

The effectiveness of guidance and counseling programmes in secondary schools in Marondera, Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Following the adoption of the recommendations of the 1999 Presidential Commission of enquiry into Education and Training, the Ministry of Education, Sport, Art and Culture in the year 2005 came up with the Director Circular Minute Number 23 which sought to strengthen and institutionalize guidance and counseling in all schools. This circular minute laid the foundation for information, framework and policy implementation guidelines towards the institutionalization of guidance and counseling programme in schools. The major question being raised now is how effective are guidance and counseling programmes in schools in light of the many challenges students are going through today. Observations today have also pointed to the fact that even the pass rate at O-level which used to hover above 30% has suddenly plummeted to below 15%. This study establishes that the guidance and counseling programmes in secondary schools are not implemented properly in Zimbabwe. The study recommends government commitment and professionalism among other recommendations in the implementation of guidance and counselling programmes in secondary schools in Zimbabwe.

KEYWORDS: Guidance, counseling, effectiveness, programmes, secondary schools.

1. Introduction

The current economic hardships facing our country have resulted in many parents leaving the country for greener pastures leaving behind their children without any form of parental guidance. The ever rising cases of child sexual abuse, high school dropout by the girl child due to pregnancy, coupled with the high prevalence of the HIV and AIDS scourge in our country are all key factors that underpin the concerns that form the basis of this research. In light of the above it may be assumed that schools are increasingly embracing many roles among them being the educators and being the primary social safety net institutions. The thrust of the education system in Zimbabwe is to promote national development through the production of well disciplined, socially adjusted and productive individuals with sound physical and mental health practices. Over the years there has been a lot more emphasis on the implementation of the guidance and counseling programmes in view of the many challenges students are facing as they grow up. The goal is to prepare learners to adjust to the ever changing environment and to lay the foundation for informed career choices as well as fostering opportunities for psycho-social support. This paper examine the effectiveness of guidance and counselling at secondary schools in Zimbabwe using Marondera as case study.

2. Statement of the Problem

Chakuchichi and Badza (2000) highlighted that school curriculum development often follows the historic development of nations, as it is the cornerstone of human resources development. The current curriculum of most independent countries in African states was largely influenced by the preceding colonial history. The advent of guidance and counseling programmes in schools soon came into being following the recommendations of the Presidential enquiry into education of 1999. Following such recommendations it has however been observed in most schools that no meaningful measures in terms of an appropriate syllabus and the training of teachers are taking place. Even those teachers who have made an effort to capacity build themselves in terms of attaining guidance and counseling degrees remain unrecognized in terms of remuneration. Those that seem to be coordinating the programme in schools do so on the basis of seniority rather than the appropriate qualifications and training. This scenario therefore raises a lot of questions than answers on the effectiveness of guidance and counseling programmes on the ground.

3. Research Objectives

This study sought to:

- determine whether the guidance and counseling programme is effective in the secondary school system in Zimbabwe;
- identify key indicators for the effectiveness of guidance and counseling programmes;
- establish the manner in which the guidance and counseling programme is being implemented in secondary schools in Zimbabwe; and
- track how the guidance and counseling programme can be strengthened in secondary schools in Zimbabwe.

4. Literature Review

According to the Director's Minute Circular Number 23 of 2005, the major recommendations of the 1999 Presidential Commission of enquiry into Education pointed to the effect that there was need for Guidance and Counseling resource rooms in each school. A follow up to this indicates that there are currently no specific guidance and counseling rooms in most schools raising questions on the effectiveness of guidance and counseling and level of confidentiality that is accorded to students.

Philips (1981) highlighted that schools need to provide conducive counseling environments where students are accorded the opportunity for career choices, relationship problems solving, conflict transformation or personal growth.

Maizels (1980) described the guidance and counseling programme as the focal point in adolescent development and associated uncertainties, disappointments, frustrations and stressful situations that they face. The above proposition seem to place significant emphasis on the importance of guidance and counseling programmes in schools to fully prepare students for the challenges in life as they are extremely vulnerable at this stage of their lives.

As earlier highlighted, most teachers in charge of guidance and counselling seem not to have appropriate qualifications in line with their important duties and rarely are there capacity building induction courses run for them. Holdsworth (1979) noted that due to lack of meaningful guidance and counseling programmes most school girls drop out of school due to pregnancy while most male students are being expelled in most schools due to indiscipline and drug related offences.

In relation to the above Holdsworth (1979) noted that part of the problem of the youth is attributed to poor decision taking and false expectations and a considerable contribution would seem to emanate from lack of orientation and support from school through the guidance and counseling programme. Carter (1985) noted that today, the bulk of young school leavers manage transition into adult life with a lot of difficulty, because the schools have in fact, made much less impact on them than is commonly assumed. The questions that continue to be raised suggest that guidance and counseling programmes need real strengthening both in the manner they are conducted and implemented. This is because such programmes are a critical component in the upbringing of youths in preparation of their long anticipated future lives.

Guidance and counseling programmes assist youths to be as open and positive as possible, open to thinking about themselves and their situations and be positive and energetic in applying their own and others in order to develop realistic plans about life. Mcgoldrick and Cooper (1988) pointed out that the guidance and counseling programmes ideally need to foster development of students from where they are now to where they want to be with minimum strain. The situation obtainable on the ground continues to paint a rather gloomy picture as to the effectiveness of guidance and counseling evidenced by the problems youths face during and on completion of certain levels of their education.

The recent economic challenges that have confronted our country have also resulted in most parents leaving the country for greener pastures leaving behind their children. As a result schools have increasingly been forced to accommodate both their roles and those of parents within the education systems calling for the need to strengthen the guidance and counseling programmes in most schools. In such situations Reubens (1986) concluded that guidance and counseling programmes instill in students ideas for knowing oneself and learning about new situations, gaining social support, learning from the past, setting realistic goals and diffusing action plan. In support Parkes (1987) emphasized that in the ongoing flux of life students undergo many changes in which they require expert support from guidance and counseling professionals with requisite training and education.

The above sentiments seem to suggest that the guidance and counseling programmes need to be conducted in a manner that prepares students effectively for life alternatives. One would therefore wonder how effective such programmes are without the appropriate textbooks, timetables, suitably trained professionals, conducive counseling rooms, capacity building courses and relevant documentation of counseling procedures. Guidance and counseling programmes are critical in that they enable students to learn to cope with the passage from one stage of personal development to another. As a result of guidance and counseling programmes students may be accorded the opportunity for increased psycho-social support when confronted with situations in which they may fail to adequately cope. Holmes (1980) however pointed out that confronted with the same problem it cannot be assumed that all students experience a transitional event in a given subject the same way. Nevertheless effective guidance and counseling programmes are pre-requisite for all schools to provide students facing challenges with coping options and conducive environments.

Dans (1990) highlighted that guidance and counseling coordinators need to work for a more open system interlinking education and work within subject syllabuses as well as timetabled counseling programmes. He further noted that such programmes need to foster an ability to minimize frustration and to optimize the capacity to help students within the constraints of recession. One therefore imagines the effectiveness of such programmes without appropriate syllabi and timetables in place. Further it raises further questions to its

effectiveness in the face of inappropriately trained human resources.

5. Methodology

The survey method was used in this study to evaluate the effectiveness of guidance and counseling programmes in the selected schools in Marondera District. Both qualitative and quantitative methodologies were used during the collection, gathering and analysis of data.

The study involved 50 school headmasters and teachers in the selected 5 schools to determine the effectiveness of guidance and counseling programmes in the schools. Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect data.

6. Results

Table 1.0 summarizes information collected through questionnaires.

Table 1.0: Gender status of teachers and heads.

N=50

Gender	N	%
Male	26	52
Female	24	48
Total	50	100

Table 1.0 above shows that 52% of the respondents were males whilst 48% were females.

Table 1.1: Position held in the school

N=50

Position	No	Percentage (%)
Head	5	10%
Deputy Head	5	10%
Senior Teacher	25	50%
Guidance plus Counseling	10	20%
Form Teacher	5	10%
Total	50	100%

Table 1.1 above shows that 10% of the respondents were headmasters, 10% were deputy headmasters, 50% were senior teachers, 10% were Guidance and Counseling teachers and 10% were form teachers.

Table 1.2: Awareness of the Guidance and Counselling Policy.

N=50

Position	N	%
Heads	5	10%
Deputy Heads	5	10%
Senior Teachers	4	8%
G&C Teachers	6	12%
Form Teacher	3	6%
Total	23	46%

The above results show that only 23 respondents constituting 46% of the total population under investigation were aware of the Ministry of Education Policy on the Institutionalization of the Guidance and Counseling programme. This also means that up to 54% of the respondents were not aware of the programme.

Table 1.3: Provisions of Policy circulars

N=50

Position	N	%
Head	3	6%
Deputy Heads	2	4%
Senior Teachers	2	4%
G&C Teachers	4	8%
Form Master	1	2%
Total	12	24%

Table 1.3 shows that 76% of the respondents were unable to state what the Policy circular on Guidance and Counselling says.

Table 1.4: General Perceptions and Responses on the effectiveness of Guidance and Counseling

N=50

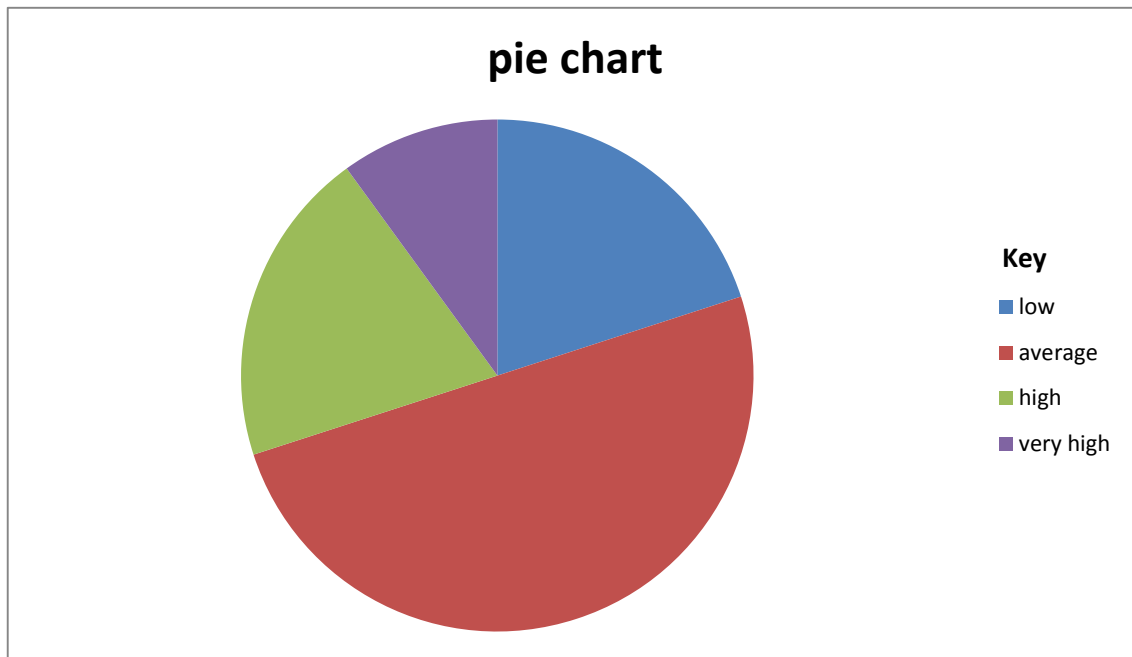
Question	Yes N	%	No N	%	Not Sure N	%
4. Time tabling of G&C	26	52	20	40	4	8
5. Training of teachers in G&C.	20	40	27	54	3	6
6. Availability of draft copy of G & C syllabus .	15	30	25	50	10	20
7. Capacity building workshops for teachers.	15	30	25	50	10	20
8. Availability of G & C room.	18	36	28	56	4	8
9. Appropriateness of counselling room.	6	33,3	10	55.5	2	11.11
10. Confidentiality issues.	15	30	25	50	10	20
11. Effectiveness of counselling programme.	20	40	25	50	5	10
12. Following G&C sessions do you think most students can freely and openly attend counseling sessions?	18	36	27	54	5	10
13. is there need to improve the manner in which G & C Programmes are conducted	40	80	2	4	8	16

On the issue of Guidance and Counseling programme being timetabled 52% of the respondents indicated that the programme was timetabled, 40% disagreed and 8% were not sure. Regarding the training background of teachers in Guidance and Counselling, 40% of the respondents indicated that teachers were trained, 54% disagreed and 6% were not sure. On the availability of a draft copy of the Guidance and Counseling syllabus, 30% of the respondents agreed that the draft copy was available, 50% disagreed and 20% were not sure. On the availability of training workshops on a regular basis, 30% of the respondents agreed that there were training workshops, 50% disagreed and 20% were not sure. On the issue of the availability of a guidance and

counseling room, 36% of the respondents agreed that it was available, 56 disagreed and 8% were not sure. A follow up on whether the counselling room was appropriately positioned, 33% of the respondents agreed that it was appropriately positioned to enhance both access and confidentiality. Of the respondents, 55.5% of those that initially agreed of its availability noted that despite its availability the room was not conducive positioned, 11% were not sure. On whether the ethical issue of confidentiality was practiced at their respective schools 30% of the respondents agreed, 50% disagreed and 20% were not sure. On whether most students underwent positive change after G and C programmes 40% of the respondents agreed that they indeed go through noticeable positive change, 50% disagreed and 10% were not sure. On whether students can freely and openly attend counseling session 36% of the respondents agreed that most students underwent positive change, 54% disagreed and 10% were not sure. On whether there was need to revamp the Guidance and Counselling programme 80% of the respondents agreed that there was need, 4% disagreed and 16% were not sure.

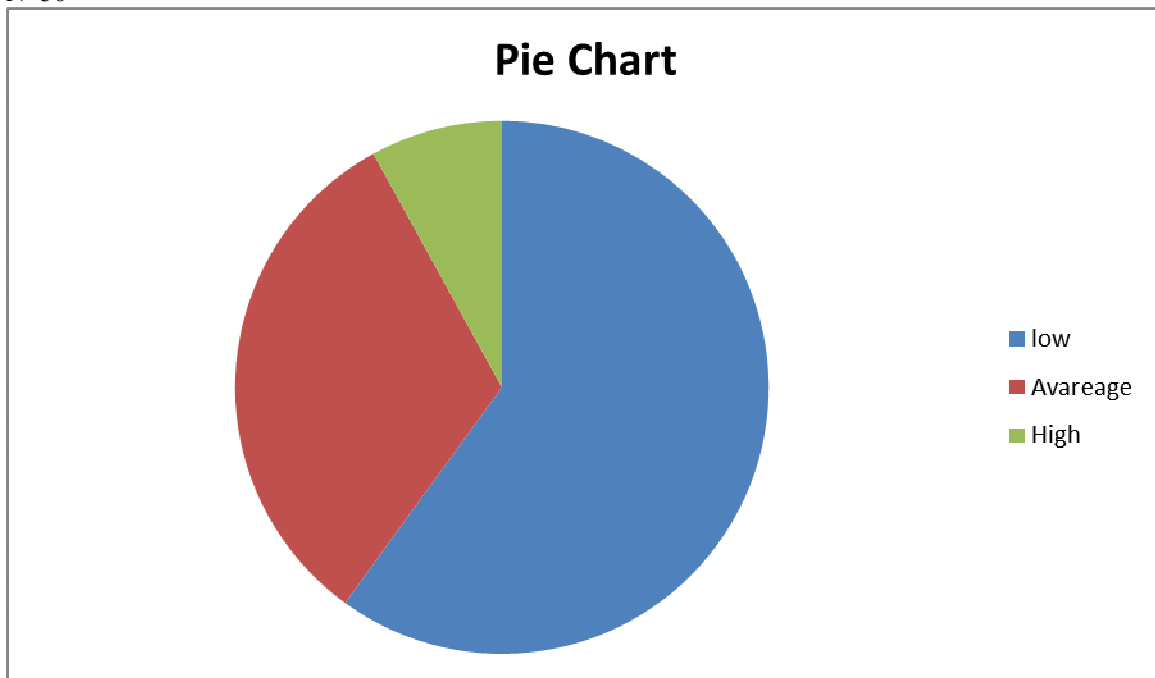
Fig 1.0: Incidence of Indiscipline

N=50



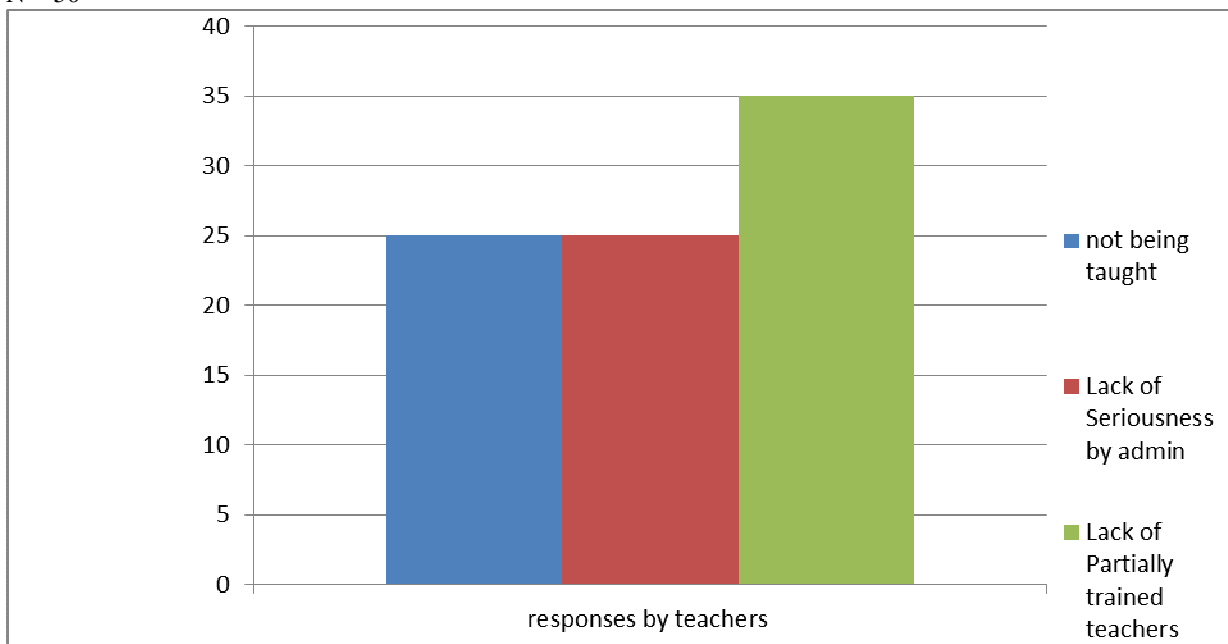
On the issue of incidence of indiscipline at respective schools 50% of the respondents rated the incidence of indiscipline as average, 20% rated it as high, 20% rated it as low and 10% rated it as very high.

Fig 1.2: Dropout due to pregnancy
 N=50



On incidences of school dropout due to pregnancy 60% of the respondents indicated the dropout rate as low, 32% indicated that it was average and 8% rated it as high.

Fig 1.3: Major challenges experienced in the implementation of Guidance and Counseling
 N = 50



On the major challenges experienced in the implementation of the guidance and counseling 30% of the respondents indicated that the programme was not being taught at all, 30% indicated lack of seriousness by school administrators while 40% noted that teachers lack the prerequisite skills to effectively implement the programme.

On other challenges encountered during the implementation of guidance and counseling, the majority of respondents indicated that there was lack of enforcement of the programme by those who were in authority.

Some of the respondents cited the lack of literature and materials on the programme. Some of the respondents felt that the most importance of this programme by not providing enough support for its effective implementation. From the interviews conducted respondents cited a number of problems in the implementation of the guidance and counseling programme. Most teachers believed there was lack of seriousness to effectively implement the guidance and counseling programme right from National level where curriculum design takes place. This lack of seriousness was evidenced by the lack for a proper syllabus on guidance and counseling. Teachers in charge of the guidance and counseling were accorded this status due to seniority rather than the knowledge and expertise to run the programme. It was also noted that those teachers who had acquired degrees in counseling were not being recognized by the Ministry yet at the same time these teachers are supposed to be effectively running and coordinating guidance and counseling in schools.

Discussion

This study established that there was need to have a fair balance of female and male teacher in the implementation of the guidance and counseling programme. The reasons for the involvement of male and female teachers could be the need to be sensitive to the needs of female and male students since they are affected differently. The other reason could be that it is a fundamental right for students to have their plight addressed by professionals who best understand their needs, hence the need to involve female and male teachers. Meyer (1977) found out that if guidance and counseling programmes are to prove their worth, they must ideally involve both male and female teachers, as these were affected differently Hayes and Hopson 1976 also indicated that better understanding of male and female teacher perceptions on the effectiveness of guidance and counseling programme was critical in coming up with curriculum improvement.

This study revealed that there was need for every member of the school who deal directly with children to have a fair understanding of guidance and counseling issues. Some students do not readily seek counselling services even when in dire need and therefore the involvement of several players in the school would help in the identification of learners in distress. Sensitivity to the needs of learners by all staff members can also be enhanced through the involvement of all members in guidance and counselling activities. On this it is a view held by Jacobson (1980) that guidance and counseling programmes must have the intervention of all staff members in the school who deal with students directly or indirectly. Jacobson (1980) further pointed out that even the training in guidance and counseling needed to target every member of the school.

The results of the study found out that teachers were generally not aware of the policy on guidance and counseling in schools. This could be because the policy on guidance and counselling were not formally distributed into schools by those in authority. It could also be the fact that such a policy was distributed into schools but could have ended in the hands of those in administration such as the Heads of schools. The findings of this study contradicted the view shared by Jacobson (1980) that guidance and counseling programmes needed the intervention of all staff members in the school, whether working with children directly or indirectly.

Only a few of the respondents in this study were able to state the provisions in the guidance and counseling policy circular. Such teachers could probably have attended a workshop on guidance and counseling or that they had come across the policy circular. There is no doubt from the findings of the study that in order to make guidance and counseling more relevant and effective to learner's daily lives, teachers needed to have a better understanding of the provisions and content in the policy circulars. Meyer (1977) summarized that if guidance and counseling programmes are to prove their worth, all teachers must have a deeper understanding of the provisions and content in policy circulars through training. Results of this study are already at variance with this important view point, there by raising numerous questions on the effectiveness of guidance and counseling programmes in the targeted secondary schools.

Revelations in this study were that in all the schools the guidance and counseling programme was generally timetabled. This may be so because it is a requirement by the ministry of education to have a subject taught in all schools, yet on ground the actual implementation is not taking place. When supervisors from the ministry visit schools and see the programme timetabled this might be taken to mean the subject is being taught. As provided in the policy document ongoing in-service training for guidance and counseling teachers should take place at cluster, district, provincial and national levels.

The study however established that even some of those officers who are in charge of guidance and counseling programmes do not have the required training in this area. This raises questions on the effectiveness of the training offered to the teachers as well as the quality of the supervision on this subject. A few of respondents in this study had received some form of training in guidance and counseling. Gottlieb and Allen (1991) indicated that students leaning needs rather than administration needs should determine the nature of education provisions in schools.

Only a few of the respondents revealed that they had the draft copy of the guidance and counseling programme available in the school. Those with the draft copy available may have received it at some training workshop they attended or it may have been received from working colleagues. Others may have used the draft

document during the course of their studies on guidance and counseling at university. Jacobson (1980) concluded that the absence of a detailed document on guidance and counseling implementation procedures would only work to negatively affect the effectiveness of this subject in schools.

It was found out that there were a few guidance and counseling rooms in schools. The reason for the availability of the counseling rooms could be attributed to the fact that it is a requirement by the ministry of education. However the general perception was that even where such facilities were available their location in the school needed to be improved to enhance issues of confidentiality and easy access to services. Established in this study is the fact that generally most students do not openly seek counseling services even in circumstances they were in need. The reason for this reluctance could be as a result of lack of confidentiality on sensitive issues affecting students by teachers. Another reason could really be lack of requisite training on guidance and counseling by the school staff. One other reason could be that the rooms are inappropriately located to ensure confidentiality. The results of this study correlate with Cavanagh and Levitov (2002) findings when they highlighted that there was need to practice confidentiality at all levels with all those concerned for the benefit of clients. Further Cavanagh and Levitov (2002) noted that professionals needed to uphold issues of ethics in counseling which direct both clients and counselors to be aware of their responsibilities. Teachers need to have an in-depth training in these critical thematic areas.

The study revealed that levels of indiscipline were generally low. The reason for the low levels of indiscipline can be attributed to a number of factors. One reason could be that teachers did not want to expose their school as this would enhance bad publicity. The other reason could be that cases of indiscipline were handled only at administration level and therefore most teachers were not in touch with the reality on the ground. Teachers could as well have feared victimization as such issues were very sensitive. Gotthlieb and Allen (1991) concurred with findings in this study when they highlighted that, if effectively implemented, guidance and counseling programmes will drastically reduce incidences of indiscipline in the schools threefold.

The research found out that school dropout due to pregnancy was low. However a few of respondents described the cases as high. The reason for the low dropout rate could be a result of the fact that cases were handled secretly between the school administration and parents to avoid negative publicity of the school. The other reason could be that this was a sensitive issue to which teachers did not wish to openly establish the realistic situation. Further it could be that most students in schools were now using birth control devices such as family planning pills, implants etc to avoid pregnancies.

The study established that negative attitudes on guidance and counseling by most administrators were a cause for concern. Such negative attitudes can be attributed to lack of training on guidance and counseling. The other reason could be a result of lack of or absence of supervision by responsible authorities who were also found to be poorly equipped with knowledge and skills on guidance and counseling. Another reason for negative attitudes on guidance and counseling was the fact that this subject is not examinable, a factor that renders it seemingly valueless. Above all most education officers in positions of authority lacked the essential expertise and zeal to drive this programme. There is need therefore to vigorously train professionals at all levels with regard to guidance and counseling issues in all schools. The findings highlighted the need to enforce the policy circular on guidance and counseling by appropriately qualified education officers at all levels. The policy circular also needs to be distributed into all schools following effective training. The guidance and counseling component needs to be effectively enshrined in the training of teachers at teacher training institutions. The teacher training curriculum therefore needs to be revamped in line with changing circumstances.

Conclusion

It was established in this study that the state of guidance and counseling in the selected schools requires urgent and serious reforms to avert the disaster of living without an informed young generation. Director circular number 23 of 2005 maintained that the main goal the education system of Zimbabwe is to promote national development through the production of disciplined, socially well adjusted and productive individual with sound physical and mental health practices. In achieving this important role played by the guidance and counseling programme cannot be underestimated. There is a general need for the comprehensive training of all teachers in this area. This training also needed to target officers in authority from National, Province and District levels. It was also found that guidance and counselling is not an examinable subject a situation that renders it useless. The study found out that despite the challenges most teachers expressed profound interest in the subject and were doing their best under the circumstances. With effective training in this area most teachers would excel in guidance and counselling issues.

Recommendations

- Teacher training colleges and universities need to put in place a more intensive guidance and counseling course regiment with major emphasis in managing changing in current situation in an era where most

parents have sought greener pastures abroad leaving behind their children.

- In-service training courses need to be embarked on targeting staff at all levels to equip teachers with the requisite skills in managing counseling issues. There is need for the deployment of policy circulars to all schools on guidance and counseling as well as production of resource books on this subject. There is also need to ensure that this subject is examinable to ensure that it is being taught.
- There is need to help establish an effective guidance and counseling delivery structure that can be further enhanced through the effective training of personnel at all levels.

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