




Effectiveness of guidance and counselling in promoting learners' academic success in rural secondary schools, Vhembe district

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Abstract—Guidance and counselling is an enterprise that promotes learners' performance globally and internationally. However, its effectiveness is not given enough attention since learners continue performing poorly in South Africa. This study investigates the effectiveness of guidance and counselling as an enterprise for promoting learner performance in rural secondary schools of Limpopo province. It used a qualitative approach. Twelve participants were purposively selected, such as ten educators' guidance who were interviewed telephonically. The results showed that life orientation teachers agreed that guidance and counselling are an enterprise that promotes learners' performance. It concluded that if guidance and counselling are implemented effectively, learners' performance in rural areas will improve. The study recommends that the Department of Education should promote the implementation of guidance and counselling by reviewing areas of guidance and counselling that need to be strengthened in rural areas.

Keywords: Guidance and counselling, Guidance versus Counselling, School counsellors, Life orientation teachers, Learners' Academic Success

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I. INTRODUCTION

GUIDANCE and counselling is an enterprise that promotes learners' performance locally and globally. Guidance and counselling are implemented informally through the elders (sisters, uncles, and aunts). In 2005 Guidance and Counselling were implemented as life orientation in South Africa (Morrow-Howell, Hinterlong, Rozario & Tang, 2003) to provide guidance and counselling on academic, social, and vocational areas (Stol, Griepnik & Van Deventer, 2009; Onyamene & Ngwakwe, 2020). Life orientation is a subject that is supposed to bring transformation and mitigate learning barriers in the lives of learners. Though guidance and counselling are available at school and aim to bring about the greatest improvement and self-realisation of human potential, some schools are still dysfunctional, even in academic performance.

The death of information about effective ways to implement guidance and counselling in the policy document is also revealed by the approach the curriculum advisors use during workshops offered to teacher counsellors by the department. They also seem not to understand the main objective of guidance and counselling. According to Nzeleni (2015), life orientation is not crucial. It also does not detail the link between the learners' performance and guidance and counselling, which qualifies the abovementioned gap.

Bernard, Dercon, and Taffesse (2011) stated that guidance counsellors' duties include running personal, academic, and social counseling programmes. Their work guarantees that learners' emotional and social problems are settled according to size to avert and fight low academic performance; thus, their programmes are

crucial in forming learning environments for better results. Hako and Bojuwoke (2019) included that the guidance counsellor's pleader is theatrical in offering counselling direction programmes in the academic, career, personal, and social spheres. Their services assist learners in dealing with emotional and behavioural difficulties and help them to build a clearer focus or direction.

Instructional leadership theory

This study adopted the instructional leadership theory. Guidance and counseling are essential in all academic institutions since learners need assistance in all areas of development, such as academic, social, interpersonal, and emotional (Brauckmann, Geibler, Feldhoff & Pashiardis, 2016). Learners in secondary schools are often overwhelmed by academic, social, and psychological challenges that are said to influence their academic performance negatively. Learners can be successful in their studies through guidance and counseling based on sound understanding and practice. Counseling theories are of serious significance; hence the following theory was selected to inform this study (Cindy & Joellen, 2007). As a resource provider, the guidance counsellor helps their learners by sharing guidance resources (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). The teacher is a resource provider as a guidance counsellor by exposing learners in rural areas to various study methods that can enhance learning in their schools (Cindy & Joellen, 2007). As instructional specialists, guidance teachers help colleagues implement effective teaching strategies by providing teacher training sections that capacitate teachers to deal with learners with disruptive behaviours. Instructional specialists might study research-based classroom strategies (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001), explore instructional methodologies appropriate for learners with various learning barriers, and share findings with colleagues to promote successful teaching. As curriculum specialists, guidance counselors

understand content standards and how various components of the curriculum link together (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). Guidance and counselling curriculum link all subjects together; guidance teacher links all the subjects to create learning motivation for learners. Use appropriate assessment strategies in guidance and counselling to diagnose various challenges that hinder effective learning among the learners. Then, the various learning strategies that may enhance teaching and learning should be recommended (Cindy & Joellen, 2007).

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This study investigated the effectiveness of guidance and counselling in promoting learners' academic performance at rural secondary schools in the Vhembe District.

III. METHODS

Research approach

This study employed a qualitative approach. A qualitative approach points to research that generates descriptive data using the participants' spoken or written words of their experience or perception; usually, no numbers or counts are assigned to these observations (Brynard & Hanekom, 1997). In the qualitative method, interviews were used to gather data. Pratt, Raiffa, and Schaifer (1995) maintain that interviews denote conversations where logically arranged questions are asked and answered simultaneously. In an interview, a one-on-one interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee occurs. The participants were ten life orientation teachers.

Research paradigm

This study was informed by pragmatism and realism to explore the efficiency of guidance and counselling as an enterprise for better learner performance. Therefore, research using a transformative paradigm aims to establish a more authentic and equitable foundation for social change to address the complexities of those being researched (Mertens, 2010b). The transformative approach is relevant for guidance and counselling in developed and developing countries. Guidance and counselling in developing countries have tended to lag far behind in developed countries, with vulnerable individuals being the most disadvantaged; the disparity is particularly the case in South Africa.

Research design

For the qualitative method, the study also used interviews to gather data. Thus, according to Pratt et al. (1995), interviews denote conversations where logically arranged questions are asked and answered simultaneously. In an interview, a one-on-one interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee occurs. Life orientation teachers at the schools were interviewed. An interview schedule was used during the interviews. This study used an interview schedule to explore the effectiveness of guidance and counselling as an enterprise to enhance learner performance in rural schools. One of the benefits of the interview is that it gives the researcher a chance to explore all aspects that may arise in the subject under inquiry. In the case of this study, interviews enabled the researcher to explore the effectiveness of guidance and counselling as an enterprise to promote academic success (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021).

Participants

Purposive sampling was adopted to select ten participants who were teachers from rural secondary schools in the Vhembe district, Limpopo Province, South Africa. This method helped investigate aspects of effective guidance and counselling that promote learners' academic success. These participants were life orientation teachers who provided guidance and counselling implementation in schools.

Data collection instruments

The study used semi-structured- interviews to gather data. According to Pratt et al. (1995), interviews denote conversations where logically arranged questions are asked and answered simultaneously. In an interview, a one-on-one interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee occurs. The life orientation of the schools was

interviewed. An interview schedule was used during the interviews. This study used an interview schedule to explore the effectiveness of guidance and counselling as an enterprise to enhance learner academic success in rural schools. One of the benefits of interview is that it gives the researcher a chance to explore all aspects that may arise in the subject under inquiry; in the case of this study, interviews enabled the researcher to explore the effectiveness of guidance and counselling as an enterprise to promote academic success (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021).

Procedure

In a qualitative procedure, to get rich logical data, a researcher should target a relevant respondent (Babbie & Mouton, 2009). The sampling procedure used in this study to select two schools was purposive sampling. Since, Individuals who implement guidance and counselling, who are life orientation teachers, were sampled and interviewed.

The total number of participants for this study was twelve. The researcher conducted the open-ended interviews personally. The questions allowed the participants to express themselves freely; they were non-judgmental and unbiased (Smit, 1995). The researcher informed the people in the interview about the nature and aims of the study and assured them of the confidentiality of their contributions as provided on the consent form they signed upon agreeing to participate.

After recording the interview after the introductory comments about the subject under investigation, the researcher asked permission to record the interviews with research participants. In this study, all participants agreed that the interviews should be recorded. A Samsung J4 core cellular phone was used to record all the information without video recording during interviews. During the process, an interview schedule was used to finalise the whole procedure for producing a report.

In this study, probing was used in a few cases to clarify the responses given by the participants. According to Babbie and Mouton (2009), probing enables the researcher to get participants to answer in more detail and more accurately or at least provide a minimal acceptable answer.

Data analysis

According to Creswell, Hanson, Clark Plano, and Morale (2007), the analysis started with data coding, splitting the text into sentences, phrases, and paragraphs, and tagging a label to each unit. The raw data comprising words rather than numbers was analysed. Manion, Cohen, and Morrison (2007) believe that data analysis must be appropriate for the data gathered.

About the interviews, the researcher started by transcribing interview data. Halcomb and Davidson (2006) explained transcription as transforming qualitative research data, such as interviews, audio recordings, or notes from the field written from observation in the form of typed text. The typed text is called a transcript. The researcher then listened to the tape recording and typed what was said into a word processing file. The original data was kept safely in a mobile hard drive protected by a password. In this study, the researcher transcribed the collected data from audio tapes, read the transcripts several times, commented on the transcripts, developed a list of categories, and reduced categories, forming themes.

IV. RESULTS

Aspects of guidance and counselling promoting learner's academic success

Guidance and counselling applied through conferences held with all stakeholders on academic support and improving learners' examination results

The results showed that respondents agreed that the conference with stakeholders on academic support improves learners' examination results. Conferences held with all stakeholders on academic support improve learners' examination results. The interviewed participants indicated that parents, social workers, psychologists, SAPS, SGB, university personnel, and police should be involved in supporting a conducive learning environment. These results suggest that the

conference held with school stakeholders improves examination results. Participants below confirm:

"Yes, we offer moral support; however, because we are not even trained professionally to handle such issues, we also refer the matter to the social workers. Fortunately, we have been assigned a professional social worker at school. Still, we also use health workers at the hospital because they have a particular section dealing with counselling. We also seek professional help from SAPS because they have professionals assigned to deal with such cases. They also assist us in training us on how to deal with these matters" (Teacher 4).

"There were a lot of learners who were interrupting our classes. Especially in grades 9 and 10 because they are starting the stage. Boys and girls start to misbehave, but our school has a disciplinary committee where we call the learners and talk to them. If it does not work, we call their parents to help each other. Because most of the learners who disrupt the class are big in that class according to age, their age is not allowed to be in grade 9 or 10. Some are not good at school according to academics. Some of them are getting past grade 10 because their age is increasing. That is why they disrupt the class; they know they do not have any future, so they want to disturb those prepared to learn" (Teacher 5).

"To assist a learner who has a social challenge which is normally affected by a family or where they come from, we normally utilise the service offered by a social worker to fit these learners and try to find out the learner's background. If they lack basic needs at home, the social worker ensures they are cared for" (Teacher 4).

Guidance and counselling offering through individual counselling sessions and helping learners' academic performance to improve their understanding of the subject matter

The results revealed that the individual counselling sessions conducted for learners with different performances in class improve their understanding of the subjects' matter because the individual barriers to learning are identified and mitigated during counselling sessions. The Participants confirmed below:

"Okay, okay, yeah, the relationship is there because schools in rural areas tend to focus much on academics, and you find that bright learners make it. Those that are in the middle also make it. For those who are struggling, the system pushes them out, counsellors in the school want to believe that they should be able to look at this area as I indicated before, we have many children headed families in the rural areas because the parents" (Teacher 1).

"It is good for those educators to know how to identify the learners with challenges, how to approach them, what to do after identifying them. It is good for them to know how to talk to those learners and how to make them feel comfortable. It is good for these educators to get training because, as educators, we are still learners who are also learning" (Teacher 2).

"I would say that the learners who are disruptive in class if the educator recognises them concerned giving them the guidance and the counselling that they need, normally at the end of the academic period, you will see a change when guidance is done, especially to these disruptive learners and that we can call it a remedial action that the educator needs to offer or the support the educator needs to offer. They can also improve on their performance" (Teacher 3).

Guidance and counselling offering by collaborating with other universities to guide learners, and motivate them to improve their good scores in their end-of-the-year examinations

The results reveal that most participants agreed that collaboration with universities to guide learners motivates them to obtain good scores in their end-of-the-year examinations. In contrast, some participants strongly agree with the statement. The participants mentioned during the interview that the Department of Education and some schools collaborate with the universities regarding career choice. This experience motivates the learners to work hard to get the results expected of their career choice. Participants confirmed below:

"Yes, we have a section that deals with career and career choices; therefore, maybe we can orientate learners to make various and relevant choices regarding how to pursue a career under career and career orientation. The career issue is of utmost importance because our learners sometimes lack skills. They follow their friend's choices and drop out of tertiary institutions because they cannot make the right choice. So, we offer such lessons to prepare them to leave

secondary school and be relevant when choosing their careers. We also take them to the university, where they conduct a career exhibition. University always uses students, so it becomes easier for them to learn from and be recruited to the university" (Teacher 4).

"When a learner is in grades 8 or 9 they do all 8 subjects at school. However, when they go to grade 10, they are expected to choose subjects according to their aspiring career choices. In grade 9, there was a curriculum that they had to follow so that they could know which subjects were relevant to the career they wanted to pursue" (Teacher 5).

"Yes, it was working because, in the end, we have matriculates who go to university and choose different careers" (Teacher 7).

V. DISCUSSION

Guidance and counselling improve learner performance because learners can obtain better marks by developing better study styles and habits through life orientation. The results above affirm that collaboration with stakeholders improves the performance of learners. Leurs et al. (2005) also confirm that collaboration with different school stakeholders promotes the well-being of learners.

Individual counselling sessions for learners with varying performances improve their understanding of the subject matter. Rao et al. (2016) supported this view as they indicated that it is essential for a counsellor to build confidentiality with the learner. This is because when the learner trusts the counsellor the learner can disclose challenges that are likely to become barriers to learning.

The results advocate that collaboration with universities motivates learners for excellent academic success. There is a great difference in the learning conditions in the rural and urban areas. Urban areas are well advanced with infrastructures and social exposure to universities, which motivate learners to improve their academic competence. Modo (2017) advocates that a school counselor's responsibility is to expose learners to the different jobs associated with a specific career. Most homes in rural areas do not have literate parents who can give learners the academic support required; thus, guidance and counselling are intensive enterprises to promote excellent academic success.

VI. CONCLUSION

The collected data on the significant aspects of effective guidance and counselling that promote learners' academic success make an innovative and worthwhile contribution to education. The study, therefore, contributes to knowledge regarding the implementation approach of guidance and counselling and its impact on learners' performance. The study also provides knowledge on what the district curriculum advisors, school management teams, and teacher counsellors think about guidance and counselling. It has also revealed the areas that need to be considered for future curriculum policy amendments on guidance and counselling.

VII. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

There are no conflicts of interest.

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