

The Essential Elements in Conducting Successful Guidance and Counseling at Secondary School Level: A Review

By

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Abstract

This article reviews literature on essential elements in conducting successful guidance and counselling at Secondary school level in Zimbabwe. These elements include; the role of the school counsellor, goals of counselling, qualities of a good counsellor, the knowledge and skills of the counsellor, availability of resources, supervision, workshops and seminars. These factors are crucial for effective implementation of Guidance and Counselling programmes in schools. The paper explores the contribution of each factor to the success of guidance and counselling and acknowledges ideas given by various authorities. Literature reviewed has been drawn from developed and developing countries.

Introduction

Guidance and Counselling is a discipline which is fundamental in the development of any institution. A number of authorities, for example, Makinde(1984), Nelson-Jones(1995); Mcleod(1998); Hough(1994) have researched and written on Guidance and counselling. The discipline is essential at any level of human development since it equips students with knowledge and skills critical for growth. At any stage of development, learners encounter a number of social, personal, educational, economical and psychological crises and they need assistance in resolving them. This transformative process aims at attaining a positive change in individuals involved. However, the success of Guidance and Counselling is dependant on a number of factors which include: the skills and knowledge of the counsellor, clear articulation of goals of the guidance and counselling process, qualities of a good counsellor, availability of resources, supervision, workshops and seminars. This article examines the importance of each aspect in conducting the guidance and counselling programme.

Background

Zimbabwe, like many other developing countries such as Botswana, Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia and Swaziland, has realized the need to offer Guidance and Counselling programmes in Secondary Schools. In Zimbabwe, Guidance and Counselling as a discipline, has always

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been offered in Secondary schools but with varying terminology. At one time it was referred to as Education for living and others referred to it as career guidance.

The government introduced Guidance and Counselling in Secondary schools to assist learners in their development. According to Policy circular minute number 4 of 1990, Guidance and Counselling programs are supposed to be implemented in all Secondary schools. 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. This is mainly because the discipline equips learners with knowledge and skills necessary for growth. Pupils in Secondary schools are at a critical stage of development which is the adolescence stage. The adolescence stage is a transitional stage from childhood to adulthood. This period is characterized by accelerated growth and development as manifested in weight, height and other body changes. Mwamwenda (1995) mentions that adolescents go through physiological changes and become more mature physically and sexually. The individual has to constantly adjust to the changes as one develops into adulthood.

Milner (1974) argues that the adolescence stage is the most difficult stage in human development. This is so because adolescents undergo identity development during this period. They have a lot of questions about themselves. They begin to ask who they are, what they look like, what they would like to be, what they would like to become and even how society perceives them? Erikson in his theory of personality development, argues that at this stage, individuals face a crisis in identity formation. The crisis according to Erikson is identity versus role confusion. Erikson in Cole and Cole (2001) explains that at this stage adolescents either establish a sense of personal identity or they become confused about who they are and what they want to do in life. Adolescents meet a lot of challenges as they try to establish who they are, hence Hall referred to this period as a period of storm and stress (Cole and Cole 2001). Hall goes on to say that this is reflected in the adolescents' conflicts with their parents, their widely fluctuating moods, their innovativeness and their risky behaviour. Adolescents engage in exploration and experimentation and yet they lack the knowledge, experience and maturity to avoid the risks that confront them. This is why the guidance and counselling programmes are necessary at this stage.

Teachers and parents should understand the nature of the unique problems of adolescents if they are to help them make a smooth transition to adulthood. When the needs of this age are not adequately provided for, the problem of indecision, uncertainty, ambiguity, conflict, instability, unpredictability, perhaps leading to delinquency, alcoholism and career muddle may surface (Makinde 1984). It becomes imperative then for educational institutions to establish guidance and counselling programmes. These are meant to assist students overcome the challenges they experience as they develop. Pupils in secondary schools need help on personal, social, educational and vocational issues. Students need to be helped to develop into mature, well-functioning and competent members of society. It is imperative for this paper to explore essential elements in conducting guidance and counselling in Secondary schools.

Essential Elements In Guidance and Counselling

Goals of Guidance and Counselling

The goals of Guidance and Counselling programmes should be well articulated to help implementers. CACC, GUIDE p.12 outlines the Aims of General School guidance as follows;

- To orient students to realise that life and their own existence are meaningful;
- To help students assess and understand themselves;
- To orient students to respect human dignity of others and to have compassion for others;
- To help students make morally, independent choices and act responsibly;
- To help students live according to one's own set of values.

The school guidance accords pupils the opportunity to explore and understand the demands of life. Students are assisted to learn more about themselves, acquire life-management skills, social competence and learn to cope with change.

Sutton (1987) observes that counselling goals are highly dependent on the individual and are selected primarily by the student but negotiated with the counsellor. George (1981) outlines the major goals in counselling as:

1. facilitating behaviour change;
2. improving the client's ability to establish and maintain relationships;
3. enhancing the client's effectiveness and ability to cope;
4. promoting the decision-making process;
5. facilitating client potential and development.

Counsellors are supposed to bring about a change in behaviour which enables the clients to live more productive and satisfying lives. Generally, counselling is concerned with helping people feel better or cope with immediate problems, (Rogers, 1965). Counselling makes people become responsible for making the most of their lives, assume responsibility with confidence and empower themselves for the future (Coleman, Butcher and Carson, 1980). Counselling services empower students with knowledge and skills necessary for healthy development. Schools provide such programmes to help students function at higher levels of personal competence (Gibson and Mitchell, 1986). According to Mapfumo (1981) some of the aims for guidance and counseling in Zimbabwe include;

1. To help pupils develop a positive self-concept;
2. To help pupils acquire useful social and communication skills;
3. To help pupils acquire knowledge about the availability of jobs;
4. To help pupils become aware of the relationship between subjects at school and future employment;
5. To help pupils appreciate the value of the education they are receiving;
6. To help pupils acquire efficient study habits and develop a healthy attitude to school work in order to reduce the wastage and failure rate in schools.

Guidance and counseling programmes are primarily concerned with character development and ensuring that pupils behave in acceptable manner. The discipline is divided into three main areas, which are the social – personal guidance, the educational guidance and the vocational guidance. Educational guidance enables learners to appreciate education as an instrument of constructive social change. The focus is on helping learners attain learning competencies that contribute to their passing. Vocational guidance or career guidance is primarily concerned with providing occupational information to learners. This type of guidance is crucial at Secondary School level since learners will be working towards future employment. The personal – social guidance focuses mainly on issues that promote the development of a positive self-concept. Learners need counseling on aspects that lead to emotional disturbances and behaviour problems.

The guidance and counseling goals are important in that they stipulate the fundamental aspects to be accomplished. It is therefore imperative for the guidance counsellor to translate these goals into workable units that are short term. According to Mapfumo (1981), the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture realizes the diversities of school environments, hence is not prescriptive and rigid on the way the programme is to be implemented. The guidance teacher should therefore aim to address the problems which are peculiar to that particular school. The uniqueness of each school environment is reflected in the policy document for each school. It is however vital for the guidance counselor to operate within the expected framework for effective implementation of the programme. If goals are not clearly enunciated, teachers may have problems of working towards the attainment of such goals. The Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture should therefore ensure that guidance counselors are aware of what they are expected to achieve at each given time.

The Role of the School Counsellor

In schools, the individuals entrusted with the major responsibility of helping students deal with their personal, social, educational, vocational or career problems are school counsellors (Lindhard, Dlamini, Barnard, 1985). Counsellors help students make appropriate choices and decisions for their future and are therefore involved with the critical processes of student development and transition. Career education informs students on the world of work and they gain knowledge about career expectations. Nelson-Jones (1995) views career education as an umbrella term used to cover a variety of interventions aimed at helping children, mainly at secondary school level to become more occupationally literate. Information on jobs and roles include the skills and tasks, tools and equipment, training and formal education, placement and advancement opportunities for various occupations. Job and role awareness ensures that students will make occupational choices based on true and complete rather than false or inadequate information.

Counsellors also play a vital role in the guidance and counselling of students in personal and social issues. Mwamwenda (1995) states that there are times when children experience problems that are personal in nature such as feelings of loneliness, indecision, inadequacy, rejection, self-hate and dislike, inferiority complex and others. The work of the counsellors is to assist pupils to grapple with these negative aspects of behaviour and transform them into

a positive perspective, thus contributing to the child's positive self-concept. Counselling can be an effective way to help pupils deal with anxiety and depression.

The guidance counsellor plays a significant role in the implementation of guidance and counseling programmes in schools. The counsellor is the one who equips students with knowledge and skills on various aspects of their curriculum. The counsellor ensures that learners gain insights on vocational, educational and personal – social guidance. However, the role of the counsellor should be well articulated to the guidance counsellor so that one is aware of his/her responsibility and expectations. Appropriate intervention strategies can only be employed if the guidance counsellor is aware of his/her role. The guidance counsellor needs adequate support from all stakeholders and interested parties for him/her to carry out his/her duties effectively. Resources such as time, text books, and materials, should be abundant to enable learners to benefit from the programme.

However, in Zimbabwean Secondary Schools, the guidance counsellor is a teacher who has his/her core business as teaching. The guidance teacher takes guidance and counselling as an additional work load. Although, Mapfumo (1981) states that this guidance teacher is expected to have a relatively reduced working load since he/she takes guidance and counselling, one feels that this is a serious impediment on the success of the programme. The guidance counsellor should be exempted from teaching and concentrate more on guidance and counseling of pupils. Counselling is a more personal activity since it is directed at the individual and hence requires much time. Learners experience problems such as poor performance, bereavement, HIV/AIDS, drug abuse, smoking, rejection, broken homes and would need more time with the counsellor for productive results.

The other problem is that guidance and counseling is allocated one period per week. This period maybe thirty or forty minutes depending on the type of school. This is the time which the guidance teacher is expected to guide learners on various issues concerning their development. Guidance is group based and deliberations may focus on such topics as sexual maturation, growing up, relationships, study skills, examinations and occupations. Information given is meant to empower students with knowledge and skills on various aspects. The time allocated for guidance and counseling on the timetable is inadequate. The programme is useful to learners and one feels that one period per week is not enough. There is need to allocate more time for guidance and counselling on the time-table. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education Sport and Culture needs to continuously reflect on this issue and see how best it could be addressed. One would suggest the engagement of full time counsellors in schools as a permanent solution to the problems being experienced. Although this suggestion has some monetary implications, one feels that this is the only way of utilizing the services of a school counsellor profitably. Learners would totally benefit from such an arrangement.

Qualities of a Good Counsellor

Nelson-Jones (1995) points out that effective counselling occurs when there is a good helping relationship and constructive exchanges between the counsellor and the clients. A good helping relationship involves counsellors who possess central desirable qualities namely,

genuineness, non-possessive warmth and empathy. Makinde (1984), Nelson-Jones (1995), Mcleod (2000) refer to these central qualities as core conditions of effective counselling.

According to George (1981), the most fundamental element in the development of the helping relationship is the counsellor's genuineness or congruence. Genuineness is a condition in which the counsellor relates, spontaneously, honestly and openly to the client and reveals himself as a human being (Rogers, 1965). Brammer and Shostrom (1977), and Makinde (1984) concur when they state that the effective counsellor reveals himself as a total being and does not indulge in defensive manoeuvres to maintain a position of false authority and security. Counsellors who are genuine do not hide behind a mask. Genuine counsellors are open with their feelings, reactions, thoughts and attitudes and this allows the client to feel safe and secure.

The other important quality is non-possessive warmth or respect for the client. Rogers 1957 in George (1981:152) refers to this quality as "unconditionality of regard." By this, Rogers is suggesting the importance of the counsellor's being able to genuinely accept the client as a person of worth and dignity. The counsellor is supposed to accept the client unconditionally without passing judgments about the client's attitudes, values and behaviours. The last quality necessary for counselling is empathy. Truax and Carkhuff (1976) in Brammer and Shostrom (1977) refer to empathy as the ability to give a person seeking help a deep sense of being understood. Effective counsellors understand students' problems as if they were their own Rogers (1961) in George (1981) observes that the more the student perceives the counsellor as genuine, empathetic and having an unconditional positive regard for him, the more the student will move away from a static, unfeeling, fixed impersonal type of functioning and the more he will move towards a way of functioning which is marked by fluid, changing, acceptant and experiencing differential personal feeling.

In Zimbabwe, the Ministry of Education Sport and Culture puts emphasis on selection of school counsellors who exhibit the desirable qualities identified above. Mapfumo (1981) identifies some characteristics for ideal counsellors as;

- [i] Keen self-awareness
- [ii] Ability to analyse own feelings
- [iii] Ability to serve as a model and influence others [iv] A thorough sense of selflessness

School counsellors are expected to possess appropriate qualities such as genuineness, non-possessive warmth, empathy for them to carryout their duties effectively. They are supposed to relate to learners honestly and openly so that learners develop trust in them. The school counsellor should have respect for his/her learners and uphold the principles of confidentiality. Learners would open up in an environment they feel safe and secure.

One can only assume that school counsellors are aware of these qualities. However, some of the qualities are learnt through training. Without much exposure in the area of guidance and counselling one may be limited on the importance of these qualities. It is therefore important for counsellors to be trained in this area so that they acquire the relevant skills which enable them to be effective and efficient in their operations.

The Skills and knowledge of the Counsellor

In addition to the above core-conditions or personal relationship skills, counsellors need to acquire counselling skills or technical qualifications which can be broadly grouped as communication, diagnostic, motivational and management skills (Gibson and Mitchell, 1986; Rice and Smith, 1993). Effective counsellors make use of both verbal and non-verbal communication skills (Rice and Smith, 1993). Non-verbal communication involves the use of facial expressions, body posture and related physical movement. An effective counsellor exhibits non-verbal communication skills by using attending behaviours. Gibson and Mitchell (1986:316) point out that attending behaviours send such messages to the client as, "I am interested in you and your concerns; I respect you and I am going to give you my undivided attention." A troubled student will reveal his problem to a counsellor who listens attentively.

Furthermore, effective verbal communication also involves the art of questioning. This is the primary tool that counsellors use to obtain information. An effective counsellor, therefore, questions the student effectively so that he understands and diagnoses the problem accurately. The effective counsellor asks both open and closed questions at appropriate points during the interview to keep the discussion moving (Connect: Manual Part 1: Certificate in Child Counselling, 1977). Through effective questioning, the counsellor can clarify and validate issues effectively. In addition to that, the effective counsellor identifies central issues and critical points of the student's problem through effective questioning (Ivey and Smek-Downing, 1980).

Counsellors need to be trained for them to have relevant knowledge and skills in counselling. Previously in Zimbabwe teachers received no training in guidance and counselling. A study by Murwira (1995) in Zimbabwe on implementation of Guidance and Counselling programmes revealed that some teachers found some topics difficult to teach like friendship, courtship, drugs, HIV/AIDS because of limited resources and limited knowledge on the topic. Teachers in that study indicated that they lacked the teaching skill to deal with the subject. Murwira in that study, noted that no teachers were qualified to teach Guidance and Counselling. Only 8 of the 17 teachers that he interviewed had in-service training in the subject area. That study revealed that Home Economics teachers were nominated by their heads to teach the subject since they had less teaching loads compared to their counterparts in other subjects.

It is only recently that Universities have taken it upon themselves to offer degrees in guidance and counselling. This positive development is aimed at producing graduands who are knowledgeable in counselling. It is hoped that the competent graduands would take up the counselling posts in schools and help learners in meeting their various challenges. It is imperative therefore for the guidance counsellor to receive training in Guidance and Counselling.

Availability of Resources

Literature has revealed that successful implementation of educational programmes depends on availability of resources and facilities. Studies by Hawes (1979); Chivore (1991); Nyagura and Reece (1989) and others have indicated that implementation of educational programmes is adversely affected by unavailability of resources. These resources include materials like

syllabuses, exercise books, teaching and learning aids, facilities and equipment. Provision of these materials contribute substantially to the success of programmes. Another barrier to effective implementation of programmes identified by Gachuhi (1999) in United Nations Children's Educational Fund report 2003 is time. Gachuhi, (1999) in his studies on HIV/AIDS education in Lesotho and Botswana observed that the programmes were not successful because of not having specific time allocation in the timetable. Provision of materials, equipment, time is essential if programmes are to be implemented in a productive way.

In counselling, if teachers fail to get books, syllabus, furniture and a room for the helping relationship then accomplishment of objectives is affected. Several investigations that focused on resources such as furniture and counselling rooms revealed that counselling is dependent upon proper furniture and comfortable rooms. Studies that were conducted by Haase and DiMattia (1976) quoted by George (1981) revealed that room size affect the counselling process. Another study conducted by Chaikin, Derlega, Miller (1976) in Goorge (1981) revealed that client self disclosure is significantly more intimate in a soft room environment than in a hard one. Client preference for seating arrangements was investigated by Brockmann and Moller (1973). They reported that subjects who were submissive and dependent tended to prefer greater distance between chairs and those who were dominant, self-assured and independent preferred the closer seating arrangements (George 1981).

In Zimbabwe, the implementation of educational programmes is being adversely affected by shortage of resources and guidance and counselling is no exception. The Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture could be aware of the ideal rooms, furniture and materials for counselling but fails to purchase because of lack of finance. It is hoped that Guidance teachers improvise and create conducive environments for their counselling sessions.

The success of guidance and counselling programmes depends on availability of resources. It is important then for schools to have the necessary resources as these facilitate the helping process.

The importance of supervision

According to Chivore (1994), supervision involves assessment of proper implementation of policy, correction of identified weaknesses, direction and redirection of defects of the attainment of stated aims, objectives and goals of an education system at a given level. It is a way of monitoring the programme in action so that improvement can be made. During implementation of educational programmes, supervision is important because it leads to improvement of designed materials.

In Zimbabwe, studies by Chivore (1994) revealed that supervision of primary school teachers was inadequate. Chivore found that 65,9% of the teachers in his study were supervised between nil and once per year by their heads. 70,9% of the teachers were not supervised by education officers in the whole year. Similarly, studies by Lewin and Bajah (1991) indicated that a good number of teachers had not been supervised teaching Environmental and Agricultural Science. In that study, supervision by Education Officers (E.Os) and District Education Officers (D.E.Os) was found to be inadequate.

In Zimbabwe, research studies have indicated that supervision of educational programmes was inadequate. This affects the implementation of programmes and guidance and counselling is included. D.E.O.s, and E.O.s fail to monitor progress in schools because of transport problems. These are the external examiners who control the standards in schools. If they fail to visit schools then it is a serious impediment which need urgent attention. The monitoring and assessment systems need to be revitalized for the sustenance of educational programmes. Without enough supervision one wonders how teachers can be expected to be effective during curriculum implementation.

The usefulness of workshops and seminars

Hawes (1979) considers seminars and workshops useful in improving teacher's skills. In Zimbabwe, studies by Nyagura and Reece (1989) reveal that professional support to teachers through seminars and workshops is inadequate. This concurred with the findings by Jaji (1990) who also observes that most seminars and workshops were poorly organised. Teachers find workshops and seminars valuable if they are properly organised. If teachers are exposed to seminars and workshops, they acquire relevant knowledge and skills which make them effective in conducting their work.

In Zimbabwe workshops and seminars have been used to train teachers in guidance and counselling. Teachers have acquired some skills and knowledge in this area through these training sessions. There is however need to improve on the organisation and technicalities of such workshops for teachers to benefit. Workshops and seminars are essential for capacity building.

Recommendations

Based on literature reviewed a number of pertinent recommendations can be made concerning effective implementation of guidance and counselling programmes in schools. Some of these recommendations include:

1. More time should be allocated for guidance and counselling programmes on the timetable if meaningful learning is to take place. Learners could have two or three periods per week per class.
2. Full time qualified counsellors are needed in schools rather than engaging teachers who have other duties and responsibilities to attend to.
3. To enhance effectiveness of Guidance and Counselling programmes, the Ministry should ensure that schools have adequate resources such as books, furniture, suitable accommodation and other materials.
4. There is need for the Ministry to improve on organisation of workshops and seminars so that teachers benefit.
5. There is need for constant monitoring and assessment of guidance and counselling programmes by E.O.'s and D.E.O.s to ensure effective implementation of the programme. D.E.O.s and E.O.s should visit schools regularly to assist in the running of educational programmes.

Conclusion

What has emerged from the literature reviewed is that factors such as: skills and knowledge of the counsellor, goals of counselling, qualities of the counsellor, availability of resources,

supervision, seminars and workshops are crucial for effective implementation of guidance and counselling programmes in schools. Counsellors play an important role in assisting students deal with their personal, social, educational, vocational and career problems. However for them to perform their work confidently they need to be trained and become knowledgeable. They should have relevant skills and knowledge in counselling so that they perform their roles effectively. Counsellors are expected to bring about change in behaviour which enables the students to live more productive and satisfying lives. It is essential for the counsellor to possess desirable qualities such as genuineness, non-possessive warmth, and empathy as these are core to effective counselling. Each aspect plays a critical role in the establishment and maintenance of the therapeutic climate and must be exhibited by effective counsellors. Persons who lack these qualities experience problems in achieving the counselling goals. Studies reviewed have shown that effective implementation of guidance and counselling programmes in Secondary Schools is hampered by lack of resources, inadequate supervision, poorly organized workshops and seminars. If these programmes are meant to benefit students then there is need for these problems to be addressed.

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