

Citation: Zimba, V & Changala, M. (2018). The Status of Guidance and Counseling in Selected Primary Schools in Lilanda Zone, Lusaka District, Zambia. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa*. 2(2), 27 – 39.

**The Status of Guidance and Counseling in Selected Primary Schools in Lilanda Zone,
Lusaka District, Zambia**

By Vundika Zimba and Moses Changala

Abstract

This study sought to establish the status of guidance and counselling in selected primary schools of Lilanda Zone in Lusaka district of Zambia. The objectives of the study were to identify the types of guidance and counselling services provided; establish the extent to which guidance and counselling services were provided; determine challenges faced by guidance and counselling teachers; and explore prospects for guidance and counselling in primary schools in Lilanda Zone. A descriptive survey design was employed by the study. A sample of 57 respondents consisting of 6 school administrators, 6 guidance and counselling teachers, 15 teachers and 30 pupils was purposively selected. Data was collected using interview guides and focus group discussion guides. Data was analysed thematically by identifying common themes and results presented using key concepts and narrations. The study revealed that the types of guidance and counselling services offered in primary schools in Lilanda Zone were personal, vocational, educational and disciplinary. It also revealed that provision of guidance and counselling was not given prominence in primary schools as it was considered periphery to the teaching and learning process. The study indicated that challenges faced by guidance and counselling teachers included lack of office space for guidance and counselling sessions, lack of training opportunities, high guidance counselling teacher-pupil ratio and limited support from school authorities and the Ministry of General Education. It also showed that although there were few guidance and counselling activities going on in primary schools in Lilanda Zone, prospects for the future were bright because the government had indicated commitment to supporting and enhancing them as was the case in secondary schools. The study concluded that the status of guidance and counselling in primary schools in Lilanda Zone was generally low going by the limited support it received from stakeholders and challenges faced by teachers providing it. The study recommended that school authorities should provide appropriate and adequate infrastructure and materials for use by guidance and counselling teachers; the Ministry of General Education should deploy trained full-time guidance and counselling teachers in all primary schools; the Ministry of General Education should ensure that all teachers not trained in guidance and counselling but performing these functions are appropriately trained; and the Ministry should come up with a policy that would ensure that guidance and counselling services are provided in all primary schools in the country.

Key words: Status, guidance and counselling, primary schools

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Introduction

The purpose of any education system is not only to foster academic learning but also all-round development of children. Besides cognitive development, schooling also involves appropriate socio-affective development (i.e. self-reliance, self-discipline, taking initiative, independence of thought, understanding relationships with people and environment, responsible action, etc.). Development of such personal-social qualities includes knowledge and understanding, abilities and skills in relation to oneself and others (National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2015). The aims of school guidance and counseling services are similar to the purposes of education in general (Wako, 2016).

Guidance and counselling, in harmony with the goals of education aims to facilitate maximum personal development of children in all spheres of life. In its attempt to meet the needs of all students, guidance and counselling makes education a meaningful and satisfying experience. Learning and understanding about self is as important as learning about various school subjects. Every child has the potential to develop self-understanding which includes understanding of abilities, interests, behaviours, attitudes, values, conflicts, anxieties, likes, dislikes, impulses/emotions, goals, one's role in society, etc. (National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2015).

Ndhlovu (2015) states that the role of guidance and counselling teachers is immensely needed in Zambian schools as a result of problems such as poor academic performance, riotous or undesirable behaviors exhibited by learners. Other problems include early pregnancies, truancy, school dropout, poor study habits and examination anxiety. The significance of guidance and counselling services in schools can, therefore, not be overemphasised.

The variety of concerns that students deal with have increased particularly in this age when the human immunodeficiency virus and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) and orphan-hood have impacted negatively on schools and learners in particular. Adults who function in supervisory capacities also recognize that the pressures being borne by learners at primary and secondary school levels, particularly in government and community schools, are generating a wide range of academic, emotional, and social problems that would require more support for learners (Ministry of General Education, 2016).

Shertzer and Stones (1976) define guidance as a process of helping individuals to understand themselves and their world. They assert that it is the purposeful direction of the growth of an individual in his or her five worlds. These five worlds, in which every individual lives, comprise the physical, mental, social, emotional and psychological aspects. Shertzer and Stones add that guidance is a specialized service aimed at assisting, helping and directing students to understand themselves and the world better. Counselling, on the other hand, is defined by Makinde (1974) as a service designed to help an individual to analyze his or herself by relating to his or her capabilities, achievements, and interest and made of adjustments to new decisions he or she has made or has to make.

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Guidance involves ways and experiences of assisting individuals understand themselves. It is knowledge-based and deals with facts and principles, methods and cognition while counselling is value-oriented and deals with motivation needs and feelings. It is also personal and confidential. However, the words guidance and counselling have been used either individually or synonymously by various authors. As a result, many texts interchangeably use the term guidance for counselling and vice versa. The general consensus among specialists is that guidance is a family name for all the helping services within the general educational and community systems (Nweze & Okolie, 2014).

Guidance and counselling services in primary schools in Zambia are provided by teachers who are trained in the theory and practice of guidance and counselling or sometimes not trained. The role of guidance and counselling teachers and their presence in government schools has become increasingly important in recent years. The increased importance being placed on guidance and counselling makes sense on many levels. By being available, school guidance and counselling teachers are used as a resource and in becoming accepted, they are free to focus on student needs that may not have surfaced during basic instruction or supervision (Ministry of General Education, 2016). This study, therefore, sought to establish the status of guidance and counseling in primary schools in Lilanda Zone, of Lusaka district.

Statement of the problem

Guidance and counselling in Zambia has proved to be very important to pupils in both primary and secondary schools because pupils have individual problems which need the attention of school guidance and counselling teachers (Makumba, 2013). However, it has been observed that this service is generally more prominent in secondary than primary schools. Furthermore, little has been documented about the status of guidance and counseling in primary schools in Zambia and, specifically, in Lusaka district, hence the relevance of this study.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study were to:

- i. Determine the types of guidance and counseling services provided in primary schools in Lilanda Zone, Lusaka district.
- ii. Establish the extent to which guidance and counselling services were provided in primary schools in Lilanda Zone, Lusaka district.
- iii. Determine challenges faced by guidance and counseling teachers in primary schools in Lilanda Zone, Lusaka district.
- iv. Explore prospects of guidance and counseling in primary schools in Lilanda Zone, Lusaka district.

Literature Review

The literature review is presented under the following themes: policy guidelines on guidance and counselling, benefits of guidance and counselling, types of guidance and counselling offered in schools, extent to which guidance and counselling is offered in schools, challenges of guidance and counselling services and future prospects for guidance and counselling.

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Policy guidelines on guidance and counselling

One of the missions of schools is stimulating and shaping the new generation for the great experiences of life. Failures in proper adjustment to development/growth, educational, and vocational experiences could affect the education of young people and expose them to environmental as well as personal problems that impede healthy development. To achieve these healthy lifelong developmental processes and experiences, the role of different stakeholders cannot be undermined in schools. Among these stakeholders in the educational setting are school guidance and counselling teachers and their services that aid the accomplishment of school missions and visions of preparing and producing competent, healthy and productive young generation for a nation (Wako, 2016).

The Zambian government is fully committed to the provision of good quality and all-encompassing education to its citizens as is reflected in the following mission statement of the Ministry of Education:

The mission of the Ministry of Education is to guide the provision of education for all Zambians so that they are able to pursue knowledge and skills, manifest excellence in performance and moral uprightness, defend democratic ideals and accept and value other persons on the basis of their personal worth and integrity, irrespective of gender, religion, ethnic origin or any other discriminatory characteristics (Ministry of Education, 1996:ix).

The Ministry of Education (1996) further affirms the provision of guidance and counselling services in schools, stating that it will strengthen the services for the benefit of all learners. Some studies done on counseling and guidance have shown that guidance and counselling provided in secondary schools has proved to be of great importance to learners (Makinde, 1974). However, the education sector does not only comprise secondary schools, but includes primary schools as well as tertiary institutions. This justifies this study which focused on the provision of guidance and counselling at primary school level. This is because primary school education does, to a large extent, lay a foundation for future learning processes among learners.

Zambia's formal education system generally has a 7-5-4 structure, with seven years of primary, five years of secondary (two years of Junior and three years of Senior secondary) and four years of first degree levels for most programmes. Transition from lower to higher education is determined by national competitive examinations at the end of Grades 7, 9 and 12 (Ministry of Education, 1996).

A guidance and counseling teacher is in a position where he or she can support a student's long-term desire for higher education or vocation. Full-time guidance and counseling teachers are able to do this in a way that teachers who are confined to a certain grade level or subject, for example, are unable to (Ministry of General Education, 2016). However, it is to the advantage of the individual teacher to be trained in the theory and practice of guidance and counselling to

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enable him or her more effectively and professionally carry out his or her duties. This, in turn, is to the advantage of learners and schools.

Benefits of guidance and counselling

Guidance and counselling services provide pupils with different benefits such as personal-social, career and vocational and scholastic-academic benefits. For example, Lapan *et al.* (2001) state that in the United States of America effective school guidance and counselling services created a safe school environment in which pupils developed a sense of belonging and self-worth. Furthermore, Bruckner & Thompson (1987) assert that in America students were able to make friends and hold their temper down as a result of the school guidance and counselling services they received.

The role of guidance and counselling in the administration and management of student discipline in Kenya has been recognized by various government policy documents since independence. The Report of the National Committee on Educational Objectives and Policies (1976) recommended that guidance and counselling be taught using subjects like Religious Education, Social Education and Ethics to enable the school promote the growth of self-discipline among students (Republic of Kenya, 1976).

Types of guidance and counselling offered in schools

According to Mikaye (2012), in most of the schools in Kenya various types of guidance and counselling are offered to students for specific reasons. They include career guidance and counselling, educational guidance and counselling and psychological and social guidance and counselling. These are meant to guide students in their pursuit and attainment of academic excellence and solve personal problems. A study by Orange (2011), which asked secondary school principals in Nairobi province to indicate guidance and counselling activities being provided in their schools, revealed that the predominant ones included motivational talks, peer education, career exhibition days, guided group discussions and organised career trips.

Furthermore, a study by Makumba (2013) revealed that the most common types of guidance and counselling services provided to pupils in basic schools in Zambia were personal and social. The study also revealed that special group counselling was, to some extent, also provided to pupils in these schools. Basic schools were once a feature in the Zambian education system in which learners had 9 years of what was called basic education before they could proceed to do 3 years of high school education and 4 years of university to obtain a first degree in most programmes.

According to Mapfumo & Nkoma (2013), the guidance and counselling programme must have four components. These are personal/social guidance, educational guidance, careers guidance, and a strong orientation programme for new students and for students proceeding to higher education levels within the school. A study by Maliwa (2016) established that the types of guidance and counselling services available in schools in Chilanga district of Zambia included educational, vocational, personal/social and health or therapeutical guidance and counselling.

The above shows that the types of guidance and counselling services schools provide to their learners in schools may vary, depending on factors such as available expertise, priorities,

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school guidance and counselling teacher-pupil ratio, infrastructure, to mention a few. The bottom line, however, is that guidance and counselling services are crucial to the academic and social wellbeing of learners. Schools cannot, therefore, ignore provision of these services as they are a cardinal ‘ingredient’ in the teaching-learning process.

Extent to which guidance and counselling is offered in schools

Guidance and counselling services play an integral part in the overall student services department of any elementary or secondary school. The aims of guidance and counselling programs in schools are to assist individuals to develop the ability to understand themselves, to solve their own problems, and to make appropriate adjustments to their environment (Lunenburg, 2010). Therefore, the extent to which schools provide guidance and counselling to learners is a reflection of the significance they attach to this educational component.

A study by Mwape (2015) revealed that the scope of guidance and counselling in public secondary schools in Mansa district, Zambia was limited. This was because only a few components of guidance and counselling services were offered. The study indicated that only talks on examination preparation and related aspects were significantly offered and that school records showed that other important guidance and counselling activities were non-existent. The study further indicated that sampled schools had no established guidance and counselling programmes largely because teachers responsible for them were not trained in the field but were seconded to the sections. The study revealed that most pupils did not have access to guidance and counselling services because they were almost non-existent and, in some cases, pupils were not aware of their existence, even where they did.

Challenges of guidance and counselling services

Adebowale (2012) posits that for the guidance and counselling service to be rendered effectively in the sustainability of education, some antecedent problems attached to the programme by society have to be solved. He points out that modern techniques of guidance and counselling are relatively new to Africa and mainly imported from America, hence, there may be an element of resistance from the intended users or beneficiaries. Orenge (2011) reports that when public secondary school principals in Kenya were asked to state challenges to effective implementation of career guidance and counselling programmes in their schools, they identified inadequate time for the programmes, shortage of trained career guidance and counselling teachers, students’ negative attitude towards guidance and counselling, lack of resources and social pressure. Guidance and counselling teachers, on the other hand, identified lack of financial resources, lack of training in guidance and counselling, heavy workloads and lack of support from school administration. Furthermore, students identified inadequate career information, shortage of career guidance and counselling teachers and inadequate reference materials on guidance and counselling.

Mikaye (2012) also revealed that challenges faced by most schools in Kenya in the provision of guidance and counselling services included inadequate guidance and counselling teachers, lack of cooperation from administration, lack of cooperation from fellow members of staff, students’ unwillingness to discuss their problems, heavy teaching loads for guidance and

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counselling teachers, lack of guidance and counselling offices, hence lack of privacy and lack of funds to sponsor guest speakers and to attend workshops or seminars.

Chireshe (2006) established that Zimbabwean school guidance and counselling services were negatively affected by lack of training of school counsellors, lack of material resources and the non-availability of a guidance and counselling policy. Additionally, a study by Ajowi and Simatwa (2010) conducted in Kisumu district in Kenya reports that obstacles to guidance and counselling in schools included negative attitudes by parents and students towards guidance and counselling services and incompetence among heads of department of guidance and counselling sections who were appointed by the Teachers Service Commission to run the programmes without proper training nor in-service training to enhance their competencies.

Makumba (2013) posits that guidance and counselling teachers in Zambia faced a lot of challenges in their quest to provide guidance and counselling services in basic schools. These included non-availability of adequate guidance and counselling materials, limited time allocated for counselling, lack of parental and community support, poor record keeping by guidance and counselling teachers, lack of trained teachers in guidance and counselling, lack of office accommodation, lack of cooperation from pupils who were the intended beneficiaries of the service and negative cultural influences which tended to discourage pupils to share their personal problems with guidance and counselling teachers.

Future prospects for guidance and counselling

The function of education is to provide opportunities for each student to reach his or her full potential in the areas of educational, vocational, social, and emotional development. The school leader must ensure that guidance is an integral part of education and that it is centered directly on this function (Lunenburg, 2010). Wambu & Fisher (2015) assert that the future of school counselling in Kenya is not all bleak but that drastic measures need to be undertaken to ensure better provision of guidance and counselling services to all the students. They explain that such changes call for more sophisticated approaches to the policies and models of school guidance and counselling. They further state that the changes will include a redefinition of counsellors' roles, restructuring training programmes, implementing a comprehensive school counselling programmes, and development of systemic support.

The major goals of guidance and counselling are to promote personal growth and to prepare students to become motivated workers and responsible citizens. Educators recognize that in addition to intellectual challenges, students encounter personal/social, educational, and career challenges. School guidance and counselling programmes need to address these challenges and to promote educational success (Lunenburg, 2010). Therefore, although guidance and counselling is an integral feature in the education sector, its future depends on the support provided by various stakeholders who include policy makers, planners, school administrators, teachers, learners and the community.

Methodology

The study employed a descriptive survey research design which aims at describing the existing reality. A sample of 57 respondents consisting of 6 school administrators, 6 guidance and

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counselling teachers, 15 teachers and 30 pupils was purposively selected. Interview guides were used to collect data from school administrators, guidance and counselling teachers and teachers while a focus group discussion guide was used to collect data from pupils. Data was analysed thematically by identifying common themes and results presented using key concepts and narrations.

Findings and Discussion

The findings and discussion of findings are presented according to the study objectives.

Types of guidance and counselling services provided in primary schools

The first objective sought to identify the types of guidance and counselling services provided in primary schools in Lilanda Zone of Lusaka district. The study revealed that the main services provided comprised personal, vocational, educational and disciplinary guidance and counselling. One guidance counselling teacher said:

The main forms of guidance and counselling we provide to our pupils are mainly personal and educational interventions to assist them in their personal adjustment and career choices. It is only a pity that we are limited by lack of space and infrastructure to benefit most of them.

A school administrator added:

Whenever we can, we provide vocational guidance to pupils to enable them identify their career and vocational interests and strengths as well as career paths. We also try to enforce discipline by guiding pupils in the way they should behave.

The above finding is consistent with Mapfumo & Nkoma (2013) who assert the guidance and counselling programme must have four components, namely personal/social guidance, educational guidance, careers guidance, and a strong orientation programme for new students and for students proceeding to higher education levels within the school. However, the fourth component of providing orientation programmes for new students, as articulated by Mapfumo & Nkoma, was missing in the guidance and counselling programmes in the studied primary schools in Lilanda Zone.

Extent to which guidance and counselling were provided in primary schools

The second objective set out to establish the extent to which guidance and counselling services were provided in Lilanda Zone. Most school administrators, guidance and counselling teachers and teachers stated that guidance and counselling was not given the prominence it deserved. They described guidance and counselling services provided in their schools as haphazard and not very well organized. Some school administrators indicated that guidance and counselling services in their schools were almost non-existent.

One school administrator stated:

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Guidance and counselling activities are more pronounced and well supported in secondary schools compared to primary schools. This explains why trained guidance and counselling teachers are mostly found in secondary schools. Most secondary schools have full-fledge guidance and counselling units, sections or departments, which is not the case in primary schools.

Guidance and counseling teacher added:

A lot needs to be done to ensure that primary schools have effective and efficient guidance and counselling services. As the situation stands, most primary schools have no relevant infrastructure, support and expertise to meet the needs of learners.

Furthermore, one pupil participating in a focus group discussion said:

Some of us are not aware of guidance and counselling programmes at this school. In fact we do not even know where the office of this teacher is; that is if such an office exists at all.

This finding is consisted with Mwape (2015) who revealed that the scope of guidance and counselling in public secondary schools in Mansa district, Zambia was limited. He explained that the main reason for this was that only a few components of guidance and counselling services were offered to pupils. He further revealed that most pupils did not have access to guidance and counselling services because they were almost non-existent. Wako (2016) asserts that in developed countries, the profession of guidance and counseling is integrated in the education system and all concerned school bodies cooperate with guidance and counselling teachers for the effectiveness of the process. This, however, was not the case in the studied primary schools in Lilanda Zone.

Challenges faced by guidance and counselling teachers

The third objective sought to determine the challenges faced by guidance and counselling teachers in primary schools in Lilanda Zone. The study indicated that guidance and counselling teachers faced a number of challenges. These included lack of support from school authorities, lack of office space to enable them effectively carry out their duties, lack of reference materials, lack of financial resources, lack of training opportunities and negative attitude towards guidance and counselling services by pupils, teachers and parents. This was compounded by the unfavourable guidance and counselling teacher-pupil ratio. Other challenges included limited time for guidance and counselling activities and heavy workloads for guidance and counselling teachers who also had to teach subjects of their expertise.

One guidance and counselling teacher said:

We always have a problem in handling a lot of students at once. Therefore, a number of students even fail to reach us. To add on to this we don't have enough support from the school. Office space is also a problem as what is available is shared, implying lack of privacy during guidance and counselling sessions.

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A school administrator stated:

There is a serious lack of supporting materials in the school to help our guidance and counselling teachers in offering the services properly. This is just to add on to the already existing shortage of qualified guidance and counselling teachers leading.

Another school administrator asserted: We do not have enough funding as a school to support guidance and counselling teachers in terms of materials and other necessities. This makes it difficult for them to work efficiently.

Ajowi and Simatwa (2010) reported that in Kisumu district in Kenya obstacles to guidance and counselling in schools included negative attitudes by parents and students towards guidance and counselling services and incompetence among heads of department of guidance and counselling sections who were appointed by the Teachers Service Commission to run the programmes without proper training nor in-service training to enhance their competence. Makumba (2013) added that challenges faced by guidance and counselling teachers included non-availability of reference materials, limited time allocated to guidance and counselling activities, lack of parental and community support and lack of cooperation from pupils.

Prospects of guidance and counselling services

The fourth objective set out to explore prospects of guidance and counselling in primary schools in Lilanda Zone. School administrators, guidance and counselling teachers, other teachers and pupils indicated that prospects for guidance and counselling services were good and bright. They, however, asserted that there should be support from stakeholders such as government, cooperating partners, parents and pupils for guidance and counselling programmes and activities.

One teacher said:

They should provide guidelines on how to run guidance and counselling services in schools. Additionally, more teachers should be trained in guidance and counselling services to help vulnerable learners or pupils who need the help the most.

Guidance and counselling teacher stated:

Administrators should regard guidance and counselling services as a priority in schools. They must provide support in terms of finances to support the guidance and counselling services. There is also need to sensitise pupils and teachers on the importance of guidance and counselling services.

A school administrator also noted:

The future of guidance and counselling could be bright if they put up a national guidance and counselling body that could effectively guide and monitor guidance and counselling programmes and activities in primary schools.

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The above finding is in agreement with Lunenburg (2010) who postulate that the major goals of counselling are to promote personal growth and to prepare students to become motivated workers and responsible citizens. Lunenburg explains that educators recognise that in addition to intellectual challenges, students encounter personal/social, educational, and career challenges. School guidance and counselling programmes need to address these challenges and to promote educational success. This implies that guidance and counselling should be an integral component of the school programme and hence, requires necessary support for it to flourish and improve.

Conclusion

The study concluded that although the significance of guidance and counselling in primary schools in Lilanda Zone of Lusaka district was widely acknowledged, its status was generally low. This was largely because of its limited scope and support from various stakeholders compounded by challenges faced by teachers providing it. It also concluded that future prospects for guidance and counselling programmes in primary schools were bright owing to the realisation of its crucial importance to the teaching and learning process by providers as well as the assurance of better support from the Ministry of General Education.

Recommendations

The study recommended that school authorities should provide appropriate and adequate infrastructure and materials for use by guidance and counselling teachers; the Ministry of General Education should deploy trained full-time guidance and counselling teachers in all primary schools in order to enhance efficiency; and the Ministry of General Education should ensure that all teachers not trained in guidance and counselling but performing these functions are appropriately trained. The study also recommended that the Ministry should come up with a policy that would ensure that guidance and counselling services are provided in all primary schools in the country; and schools should come up with ways of involving parents and the community in the general welfare of their children and, in the process, foster stakeholder participation in guidance and counselling programmes.

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