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AN ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING PROGRAMMES AT ORDINARY LEVEL IN GWERU URBAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

This paper is based on a research study carried out by the author in 2003. The study assessed how Guidance and Counselling Programmes were being implemented in Gweru urban secondary schools at Ordinary level. The assessment focused on such key elements in Guidance and Counselling as time allocation, availability of resources, training of counsellors, qualities of counsellors, attendance at workshops and seminars, among other things. The researcher employed the survey method and data were gathered through the use of a questionnaire. The population was made up of all the thirteen secondary schools in Gweru urban district. The sample comprised of all heads, all Guidance and Counselling teachers and 140 "O" level students in the 7 selected schools. The study found that secondary schools in Gweru urban district were implementing Guidance and Counselling programmes; that pupils were benefiting from the guidance and counselling programmes offered by the schools; that full time teachers were engaged as counsellors, which interfered with their operations as counsellors; effective implementation of the Guidance and Counselling programme was hindered by lack of resources such as time, books, furniture, syllabus, and counselling accommodation. The study recommends that more time be allocated for Guidance and Counselling programmes; that full time qualified counsellors be recruited in schools rather than engaging teachers who have other duties and responsibilities to attend to; that schools be allocated more resources such as books, furniture, syllabi and suitable accommodation for them to implement the Guidance and Counselling programmes effectively.

Background

Guidance and Counselling as a discipline has become popular in both developed and developing countries. The rising levels of social, economic, and psychological challenges in today's world have necessitated the emergence of this discipline. Problems of drug abuse, sexuality, abortions and unwanted pregnancies, which are rampant among the youths, have forced many countries, including Zimbabwe, to institute Guidance and Counselling

programmes in educational institutions. According to the Zimbabwe Policy Circular Minute number 4 of 1990, Guidance and Counselling programmes are supposed to be implemented in all secondary schools. Furthermore the Nziramasanga Report of 1999 recommended that Guidance and Counselling be offered at all levels in the education system, that is, pre-school, primary, secondary and tertiary level. The Nziramasanga Commission was set up by the Zimbabwean Government to investigate the education system in Zimbabwe.

The success of the implementation of Guidance and Counselling programmes, like any other educational programmes, depends on a number of factors. These include the level of education and training of the implementers, knowledge and skills in counselling, the qualities of the counsellors, availability of resources, attendance at workshops and seminars, among other things. Literature reviewed indicated that in schools, the individuals entrusted with the major responsibility of helping students deal with their personal, social, educational, and vocational or career problems are school counsellors (Lindhard, Dlamini, Barnard, 1985). Nelson-Jones (1995) points out that effective counselling occurs when there is a good helping relationship and constructive exchanges between the counsellors and the client. A good helping relationship involves counsellors who possess central desirable qualities namely; genuineness, non-possessive warmth and empathy. Makinde (1984), Nelson-Jones (1995) and McLeod (2000) refer to these central qualities as core conditions for effective counselling. George (1981) states that genuineness in counselling facilitates trust. If the counsellor and counsee trust each other, then they can work together freely. Students who pick up incongruence during counselling sessions are not likely to benefit from the counselling process (Brammer and Shostrom, 1977).

Furthermore, knowledge and skills of the implementers also play a crucial role in the implementation of educational programmes. Studies by Gross, Giacquin and Bernstein (1971) in the U.S.A indicate that the teachers' lack of knowledge and skills is a barrier to implementation of programmes. This has been supported by Hawes (1979) in his studies in Ghana who observed that most innovations were not carried out because of the teachers' lack of knowledge. Studies by Hodzi (1989), Jaji (1990), Lewin and Bajah (1991), Chivore (1992) and Murwira (1995) revealed that lack of sufficient knowledge and skills is a hindrance to the implementation of educational programmes.

In addition, studies by Hawes (1979), Chivore (1992), Nyagura and Reece (1989), Jaji (1990) and others have indicated that implementation of

educational programmes is adversely affected by the unavailability of resources. These resources include human resources, time, and materials such as syllabi, exercise books, teaching and learning aids, facilities, and equipment.

This researcher, therefore, decided to assess the extent to which Guidance and Counselling programmes were being implemented in Gweru urban secondary schools which happens to be her home area.

Statement of the problem

Secondary schools at Ordinary level deal with teenagers who are experiencing personal and social problems that come with their adolescent stage of development. These problems need to be addressed at school through effective guidance and counselling programmes. Thus, this study sought to address the question: 'To what extent are Guidance and Counselling programmes being implemented in Gweru urban secondary schools at "O" level?'

Aims of the study

The study aimed to do the following:

1. Investigate and establish the extent to which the Guidance and Counselling programmes were being implemented in Gweru urban secondary schools at ordinary level;
2. Find out whether pupils were benefiting from the Guidance and Counseling Programmes offered by the schools;
3. Establish whether Guidance and Counselling programmes were being effectively implemented;
4. Identify problems encountered by secondary schools as they implement the Guidance and Counseling programmes;
5. Find out possible solutions to identified problems.

Research Questions

The questions that this investigation sought to answer were:

1. Do pupils benefit from Guidance and Counseling programmes offered by their schools?
2. Are Guidance and Counseling programmes being effectively implemented?
3. What problems do schools encounter during the implementation of Guidance and Counseling programmes?
4. What are some of the possible solutions to identified problems?

Research Design

In this study, the researcher adopted the survey design. Isaac and Michael (1989:128) have explained that "Surveys are a means of gathering information that describe the nature and extent of a specified set of data ranging from physical counts to frequencies to attitudes and opinions."

A survey is a method of gathering data from a number of individuals in order to answer predetermined questions. Cohen and Manion (1989) state that a survey gathers data at a particular point in time with the intention of:

- a) Describing the nature of existing conditions;
- b) Identifying standards against which existing conditions can be compared;
- c) Determining the relationship that exists between specific events.

Population

The population of the study was made up of 13 secondary schools in Gweru Urban district. All heads, Guidance and Counseling teachers and all Ordinary level students in these schools made up the population for the study. However, it was impossible to involve everyone in the study because of time, financial, material and human resource constraints. The researcher, therefore, selected a sample for the study.

The Sample

The sample was made up of all heads of schools, all Guidance and Counseling teachers and 140 "O" level students in 7 selected schools. This sample was about 53,8% of the population. Borg and Gall (1979) argue that the general

rule to determine the size of the sample is to use the largest sample possible. The researcher was satisfied that the sample selected was representative of the population.

Sampling Procedure

The researcher used the simple random sampling procedures in selecting the sample for the study. Cohen and Manion (1989) mention that a random sample is one selected in such a way that each individual in the defined population has an equal independent chance of being selected. Randomisation in sampling limits the probability of choosing a biased sample. Simple random sampling procedure involves selecting at random the required number of subjects for the study. The researcher placed pieces of paper with yes or no in a hat, mixed these pieces thoroughly and then each participant was asked to pick only one piece. Those who picked the "yes" pieces became the respondents for the study.

Instrumentation

A structured questionnaire with closed and open-ended questions was used for data gathering.

Data Collection Procedures

All the questionnaires for the study were administered personally by the researcher to the heads, Guidance and Counseling teachers and "O" level students in the selected schools. The researcher visited the schools, explained the purpose of the study to the respondents, administered the questionnaires and collected the questionnaires soon after completion. This was the most convenient procedure for the researcher because of time limitations. The advantage was that 100% return of questionnaires was achieved.

Data Analysis

The descriptive statistical analysis was used to interpret data. The descriptive statistical analysis used in this study consisted of the Number (N) of respondents and corresponding percentages (%) of the respondents. According to Ary et al (1985), the descriptive statistical procedures have the advantage that they enable researchers to organize, summarise and describe observations. In this study, the researcher preferred the descriptive method, because it was relatively simple and convenient. The method clarifies the meaning of raw data and makes it easy to interpret.

The analysis was done at the computer centre of the University of Zimbabwe using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). It is Ary et al (1985) who correctly observe that computers make it possible to analyse large quantities of data and perform complex analysis quickly and efficiently.

Findings and Discussion

Research question 1:

Are pupils benefiting from the Guidance and Counselling programmes offered by the school?

The researcher wanted to establish whether the "O" level pupils were benefiting from Guidance and Counselling programmes offered by their schools. Results showed that all heads (100%), all Guidance and Counseling teachers (100%) and some pupils (87,9%) stated that pupils were benefiting from the Guidance and Counselling programmes that were offered by the schools. Heads, teachers and pupils indicated that discipline had improved in their schools since the inception of Guidance and Counselling in their schools. Pupils in Secondary school are at a critical stage of development, which is the adolescent stage. During this period, adolescents undergo identity development and need assistance in establishing who they are. Makinde (1984) states that when the needs of this stage are not adequately provided for, the problem of indecision, uncertainty, ambiguity, conflicts, instability, unpredictability, perhaps leading to delinquency, alcoholism and career muddle may surface. The researcher established that students were getting help on various areas such as HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted infections, general hygiene, puberty, handling peer pressure, drug abuse and unwanted pregnancies. Table 1 below shows school Heads', teachers' and pupils' estimations of the areas mostly emphasised by the school in Guidance and Counselling.

Heads, teachers and pupils were asked to identify areas mostly emphasised by their schools in Guidance and Counselling. In Table 1, the following areas were identified as mostly emphasized; HIV and AIDS, decision making, career guidance, relationships, education for living, problem-solving and study skills. Those not emphasized included note-taking, reading and selection of subjects. HIV and AIDS education is one of the areas that is strongly emphasized by the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture. The HIV/ AIDS pandemic has claimed many lives in both developing and developed countries. World Health Organization (WHO) (1998) states that HIV/AIDS is a fatal viral problem, which suppresses the body's immune system causing increased vulnerability to many other infections.

Table 1: School Heads', Teachers' and Pupils' estimations of the areas mostly emphasised by the school in Guidance and Counselling.

	Heads %		Teachers%		Pupils%	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Career and Guidance	100	—	75	25	68.6	31.4
H.I.V. and A.I.D.S.	100	—	100	—	80.7	19.3
Relationships	85.7	14.3	75	25	70	30
Study skills	57.1	42.9	50	50	38.6	61.4
Note Taking	—	100	37.5	62.5	20	80
Education for Living	71.4	28.6	62.5	37.5	71.4	28.6
Decision Making	85.7	14.3	87.5	12.5	67.9	32.1
Problem Solving	57.1	42.9	100	—	63.6	36.4
Reading	28.6	71.4	37.5	62.5	49.3	50.7
Selection of Subjects	42.9	57.1	25	75	42.1	57.9

Heads: N = 7 Teachers: N = 8 Pupils: N = 140

According to the Zimbabwe National Family Planning Council Report (1998), young people are the most vulnerable group to both sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS. These people need protection from both government and society. This is the reason why the education system is designing policies and counter measures to mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS. Schools are emphasising preventive measures and behavioural change. The Zimbabwean government has integrated HIV/AIDS education at both primary and secondary levels. The aim of this subject is to empower students with knowledge and skills to use for their survival.

However, from the results in Table 1, one can suggest that there is need for schools to emphasise areas such as note taking, reading and selection of subjects as these areas are related to tertiary education. Students need assistance in the selection of subjects as this determines which subjects to choose at 'A' level leading to careers of their choice. If students get help in identifying suitable subject combinations required for different careers then they work hard to accomplish their goals. Those pupils who wish to enter University will discover that they can only enrol for the degree programme they prefer if they have the correct subject combination. Insufficient knowledge about the course or degree requirements has led to frustration among the youths when they fail to enrol for the preferred areas.

Research Question 2:

Are Guidance and Counseling programmes being effectively implemented?

In finding out whether Guidance and Counseling programmes were being effectively implemented, the researcher investigated the following factors: availability of material resources, time allocation, qualities of the counsellors, attendance at workshops and seminars among other things.

Availability of resources (see Table 2).

Table 2: Heads', Teachers' and Pupils' comments about availability of resources in schools.

	Heads %		Teachers %		Pupils %	
	Not Satisfied	Satisfied	Not Satisfied	Satisfied	Not Satisfied	Satisfied
Books on Guidance and Counselling	57.2	42.9	62.5	37.5	73.6	26.4
Room for Guidance and Counselling	71.5	28.6	62.5	37.5	65.8	34.3
Appropriate furniture	42.9	57.2	100		70.7	29.3
Syllabus	57.2	42.9	87.5	12.5	58.6	41.4

Heads: N = 7 Teachers: N = 8 Pupils: N = 140

It was essential for the researcher to establish whether schools had adequate resources for Guidance and Counselling or not. Results in Table 2 show that heads, teachers and pupils were not satisfied with: books on guidance and counselling, rooms or space for counselling, furniture and syllabi. This means that resources are not enough, and, inevitably, the implementation of the programme is adversely affected.

These findings are in line with findings by Hawes (1979), Chivore (1992), Nyagura and Reece (1989), who observed that implementation of educational programmes is adversely affected by unavailability of resources. In Counselling, if teachers fail to get books, syllabi, furniture and accommodation for the helping relationship, then the objectives cannot be adequately accomplished. The success of Guidance and Counselling programmes depends on availability of resources. If pupils are meant to benefit from these programmes, then

there is need for the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture to provide the needed resources. Schools would implement programmes effectively if they have adequate resources.

Time allocation

It was important for the researcher to establish whether time allocated for Guidance and Counselling was adequate or not. Results showed that some school Heads (71,4%) regarded the time for Guidance and Counselling as adequate. However, teachers (100%) and some pupils (62,1%) indicated that time was not adequate. Normally, students have a one thirty-minute period for this subject per week. Heads may feel that the time is adequate since the subject is not examinable. The timetable may be overloaded with those subjects that are examinable but teachers as implementers of the curriculum realise that thirty minutes per week is not enough to cover the syllabus and pupils may not totally benefit if the time is too limited. If meaningful learning has to take place, then, there is need to increase time for Guidance and Counselling. As Gibson and Mitchell (1986) state, counsellors need adequate time to help troubled students to their satisfaction.

Qualities of The Counsellor

Table 3: Heads and Pupils' rating of the qualities of their counsellors.

	Heads %		Pupils %	
	Bad	Good	Bad	Good
Ability to keep secrets	14.3	85.7	30	70
Ability to listen	—	100	22.9	77.2
Ability to understand	—	100	23.6	76.4
Ability to respect others	14.3	85.7	24.4	75.7
Ability to accept others	14.3	85.7	27.9	72.1
Setting a good example	—	100	28.5	71.4

Heads: N= 7 Pupils: N= 140

Respondents were asked to evaluate school counsellors on personal qualities. This question was directed to heads and pupils. Teachers were left out since they could not rate themselves. School counsellors were rated as good in the following areas; ability to listen, ability to understand, ability to respect and accept others, ability to keep secrets and setting a good example. These personal qualities are essential for effective counselling. Pupils have to trust

their counsellors if the counselling process is to succeed. Pupils as clients have to build confidence in the counsellor for them to open up and get assistance. If counsellors in schools possess essential qualities then counselling will be successful.

According to Brown and Stebalus (1988, in Mwamwenda, 1995), whether a counselling process is successful or not is dependant on the qualities or characteristics of the counsellor. A counsellor should possess desirable qualities such as genuineness, non-possessive warmth and empathy (Nelson-Jones 1995). In a school setting, if pupils are convinced that the counsellor possesses essential qualities for counselling, they build trust and disclose their problems. Pupils need counsellors who listen to them without making judgments or imposing values and attitudes. Makinde (1984) states that the counsellor should appreciate the client as a person regardless of the client's views, attitudes and values. This means that, school counsellors should accept and value pupils as individuals or persons of dignity and worth.

The results revealed that teachers possess qualities that are fundamental to the helping relationship.

Availability of the School Counsellor

The researcher found it necessary to establish whether the school counsellor was readily available when a pupil had a problem. Data gathered showed that heads (85,7%) and teachers (75%) indicated that the school counsellor was readily available. On the contrary, pupils (50,7%) stated that the school counsellor was not readily available to assist students with problems. One can only assume that the reason why the school counsellor was not readily available to attend to pupils was that he or she was teaching most of the time. School counsellors are full-time teachers who have a lot of other duties and responsibilities to attend to, hence, they cannot always avail themselves for counselling. Teachers concentrate on teaching, marking and carrying out administrative duties that constitute their Key Result Areas on which their promotion depends. Guidance and Counselling may be another additional responsibility, which the teacher may not consider a core area in his or her operations. This, therefore, calls for the school administrators to exempt the school counsellors from other responsibilities if they have to perform their duties effectively as counsellors. It is the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture which can ensure that schools engage the services of full time counsellors who are readily available to assist pupils.

In addition, full time counsellors would have adequate time to attend to challenges faced by adolescents. As Mwamwenda (1995) states, there are times when children experience problems that are personal in nature such as feelings of loneliness, indecision, inadequacy, rejection, self-hatred and dislike, inferiority complex and other such ugly feelings. School counsellors would assist pupils to grapple with these negative aspects of feelings and transform them into a positive perception of self, thus, contributing to a child's positive self-concept. Full time counsellors are needed to run the Guidance and Counselling programmes in schools.

Attendance at Workshops or Seminars

Guidance and Counselling, like any other subject, requires people who are knowledgeable in that area. The researcher investigated whether heads, teachers or pupils had received any training through workshops or seminars. Information obtained showed that some Heads (85,7%) and teachers (100%) attended workshops or seminars on Guidance and Counselling. Most of the pupils (65,7%) indicated that they had not received any training in Guidance and Counselling outside that they get from their teachers. Maybe those pupils (34,3%) who indicated that they had received training could have got it through peer counselling programmes. These programmes are important because they provide pupils opportunities to share information and help each other. Workshops and seminars are also important because they expose participants to new areas of knowledge by different personalities. Participants gain knowledge and skills, which lead to efficiency and effectiveness in their operations.

The findings of this study revealed that some Heads and teachers were receiving some training through workshops and seminars. This differs from studies, by Nyagura and Reece (1989) and Jaji (1990) who observed that professional support to teachers through workshops and seminars was inadequate. Jaji (1990) also observed that most seminars and workshops were poorly organised. The results of this study indicated that there was some development in the area of workshops and seminars. Some Heads and teachers were receiving some training and this is essential for professional growth.

Other people involved in Guidance and Counselling Programmes**Table 4: Responses from Heads, Teachers and Students on Involvement of other Stakeholders in Guidance and Counselling Programmes.**

	Heads		Teachers		Pupils	
	Not Involved	Involved	Not Involved	Involved	Not Involved	Involved
Other Teachers	57,2	42,8	87,5	12,5	72,9	27,1
Senior Master	14,3	85,7	50	50	52,1	47,9
Senior Woman	—	100	62,5	37,5	40	60
Deputy Head	28,6	71,5	50	50	47,8	52,2
District Education Officer 12,8		57,1	42,9	75,0	12,5	87,2
Education Officer	71,4	28,6	87,5	12,5	80,7	19,3
Parents	71,4	28,6	75	25,0	42,2	57,9

*Heads N=7**Teachers N=8**Pupils N=140*

The researcher wanted to find out how far other stakeholders had been involved in assisting with the running of Guidance and Counselling programmes at the schools. The results from the Heads, Guidance and Counselling teachers and pupils in Table 4 above showed that the senior woman, senior master and deputy head were involved in the Guidance and Counselling programmes at school. Those people rated as not being helpful were: other teachers, District Education Officers, Education Officers and parents. The reasons why other teachers were not involved could be numerous. Probably they perceived Guidance and Counselling as the responsibility of one or two teachers at school. Other teachers might also have their duties and responsibilities that needed their attention.

Furthermore, it was noted that District Education Officers and Education Officers were not taking an active part in assisting the Guidance and counselling teachers. These findings are in line with what was observed by Chivore (1992), Lewin and Bajah (1991). District Education Officers and Education Officers rarely visited schools and yet it was their responsibility to control standards in schools. It was also disturbing to note that parents, as caregivers were also not taking a leading role in helping their children. Gibson and Mitchell (1986, in Mwamwenda, 1995), state that the counsellor has to

work with parents as well as pupils themselves in solving problems that affect the pupils. Parents should play a significant role in the development of their children. They remain the most influential teachers of children.

There is need for District Education Officers, Education Officers, other teachers and parents to be involved in the running of Guidance and Counselling programmes in schools. If these people work collaboratively as a team there are high possibilities of accomplishing set objectives.

Conclusion

This study sought to investigate the extent to which Guidance and Counseling programmes were being implemented in Gweru urban secondary schools. The findings revealed that secondary schools in Gweru urban district were implementing Guidance and Counseling programmes and pupils were benefiting from the programmes. The findings also revealed that effective implementation of programmes was hindered by a number of constraints. These included: engaging part-time counsellors to run the programmes, inadequacy of resources such as, time, books, furniture, syllabi and accommodation, lack of participation by interested parties such as District Education Officers and parents. If the Government wants pupils to fully benefit from these programmes, then there is need to engage full-time counsellors, increase time on the timetable, provide needed resources and ensure that all stakeholders are fully involved. It is important for the Government to take an initiative to address these problems for the benefit of students. To this end, the following recommendations are being proffered by this study:

Recommendations

Based on the evidence gathered in this study, a number of pertinent recommendations can be made with respect to effective implementation of Guidance and Counselling programmes. Some of the principal recommendations are presented hereunder:

- i) More time should be allocated for Guidance and Counselling programmes on the timetable if meaningful learning is to take place. Learners should have two or three thirty-minute periods per week per class. This could be an improvement from the one thirty minute period the subject is currently allocated.

- ii) Full-time qualified counsellors are needed in schools rather than engaging teachers who have other duties and responsibilities to attend to. Having teachers as counsellors is not the best arrangement since teachers have the core business of teaching. Teachers who have their classes to teach cannot be expected to be available all the time to assist students with problems.
- iii) To enhance the effectiveness of Guidance and Counselling programmes, the Ministry should ensure that schools have adequate resources, such as books, furniture, syllabi, and suitable accommodation. The resources in schools need to be improved in order to facilitate effective implementation of programmes. This could be done through the Schools Development Associations and Schools Development Committees undertaking fund-raising projects and mobilising the communities to provide material support, finance and Labour needed in the improvement of schools.
- iv) Involvement of, and participation by the District Education Officers and Education Officers in Guidance and Counselling programmes is essential. These officials have an obligation to maintain high standards in schools and therefore should be fully involved in school activities. These people need to visit schools more regularly to get feedback from heads and teachers on how the programmes are running.
- v) The other interested party, which needs to be involved, is the parents. There is need for schools to work collaboratively with parents in running Guidance and Counselling programmes. Parents play a significant role in the development of their children. They play a major role in the primary socialisation of the child and have great influence on the child throughout life.

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