



WWJMRD 2018; 4(10): 17-22
www.wwjmr.com
International Journal
Peer Reviewed Journal
Refereed Journal
Indexed Journal
Impact Factor MJIF: 4.25
E-ISSN: 2454-6615

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Benefits of Educational Group Guidance to Learners Who Were Orphaned and Vulnerable (Disabled) at Bauleni Community School

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Abstract

This study was an educational group guidance ' sessions given to ten pupils in grade six classes at Bauleni community school. The study was administered to establish the school profile, counseling services offered at this school as well as the organisation and administration of guidance and counseling programme. It was also administered in order to address the problem faced by pupils when preparing themselves for exams through educational group counseling or a counseling session. The findings established the school profile; it also revealed that counseling services were not fully offered at this school. It was also found that, there was no organisation and administration of guidance and counseling programme. Another finding was that pupils faced the challenge of preparing for their exams which was addressed through educational group counseling session. The study site was Bauleni Community School. It was chosen because it had orphaned and vulnerable learners or disabled learners who needed to benefit from the counseling session. The instruments used for data collection were the group interview schedule and observation checklist. Population comprised of all the pupils in grade six at Bauleni Community School. The total sample comprised of 10 pupils. Data was analyzed manually.

Keywords: Educational Group Guidance, Session, Guide, Counseling Service and Counseling Programme

Introduction

Teaching is a process of imparting knowledge in learners while learning is a process or acquiring academic knowledge and skills. In the process of teaching and learning guidance is highly valued. Guidance and Counselling services provisions dominate the educational discourse because they have proved to be a panacea for most of the myriad of challenges experienced by both children with disabilities and those 'without' disabilities DeRosier, (2004). This implies that lack of these two services contribute to the challenges learners face if inefficiently provided or absent in institutions. Guidance and counselling in African countries like Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Rwanda and Burundi started immediately after these countries got their independence. There were different types of Traditional practices and beliefs associated with post-independence behaviour. Ominde (1964) reported that due to post independence trauma there was need for guidance and counselling services in schools and to the general public. Thus, the need for guidance and counseling is still of great value even today in schools.

Problem statement

The use of guidance and counseling services in schools in order to address various problems learners are being faced with while at school have been encouraged by the ministry of education. This is supported by the Ministry of Education (2003) by reporting that, Guidance and Counselling in schools is a support programme that aim at helping pupils to understand their individual abilities, interests and opportunities in terms of their education. However, the practice administration of counseling service to orphaned and vulnerable learner at Bauleni Community School has not been document. Therefore, there was need to

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establish the implementation of guidance and counseling services along with its benefits to orphaned and vulnerable learner at Bauleni Community School. Hence, the study meant to answer the question "What are the benefits of group guidance to orphaned and vulnerable learner at Bauleni Community School?"

Objectives

The objectives which guided this study were as follows:

To establish the school profile, that guidance and counseling services offered at this school.

To establish the organization and administration of guidance and counseling programme

To establish the challenges pupils were faced with when preparing for their exams.

To address challenges pupils were faced with when preparing for their exams through educational group counseling.

Study questions

The questions which this study answered were as follows:

What is the school profile and counseling services offered at this school?

Does the school organize and administer guidance and counseling programme for learners? What challenges pupils were faced with when preparing for their exams?

What challenges educational group counseling addressed which were faced by pupils when preparing for their exams? Purpose of the study the purpose of this study was to ascertain the challenges faced by pupils and the benefits, availability, implementation and accessibility of Educational Guidance Services by learners who are orphaned and vulnerable at Bauleni Community School.

Significance of the study

This study assumed that the presence of Educational Guidance Services at Bauleni Community School would ascertain the benefits and reduce the problems learners who are orphaned and vulnerable are faced with while preparing for their exams.

Literature review

Human beings experience a variety of problems which make them yearn for guidance; this implies that even children are inclusive for guidance. According to Makinde, (1984) guidance is a process of helping an individual understanding himself or herself and his or her world. In other words guidance, involves a lot of events towards a goal in trying to help clients come to know who they are. When individuals are guided as a group this is called group guidance. According to Phiri and Ndhlovu, (2006) group guidance is defined as a relationship in which the guidance worker attempts to assist a number of students to attain self-satisfactory development or adjust to their individual collective life situation. This simply means group of individuals benefit from the session of guidance in a more economic and self-satisfactory way.

Guidance given for education purposes is called educational guidance which is a process of helping an individual in planning a suitable educational programme and making progress in it (Kochhlar, 2005). Guidance help an individual to have keen interest to plan for their future upon learning from their own experiences. The core skills to realize effective guidance relationship according to

(Chibola, 2006) are the counseling techniques or skills such as attending, listening, probing, emphasizing, reflecting goal and summarizing skills. There are several theories available in guidance, in this study the guidance worker made use of personal centered theory and Gestalt therapy. Guidance is significantly essential otherwise life can be chaotic.

Counseling is an integral part of an over-all programme of guidance. According to Willey and Andrew (2011), Counselling involves two individuals one seeking help and other a professionally trained person who helps to solve problems, orient and direct him towards a goal which leads to his maximum development and growth. Counselling services are therefore required for individuals having developmental problems because of the handicap they suffer in any area of emotional either because of hereditary factors or environment conditions such as school environment.

Methodology

Organisation and Administration of Guidance Programme

Procedure for the Session

The guidance worker started with getting or sorting permission or authority from Bauleni Community School in order to do group guidance and it was granted. The duty of selecting 10 pupils from grade six classes was delegated to the school counselor by the school authority. Thereafter, the date to meet children was set. This was in agreement with Lankshear and Knobel (2004) who noted that it is important to seek informed consent from participants for them not to feel coerced.

Ethical Issues in Practice

All ethical issues were considered. To begin with, confidentiality; this was were all children for the session were assured that whatever was discussed would remain confidential. Assessed information was kept confidentially. Participants were promised that the researcher would observe the preservation of the information they would share. Secondly, anonymity was also observed where the identity of participants was hidden at the time of reporting. As Lankshear and Knobel (2004) pointed out that, participants need to be assured of confidentiality and preservation of anonymity in that their identities will be masked as much as possible to minimise any negative repercussions in the light of outcome of the study. Children were given freedom to make decisions on what action to carry autonomously towards the end of the session. The guidance worker implemented the theory aspects with a level of competence and was responsible by being committed, punctual. The researcher implemented the group guidance session as per arrangement.

Privacy was observed by the guidance worker for instance professional boundary and location was taken into account. The guide's manner of dressing, body attraction, respect, conducive place were taken into consideration. The moral and legal standard of the community was followed such as conducting oneself appropriately and behaving in a good manner. For instance permission was sort before conducting the session, the client welfare were respected by making them make their own choices. In other words, participants were assured about the "matters of privacy" (Cohen *et al.* 2007, p51).

There was a purpose of meeting the clients and it was for

the purpose of preparing them for exams. The guidance worker had regard for the school counselor and received approval from her before the session began in this way the guidance worker maintained professional relationship. There was a respect accorded to the input of participants by the researcher. Respect was granted to clients during the session in line with accepted society norms of research. Clients were not aided in making informed judgement with the use of public statement objectively by the guide. The guide followed relevant standard in the development, publication and utilization of guidance techniques. For example, the record keeping was done cautiously, good organization and management was done because there was a clear contact between the guide and the clients as well as the administrator and there was no dual relationship.

Findings and discussion

Profile of Bauleni Community School

Bauleni community school comprises of vulnerable and orphaned children who were identified. The school was born out of the survey carried out by Sr. Elizabeth of the Sacred Heart sisters. While a lecturer at Zambia Institute of Special Education Sr. Elizabeth carried out a survey in Bauleni compound with the intent of identifying orphan and vulnerable or disabled children and were found to be many. Being vulnerable and orphaned were identified as the causal factors that caused children end up being in the street. She identified them in order to give them education as a measure taken to prevent them enter into street life particularly from Bauleni compound in Lusaka province of Zambia. She opened a unit at Bauleni Basic School but the unit was too small thus she requested for a land from the Roman Catholic church of which she was given and this is where Bauleni community school is found currently. The school opened in 1998. At the time of the study there were 142 children with age ranging between 10 to 16 with grades running from one to nine. Those who assisted financially among them were the French embassy and did the construction of the classroom blocks. The French embassy also donated specific and separate funds for the purpose of intervening into the problems of children entering into street life. The ministry of education assisted the school in terms of training teachers, giving of teaching materials such as text books. The VSO-a non-governmental organization and the Sacred heart sisters helped the school financially.

Guidance and counseling Services Offered

The school had one school counselor who said, serious guidance and counseling programme does not exist, the counselor only offered counseling to children upon their request using individual counseling. This finding was contrary to what was reported by the Ministry of Education (2003) that, Guidance and Counselling in schools is a support programme that aim at helping pupils to understand their individual abilities, interests and opportunities in terms of their education. The researcher basing on this empirical finding argued that guidance and counseling services should be taken seriously and be implemented as supported by the Ministry of Education.

Organization and administration of guidance and counseling programme

At the time of this study there was no programme for guidance and counseling as reported by the school

counselor. This finding was not similar to what was reported by the Ministry of Education (2003) that, Guidance and Counselling in schools is a support programme that aim at helping pupils to understand their individual abilities, interests and opportunities in terms of their education. The researcher basing on this research finding argued that guidance and counseling services should be taken seriously and be organized and managed as supported by the Ministry of Education.

The challenges pupils were faced with when preparing for their exams.

The clients reported having the following challenges

- Panicking.
- Having difficulties in understanding English language and questions.
- Having no confidence.
- Not being sure about their performance.
- Not being sure of how to study.
- Not being sure when to work with others or alone.
- Having difficulties in keeping exam dates.
- Not being sure on how to answer questions.

The findings were in line with what was discovered by DeRosier, (2004) that, in the process of teaching and learning guidance is highly valued because guidance and Counselling services provisions dominate the educational discourse because they have proved to be a panacea for most of the myriad of challenges experienced by both children with disabilities and those 'without' disabilities. The researcher felt that the challenges faced by learners was worth noticing in order to help them accordingly.

The administration of guidance and counseling services by the researcher

Counseling Environment

The counseling environment was a classroom. The room was fairly conducive for guidance because it allowed the session to be confidential and offered sufficient privacy and safety for instance the room was quiet and free from passerby. The room had enough chairs for all children, with adequate space, ventilation and sufficient lighting, suitable tables but it lacked storage facilities for files also lacked office table. The researcher observed that, there were no files for those children and no specific office for counseling purpose. The finding Mutie and Ndambuki (1999) was that, an ideal guidance and counselling centre should be a large room with display racks, bulletin boards and tables where materials can be maintained and displayed. Furthermore, Sindabi (1992), notes that Kenyan counsellors have inadequate facilities and this makes it difficult for an effective implementation of a counselling programme. The room at Bauleni community school had been partially conducive because it had no display racks, bulletin boards and tables where materials could have been maintained and displayed. Basing on the finding the researcher argues that, there was need to set up an office and not a classroom for counseling and guidance services. As was the case with the research finding the gap shows inadequate infrastructure, as one of the barrier affecting the provision of Educational Guidance services which might have resulted in learners having problems in preparing for their exams.

Counseling theories applied

Personal centered theory and Gestalt was applied. Personal

centered was applied because of the need to focus on the individual clients rather than the magnitude of the problem. Also the need for its agents which are acceptance, genuineness and empathy of counseling relationship which facilitate change. The study was therefore guided by the "Person-centred therapy" of counselling by Carl Rogers (1940). Rogers viewed human nature as basically good. He believed that if given the appropriate environment of acceptance, warmth and empathy, the individual would move toward self-actualization. The person-centred approach was developed from the concepts of humanistic psychology. The humanistic approach "views people as capable and autonomous, with the ability to resolve their difficulties, realize their potential, and change their lives in positive ways" (Seligman, 2006). Gestalt therapy was vital because it offered self-awareness which was curative on its own and clients became personally responsible as a key to behavior and cognitive successful adjustment. Gestalt therapy uses "I" language, which is very important to clients for them not to distant their own problem of preparing for exam. The theories applied were in support of what Omide (1964), observed that, the role of Guidance and Counselling is critical in addressing psychological issues in order to produce well balanced and productive learners using appropriate theories.

Counseling techniques applied

The techniques employed were empathy, genuineness, acceptance and "I" language. The goals of person-centred therapy according to Seligman, (2006) are to encourage congruence in the client's behavior, Self-awareness and self-esteem. These were chosen in order for guidance to intellectually and emotionally identify oneself with clients. It was also for the purpose of ensuring that, the feelings and expressions be in agreement with those of the clients. Furthermore, it was for the purpose of having a positive regard for clients and not to allow them to distance a problem from themselves. This was done with a view to bringing about self-awareness and behavior change in order to adjust in the academic field successfully through preparing themselves for the exams. The counseling techniques being used were also in line with the finding of Chibola, (2006) about the counseling techniques or skills such as attending, listening, probing, emphasizing, reflecting goal and summarizing skills. In other words an individual has to understand himself/herself of what he/she is able to achieve and what he/she cannot. Then after an understanding brings about self-esteem for learners which is a feeling of satisfaction that someone has in him/herself and his/her abilities. The purpose of this study was to help learners understand their situation and gain the ability to manage their lives and become self-actualised, Students like any other client deserve unconditional positive regard. Unconditional positive regard refers to the therapist accepting, respecting and caring about clients (Seligman, 2006). It does not mean the therapist has to agree with everything the client says or does, however, the therapist should see the client as doing the best he or she can and demonstrate this by expressing concern rather than disagreeing with him or her. The researcher used unconditional positive regard in this study in order to allow clients to express how they are thinking without feeling judged, and help to facilitate the change process by showing that they can be accepted.

The group guided and group techniques used

The group consisted of 10 grade six pupils aged between 15 to 16 there were 5 boys and 5 girls who had similar problem of preparing for the exam. It was a homogeneous group of vulnerable and orphaned children with a similar problem. Group techniques used were group reports and informal discussions and it allowed children to participate fully and learn to work as a group as well as individually. The researcher took into account the gender balance when sampling the clients.

Creation of rapport

Children were observed being tensed up immediately the session began. Then to address the issue of being tensed up the guidance worker used clear contact by greeting them and telling them to feel welcome to the session. A joke was cracked and they laughed. After that laughter they were no longer tensed up. Then the guidance worker introduced oneself and thereafter asked the clients to do so. The guidance worker then told the clients about he role of being a helper and the time for the session as being between 30 to 45 minutes and that it was a group guidance. The clients were assured of confidentiality and respect and the researcher told them that she expect the same from them.

Nature of the case for guidance

The nature of the case was educational guidance and it prepared the clients for exams as a study skill needed to develop. This was in line with Kochhlar, (2005) who found that, guidance given for education purposes is called educational guidance which is a process of helping an individual in planning a suitable educational programme and making progress in it. Thus the researcher told the participants that being ready for exams requires longtime preparation on the part of the of learners like you in order to organize information and understand it, evaluate oneself, improve on academic performance, recall what is learnt during exams, pass the exams and have better grades. Furthermore, the researcher told the clients that, in order to face the exam with confidence and pass the exams with good grades it calls for good study habits and proper preparations. This was a vital case for the session because learners needed to prepare themselves for grade 7 examinations for the coming year because the time they were met was a crisis point of concentration in order to overcome the problem of getting poor grades. Therefore, basing on the this research findings the researcher argues that, it was good timing for the session because clients needed special help in form of educational guidance for them to take this direction because the clients needed guidance in order for them to overcome the difficulties being faced with and be ready for exams.

Session design

The session was designed as follows; Firstly, there was introduction which comprised of rapport, then the topic was introduced called "Preparation for the exam" thereafter, explanation about the topic was given to clients. Confidentiality and respect was assured to them and they were asked to do the same.

Secondly, clients were asked if at all they faced difficulties in preparing for their test and exam to which they agreed. Then they were asked to put in writing the difficulties they were faced with using the "I" language and they did exactly

that. Thereafter, clients were grouped into two groups to discuss their difficulties and the discussion was conducted in an informal way. Afterwards the discussions were reported to the whole group one group at a time by one group member from each group.

Using informal discussion clients proposed the answers to their problem in terms of being ready for exams to which the guide encouraged them. Answers were as follows, there should be a good start, starting from the first day of learning to avoid panicking when the exam is near. The need to be cool and calm when studying in order to gain confidence for a better score. The need to be realistic or having knowledge of one's performance level such as being gifted, on the average or below average. The need to take note of points being more emphasized by the teacher while teaching in order to be sure of the material to study. The individual need to work with others in order to learn from each other. The need to work hard alone, for example setting of own study time-table, making a review of what one study daily in order to fully understand what one is learning and examination questions as sign of being responsible. The individual need to prepare classwork effectively. When dates for exams are set there is need to keep the date for exams. The candidate need to know how to answer the types of exam questions for instance objective and subjective questions. The candidate need to practice the use of English language and learn from their friends at all times in order to overcome the problem of language being faced with.

Thirdly, clients were allowed to ask questions and these were attended to attentively by the guide or researcher. Thereafter, clients wrote their own way of preparing for the exams and then read it to the whole group.

During the session the guide used all the techniques and methods as explained earlier on such as acceptance, genuineness, empathy "I" language and core skills or techniques of attending, listening, probing, reflecting, goal setting and summarizing. Towards the end of the session clients were greatly appreciated for their active participation and encouraged to study hard.

The session was implemented in line with Willey and Andrew (2011) who found that, counselling involves two individuals one seeking help and other a professionally trained person who helps to solve problems, orient and direct the client towards a goal which leads to his maximum development and growth. The researcher's view was that, the session needed to be organized in this manner in order to yield the positive results in terms of the objective of the study.

Guidance challenge and strength experienced

The strength was that clients were made aware of their need of preparing themselves for exams. The clients were also able to discuss difficulties and solutions freely as a group and individually. Techniques and methods employed were effective. Autonomous of clients was also another strength experienced.

One of the challenges experienced were that clients were tensed up at the beginning of the session but after welcoming them and cracking a joke clients' tension was addressed. Another challenge was that majority of clients expressed having a problem with English language and the guide encouraged them to learn from others as they suggested. The researcher used the core skill to realize

effective guidance relationship in line with (Chibola, 2006) who discovered the counseling technique or skill of attending to client needs. A joke cracked and advising them to learn English from others was a way of attending to their need of being tensed up and their lack of language skill.

Benefits experienced

The guide experienced the awareness of the ability or potential to guide a group for the first time. The guide also experienced the benefit of putting theories, techniques into practice. Another benefit was self-confidence experienced by the guide upon making clients being aware of their problem of preparing for their exams and their need to find a solution and plan for it. This knowledge obtained from practical experience helps the counsellor to appropriately understand the client's problems and use the proper psychological school of thought to offer assistance to more clients (Durojaiye, 1980).

Suggestions/ Recommendations

The following were the suggestions for the benefit of pupils at Bauleni Community School after the study was conducted:

- There was need to have a counseling environment or office
- There was need to have an office where files had to be kept.
- There was need for the school administration to do group guidance through the school counselor
- School counselor to draw up the programme for group guidance.

Conclusion

In conclusion, group guidance is significantly essential for individuals to attain self-satisfactory development or adjust individually as well as collectively. This can only be realized by the guidance worker upon taking into account the organization and administration of guidance and counseling programme seriously.

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