanning the last three years. This study encountered a number of limitations which impeded effective answering of the research questions. These limitations include:

- The students' academic performance in any given can only be determined by varied factors including the ability of the individual student, the quality of the teachers, the staffing level, availability of facilities, and guidance and counselling, among others. Therefore, it was not feasible to isolate one factor and link it to the level of academic performance. However, in this study, the researcher was restricted to academic areas that were of concern to the guidance and counselling programme only.
- Primary and Secondary schools in Zimbabwe were expected to have implemented guidance and counselling programme as directed by the government through the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. Therefore, assessment of the impact of the guidance and counselling programme in the country required a consideration of as many schools as possible both rural and urban. However, due to time, manpower and financial resource constraints, it is not practically possible to cover all the schools in the country. This means that only a small sample of the schools was be involved. Thus, the four (4) urban secondary schools in Harare Metropolitan Province, which are a very small sample of the total number of schools in the country, were involved in this study. The findings of this study were therefore restricted to the sampled schools and students and they cannot be generalised to all secondary schools in Zimbabwe.

1.7 Research Methodology

The present study made use of the qualitative methodology in which a variety of qualitative multi-methods were used to interpret, understand, explain and bring meaning to attitudes, perceptions and behaviour of people towards the impact of guidance and counselling programme in four urban secondary schools in Zimbabwe: A case study of Harare Metropolitan Province. The study also involved the examinations of various local, regional and international instruments that relate to the subject matter as well as the

writings of various authors on the subject of guidance and counselling. Qualitative paradigms offer the researcher the opportunity to develop an idiographic understanding of participants and what it means to them, within their social reality, to live with a particular condition or be in a particular situation (Bryman, 1988). It thus facilitates an understanding of the complexity of bio-psycho-social phenomena and, as such, affords exciting possibilities for informing clinical practice (Boyle, 1991). Qualitative research studies phenomena using a prolonged first hand presence at the research site whereby the researcher would get a true reflection of what goes on at the site (Herndon and Kreps, 2001; Willig, 2001). It uses different data generation methods such as observation, interviews and other researcher designed instruments (Kitchin and Tate, 2000). In this study I as the researcher made use of the face to face interviews, observations and document analysis to generate data. Conducting qualitative research requires considerable reflection on the researcher's part and the ability to make a critical assessment of participant's comments. It involves debating the reasons for adopting a course of action, challenging one's own assumptions and recognising how decisions shape the research study.

Population The population to the study was one hundred fifty (150) and it was chosen from four urban secondary schools in the Harare Metropolitan Province. This population comprised of the school heads, class teachers and students who were only in form four.

Sample A sample of fifteen (15) participants took part in the study and these were divided as follows: four (4) school heads; four (4) class teachers and seven (7) form four students. Purposive sampling technique was used in this study.

Data Collection Procedures The researcher conducted face to face interviews with the research participants that lasted between twenty to thirty minutes at the sampled secondary schools. Teachers responsible for teaching guidance and counselling subject who were part of the sample were the ones targeted and students. Permission to conduct the study was sought from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education.

1.8 Research findings and discussion

Results indicate that there is an impact of guidance and counselling in the four different secondary schools that were used in the study. Students from all the four secondary schools confirmed the presence of guidance and counselling services which was allocated a two hour period per week on the curriculum where students were imparted with knowledge and skills that would assist them in their future endeavours as they grow into adulthood. Students also stated that through guidance and counselling, they were now well equipped to make decisions that would uplift their livelihoods as they grow up. Cases of anti social behaviours such as smoking marijuana, cocaine, alcohol, indulging in sex and prostitution whilst still at school going age were remarkably reduced through the introduction of guidance and counselling lessons.

Students interviewed in the study also indicated that the existence of career guidance with less frequency than personal, social and educational guidance. These results concur with the findings by Mapfumo and Nkoma (2013) who found that guidance and counselling services in schools were in line with the responsive services directed at meeting students needs (personal or social) as they emerge rather than preventative. Lack of professional development for counsellors and head-teachers' lack of support of guidance and counselling programmes in both primary and secondary schools in Zimbabwe (Chireshe and Mapfumo, 2006; Mapfumo and Nkoma, 2013; Chireshe, 2006) compounded the problem of guidance and counselling programmes implementation. Also studies by Achebe (1986); Bulus (2001); Denga (2001); Edet (2008), have shown that school heads and class teachers constitute the greatest obstacle to the success of guidance and counselling services in schools. The reports show negative attitudes of school authorities to guidance services and to counsellors in particular. Schools are supposed to play a significant role in career counselling but in the present study the opposite obtains in most cases. Few teachers were professionally trained in life orientation and its career component while some teachers used life orientation periods to do more 'important'

subjects. In other words, some teachers would abscond the guidance and counselling lessons saying that it was not necessary. Some teachers also argued that guidance and counselling was not core to the student as it was not examined either at Grade Seven, O-Level or A-Level; hence it was irrelevant to focus on it in class as a subject.

This study also revealed that guidance and counselling programmes have an effect on student academic achievement and they reduce test anxiety. Five (5) out of the eight (8) students who took part in the study confirmed that the introduction of guidance and counselling subject in the new education curriculum had changed the way they perceived academic work; hence their academic performance had significantly improved. They also stated that they were now more envisioned about the relevance of academic work towards a better future. Guidance and counselling programmes can also assist students with better decisions about college and further education was another finding that came out of this study which is also similar to another finding by Chireshe (2006).

1.9 Conclusion

The students from three (3) secondary schools did benefit from the introduction of guidance and counselling programme whilst findings from one secondary school showed that students were not benefitting from the introduction of guidance and counselling since the services were not being fully implemented at that schools. Wherever the subject was taught, it failed to achieve its goals and objectives as stipulated in the syllabus. Some of the individual school heads, teachers and students lacked positive attitudes and to some, it was a worst of time to have guidance and counselling as a subject in the new education curriculum. It is from these findings that the researcher conclusively noted that there was an impact of guidance and counselling in the three urban secondary schools that were selected for this study. However, in one of the secondary schools, the researcher noted that the impact of guidance and counselling had been adversely affected by the failure to

implement the guidance and counselling due to lack of qualified personal to teach the subject.

1.10 Recommendations

The following were the recommendations of this study:

- The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should assign qualified teachers with training in guidance and counselling knowledge to teach the subject.
- There is need to have school heads, school inspectors and district school inspectors to effectively supervise the implementation of the guidance and counselling programme so that it can achieve its aims, goals and objectives.
- The development of infrastructure at the different schools that provides a conducive environment for the teaching of guidance and counselling so as to enhance effective implementation of its services.
- The crafting of an enabling legislation to support guidance and counselling programmes in both primary and secondary schools.

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