



Molding the Young for Proper Socio-Economic Development: The Case for Vocational Guidance and Counselling in the Secondary School System in Zimbabwe

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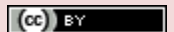
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Abstract

In this desktop based paper we argue the case for school based vocational guidance and counselling services in Zimbabwe. We establish that school based vocational guidance and counselling services help students to reflect on their ambitions, interests and abilities. Young people experience problems, especially in their vocational development and eventually leading to a mismatch in the job market world. These include a lack of knowledge of their own aptitudes and interests; a lack of realism; indecision; inflexibility and unwillingness to change; a lack of occupational information; problem-solving skills; and gender stereotypes. Our argument in this paper is that in the modern constantly changing world, students should be helped to seek and use current occupational information, clarify their own values, feelings and attitudes, and relate them to educational and vocational demands. We thus categorize the benefits of guidance and counselling into the following groups: personal-social benefits; scholastic-academic benefits; and career vocational benefits.

Keywords: Guidance, Counselling, Socio-economic Development, Vocation, Career, Secondary school



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1. Introduction

Comprehensive developmental school counselling programmes positively impact students, parents, teachers, administrators, boards of education, other student services personnel, school counsellors, business, and industry. Thus borrowing from [Shumba \(1995\)](#), no child should go through secondary school education without having received guidance and counselling because this tends to lead students to develop unrealistic ambitions that result in them becoming discontented members of the society. In this paper we look at some of the benefits of vocational guidance and counselling in the secondary school system as supported by empirical evidence from the USA, UK, Canada, Hong Kong, Malawi and Zimbabwe. The paper is based on literature review and content analysis. We place the benefits of guidance and counselling in the secondary school system into three categories as identified by [Chireshe \(2006\)](#). These benefit categories include personal-social, scholastic-academic, career and vocational benefits. We start by exploring the meaning of important concepts before exploring the benefits of guidance and counselling and arguing the case for vocational guidance and counselling in the secondary school system in Zimbabwe.

2. Definition of Terms

Guidance: The concepts guidance and counselling carry differing but overlapping meanings ([Chireshe, 2006](#)). Guidance is broader than counselling and contains the latter ([Mapfumo, 1992](#)). Guidance encompasses those services and programmes of the school, which are specifically intended to promote educational, career, and personal-social development of students ([Chireshe, 2006](#)). [Bhatnagar and Gupta \(1999\)](#) define guidance as a process of helping the individual find solutions to his own problems and accept them as his own. It is thus a process, developmental in nature, by which an individual is assisted to understand, accept and use his/her abilities, aptitudes and interests and attitudinal patterns in relation to his/her aspirations. ([Guez and Allen, 2000](#)). Guidance programmes for secondary school students are designed to address the physical, emotional, social and academic difficulties of adolescence

(Abid, 2006). It is thus an umbrella term encompassing many services aimed at students' personal and career development (Hughes and Karp, 2004).

Career / Vocation: According to UNESCO (2000) a career is a sequence of major positions occupied by a person throughout life. It is the totality of work one does in a lifetime (Sadock and Sadock, 2003). A vocation is defined by UNESCO (2000) as an urge or commitment to work in a particular occupation. It is equated to a career or calling as the word is derived from the Latin *vocare*, which means to call (<http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-vocational-guidance.htm>, accessed on 28 March 2014).

Vocational / career guidance: This is the portion of the guidance programme focused on students' career development. This can include career counseling or other career-related services (Hughes and Karp, 2004). UNESCO (2000) defines vocational guidance as the process of helping an individual to choose an occupation, prepare for it, enter it, and progress in it. It is guidance given to learners that is aimed at study method, occupational choice and planning, and developing the learners' future career. It includes self-knowledge, educational knowledge and occupational knowledge with a view to making meaningful occupational choices (Crites, 1971). Vocational guidance means helping someone find his or her calling or at least a suitable career choice (<http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-vocational-guidance.htm>, accessed on 28 March 2014).

Counselling: Counselling is defined as a one to one relationship between a counsellor and a client whereby the counsellor attempts to help the specific individual make personally relevant decisions that he or she can live with (Chireshe, 2006). Counselling may involve groups. In the secondary school setting thus counselling means helping students to help themselves. In this regard, school counsellors assist students to understand themselves and their opportunities, to make appropriate adjustments and decisions in the light of this insight, to accept personal responsibility for their choices and to follow courses of action in harmony with their choices. Counselling is understood as a major guidance service (Chireshe, 2006).

Career counseling: This is the portion of the guidance and counselling programme in which trained professionals interact with students to assist them with their career development (Hughes and Karp, 2004).

Counsellor: Bulus (1990) defines a counsellor as "one who helps the client to explore his feelings, take appropriate decisions, and initiate new actions to resolve problems". A counsellor is thus a patient listener who knows how to encourage client and gives reassurance, and has a deep understanding of human motives. In the secondary school setting the counsellor thus makes every effort to be very close to students in order to direct and modify their behaviour towards useful purpose (Ogbodo, 2010).

Vocational adjustment: According to Bholanath (2005), this is the outcome of the handling of vocational development problems encountered by the individual. It is the result of the interaction between one's personal resources including his / her vocational maturity (what one can bring to his / her encounters with reality on the one hand, and the reality demands on the other). Crites (1971) defines this adjustment as career maturity. A person with career maturity is thought to be emotionally stable and have the ability to make good vocational choices (Osipow, 1983). Most theorists concur that if an individual's psychological development is inadequate, career development will not progress smoothly (Pendergrass, 1987).

Career readiness: This refers to a level of maturity to acquire specific information on career options; to identify interests, values, and aptitudes; to use this information in career planning and course selection and to change plans when pertinent information is presented (Bholanath, 2005). Career readiness / maturity is thought to be the interaction between an individual's resources (Crites, 1971). Winecoff and Lyday (1978) believe that reasonable career maturity for high school adolescents should involve the understanding of basic work values and attitudes including some initial experiences with several job clusters; an awareness of personal interests and abilities; higher levels of achievement in basic academic skills; a tentative selection of preferred job clusters; and a sense of civic responsibility.

3. Benefits of Guidance and Counselling in Secondary Schools

Chireshe (2006) categorizes the benefits of guidance and counselling into personal-social benefits; scholastic-academic benefits; and career vocational benefits.

3.1. Personal-Social Benefits

According to the Zimbabwe Secretary's Circular No. 2 of 2000, school guidance and counselling services are important for all students especially those who are unhappy, underachieving or at risk of dropping out of school. Lonborg and Bowen (2004) and Lapan (2001) argue that in America, counselling programmes in the secondary school system create a safe school environment. Lapan and Kosciulek (2003) state the programmes engender greater student feelings of safety in schools. In this kind of environment, students have a sense of belonging. Bruckner and Thompson (1987) state that in America, students were able to make friends and hold their temper down as a result of the counselling services they would have received. Thus school based counselling help students relate well with their immediate social environment.

Siann *et al.* (1982) posit that the main criterion in assessing the effectiveness of school based counselling programmes is whether or not the school counsellors were seen as helpful in problem situations. Wiggins and Moody (1987) state that in America, students surveyed gave excellent ratings to the school based counselling services they received. Earlier on Leviton (1977) found that the majority of American students revealed that the school counsellors had been helpful with students' problems. Lee (1993) argues that students who participated in school based counselling services in American schools viewed themselves more positively and began to predict their own success in school. Armacost (1990) says that many students in America indicated that they preferred to talk to the school counsellor about personal problems other than any staff. Counselling in schools thus make students feel confident of both themselves and the school based counsellor.

Euvrard (1996) points out that effective South African high school guidance services operate in a preventive way and equip students with information, skills and attitudes which enable them to successfully negotiate the challenges of adolescence. Adolescents are helped to develop social skills in getting along with the opposite sex. Thus, effective school counselling services result in fewer personality or social maladjustments. The above argument is supported by (Rowley *et al.*, 2005) who state that effective school counselling services in America help students acquire developmental competencies such as establishing and maintaining peer relationships.

Zimbabwean teachers indicated that school based counselling services improve social, interpersonal and problem solving skills (Mudhumani, 2005). Nyanungo (2005) and Badza (2005) reinforce the above point when they state that effective school based counselling services result in the decrease of cases of poor discipline among learners and reduced school dropout rates. The above views are supported by Mukamwi (2005) who states that school based counselling services equip students with problem-solving and decision-making skills. Chivonivoni (2006) adds that Zimbabwean school based counselling services impart life skills, attitudes and values to students that enable them to solve problems and make sound decisions. Chivonivoni (2006) further states that Zimbabwean school based counselling services help adolescents address the social, psychological and emotional problems they experience. Thus, school based counselling services help reduce irregular behaviour patterns emanating from social, psychological, emotional and developmental problems.

It is thus concluded that school based counselling programmes help students adjust well to their personal and immediate social environment. Such counselling programmes create base for successful adult relationships and therefore they can be regarded as social orientation to adulthood.

3.2. Scholastic-Academic Benefits

The Nziramasanga (1999) reports that repeating or failing in Zimbabwean schools may be minimised to a negligible level when cases of slow learners and learners who are not confident are spotted and provided with counselling services. Mudhumani (2005) adds that school based counselling services reduce students' educational problems and make students discover occupations that suit their abilities.

Gerler (1985) reports that school counselling services in America positively influence the affective, behavioural and interpersonal domains of children's lives and thus affect students' achievement positively. It was also established in America that effective school counselling results in an increase of behaviours related to achievement such as improved study habits, efficient use of time and greater academic effort (Otwell and Mullis, 1997). St Clair (Gerler and Herndon, 1993) adds that effective school based counselling services can improve classroom behaviour, reduce students' anxiety and improve self-concept. Schmidt (1993) states that effective school counselling services in America assist students in becoming able learners. This assistance is achieved through helping teachers to adopt effective teaching methods and creating safe classroom environments.

Besley (2002) states that effective school based counselling services in Scotland remove some barriers to learning that students may face and consequently, teachers concentrate on their major task of teaching. This results in better academic results. Related to the above is Carnevale and Desrochers (2003), view that American school counselling, "helps students develop education strategies that will allow them to meet academic requirements and at the same time develop soft skills and attitudes that are typically learned in applied contexts". Lapan and Kosciulek (2003) add that academic achievement in American schools is to be "best understood within a comprehensive framework that includes activities such as problem solving, classroom performance, work-based performance, standardised test scores and vocational skills development".

Borders and Drury (1992) cite studies in America that show increased academic achievement, academic persistence, school attendance and positive attitude towards school and others as a result of school counselling. Lee (1993) found that American classroom guidance lessons led by counsellors can "positively influence students' academic achievement in mathematics". In the same country, improved academic achievement resulting from receiving effective school based counselling services is also reported by Sink and Stroh (2003); Gibson (1989); Blum and Jones (1993) and Otwell and Mullis (1997). Hui (1998) reports similar experiences in Hong Kong. American students, parents and teachers viewed the school based counselling services as having a positive impact on students (Hughey *et al.*, 1993) whilst Canadian school counsellors viewed themselves as having an impact on classroom behaviour problems (Gora *et al.*, 1992).

It is thus established that school based counselling programmes help students enhance their academic performance. They make students comfortable at school, improve school attendance and result in the improvement of academic performance of under-achievers.

3.3. Career and Vocational Benefits

The Nziramasanga (1999) reports that guidance and counselling assists learners in identifying their own talents and in making intelligent choices for their future careers. School guidance and counselling services foster better parental understanding of the potentialities and abilities of their children (Mapfumo, 2001).

Okey *et al.* (1993) and Jones (1993) say that in America, students who received school based counselling services reported that they learnt about careers, developed a clearer idea about possible careers for themselves, learned things about themselves and had been encouraged to learn more about careers. Maluwa-Banda (1998) supports the above when he states that Malawian secondary school based counselling services help students understand their own interests, abilities and potentialities and develop them to the full. Students are also helped to identify educational and vocational opportunities. Lapan *et al.* (1997) report that American schools with effective school based counselling services had students reporting that they had earned higher grades, their education was preparing them for their future, their schools made more career and college information available and their school had a more positive climate.

Hartman (1999) states that in vocational guidance, effective Canadian school based counselling services enable students to develop "decision-making skills to the point of being capable of making realistic choices from short term

to longer term. That is, students are assisted in assessing their aspirations, values, interests and aptitudes when making career decisions and plans.

Taylor (1971) notes that British school counselling services help students throughout their secondary education, to plan their vocational and educational progress. The school counselling services help students learn of possible future educational and vocational opportunities.

Mudhumani (2005) found that ordinary Zimbabwean secondary school teachers perceived the school based counselling services as addressing the students' career aspirations. Zimbabwean school based counselling services help students to become aware of their career choices (Badza, 2005). School based guidance and counselling is thus important for clearing the way students should follow. Otherwise they are left in the dark. They need a roadmap for ensuring smooth sailing through into the world of adulthood and employment.

4. An Overview of the Argument for Vocational Guidance for Secondary School Students

According to UNESCO (2000) vocational guidance was originally thought to be provided only prior to training and employment. However, it is a lifelong process for many individuals at various stages of their lives. At such stages individuals reconsider and re-diagnose their capabilities and match them against the opportunities available. In this way, vocational guidance is aimed at helping students to make not only specific choices but also good decisions (Mapfumo, 2001). It recognizes that flexibility, and a willingness to change, may be as critical for a student as the ability to commit oneself to a particular goal.

It has been established that career and vocational guidance helps people to reflect on their ambitions, interests, qualifications and abilities (Mapfumo, 2001; Chireshe, 2006). It helps them to understand the labour market and education systems, and to relate this to what they know about themselves. Comprehensive career guidance tries to teach people to plan and make decisions about work and learning. Career guidance makes information about the labour market and about educational opportunities more accessible by organising it, systematising it, and making it available when and where people need it (Mapfumo, 2001).

UNESCO (2000) argues that the provision of vocational guidance in educational institutions has been necessitated by great changes in society. Automation and recession, for example, have forced many people into early retirement and retrenchment, resulting in unemployment. The rate of technological change and the isolation of young people from possibilities for employment have created problems in occupational choices. Many students are not able to obtain an informal exposure to a variety of occupations, nor can they easily obtain relevant data about them. Students have a limited knowledge of occupations and of the narrow range of alternatives available to them. This ignorance leads to unrealistic career aspirations (Bholanath, 2005). There is, therefore, a need to assist students to have more realistic career expectations.

Several studies (Burkheimer and Jaffe, 1981; Somers, 1981; Ingels, 1990; Lee, 1993; Mau, 1995) suggest that many school-leavers remain vocationally immature, lack understanding of the importance of career planning, and lack the knowledge to plan their high school curricula. Although junior secondary school learners appear to value the need for post-secondary education (Larter, 1982), few understand the importance of preparatory work (Mau, 1995) and the knowledge of career resources available to them (Lee, 1993). The majority of young people leave school with only a vague knowledge of employment opportunities and with little insight as to the most appropriate career direction for their abilities, interests and personality. A large number of school-leavers receive no training at all beyond school and become virtually unemployable (Bholanath, 2005). And yet, if pointed in the correct direction, could become assets to the national economy.

Helping learners to understand career readiness and nullifying the effects of vocational immaturity and underachievement is the basic premise for pre-tertiary interventions. In a meta-analysis study of 67 career interventions, Evans and Burck (1992) discovered that average ability students involved in career interventions appeared to profit the most in academic achievement. Toepfer (1994) concurred by stating that children who learn to relate schoolwork with the real world experiences do better in school.

Career programmes in the early grades of high school can help children understand the changing circumstances that face them in trying to achieve the work ethic (Toepfer, 1994). As life-long learning becomes a basic educational outcome, it is essential that young adolescents understand their need to become life-long learners. The value of education could be powerfully influenced by career programmes that connect them with potential employment and career interests (Toepfer, 1994). Career readiness in high school would include what Winecoff and Lyday (1978) calls a basic understanding of work values and attitudes such as an awareness of and some experience with job clusters, an awareness of personal interests and abilities, higher levels of achievement in basic academic skills, a tentative selection of preferred job clusters, and a sense of civic responsibility.

Bholanath (2005) observes that the variable of career readiness is critical to tertiary educational planning. It is believed that for one to develop aspiration, one needs to have some understanding of occupational information and self-awareness (interests, values, abilities, etc.). This understanding gives way to broad career possibilities and opportunities, the purpose of school, and the development of a career plan. Without this understanding, one may lack the maturity to progress to the next development stage and / or succumb to internal and external negative impediments to post-secondary aspiration.

Cogen (1992) wrote that adolescents have a tendency to be negative, sensitive and defensive and spend more time alone in their rooms. Cogen also felt that early adolescence is also a time of maturation in the thinking process. In high school, an early adolescent begins to consider hypothetical problems that begin with a what- if mode of thinking and permits the child to move from one item into many possibilities. Unfortunately, adolescence is also characterized as an age where one is preoccupied with thoughts of personal growth and peer relations. There is a tendency to value education less, especially if there is little relevancy between school-learning and their lives outside the classroom (Cogen, 1992).

Early adolescents need assistance in planning and preparing for the future. Carpenter and Western (1992) feel that children in this age group need pre-tertiary counselling that develops aspiration, sustains motivation, promotes effective study skills, clarifies values, differentiates among programmes and courses, discusses graduation requirements, introduces guidance resources, and suggests the possibility of college and the availability of financial aid. According to Toepfer (1994), career education should be a major preparation focus in the high school where early adolescents explore careers, develop attitudes, and understand work and employability skills. Fouad (1995) writes that the goal of education should be focused on increasing, at an early age, a student's career knowledge, self-esteem, maths and science achievement, and high school course selection.

5. Conclusion

In this paper we argued that school based vocational guidance and counselling services help students to reflect on their ambitions, interests and abilities. Young people experience problems in their social and vocational development. These include a lack of knowledge of their own aptitudes and interests; lack of realism; indecision; inflexibility and unwillingness to change, lack of occupational information; weak problem-solving skills; and gender stereotypes. In a constantly changing world, students should be helped to seek and use current occupational information, clarify their own values, feelings and attitudes, and relate them to educational and vocational demands. Thus school based career guidance plays a key role in helping labour markets work and education systems meet their goals. It also promotes equity as social mobility relies on wider acquisition not just of knowledge and skills, but of an understanding about how to use them. It has therefore been established that school based guidance and counselling is of great necessity in the secondary school system to ensure proper alignment and placement of human resources for socio-economic development not only in Zimbabwe, but the whole international community.

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