

Implementation of Guidance and Counseling As a Positive Discipline Management Strategy in Bulawayo Metropolitan Province Secondary Schools

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KEYWORDS Discipline. Good Practices. Guidance. Counseling. Positive Discipline

ABSTRACT The paper examined how secondary schools implemented a guidance and counseling strategy to maintain positive discipline. It adopted a qualitative approach and employed a case study design. Purposive sampling was used to select four secondary schools and participants that comprised two education officers, four school heads, four school counselors, twenty members of the disciplinary committee, forty prefects and four School Development Committee chairpersons. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews, and analyzed thematically. The study established that guidance and counseling services were offered through lessons and counseling sessions, schools referred serious cases to experts for professional counseling, and secondary schools experienced challenges in implementing guidance and counseling. The paper concluded that pockets of good practices were evident in the implementation of the guidance and counseling. It recommends that the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should create a substantive post of a non-teaching school counselor in every school.

INTRODUCTION

The focus on use of positive discipline management strategies in schools globally has seen guidance and counseling being adopted as one of the measures used to maintain discipline in schools. This has been necessitated by the fact that guidance and counseling contributes immensely to the overall growth and development of secondary school learners who are at adolescence stage, which is characterized by many physical and psychological changes, which pose a number of personal, social and educational challenges (Nyamwange et al. 2012). Using guidance and counseling to maintain positive discipline in schools could continually be practiced if members of the school community are to work harmoniously for the achievement of a common purpose (Ajowi and Simatwa 2010). This, therefore, raises a question whether guidance and counseling as a discipline management strategy has the potential to bring about positive discipline in secondary schools.

Guidance and Counseling

The terms guidance and counseling are like two sides of the same coin though there has

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been a tendency to use them interchangeably. Guidance could be viewed as the process of assisting learners to recognize their potentials (Mbabazi and Bagaya 2013). Guidance aims at encouraging self-esteem and the development of various aspects of 'self', such as personal, moral and social (Hue 2007). Counseling, on the other hand, has been seen as the process of helping an individual explore difficulties experienced in life so as to make informed decisions that will lead towards a more satisfying life (Mbabazi and Bagaya 2013). These definitions imply that counseling is an integral part of guidance without which guidance can never be complete (Mbabazi and Bagaya 2013).

Kindiki (2009) postulates that guidance and counseling is an effective method of dealing with indiscipline because it addresses the problem and its root cause. Studies conducted recognize the importance of using guidance and counseling in schools as a positive discipline strategy, especially in dealing with cigarette smoking, alcohol consumption, drug abuse issues, boy and girl relationships and other problems that learners face (Onderi and Makori 2013; Maina and Sindabi 2016). Nyaegah (2011) and Onderi and Makori (2013), report that there is sufficient evidence that counseling produces positive results even with difficult learners. It has also been observed that counseling has become a remedial

strategy for disruptive behavior in British schools (Nyaegah 2011). In addition, Kok et al. (2012) state that guidance and counseling gained momentum in Malaysia as it was considered as a panacea for social evils such as drug addiction, delinquency and indiscipline in schools. In the United States of America, effective school guidance and counseling services have created a safe school environment. There is evidence that guidance and counseling engender greater learner feelings of safety in schools, which result in learners developing a sense of belonging (Chireshe 2006). In her study conducted in Kenya, Wambui (2015) found that there was some behavior modification among students after receiving counseling from teachers.

In Zimbabwe, it has been found that guidance and counseling helps learners develop a positive self-concept, understand their role in the school and society and acquire useful social and communication skills. The learners are also sensitized to the dangers of sexual misconduct, alcohol and drug abuse (Chireshe 2006). In such cases guidance and counseling would be used in schools as positive disciplinary strategies where learners are empowered to become responsible for their behavior.

Despite the crucial role played by guidance and counseling in maintaining positive discipline in schools, the findings of the study conducted in Kenya by Ajowi and Simatwa (2010) show that guidance and counseling has not been effectively used to promote learner discipline in secondary schools in the district studied. In accordance, the results of the study carried out by Wambui (2015) also reveal that almost a half of both teachers and students were convinced that guidance and counseling was rarely carried out in schools. In Malaysia, Kok et al. (2012) also discovered that though guidance and counseling services were funded, there were still misconceptions on the counseling services in secondary schools amongst learners, parents and school staff. Simatwa's (2012) study further confirms that fifty percent of the prefects perceived guidance and counseling as an option taken by those who could not solve their own problems or were overwhelmed by the world around them. Most learners hardly considered counseling to help them solve problems as an option. Counseling was particularly viewed as for those who showed signs of emotional and behavioral difficulties.

The School Counselor

It is imperative for schools to have professional school counselors in order for the guidance and counseling programs to be effectively implemented in the maintenance of positive discipline. The professional school counselor works with school personnel and other stakeholders to establish and maintain policies that encourage appropriate behavior so that schools can be safe places where teaching and learning can be effectively accomplished. The school counselor should be used as a resource person with expertise in the area of disciplinary plans. She/he is the school counselor and not a disciplinarian (American School Counsellor Association 2007).

Nyaegah (2011) emphasizes that counseling is a profession and as such it requires competence, knowledge and skills, which cannot be acquired unless one undergoes relevant training. Studies conducted in the United States of America indicated that the majority of learners revealed that the school counselors had been helpful with learners' problems (Chireshe 2006).

However, in their study conducted in Kenya, Kamore and Tiego (2015) found that the teachers in charge of guidance and counseling in most schools lack necessary training and competency in handling school discipline issues in their schools. In addition, Khansa's (2015) study in Lebanon found that counselors were not well trained. These findings also agree with Ngumi's (2003) view who argues that even the trained teachers do not cover sufficient courses in guidance and counseling to enable them to effectively render the guidance and counseling services.

Nevertheless, the situation was different in Malaysia where the results of the study conducted by Kok et al. (2012) revealed that the school counseling service in Malaysia's secondary school system appeared to be well established and it has been implemented that every secondary school is funded with a full time school counselor. Thus, from the studies reviewed it is with no doubt that guidance and counseling is paramount in maintenance of positive discipline in schools, hence their relevance to this study.

Counseling Methods

In order to effectively implement guidance and counseling programs to maintain positive

discipline in schools, certain strategies should be considered as modes of conducting guidance and counseling sessions. These modes are categorized as individual guidance and counseling that deals with one learner and group guidance and counseling that deals with more than one learner at a time. The methods aim at ensuring that learner behavior, character, attitudes, values and life circumstances improve. Group guidance and counseling allows common problems to be handled at once and provides a safe environment for learners to express their feelings concerns and experiences (Mbabazi and Bagaya 2013). The National Association of School Psychologists (2006) emphasizes that schools should provide individual, family, and group counseling as alternatives for educating and supporting learners. Group guidance and counseling is successful in enhancing self-concept and self-efficacy, and prevention of learner disturbances and to help develop a very free and friendly atmosphere (Iowa Department of Education 2001; Bakhda 2004). Wambui (2015) gives evidence from the findings of her study that half of both teachers and students interviewed reported that counselors used group counseling. This method, however, suffers from lack of privacy and confidentiality (Mbabazi and Bagaya 2013).

Individual guidance and counseling comes in handy to address these challenges. It focuses on a deeper understanding of the learner as an individual and establishes self-concept and sound identity (Lam as cited in Mbabazi and Bagaya 2013). Individual guidance and counseling is effective in both preventive and remedial aspects (Iowa Department of Education 2001). However, the challenge is that since individual guidance and counseling is learner-initiated, learners may not easily confide in the teachers and may end up not being helped out of their difficulties and this might have a negative effect on maintenance of positive discipline in schools (Mbabazi and Bagaya 2013).

Lapperts (2012) mentions that one of the most powerful ways of resolving conflict is through peer counseling, mentoring and mediation. At the heart of peer counseling is the involvement of an equal partnership as two peers counsel each other, with neither partner being regarded as having more expertise or status than the other. In their study Auni et al. (2014) found that seventy-six percent of the heads of guid-

ance and counseling department reported that one of the strategies adopted by the schools was use of peer counselors who were appointed to represent each class since they had realized that many learners sought for social guidance from fellow learners. Hence, the stated guidance and counseling methods if properly implemented would yield positive results in maintenance of positive discipline in schools.

However, a study conducted in Uganda by Mbabazi and Bagaya (2013) found that an individual guidance and counseling strategy was commonly used as opposed to group guidance and counseling. This finding is consistent with the findings of Egbochuku (2008), Ajowi and Simatwa (2010) and Simatwa (2012) that guidance and counseling services tended to be provided to individuals after administering punishment and meant for those who could not solve their own problems. As such only a small number of learners were likely to turn up for guidance and counseling services.

In Zimbabwe, guidance and counseling is one of the strategies recommended by Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MOPSE) to be employed in schools to maintain positive discipline (Ministry of Education and Culture 1993: 98-104; Ministry of Education, Sports, Arts and Culture 1999). The MOPSE states that schools should establish guidance and counseling programs, which sensitize learners about the dangers of sexual misconduct, alcohol and drug abuse. New learners in a school should also be informed on handling situations involving bad friends and bullying by other learners (Ministry of Education and Culture 1993). The schools should appoint guidance and counseling coordinators and provide adequate space and time for guidance and counseling activities. Each school should have a team of male and female school counselors so that all learners could be assisted accordingly (Ministry of Education, Sports, Arts and Culture as cited in Chireshe 2006). In addition, one period per class per week on the school timetable should be allocated to guidance and counseling (Ministry of Education, Sports, Arts and Culture 2002).

To reinforce the implementation of the guidance and counseling strategy to maintain positive discipline in schools, the MOPSE has conducted workshops to empower schools to implement the strategy (Bowora 2010).

In spite of the guiding policies highlighted above, some concerns were raised by parents, learners and other stakeholders through the media regarding the implementation of guidance and counseling strategy in some secondary schools to maintain discipline. It has been alleged that there is excessive use of traditional discipline strategies in some schools, for example, in a shocking incident a school head forced a female learner to undress before severely assaulting her (Nhambura 2011). In addition, some complaints have been raised by stakeholders pertaining to some of the disciplinary strategies used by some schools, such as ordering the learners to stand or kneel in the blazing sun for some hours because learners have been making noise in class (Makwanya et al. 2012; Simatwa 2012).

Given the above concerns and observations by media and informally by some stakeholders, it is really not clear what is taking place at the school level in terms of the implementation of a guidance and counseling strategy to maintain positive discipline. Additionally, it was also observed by some stakeholders that there are pockets of very good practices whereby some schools in both urban and rural areas are implementing a guidance and counseling strategy (Newsday Reporter 2011; Mlalazi 2015). Hence, this study intended to examine how a guidance and counseling strategy was implemented to maintain positive discipline in Bulawayo Metropolitan secondary schools as well as concentrating on pockets of good practices.

Research Question

The study was guided by the following research question:

How are secondary schools implementing the guidance and counseling strategy to maintain positive discipline?

Objective of the Study

The objective of the study was to examine how secondary schools in Bulawayo Metropolitan Province implement the guidance and counselling strategy to maintain positive discipline.

METHODOLOGY

The study used a qualitative approach, which typically studies people or systems by interacting with and observing the participants

in their natural environment and focusing on their meanings and interpretations (Nieuwenhuis 2007). Hence, the qualitative approach was pertinent to this study because the researchers studied the participants' experiences as they occurred in natural settings, that is, in Bulawayo Metropolitan Province secondary schools where the guidance and counseling strategy was implemented to maintain positive discipline. This enabled the researchers to gain an insider's view of the problem under study.

This study adopted a case study design, which is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and in which multiple sources of evidence are used (Yin 2009). The case study design enabled the researchers to intensively focus and obtain unique perceptions, attitudes, views and experiences of participants in rich descriptive data on implementation of guidance and counseling strategy to maintain positive discipline in four Bulawayo Metropolitan Province secondary schools.

The participants who were purposively selected constituted the study sample which comprised two Education Officers (one responsible for discipline in schools and the other responsible for guidance and counseling in schools), four school heads, twenty members of the disciplinary committee, that is, five members from each school, four school counselors, forty prefects (ten prefects from each school) that is, twenty female prefects and twenty male prefects were selected and four School Development Committee chairpersons. The sample units were chosen because they had particular features or characteristics, which enabled detailed exploration and understanding of the central themes and puzzles that the researcher wished to study (Ritchie et al. 2003).

To collect data from the participants, the researchers used semi-structured interviews, which were held with four school heads, two Education Officers, four school counselors and four School Development Committee chairpersons. The researchers used an interview guide with a list of the key questions to be covered, with some useful prompts to encourage the interviewee to talk about specific issues if they did not come up spontaneously (Patton and Cochran 2002; Hancock et al. 2009). The focus group interviews were conducted with forty pre-

fect participants who were divided into four focus groups and twenty members of the disciplinary committees who were also divided into four focus groups. This size yielded a variety of viewpoints and good participation (Sherraden 2001). Focus group interviews allowed interactions among participants, which enhanced data quality because participants provided checks and balances regarding the implementation of guidance and counseling strategy to maintain positive discipline in secondary schools and these weeded out false or extreme views (Kruger as cited in Patton 2002). To capture the participants' responses during face-to-face interviews and focus group interviews, the researchers used a digital voice recorder to minimize the risk of recording inaccurate data and also to ensure trustworthiness of the data collected. The qualitative data was coded systematically according to specific themes and then analyzed to address the main research question. To ensure credibility, the researchers used member checks and triangulation of data (Guba and Lincoln 2005).

Regarding ethical issues, the researchers sought permission from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education to conduct the study and were granted the permission to do so. Issues of consent, honesty, respect for the integrity of the individual, confidentiality of certain information and anonymity were considered when carrying out the study.

RESULTS

From the participants' responses it has come out that the guidance and counseling strategy is essential in maintenance of positive discipline in schools. There is evidence from the responses that the use of the strategy in schools has resulted in positive change of behavior in some of the learners. The results of the study are presented in the subsequent sections and the identification of participants in this study is as follows:

- EO1-EO2 = Education Officers
- SH1-SH4 = School Heads
- SC1-SC4 = School Counselors
- SDC1-SDC4 = School Development Committee Chairpersons
- FGDC1-FGDC4 = Focus Group interview for Members of the Disciplinary Committee
- FGP1-FGP4 = Focus Group interview for Prefects

Guidance and Counseling Services in Schools

Participants were requested to highlight how guidance and counseling services in the secondary schools were offered. The examples of their responses are presented below.

SH2: *Guidance and counseling are now in the curriculum, all schools are now expected to teach guidance and counseling. There are timetabled lessons, one period per week, which is 35 minutes long.*

FGD2: *We have timetabled lessons generally, and when there are certain cases which need individual counseling then we send these to the counselor. At assemblies we offer some counseling to the whole school.*

FGDC4: *Sometimes we refer cases to the guidance and counseling department, also through guidance and counseling lessons, and through counseling sessions.*

The school counselors were also asked the same question and concurred with other participants' views.

SC2: *There are timetabled guidance and counseling lessons from form one up to 'A' level and for any identified learners with problems we hold sessions with them. So there is group counseling where we touch different topics where all learners can benefit, for example, there are topics like drugs and substance abuse, HIV/AIDS and all that stuff where we are presenting to them as a group a preventive measure. Where there are cases that need individual counseling we deal with them accordingly.*

SC3: *We have one-on-one counseling sessions, and we also have group counseling, gender counseling, that is, counseling girls and boys on their own. The services are also offered through guidance and counseling lessons and through clubs.*

Prefects also gave their opinions on the same issue. They seem to give similar responses to other participants.

FGP2: *Guidance and counseling services are offered through timetabled guidance and counseling lessons and also through clubs, for example, Health Club, Child Forum Law Club.*

The responses from the SDC chairpersons on the same issue reveal that some of the SDC participants concurred with other participants while others were not sure. For example,

SDC1: *Not quite sure about guidance and counseling services but what I know, they might*

have it maybe in a curricular kind of situation because these days all these things are coming into the timetable, so I can say it is being taught during lessons.

SDC2: *The guidance and counseling services in the school are offered through timetabled guidance and counseling lessons.*

On the same question, the Education Officers confirm,

EO1: *There are actually timetabled lessons, and then for certain individual cases where probably a learner needs special attention the learner is given such attention by either the Head of Department for guidance and counseling or to the teachers for guidance and counseling.*

EO2: *Guidance and counseling services are offered through lessons. We have guidance and counseling as a subject in secondary schools. Guidance and counseling services are also offered through services such as Boy Empowerment Movement/Girl Empowerment Movement (BEM/GEM) and then also through general discussions with stakeholders whom we invite into schools.*

Pertaining to the counseling methods used by counselors, EO2 explains,

Basically, we agreed as a province that the systems theory would be the best that is the basic one we use. We do group counseling of course but with group counseling you know it is always like a discussion. When it comes to real counseling where we have identified a need and we need to counsel, that is when we employ the use of the systems theory, which is face-to-face.

However, the implementation of guidance and counseling services in schools is negatively affected by many factors as stated by the participants. For instance, SH3 laments on lack of counseling facilities as she says, "... Unfortunately we do not have proper counseling facilities. Currently the school counselor uses a storeroom and she says it is not convenient for counseling sessions because some learners may not even want to pass through the class to get to the storeroom."

FGDC4: *The challenge experienced is that of inadequate time to effectively conduct counseling sessions, we know that counseling is a process but unfortunately the time is not on our side, we would want those sessions to continue with a particular learner but at the same time I*

am expected to go to class and teach, even that guidance and counseling teacher is supposed to go to class and in the end you do not have that time you need with learners.

EO2: *Of concern is the issue of lack of expertise in teachers who teach guidance and counseling. We also have the issue of lack of resources, as there is very little literature on guidance and counseling, which makes it difficult for teachers to effectively implement some of the programs. Lack of counseling facilities, that is, lack of proper infrastructure also thwart the implementation of the guidance and counseling programs in schools.*

It is evident from the above data that guidance and counseling services are offered in varied ways. It emerged from the participants' responses that guidance and counseling services are offered mainly through lessons, clubs and counseling sessions. This implies that learners are exposed to various activities in the implementation of guidance and counseling strategy in selected schools. In spite of the drawbacks encountered by schools in the implementation of guidance and counseling services, it has come out from the data that there are pockets of good practices in the implementation of guidance and counseling strategy. It has been revealed that learners are involved in clubs, which teach them community involvement at the same time teaching them positive behavior. Use of assemblies for group counseling acts as a preventive measure to encourage the whole school to desist from indulging on unbecoming behavior. Gender counseling is also another element of good practice, which has emerged in the implementation of guidance and counseling strategy in selected schools. The separation of male and female learners during counseling sessions shows that schools are sensitive to learners' problems, which might be gender based. It further emerged that schools use storerooms as a way of improvising the counseling facilities. This is an example of good practice because learners are offered the counseling services even though the facilities are not conducive for counseling. At least learners with behavior problems have access to the counseling services.

The Role of a School Counselor in the Implementation of Guidance and Counseling Programs

In response to the question that focused on the role of a school counselor in the implemen-

tation of guidance and counseling programs, the participants revealed varied roles of school counselors. Examples of their responses are as follows:

SH2: *The school counselor becomes Head of the Department. She is in charge of the subject. She provides teachers with the syllabus, teaching material, and supervises other teachers to ensure that the lessons go on well. Sometimes she brings facilitators from outside. She conducts counseling sessions. Teachers refer the learners to her. Even here when I come across a difficult learner I refer to our good school counsellor.*

SH3: *The counselor organizes workshops, supervises the teaching of guidance and counseling lessons and she holds counseling sessions.*

In agreement with the school heads, the members of the disciplinary committee concurred, for instance,

FGDC1: *The school counselor monitors the implementation of guidance and counseling programs.*

FGDC2: *The role of the school counselor is to correct the behavior and guide learners away from bad behavior, then maybe to work on the with guidance and counseling syllabus and also select other teachers who can assist those who offer guidance and counseling lessons. That is, the counselor conducts counseling sessions.*

The school counselors were asked about their roles in the implementation of guidance and counseling programs. In response to the question, the school counselors confirmed what other participants have highlighted.

SC2: *I am the teacher in guidance and counseling as a subject as well as a school counselor and I am also involved in the prefects' body. They do invite me in the capacity of a counselor to come and share with them. I also conduct counseling sessions.*

SC4: *My role is to supervise the teaching and learning of guidance and counseling lessons. I also organize mass discussions with different forms from form one to 'A' levels. This is done during form assemblies where we are given time as counselors to teach and discuss with learners certain issues, for example, conduct. We also conduct individual counseling during counseling sessions and refer some cases to experts.*

Prefect participants' responses affirmed the views of other participants on the roles of the school counselor.

FGP1: *The school counselor gives guidance and tries to set a pace for learners' understanding of the problem. We can say they assist learners with behavior problems so that they can show a positive change in their behavior.*

FGP2: *The role of the school counselor is to assist learners with behavior problems, they hold counseling sessions, and they also teach guidance and counseling lessons.*

On the same issue the SDC chairpersons echoed the same sentiments with other participants and gave the following responses.

SDC2: *The role of the school counselor is to assist learners with behavior problems to find solutions to the problems they are facing. The learners they assist end up showing positive behavior.*

The Education Officer responsible for discipline's response indicates that there was no deviation from the responses given by other participants. This is how he responded,

EO1: *The primary role is to ensure that she monitors lesson delivery of guidance and counseling, ensures that lessons are implemented in line with the recommended standards and also handles those complicated cases, which individual teachers cannot handle.*

The Education Officer for guidance and counseling was asked about her role in the implementation of guidance and counseling programs in secondary schools. This is what she said,

"My role is to supervise the teaching of guidance and counseling, I also follow up on issues that require learners to be counseled, and I also advise in cases where decisions have to be made."

However, school counselors experience some challenges in performing their roles in schools such as work overload, role conflict and many others. The evidence from the participants' responses is given below.

SH3: *There is a challenge of work overload for the school counselor who is a full-time teacher and also a counselor, and this limits her counseling effectiveness.*

SC2: *I have observed the problem of role conflict, because I might be that horrible mathematics teacher, and then I have to change the jacket to perform counseling duties. Learners might fail to understand me. They might say how can I go to that individual who has been harsh during a mathematics lesson? How can*

she be a good counselor? It is a problem that the ministry should look into, such that when you are a school counselor you concentrate on counseling so that there is no role conflict.

The information gathered from participants reflects that the school counselors had multiple roles in selected schools. It emerged from the responses that in addition to their counseling duties the school counselors also teach. This shows that the school counselors are overloaded and could have negative effect in the execution of their counseling duties. Regardless of the hurdles faced by school counselors in the implementation of their counseling roles, the participants' responses reveal that there are pockets of good practices. It has been mentioned that learners are referred by other members of the school community to the school counselors and then to expert counselors by the school counselors. Thus, learners are exposed to expert counseling where they would get appropriate assistance. In addition, it emerged that in some schools the school counselor becomes part of the prefects' body. This suggests that there is coordination in the implementation of guidance and counseling strategy in maintaining positive discipline in those selected schools.

Participation of Learners in Guidance and Counseling Programs

Active participation of learners in guidance and counseling programs has been shown as a major way of maintaining positive discipline in schools. Responses from the participants reveal that learners participate through lessons, clubs, as peer counselors, as well as giving motivational speeches at assemblies. Their responses are as follows.

SH1: *Learners participate through lessons and discussions, there are clubs like Scripture Union that do lots of that, Interact club, peer educators/peer counselors who present motivational speeches.*

SH2: *Learners participate through guidance and counseling lessons and clubs, for example, Interact club, BEM/GEM club.*

Whilst some school heads were in agreement in their responses, the other head, SH4 seemed to be ignorant about the participation of learners in any clubs. He declared, "...*They participate through guidance and counseling lessons. There are no clubs in which learners are involved.*"

Responding to the same question, the members of the disciplinary committee confirmed what was said by school heads.

FGDC2: *Learners are involved in peer education or peer counseling. They are also involved in clubs, for example, BEM/GEM, Girl Development Initiative (G. D. I.), and Justice for Children. They also participate through guidance and counseling lessons.*

FGDC4: *Learners participate through guidance and counseling lessons and also through clubs, for instance, BEM/GEM, Young Men Christian Association (YMCA), HIV/AIDS club, Sesikhathele Club for peer counselors.*

In answering the same question, the school counselors confirmed what other participants have expressed.

SC2: *Learners are actively involved in guidance and counseling programs. They are also involved in peer counseling, as mainly those who are in the AIDS club do this, and there is also the BEM/GEM club.*

SC4: *Our learners love guidance and counseling, I also feel that they sometimes feel it should be allocated more time because when you discuss with them they do not even want to go to attend other lessons. They participate as peer educators and peer counselors, and in clubs, for example, AIDS Action Club, Debate Club, and Sesikhathele Club.*

As part of the learners, prefects were also asked how they participated in guidance and counseling programs. The evidence of their responses is as follows.

FGP1 illustrates, "*We attend lessons, we do research on tasks that we are given, we participate through clubs, such as, Human Rights club, AIDS club, BEM/GEM club.*"

FGP2 concurs, "*We participate through guidance and counseling lessons, through clubs, as peer counselors, for example, there is a learner counselor who is a member of Justice for Children Trust (J.C.T.) the role of the learner counselor is to peer educate other learners.*"

FGP3 alludes to what other prefects' focus groups have said, "*We participate by making presentations, peer education. Our presentations involve telling other learners the different aspects of life, through guidance and counseling lessons and through clubs.*"

However, FGP4's response suggests that the learners' participation in their school was limited to guidance and counseling lessons only.

They said, "... *We participate through guidance and counseling lessons.*" Their response is in agreement with SH4 but contradicts with responses from other participants, FGDC4 and SC4, in the same school who mentioned that in addition to guidance and counseling lessons, learners were involved in clubs.

On the same question, some SDC chairpersons acknowledged the involvement of learners in guidance and counseling lessons while other SDC chairpersons indicated that they had no idea on how learners participated in guidance and counseling programs. For instance, SDC1 explicates, "... *I think in the curricular they have now in their classrooms learners who are nurtured into guidance and counseling.*"

SDC2 buttress SDC1's view, "*Learners participate through guidance and counseling lessons, and also attend counseling sessions.*"

However, SDC3 had this to say, "*I am not sure of how learners participate in guidance and counseling and I am not aware if there are any lessons being taught.*"

SDC4 only knew one aspect in which learners contribute as he states, "*They are involved in counseling sessions. There are no lessons that are being taught yet.*"

The Education Officers buttressed other participants' views when EO1 ascertains, "*Learners participate through the lessons and then others get involved in the counseling when they face problems. We have situations where if a problem happens in a classroom situation, let us say a learner physically attacks another fellow learner or something terrible happens to the fellow learner, the victim is given counseling and also the colleagues are given counseling and even the offender is given counseling.*"

Then EO2 attests, "*Well, learners are active members as I have said we have clubs that are guidance and counseling clubs, we also train peer counselors, so they are active participants.*"

The evidence drawn from the given responses reveal that learners are exposed to various activities as they participate in the implementation of guidance and counseling strategy to maintain positive discipline in schools. The participants' responses indicate that there are pockets of good practices in the implementation of guidance and counseling strategy in selected schools. It has emerged that learners are members of various clubs where they encourage each other on positive behavior. Some learners also

participate in peer counseling where the peer counselors engage fellow learners in counseling sessions at their level. Peer counseling is very important since some learners would find it easy to accept issues from their peers' point of view than from adults. Thus, learners' participation enhances maintenance of positive discipline in secondary schools.

Meeting Learners for Counseling Sessions

The school counselors and Education Officers for guidance and counseling were asked how often the school counselors met the learners for counseling sessions. In their responses the participants revealed that they met the learners once a week during guidance and counseling lessons where mainly it would be group counseling. As for individual counseling, the counselors concurred that they meet learners when the need arises. Their responses are as follows.

SC1: *Every class it is once a week for 35 minutes, that is the timetabled one. Then if the learner needs individual counseling they come in for sessions. That is, if there is need they come.*

SC3: *Once a week there is a day that is fully booked for counseling sessions, and then as and when there is need, they know that, they just come anytime and say ma'am can I see you and I attend to them. That is once a week I have a day when I do not have a teaching load, the day will be set aside for counseling the whole day.*

EO2 buttresses the school counselors' responses when she says, "*Well, depending on the need but otherwise for lessons it is one lesson per week for each class and then for all other learners as need arises.*"

However, one of the challenges that hinder the counselors from effectively conducting the counseling sessions is that they also have classes to teach. For instance, SC1 explains, "... *The counselor is also a teacher, and as a result she becomes overloaded and this limits my accessibility to learners for individual counseling sessions.*"

The data gathered expose that school counselors play their role in assisting learners during counseling sessions. The responses also reveal that individual learners can access counseling services any time they need counseling regardless of the counselors' tight schedules. This is an example of a pocket of good practice in implementation of guidance and counseling strategy

to maintain positive discipline in schools. The practice encourages learners to expose their problems to counselors so that they get immediate assistance. Another significant pocket of good practice that has emerged from the data is that some schools have reduced the teaching load for counselors to allow counselors to have more time for counseling learners. This allows the counselor to be more accessible to learners who need counseling. Hence, the practice enhances the implementation of guidance and counseling strategy in maintaining positive discipline in selected schools.

DISCUSSION

The study sought to examine how secondary schools implemented guidance and counseling strategy to maintain positive discipline. The findings of the study are discussed in succeeding sections.

Guidance and Counseling Services in Schools

As for the implementation of guidance and counseling services in secondary schools, the study established that guidance and counseling was part of the curriculum. It was found that there was one 35-minute timetabled guidance and counseling lesson per week for all classes in the schools. This finding is in line with the MOPSE policy that one period per class per week on the school timetable should be allocated to guidance and counseling (Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture 2002).

It emerged from the study that guidance and counseling services were also offered through counseling sessions. This finding confirms Wambui's (2015) findings of her study in Kenya that there was some behavior modification among students after receiving counseling from teachers. This, therefore, is an indicator that counseling sessions are important components in the implementation of guidance and counseling strategy to maintain positive discipline in schools. Hence, such services should always be accessible to learners.

The results of the study showed that school counselors predominantly used the systems theory, which uses the individual counseling technique. The findings of the study are consistent with the observations from the literature reviewed, which concede that individual guidance

and counseling comes in handy to address the behavior challenges experienced by learners (Lam as cited in Mbabazi and Bagaya 2013). However, the findings of the current study conflict with the results of the study conducted by Chireshe (2006), which revealed that schools in Zimbabwe mainly used group guidance and counseling technique in counseling learners. The results of this study also dispute what was found by Wambui (2015) in Kenya that only one in three teachers and students indicated that counselors used individual counseling.

The findings of the study revealed that group counseling sessions were conducted mainly during lessons and assemblies. The findings of the study concur with the results of the study by Wambui (2015) where both teachers and students reported that counselors used group counseling. Additionally, it emerged from the data that sometimes learners were grouped according to their gender and then counseled so that issues pertaining to male and female learners were dealt with accordingly. The finding is aligned to the MOPSE regulation that each school should have a team of male and female school counselors so that all learners could be assisted accordingly (Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture 2002). Contrary to the findings of the study, some scholars argue that group guidance and counseling suffers from lack of privacy and confidentiality and as a result some learners may not easily open up to a group for fear of being exposed (Mbabazi and Bagaya 2013). However, to counter this limitation, the findings of the current study indicated that both individual and group counseling methods were used for learners. In accordance with the findings of the study, again, the National Association of School Psychologists (2014) sums up by urging schools to provide individual, family, and group counseling when deemed necessary.

Nonetheless, the study found that the implementation of guidance and counseling strategy to maintain positive discipline in selected schools was thwarted by lack of counseling facilities. It came out from the findings that school counselors were using storerooms, which were not convenient for individual counseling sessions. The findings of the study are corresponding with the results of the studies by Nyamwange et al. (2012) and Cheruiyot and Orodho (2015) in Kenya, which revealed that the available guidance and counseling facilities were in-

adequate. Furthermore, it emerged from the findings that the teaching of guidance and counseling lessons were negatively affected by lack of teaching and learning resources like textbooks. This finding concurs with Kiprop's (as cited in Kiprop 2012) results of her study, which revealed that many schools lacked necessary resources like books and office space. Accordingly, if teachers are not provided with necessary resources to use during the delivery of guidance and counseling lessons, it means that the content given to learners would be watered down and could have negative impact on the implementation of guidance and counseling strategy to maintain positive discipline in schools.

In spite of the drawbacks encountered by schools in the implementation of guidance and counseling services, the findings of the study revealed that there are pockets of good practices in the implementation of guidance and counseling strategy to maintain positive discipline. The study found that selected schools used counseling methods that respond to the needs of individual learners. It emerged that schools used assemblies for group counseling, which act as a preventive measure to encourage the whole school to desist from indulging on unbecoming behavior. Gender counseling is also another element of good practice, which has emerged in the implementation of guidance and counseling strategy in selected schools. The findings revealed that male and female learners were separated during counseling sessions, this shows that schools are sensitive to learners' problems, which might be gender based. It was further established that schools use storerooms as a way of improvising the counseling facilities. This is an example of a pocket of good practice because learners were offered the counseling services even though the facilities were not favorable for counseling. Though there were some difficulties in the implementation process, at least learners with behavior problems had access to the counseling services.

The Role of a School Counselor in the Implementation of Guidance and Counseling Programs

Concerning the role of the school counselor in the implementation of guidance and counseling strategy to maintain positive discipline in schools, the study found that the school coun-

selor supervised and coordinated the guidance and counseling programs to ensure that they were implemented in line with the recommended standards. It was also established from the study that the school counselor was the Head of Guidance and Counseling Department and provided teachers with teaching material and also organized workshops for members of staff. The findings are in line with what was found by Kamore and Tiego (2015) that teacher counselors are aware of their responsibility in enhancing school discipline. In addition, it emerged from the study that the school counselors taught guidance and counseling lessons and conducted counseling sessions. According to Serame (2011), learners are referred to a school counselor as a matter of positive approach. Thus, the findings of the current study substantiate Serame's view.

The findings of the study further revealed that the school counselor also referred complicated cases, which he/she could not handle to experts. In addition, the results of the study indicated that the school counselors were mentors of the prefects' body. The results of the study further buttress the view of American School Counselor Association (2007) that the school counselor is a liaison, consultant and mediator to help create an effective learning environment, keeping in mind the diverse cultural, developmental, emotional and individual learner needs. Contrary to the findings of this study are the results of the study carried out by Wango (2006) in Kenya, which revealed that the role of the teacher counselor was at times not very clear due to probably ambiguity and lack of definite roles and responsibilities.

Nevertheless, the study found that the school counselors experienced some challenges in implementing guidance and counseling strategies to maintain positive discipline in secondary schools. It emerged from the study that school counselors encountered a problem of work overload. The study established that most of the school counselors were full-time teachers with full teaching loads and also performed guidance and counseling responsibilities and this limited their counseling effectiveness. The findings of the current study support the results of the study by Nyamwange et al. (2012), which revealed that teacher counselors handled the normal workload (more than 18 lessons) per week and only 9.6 percent handled less than 18 lessons per week. However, the findings of the cur-

rent study are incongruous with the results of the study conducted in Malaysia by Kok et al. (2012), which found that the school counseling service in the Malaysia secondary school system appeared to be well established and it had been implemented that every secondary school was funded with a full-time school counselor.

Notwithstanding the hurdles faced by school counselors in implementing their counseling roles, the data indicated that there are pockets of good practices in implementing guidance and counseling strategy to maintain positive discipline. It came out that learners were referred to professional counselors for expert counseling. Thus, the learners' exposure to expert counseling enabled them to get appropriate assistance. In addition, it emerged that in some schools, the school counselor becomes a mentor for the prefects' body. This suggests that there is coordination in the implementation of guidance and counseling strategy in maintaining positive discipline in those selected schools.

Participation of Learners in Guidance and Counseling Programs

Regarding the participation of learners in implementing a guidance and counseling strategy to maintain positive discipline in schools, the data showed that learners participated mainly through guidance and counseling lessons where they were engaged in various activities, which involved discussions, carrying out researches on given tasks and presenting what they had researched on. The findings agree with Chireshe's (2006) observation that in Zimbabwe, guidance and counseling programs helped learners to develop a positive self-concept, understand their role in the school and society and acquire useful social and communication skills.

The study also found that learners were trained in peer counseling and participated as peer counselors. The finding corresponds with Lapperts's (2012) observation that some schools carefully select mature and sensitive learners to train in basic counseling skills. However, the finding of the current study contradicts the results of the study by Auni et al. (2014) who found that peer counselors had not undergone training to empower them to reach out effectively and help their fellow students in matters of social adjustment.

Furthermore, the study established that learners participated in guidance and counsel-

ing programs through various clubs and also gave motivational speeches at assemblies. The findings substantiate what was found by Mbesa (2013) that the majority of teachers (56.8%) suggested that in order to improve discipline among learners, there was an urgent need to put in place a comprehensive guidance and counseling intervention program. The findings also corroborate with Chireshe (2006) when he stated that learners who participated in guidance and counseling services in American schools viewed themselves more positively and began to predict their own success in school. Consequently, if learners are involved in guidance and counseling programs like clubs, they would be kept occupied most of the time and would learn to appreciate the value of engaging in positive behavior.

It also emerged from the study that learners participated in counseling sessions whenever they had some problems. The finding concurs with what was found by Wambui (2015) that teachers interviewed also noted that the frequency of students seeking guidance and counseling after receiving encouragement from teachers kept increasing drastically and the occurrences of appropriate behavior improved with subsequent counseling sessions. However, the finding of the current study contradicts the results of the study by Nyamwange et al. (2012) who found that 56.2 percent of the learners did not consider counseling necessary in the schools while only 43.8 percent found it necessary. Thus, if the counselors do not have the knowledge and skills in handling learners' problems, the learners might not realize the value of attending counseling sessions. However, if the counselors have the expertise and assist the learners accordingly, the learners would respond positively.

Accordingly, the study established that in this section there are pockets of good practices in the implementation of guidance and counseling strategy to maintain positive discipline in selected schools. The data revealed that learners were members of various clubs where during club sessions they encourage each other on positive behavior. It also came out from findings that during club sessions learners are taught community involvement, which has a positive influence in their behavior. Furthermore, the results of the study indicated that some learners participated in peer counseling where the peer

counselors engaged fellow learners in counseling sessions at their level. Peer counseling is very essential since some learners would find it easy to accept issues from their peers' point of view than from adults. Thus, learners' participation in implementation of guidance and counseling strategy enhances maintenance of positive discipline in selected schools.

Meeting Learners for Counseling Sessions

Regarding the meeting with learners for counseling sessions, the data revealed that the school counselors met the learners for counseling sessions once a week during guidance and counseling lessons where mainly it would be group counseling. The study also found that as for individual counseling, the school counselors met learners anytime when there was a need. The findings of the study revealed that in some schools, the counselor had a day once a week, which was fully booked for individual counseling sessions only. It came out that on that particular day, the school counselor would not be having any teaching load, and the whole day would be dedicated to individual counseling sessions for learners. The findings of the study refute Simatwa's (2012) study findings that seventy-five percent of the school heads involved in the study indicated that in most schools studied only a small number of the learners turned out for counseling. Consequently, the fact that there were some schools that set aside some days for individual counseling, as indicated in the findings of the current study, this suggests that the counselors were overwhelmed by the number of learners who came for counseling sessions. This, therefore, implies that selected schools are committed to the implementation of guidance and counseling strategy to maintain positive discipline.

However, as indicated in the preceding sections, the study established that one of the obstacles that impeded school counselors from effectively conducting the counseling sessions was that they also had classes to teach. The finding substantiates the results of the study by Auni et al. (2014) that the teachers are overloaded with the responsibility bestowed upon them. This, therefore, limited their availability to learners for individual counseling sessions.

Despite the challenges faced by selected schools, the data in this section revealed that

there are pockets of good practices in the implementation of guidance and counseling strategy to maintain positive discipline in selected schools. It emerged from the study that individual learners could access counseling services any time they needed it regardless of the counselors' tight schedules. Thus, the practice encourages learners to reveal their problems to counselors so that they can be immediately assisted. Another noteworthy pocket of good practice that has emerged from the findings of the study is that some schools have reduced the teaching load for counselors to allow counselors to have more time for counseling sessions. This permits the counselor to be available for learners who need counseling. Hence, the practices enhance the implementation of guidance and counseling strategy in maintaining positive discipline in selected schools.

CONCLUSION

This study sought to examine how secondary schools implemented guidance and counseling strategy to maintain positive discipline. From the findings of the study it may be concluded that secondary schools experienced obstacles, which impeded effective implementation of guidance and counseling strategy to maintain positive discipline. In spite of the hindrances encountered, the study finally concludes that there were pockets of good practices in the implementation of guidance and counseling strategy to maintain positive discipline in secondary schools, which embraced use of counseling methods that respond to the needs of individual learners, learners were offered counseling services even though the facilities were not favorable for counseling, learners referred to professional counselors for expert counseling, and involvement of learners in clubs and as peer counselors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the presented research findings, the study recommends the following.

The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should create a substantive post of a non-teaching school counselor in every school so that there is effective delivery of guidance and counseling services in schools.

Schools should provide adequate resources and proper facilities such as counseling rooms

as it has been revealed in the findings that some learners shunned attending individual counseling sessions because the storerooms that were used for counseling sessions lacked confidentiality, which is one of the fundamental ethics in counseling. It is recommended that a study with a larger sample using mixed methods approach should be conducted so that the results could be generalized to all secondary schools in the province.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitation of this study is that the results of the study are confined to four urban secondary schools. Hence, it is difficult to generalize the results to all secondary schools in the province.

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Paper received for publication on October 2015
Paper accepted for publication on June 2016