

Peer Counselling in Zimbabwean Secondary Schools

Regis Chireshe

Department of Psychology of Education, University of South Africa
E-mail: chirer@unisa.ac.za, chireshe@yahoo.co.uk

KEYWORDS Guidance and Counselling. Learner Support Services. Peer Counsellors. School Counsellor. Secondary Schools. Students. Zimbabwe

ABSTRACT The study sought to establish the status of peer counselling in some Zimbabwean secondary schools as perceived by school teachers. A qualitative design was used. An open-ended questionnaire was completed by 26 secondary school teachers who were then enrolled for a Bachelor's degree in secondary education at a state university in Zimbabwe. Data were thematically analysed. The results revealed that most of the secondary schools from which the respondents came from, did not have peer counsellors. Some participants mentioned peer counsellors in the form of peer educators from HIV and AIDS related organisations or Non Governmental Organisations who sometimes visited secondary schools. The few teachers whose schools had peer counsellors revealed that the peer counsellors were selected on the basis of their good characters. The peer counsellors were involved in HIV and AIDS and related issues such as unwanted pregnancy, sexual abuse, drug abuse, problem solving and overcoming peer pressure. They entertained other students through dramas, poems and presentations. Although the peer counsellors had some HIV and AIDS training, they were reported to be lacking in peer helping training. The peer counsellors faced challenges including peer counselling underrating, resistance and discouragement from other students, lack of faith by other students and shortage of time. The teachers wished the peer counsellors could receive training in managing depression, study and listening skills, ethical issues and managing disputes among students. Recommendations were made.