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SCHOOL COUNSELLORS' PERCEPTIONS OF HEADMASTERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING IN ZIMBABWE SECONDARY SCHOOLS.

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Abstract

The study sought to find out school counsellors' perceptions of headmasters' attitudes towards the guidance and counselling programme in Zimbabwe Secondary schools. Two hundred and six (N=206) school counsellors participated in the study. A questionnaire was developed to collect the data. The SPSS 7.5 version was used to analyze the data. A t-test for independent samples was used. The results revealed that headmasters were perceived as having negative attitudes towards the guidance and counselling programme. There was no significant difference between male and female counsellors' perceptions of headmasters' attitudes towards the guidance and counselling programme. Recommendations for improving headmasters' attitudes were made.

Introduction

Guidance and counselling has been introduced in schools the world over to instil responsible behaviour in students. Guidance is a means of helping individuals to understand and use wisely the educational, vocational and present opportunities or is a form of systematic assistance whereby students are aided in achieving satisfactory adjustment to school and life (Kochhar, 1994). The same sentiments are echoed by Tolbert (1978) who posits that guidance is the total programme of activities and services within the school to assist the individual conceive and carry out adequate adjustments in all aspects of his/her life. Counselling is an accepting, trusting and safe relationship in which clients learn to discuss openly what worries and upsets them, to define precise behaviour goals, to acquire essential social skills and to develop the courage and self-confidence to implement desired new behaviour (Kochhar, 1996). The central

feature of counselling is in helping the client to come to see who he/she really is, what he/she has and does not have, what he/she can do easily or with difficulty and what he/she can probably not do at all (Mapfumo & Chireshe in press). From the above definitions, one can conclude that through guidance and counselling programmes students understand their own interests, abilities and potentialities and attempt to develop them to the full (Levi & Zigler, 1991; Schmidt, 1993; Maluwa- Banda, 1998; Nziramasanga Commission, 1999).

Effective school guidance and counselling programmes have the following important components: planning, organizing, implementation and evaluation (Schmidt, 1993). The above key components require the support of the headmaster for the programme to succeed. In Western and African countries where the programme has been established, there have been problems of lack of support for the programme by school administrators (Brown, 1989; Lombo, 1993; Maluwa- Banda, 1998). The above authorities have indicated that the majority of the school administrators have negative attitudes towards the programme. Gerler Jnr (1992) argued that headmasters may have negative attitudes towards school guidance and counselling programmes because these programmes' outcomes are not clear. Headmasters are increasingly focused on clear outcomes namely improved student grades, improved school attendance and lower drop out rates. The school counsellors themselves have been subjected to a fair amount of criticism. They have been accused of not knowing their role and how to implement the guidance and counselling programme (Maluwa-Banda, 1998). The school counsellors have also been seen to have negative attitudes towards their guidance and counselling services because of lack of training in the area (Shertzer & Stone, 1981; Lombo, 1993).

The Zimbabwe guidance and counselling programme was introduced in all secondary schools in 1987 (Mapfumo, 2001). The objectives of the programme were to encourage the development of self-discipline and responsibility; the growth of intellectual curiosity, creativity and habits of learning and the promoting of an understanding of higher education and career opportunities and responsibilities in each child in secondary school (Mapfumo, 2001; Murwira, 1993). However, there was no policy on the implementation of the programme, neither was there a syllabus to go with the introduction of the guidance and counselling services in schools (Mapfumo, 2001).

Four years after the programme was introduced in Zimbabwe, only an eighth of the schools were implementing the programme (Ndanga, 1991). Kanyowa (1998)

adds that although the guidance and counselling programme was introduced in 1987, there still existed a general lack of awareness of its importance by schools judging by the slow and sometimes haphazard response to its implementation. Part of this state of affairs could be due to the headmaster's inability to provide the clear leadership required in implementing guidance and counselling programmes.

Given the importance of school guidance and counselling programme and the reported negative attitudes of administrators towards the programme, it is disturbing that researchers have not been attracted to this unexplored area of study. The success of any school programme, guidance and counselling included, depends on the headmasters' attitudes. That is, the headmasters' attitudes are critical for the success of any programme within the school including guidance and counselling.

Purpose of the study

This study sought to find out what school counsellors perceive as headmasters' attitudes towards the guidance and counselling programme. The main question being answered by the study was: what are the school counsellor-perceived headmasters' attitudes towards the guidance and counselling programme?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were postulated for this study:

- The majority of school counsellors surveyed will perceive that headmasters have negative attitudes towards the guidance and counselling programmes in their school.
- There are no significant differences in perceptions of headmasters' attitudes towards the guidance and counselling programme between male and female school counsellors.

Methodology

Sample

Two hundred and six (N=206) school counsellors from Manicaland and Masvingo regions participated in the study. All the school counsellors from

secondary schools implementing the guidance and counselling programme from the two regions were selected. One hundred and thirty (130) school counsellors were from Masvingo while 86 were from Manicaland. One hundred and six (106) were male while 100 were female. Their age ranged from 25 to 45 years.

Instrument

A questionnaire for school counsellors was developed (See appendix 1 for details). The components of the questionnaire sought to obtain the perceptions of the school counsellors with respect to the opinion of their headmasters regarding the guidance and counselling programmes in their school. A test re-test reliability was carried out with the questionnaire on 25 school counsellors. A Pearson product moment correlation (r) of .75 was obtained. This shows that the instrument was reliable.

Procedure

Permission to carry out the study was obtained from the Ministry of Education Sport and Culture. The researchers were supplied with a list of 280 secondary schools (150 from Masvingo and 130 from Manicaland) implementing the guidance and counselling programme by Education Officers responsible for the programme in the two regions. One questionnaire was posted to each of the 280 schools for completion by the school counsellor in 2003. Two hundred and twenty five (225) questionnaires were returned. Nineteen (19) of these questionnaires were incomplete and thus were not considered for the study.

Data analysis

The SPSS 7.5 computer version was used to analyze the data. The data were presented in tables. Descriptions of the data in the tables were provided.

The table shows that the majority of the school counsellors were not required by the administration to: plan for the Guidance and Counselling programme, keep Guidance and Counselling records and evaluate the Guidance and Counselling programme. In addition they were not allocated enough time to attend to matters related to the Guidance and Counselling programme. The table shows that the majority of the school counsellors indicated that things were as they were because the school administrators did not value the programme.

Table 1: Counsellor-perceived reasons for the state of the guidance and counselling programme in secondary schools.

Item	Sex	Response		Reasons for the state of affairs				No time for it	Lack of knowledge	No confidential Place	Other
		Yes	No	Administrator does not value it	Subject not examined	No time for it	Lack of knowledge				
Annual planning	M	43(20.9%)	63(36.6%)	42(39.6%)	10(9.3%)	8(7.6%)					
	F	40(19.4%)	60(29.1%)	38(35.9%)	5(4.7%)	3(2.8%)					
	Total	83(40.3%)	123(59.7%)	80(75.5%)	15(14%)	11(10.4%)					
Adequate guidance and counselling time	M	33(16%)	73(35.4%)	65(45.1%)	5(3.5%)						
	F	29(14.1%)	71(34.5%)	61(47.2%)	6(4.2%)						
	Total	62(30.1%)	144(69.9%)	133(92.4%)	11(7.6%)						
Administration Support	M	46(22.3%)	60(29.1%)	56(45.1%)	4(3.3%)						
	F	38(18.5%)	62(30.1%)	60(49.2%)	2(1.6%)						
	Total	84(40.8%)	122(59.2%)	116(95.1%)	6(4.9%)						
Keeping Records	M	52(25.2%)	54(26.2%)	33(32.4%)		6(5.9%)		8(7.8%)		1(0.9%)	
	F	42(20.4%)	58(28.2%)	25(24.5%)		27(26.5%)		2(2%)		0(0%)	
	Total	94(45.6%)	112(54.4%)	58(56.9%)		33(32.4%)		10(9.8%)		1(0.9%)	
Evaluation of Guidance and Counselling Programme	M	35(17%)	71(34.5%)	47(34.3%)	3(2.2%)	14(10.2%)		6(4.4%)			
	F	31(15%)	69(33.5%)	46(33.5%)	4(2.9%)	7(5.1%)		10(7.3%)			
	Total	66(32%)	140(68%)	93(67.8%)	7(5.1%)	21(15.3%)		16(11.7%)			

Table 2: A t-test for independent samples to determine difference between male and female school counsellors' perceptions of headmasters' attitudes (N=206).

Variable	t-obtained	df	t-critical	Significance level (0.05)
Why programme is not evaluated	-2.8	93	1.66	Not significant
Why time for the programme is not adequate	.91	140	1.66	Not significant
Support of the programme by administration	-.87	203	1.64	Not significant
Why programme is not supported	.72	91	1.66	Not significant
Why records are not kept	1.13	108	1.66	Not significant
Why programme is not evaluated	-2.6	102	1.66	Not significant

At 0.05 significance level and using a two-tailed test, the ts obtained for all variables are less than the tabulated values. This means that there is no significant difference between male and female school counsellors' perceptions of headmasters' attitudes towards the guidance and counselling programme. Thus, we fail to reject the null hypothesis that there are no significant differences between male and female counsellors' perceptions of headmasters' attitudes towards the guidance and counselling programme.

Discussion

The study revealed that school counsellors perceived their headmasters as having negative attitudes towards the guidance and counselling programme. The majority of the school counsellors did not annually plan for guidance and counselling; they did not have adequate time for the programme, they did not keep guidance and counselling records and they did not evaluate the programme. The main reason for this state of affairs as given by the school counsellors was that the headmasters did not value the programme. All other school programmes are planned for, have adequate time, records and are evaluated while guidance and counselling is not hence the school counsellors' strong view that it is lowly valued by the headmasters. Because of these findings, we fail to reject our null hypothesis that the majority of school counsellors surveyed will perceive that headmasters have negative attitudes towards the guidance and counselling programme in their schools.

The above findings are supported by Lombo (1993) who found out that in South Africa school guidance is generally perceived as being accorded minimal status by school administrators. Maluwa-Banda's (1998) argument that Malawian secondary school headmasters are unwilling to give office space to school

counsellors also indicates perceived negative attitude of headmasters towards the programme.

Observations from this study suggest that the teachers who are carrying our counselling in Zimbabwe schools believe they are not well supported by those who normally supervise their work. This view is consistent with the observation of the Inspectorate-UK (2002:4) that "in almost all schools with teachers who carry out counselling roles, the teachers involved do not receive support on a personal level, or counselling supervision on a professional level".

The school administrators may have the perceived negative attitudes towards the programme because they do not know what exactly the programme entails (Ficklen, 1987). Because they do not know what the programme entails, they may be perceived as not providing clear objectives for the programme (Brown, 1989). The perceived headmasters' negative attitudes may also be because school guidance and counselling outcomes like school adjustment, choosing the right career and personal relations are not clear and may be difficult to measure like other school activities such as teaching (Gerlner Jnr, 1992). The outcomes of teaching for example, improved grades are very clear to any one and they can be easily measured. Thus focus is on such activities.

The other finding is that there is no significant difference in perception of headmasters' attitudes towards the guidance and counselling programme between male and female school counsellors. That is, there is complete agreement between male and female school counsellors on headmasters' perceived attitudes.

Recommendations

The Ministry of Education Sport and Culture should put in place staff development programmes for headmasters so that they may appreciate the value of the guidance and counselling programme. There is need to provide a more systematic and coherent approach to staff development and training and the provision of accredited qualifications for those who provide counselling services. The staff development programme for instance, should include issues like the how and what of the guidance and counselling programme. There is also clearly a need for more accountability in the provision of counselling services. In that regard the headmasters of schools should take an active role in what is offered and whether the targets set for a given period are reached satisfactorily. School counsellors should be assisted in developing their skills in publishing and

marketing their programmes to other school personnel. Further research on school guidance and counselling is also recommended. The research should include headmasters' perceptions of the programme

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Appendix 1:

Headmasters' attitudes towards secondary school guidance and counselling programme:
School Counsellors' perceptions.

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study. The study is on headmaster' attitude towards secondary school guidance and counselling programme as perceived by school counsellors. On explaining your answers PLEASE FOCUS ON THE HEADMASTER's contributions/attitudes. All the information collected will be kept confidential and the responses will be used only for research purposes.

1. Does your school administration support your guidance and counselling programme?

Yes	No

If no, explain your answer. _____

2. Do you have adequate guidance and counselling time in your school?

Yes	No

If no, explain your answer _____

3. Do you annually plan your guidance and counselling programme?

Yes	No

If no, explain your answer _____

4. Is your guidance and counselling programme evaluated?

Yes	No

If no, explain your answer _____



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