

The Challenges in the Provision of Counselling Services in Secondary Schools in Tanzania

REBECCA G. SIMA (PHD)

Department of Educational Psychology and Curriculum Studies

University of Dar es Salaam

Email: re_sima@yahoo.co.uk

Abstract

This is a research-based paper that uncovers the experiences and challenges in the provision of counselling services in secondary schools in Tanzania. The paper covers the main issues regarding adolescent secondary schools students and how they are affected by that developmental stage. It also points out how the then Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) took initiatives to train school counsellors for the purpose of establishing counselling services in schools. Training counsellors was one of the important aspects in implementing the provision of the service in schools. The main objective of the study was to find out what goes on the ground in relation to the provision of counselling services in schools after the training of school counsellors. Ninety six schools drawn from six regions were involved in the study. Using interviews, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and observations, qualitative data were collected from school counsellors, students and Head of Schools (HoSs). Content analysis was used to analyse data.

The findings revealed that counsellors were mainly challenged by the unavailability of counselling resources, including confidential rooms for conducting interviews. They had a high workload that limits their performance as counsellors. At the same time some counsellors were somewhat incompetent and in some cases Heads of Schools violated Ministry directive in selecting school counsellors.

As one of the major recommendations, the author urges the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MoEVT) to provide counselling services in schools more strategically by providing schools with the required resources, including more seriously trained school counsellors to achieve its mission.

Background information

School counselling is a profession that focuses on the relations and interactions between students and their school environment with the expressed purpose of reducing the effect of environmental and institutional barriers that impede students' academic success (<http://www2.edtrust.org> 2006). It fosters conditions that ensure educational equity, access, and

academic success for all students regardless of their differences. To accomplish this important task, trained school counsellors must be assertive and use as many counselling skills as possible to help students gain opportunities to realise their dreams. They assist students in their academic, social, emotional and personal development; and help them to define the best pathways to successfully achieve their plans (<http://www2.edtrust.org> 2006, American Association of Counselling (AAC) (2005) at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/School-counselor> 2007). All secondary schools in Tanzania have para-professional counsellors who are partially trained in the basics of counselling (Sima and Mkumbo, 2005, 2006). This situation is detrimental to the lives of students who are at the developmental stage. As adolescents they may not develop fully or adjust well to the hostile environment that they live in if they do not get the required counselling services.

School counsellors ought to serve as leaders, as well as effective team members of schools, by working with teachers, administrators and other school personnel. They ought to go beyond the school compounds to work with other networking parties such as parents, community members and other organisations to strengthen the services and make them effective (MoEC, 2000). They have to make sure that each student meets his/her immediate needs for success in social and academic issues. They also ought to offer consultancy services to empower families. They do so by assisting parents and guardians in identifying students' needs and shared interests, as well as accessing available resources and utilising them in promoting their wellbeing.

The function requires focused attention on students for whom schools have not been successful. Most community schools in Tanzania, particularly those in rural areas, are at a disadvantage because they have not been furnished with adequate physical, fiscal and human resources (Haki Elimu, 2004). Therefore students encounter problems because of their poor conditions. Students do not do well because they lack the necessary conditions in which to perform well. They therefore need strong counselling programmes that will be able to delineate issues, strategize and establish intervention programmes that will assist in closing the achievement gap between these students and their more advantaged peers.

School counsellors, if well trained to work in schools, can make an enormous impact on the choices that students make and their future options. They are ideally positioned in schools to serve as advocates, creating opportunities for all students to define, nurture and accomplish high academic aspirations (<http://www2.edtrust.org> 2006). Yet, in Tanzania school counsellors have been left out of the education reform movements that have been implemented. Little has been done to prepare counsellors for their advocacy role in relation to students. The meagre resources that are available exist mainly in schools in big cities and towns while the rural schools, especially those with students from low-income families, are ignored (Sima, 2002).

Statement of the problem

Studies in Tanzania show that secondary school students encounter social, academic and psychological problems (Sima 1997). Currently, amidst the ever-growing number of secondary schools as directed by the Education and Training Policy of 1995 (URT 2005), a growing number of students problems has been reported, calling for effective counselling services. In particular, such problems are related to the choice of career and subject combinations; family problems, particularly relating to marital conflicts that affect students directly and indirectly; they are academic particularly in connection with the language of instruction causing a low level of understanding; and they are related to poverty. Other problems include discipline matters such as truancy, sexual harassment and bullying; those relating to orphan-hood and vulnerability to dependence; those facing HIV/AIDS infected and affected students; and relationships ranging from the parent-child relationship to the teacher-student relationship and the relationship among students (Sima and Mkumbo, 2005, 2006).

The problems, technically called as psychosocial problems, have an impact on the performance of students. The context of this study emanates from the fact that the then MoEC realised the importance of establishing counselling services for adolescent students in secondary schools who were encountering a number of developmental problems. One of the major measures that the Ministry took to rescue the situation was to train school counsellors to assist students work out their problems. It was anticipated that counselling would help students to resolve their problems easily and work towards better achievement. The MoEC directed each school to have school counsellors to work with students to solve their problems and issued circular No 11 to guide that

directive (MoEC, 2001). Since then a number of training workshops on counselling skills have been carried out to fulfil that mission. For example, the author was involved in two training workshops in 2006 with PASHA project and 2007 on the Counselling for HIV/AIDS project by members of the Department of Educational Psychology at the UDSM. In the two projects 96 schools in 6 regions benefited, with each school having two (a male and a female) trained school counsellors. Since the time the school counsellors were trained there has not been information on whether their counselling in schools has made any significant changes regarding students' wellbeing. This study intended to collect information on whether the counsellors were performing well enough to help change the lives of students for the better socially, academically and psychologically, particularly after receiving training in counselling skills.

Objectives of the study

In the light of the foregoing statement, the main objectives of this study were twofold:

1. To identify the challenges facing the school administration and counsellors in the provision of counselling services to students
2. To provide some feasible recommendations for the adequate provision of effective counselling services.

To achieve the stated objectives the study intended to answer the following questions:

1. What procedures are used to select school counsellors?
2. Do school counsellors have enough time to work with students in the provision of counselling services?
3. What counselling resources are available in schools to facilitate the effective provision of counselling services?
4. What challenges do school counsellors and school administrators face in the provision of counselling services to students?

The answers to these questions should help the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training to be aware of the status of counselling services in schools so that it can act according to the needs. The challenges that counsellors faced should be worked out by the MoEVT in order to facilitate counsellors so that they are able to work effectively at providing of effective counselling services.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study was based on the aims of counselling as stipulated by McLeod (1994, 1998 and 2003). Box 1 indicates the aims of counselling which constitute the conceptual framework, which guided the study.

Box 1: Aims of counselling

- **Insight:** The acquisition of an understanding of the origins and development of emotional difficulties, leading to an increased capacity to take rational control over feelings and actions (Freud: 'where id was, shall ego be').
- **Relating with others:** Becoming better and able to form and maintain meaningful and satisfying relationships with other people: for example, within the family or workplace or school
- **Self-awareness.** Becoming more aware of thoughts and feelings that had been blocked off or denied, or developing a more accurate sense of how self is perceived by others.
- **Self-acceptance.** The development of a positive attitude towards self-, marked by an ability to acknowledge areas of experience that had been the subject of self-criticism and rejection.
- **Self-actualization of an individual.** Moving in the direction of fulfilling potential or achieving the integration of previously conflicting parts of self.
- **Enlightenment.** Assisting the client to arrive at a higher state of spiritual awakening.
- **Problem-solving.** Finding a solution to a specific problem that the client had not been able to resolve alone. Acquiring a general competence in problem-solving.
- **Psychological education.** Enabling the client to acquire ideas and techniques with which to understand and control behaviour.
- **Acquisition of social skills.** Learning and mastering social and interpersonal skills such as maintaining contact, taking turn in conversations, assertiveness or anger control.
- **Cognitive change.** The modification or replacement of irrational beliefs in maladaptive thought patterns associated with self-destructive behaviour.
- **Behaviour change.** The modification or replacement of maladaptive or self-destructive patterns of behaviour.
- **Systemic change.** Introducing change into the way social systems (e.g. families) operate.
- **Empowerment.** Working on skills, awareness and knowledge that will enable the client to take control of his or her own life.
- **Restitution.** Helping the client to make amends for previous destructive behaviour.
- **Generativity and social action.** Inspiring in the person a desire and capacity to care for others and pass on knowledge (generativity) and to contribute to the collective good through political engagement and community work.

Source: McLeod 2003, pp.12-13.

It was anticipated that with the availability of required facilities school counsellors would be able to achieve these aims of counselling if they were practising counselling in accordance with what they learnt. The role of counsellors should be to help students develop into “fully functioning” persons (good persons). A fully functioning person is the one who possesses characteristics such as openness to change, trust in him/her self, having an internal source of evaluation and willingness to continue growing (Corey, 1996, McLeod 1998). These characteristics will help students to live up to their expectations.

However, McLeod (2003) argues that it is unlikely that any one counsellor would attempt to achieve all the objectives in the list. The application of different approaches would determine what aim the counsellor wants to achieve. For example, psycho-dynamic counsellors would focus on insight; humanistic practitioners would aim to promote self-acceptance and personal freedom of the students, while cognitive-behavioural counsellors would mainly be concerned with the management and control of the students’ behaviour. Nevertheless, any valid counselling approach should be flexible enough to make it possible for the client (in our case the students) to use the counselling relationship as an arena for exploring whatever dimension in life is most relevant to their well-being at that point in time (McLeod 2003). Since school counsellors were trained across approaches and equipped with a variety of counselling techniques, they should be able to achieve some of the mentioned aims of counselling

Literature Review

The importance of counselling for students in secondary schools

Counselling as a professional activity in all spheres of human life in general, and secondary school students in particular, cannot be overemphasised. The importance of counselling for secondary school students rests on the fact that they are at a very challenging phase of development. Most secondary school students are aged between 15-22 years, popularly known as adolescence (MoEC 2000); (MoEVT, 2006).

Adolescence is a challenging stage in various ways but more importantly it is the period of transition to adulthood. By its nature, adolescence is the time when huge changes occur. Biologically it is the time when adolescents attain sexual and physical maturity both of which lead to their attraction to adolescents of the opposite sex (Santrock, 2004). The physiological changes trigger many other changes, including social, psychological, intellectual and emotional development. It is the time to a start of new life which suggests more independence. The turmoil of adolescence occurs as adolescents strive for such independence, and is serious in cultures where the needed independence is limited (Sima, 1997).

Secondary school students are socially in transition as they move from primary to secondary education. Tanzanian primary education is offered mostly in day schools, meaning that most students live with their parents and/or guardians and go to and from school daily. When they go to secondary school a substantial number of them join boarding schools where they live far from their home. They therefore spend less time with their parents and more time with their peers, who are equally inexperienced in life (Santrock, 2004, Dornbusch, 2000). This represents a social change from a lower level of education to a higher one, as well as being separated from their families. Even those who study in day schools spend most of the day at school rather than at home with parents and relatives. Indeed, this is a challenging situation causing young people many social, psychological and emotional problems.

The academic transition from a lower level to a higher one, especially from primary to secondary school, is accompanied by anticipation and anxiety (Mizelle and Irvin, 2000; Morgan and Hertzog, 2001; Zeedky, et al., 2003; (<http://www2.edtrust.org>, 2006). Schiller (1999) defines academic transition as “a process during which institutional and social factors influence students’ educational careers positively or negatively”. This definition calls for the responsibility to be shared by lower and higher-level school personnel to guide students. Effective communication is needed between the two types of personnel. For example, the higher-level personnel may wish to make inquiries and gather information about a particular student from the personnel in the lower level where the student studied. Also, there is always important information that students need so that they can adjust to the new environment.

Counselling is regarded as the best way to provide a smooth transition, for students from primary to secondary school, settling them in and helping them adjust to and seeing that they are

comfortable socially, academically, emotionally and psychologically staying in those schools. In the absence of counselling life can be a nightmare given the characteristics and problems of adolescents. As one looks at the problems associated with adolescence, there is little doubt that these young people need counselling to help them understand themselves, and their needs and find ways to meet them, make choices according to the environment (McLeod, 1994, 1998, 2003, Corey, 1996), adjust to situations and live resourcefully and comfortably (Biswalo, 1996). This is the educational gap that this study sought to fill by assessing the provision of counselling services in schools.

Methodology

This was a monitoring study to check on whether counselling services were being provided in schools as was intended. It was therefore largely an exploratory study, which sought to uncover the experiences and challenges of key actors, such as school counsellors and head of schools in the provision of counselling services in schools. Also it sought to understand the feelings of the main consumers of the counselling services, namely secondary school students. The qualitative paradigm was selected because of its underlying assumption that the whole needs to be examined in order to understand a phenomenon (Gall et al. 2003) because, according to qualitative researchers, there are multiple realities, not a single reality of phenomena, which can differ across time and space. The phenomena such as experiences and feelings can hardly be studied quantitatively.

Area of study, population and instruments of data collection

Ninety six rural and urban secondary schools from six regions in Tanzania Mainland were purposively selected to participate in the study. In many qualitative studies, the sample is purposive in which researchers use their judgement to select a sample that they believe, based on their information, will provide the data they need (Fraenkel and Wallen 2000). In this study, the selection was purposive to target only schools that had counsellors trained in counselling, in the belief that they would give the required information to determine their counselling performance.

To begin with, the researcher collected information from four regions which had trained school counsellors who had been trained by the MOEVT through its Counselling Unit or PASHA

(Prevention and Awareness of Schools HIV/AIDS) project. The regions were Tanga, Arusha, Dodoma and Iringa (see also Table 1). The counsellors in Coast and Dar es Salaam regions were trained by counsellors from the Faculty of Education of the University of Dar es Salaam through a project known as “*Addressing HIV/AIDS in Secondary Schools through Effective School-Based Counselling Programme*”. This study was a monitoring and/or evaluation exercise to understand what was happening on the on the ground, particularly after the training of school counsellors for all six regions.

Table 1: Regions, schools and participants of the study

S/N	Area of study		Participants per region and school					
	Number of Regions	No. of Schools	Counsellors			HoS		
			males	females	Total	males	females	Total
1	Tanga	24	12	12	24	20	4	24
2	Arusha	16	8	8	16	12	4	16
3	Dodoma	8	4	4	8	6	2	8
4	Iringa	8	4	4	8	7	1	8
5	Coast	10	5	5	10	8	2	10
6	D’ Salaam	30	15	15	30	13	17	30
Total	6	96	48	48	96	66	30	96

The then Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) had selected the schools in the named regions to take part in training of school counsellors as a pilot project towards the establishment of counselling services and programmes in all secondary schools in the country.

Semi-structured interviews were used to obtain information from school counsellors and Heads of Schools (HoS). Interviews were the preferred instruments in this qualitative study as they allowed the researcher to ask for more information from the respondents using probing questions based on their responses while at the same time remaining focused on the requirements of the study. The counsellors and the HoS participated in the study by virtue of their positions as key players in the provision of counselling services. In total 96 HoS (66 males and 30 females) and 96 counsellors (48 males and 48 females) one from each school were involved in the study. It should be noted that it was possible to get an equal number of male and female counsellors

because it was the directive from the then MoEC that in each school there should be two counsellors a female and male at any point in time. The directive was keen to meet the varied needs of boys and girls in schools.

The interview guide covered topics reflecting the objectives of the study that would precisely answer the research questions that guided the study. The interviews covered the following areas: (i) Procedures used in the selection of school counsellors, (ii) Availability of counselling resources, (iii) Utilisation of counselling services by students and (iv) Counsellors' workload. The interview guide for school counsellors had more questions since they were the key players in the provision of counselling services and had attended special training in counselling. The HoS explained how they assisted the counsellors to ensure that counselling services were provided as intended. In all these areas of discussion the challenges that counsellors faced in providing effective counselling services were explored and some recommendations were given on how best the challenges could be tackled.

Information from students was collected through Focus Group Discussion (FGD). FGD is a qualitative method of data collection that is designed to obtain in-depth information on a topic through spontaneous group discussion of approximately 6-12 persons, guided by a facilitator (Greenbaum 1993). FGD was selected because it encourages respondents to take part in an extensive discussion, allowing the researcher to obtain the in-depth information that was needed for this study. A number of students were grouped to discuss topics regarding the provision of counselling services in their schools. The issues discussed were the selection of school counsellors, the availability of counselling resources and the extent to which counselling services were utilised in their schools. Students were asked to participate voluntarily in the discussion. The researcher used two to three focus group discussions per school and each group spent between 45-60 minutes in discussion. Both girls and boys participated so as to capture gender issues. Students in class five to seven participated in the study. Students' group responses supplemented and complemented information from the HoS and counsellors information, being used as checks and balances.

The researcher also used a checklist to observe the available resources that enhanced the provision of counselling services in the schools. This was a very useful triangulation approach (McLeod 1996) as it counterchecked the collected information from the respondents involved in the study. Generally, the respondents were very cooperative so that it made the entire exercise very easy and successful. The collected information was analysed thematically using content analysis following the set research questions.

Data presentation and analysis

Generally, parents, counsellors and other parties interested in the welfare of students were keen to have effective counselling services in secondary schools to save the lives of young people. Their wishes are, however, far from being realised due to the fact that counselling faces a lot of challenges that need to be worked on. It was anticipated that if the trained counsellors worked according to the expectations of the interested parties there would be a high chance of counselling services being effective in reducing students' psychosocial, academic and other related problems in schools.

Selection of counsellors and their role in schools

In the first place the study intended to trace the procedures that were used to select school counsellors. It was learned that school counsellors were selected from among schoolteachers in each school. This is according to directives from Circular No 11 that was issued by the MoEC in 2001, which directed school counsellors to be selected by students (MOEC 2001). Following the Ministry's directive, most of these school counsellors were selected by students. However, in a very few schools HoS violated the directive and selected school counsellors themselves.

There were also some discrepancies regarding this issue. During discussion with the HoS, while all of them (96), insisted that the counsellors had been selected by students, 4 counsellors from 2 schools admitted to having been appointed by HoS. The other discrepancy was noted in the FGD with students, where students in two schools revealed that they had not been involved in the selection of counsellors and did not even know who their school counsellors were. It can be noted that the information provided by counsellors concurs with that of students. This can be interpreted that the HoS in the two schools knew that they had violated the directives from the

Ministry but could not admit it because it would have had an adverse effect on their performance as school leaders.

The further unfortunate thing in this regard was that the counselling services were not active at all in the two schools where counsellors had been appointed by the HoS. In one case in Tanga region, one counsellor admitted that he had not counselled any one since being appointed by the HoS. So one wonders whether students in that school have not had any problem that needed a counsellor's help or the whole issue of the provision of counselling services was not regarded as a priority. This situation warrants further attention in the context of the amount of resources that the MoEC and trainers had wasted on training such counsellors who do not perform their counselling duties. In the schools where students were involved in selecting their counsellors, it was clear through discussion with the students that their counsellors were very active in helping them solve their problems.

School counsellors' workload

Since studies have shown that if students in Tanzanian secondary schools have many developmental problems, counsellors would be overwhelmed with a lot of work if they were not relieved of some school duties. The information that was collected from counsellors in the selected schools revealed that they were given the same teaching responsibility as other teachers in the school. This means that they were overloaded; counselling took most of their time leaving no time to prepare well for their lessons. The time they could be resting was used for school work. Of some concern is that some of these counsellors serve as discipline masters/mistresses. It then becomes difficult for counsellors to perform their counselling roles and duties together with their disciplining role, which clashes with counselling. One may be tempted to interpret that counselling is given neither much consideration nor emphasis in the schools and, if it is emphasized, then counsellors do not do what they are supposed to be doing as counsellors. This situation leaves much to be desired given the importance of counselling for students in secondary schools.

When school heads were asked about this challenging issue they maintained that it was not possible to relieve the teaching load of counsellors because unlike primary school teachers who

are prepared to teach all subjects, secondary schools teachers are prepared in specialised subjects. This means that relieving a counsellor from teaching his/her subject of specialisation would mean employing another teacher to cover. Nevertheless, the researcher still challenged the HoS that they could exempt school counsellors from other duties which are not academic oriented and do not demand specialisation. In this regard the counsellors would be exempted from such duties as teachers' weekly rosters or being a class teacher so that they use that time for counselling activities. The HoS promised to work on the possibility of relieving school counsellors of such duties. In a way, this is an indication that counselling is not given the required emphasis as was expected by the then MoEC. The counsellors in all the schools spoke of their intention to work tirelessly if they were exempted from other extra-curricula duties.

Availability of Counselling Resources in secondary schools

One of the most important things that can determine the effective provision of counselling services in schools is the availability of counselling resources and facilities. Table 1 indicates the availability of resources and facilities in each school as informed by school counsellors and verified by the researcher's checklist.

Table 2: Availability of Counselling Resources in schools by numbers and percentage

Facilities/Resources required for effective provision of counselling services in secondary schools	Availability of facilities/resources			
	Number of schools indicating availability of resources		Number of schools indicating non-availability of resources	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Counselling room/ Confidential place for counselling	52	54.2	44	45.8
Furniture in the counselling room	20	20.8	76	79.2
Resource file	84	87.5	12	12.5
Reference books	84	87.5	12	12.5
Brochures	48	50	48	50
Magazines	90	93	6	6.3
School counselling and AIDS committee	30	31.7	66	68.3
Action Plan for school Counselling and AIDS committee	0	0	96	100
	60	62.5	36	37

Counselling Timetable				
Counsellor's Action Plan	36	37.5	60	62.5
Question box	72	75	24	25
Peer education/educators	72	75	24	25
Health or life skills club	54	56.2	42	43.8

The Table shows that most schools had facilities such as educative magazines, reference books on counselling issues, resource files, a question box, peer educators and counselling timetables. Only 30 school counsellors reported having worked hard to ensure that the School Counselling and AIDS committee was established. However, even those 30 counsellors had not yet developed the action plans to be used by the committee. This is an important committee which draws members from schools and the community surrounding the schools to work on all matters related to HIV and AIDS education as part of the counselling programme. This was according to the directive of the then MoEC to be implemented in every school with the support of the counsellors and HoS. The lack of an action plan for the committee was an indication that the committees had not yet started working even where these committees had already been established. The school counsellors had not yet engaged the school counselling and AIDS committees in the activities that were prescribed for them by the MoEC as stated in circular No 11 at the time when the study was conducted. Counsellors were told during counselling training workshops (at which the researcher and author of this paper was a facilitator) that the mentioned facilities/resources should be available in their schools for daily use in the provision of counselling services that would enhance the provision of effective counselling services in their schools.

The study revealed that in the absence of a counselling room, assembly halls, store rooms, libraries, shadows of various trees and staffrooms were used for counselling. However, the

confidentiality of such places was questionable given the nature of schools. For example, a student who was being counselled under a tree would attract the attention of other students, who would try to see and hear what was going on under that particular tree. This would discourage students from seeking counselling services in fear of being labelled by their fellow students. Imagine a student who might be in a highly disturbed state being counselled under the tree! Such a student would definitely be the centre of attraction, hence limiting his/her freedom of expression.

It was sad to observe that there were schools with no question boxes. A question box is a tool for a school counsellor as students can drop in questions which they feel are too *sensitive* to be asked in public, particularly those relating to reproductive health or sexuality. The box is very important also for students to gain more knowledge about the adolescence and the changes they observe in themselves. The absence of such a box shows that counsellors are not creative in ensuring the availability of the counselling working tools. It should be borne in mind that some resources are capable of being produced by counsellors while others need the counsellors to work in collaboration with the school management. If the school counsellor cannot prepare an action plan she/he may not be prepared to help students and it would be difficult for such a counsellor to ask for some items from the HoS. The action plan and the question box are some of the fundamental things, which should be readily available in schools. School counsellors have been given the knowledge about how important it is to use the mentioned facilities during training. As regards the lack of working facilities, the counsellors said that it seemed the school management had other priorities. Nevertheless, the HoS claimed that they were aware of the importance of the facilities and resources necessary for the provision of counselling services but they lacked the funds.

Utilisation of counselling service in secondary schools

The availability of counselling in schools is one thing but its utilisation is another. The availability of facilities and resources, for example, confidential counselling rooms, would in most cases enhance utilisation of the service while inadequate counselling resources adversely hamper its utilisation. FGD with students in schools indicated that utilisation of the service depended mostly on the commitment of the school counsellor to assist the students. In one

school, students claimed that most of them presented their problems to only one counsellor between the two because the other one was not ready to help. Ethically, this is wrong and unacceptable.

Heads of School were asked to take note of this anomaly and work on it because it could be that those who were appointed were not willing to work with the students. Students were also of the opinion that the lack of a counselling room does not encourage them to seek counselling. Many times when they need counsellors they find them busy with other things and invite them to come later. Unfortunately, such times hardly come as they keep getting engaged in other things, forgetting students' appointments. A student in FGD had this to say,

“When you have an appointment with the counsellor as they told us to make appointments, you get her in the office and that is you start following her looking for a private place to talk with you. I did that once, I have not gone again and I think I will not. We need a place.”

Students admitted that most of them would shy away from using the services due to such limitations.

Challenges facing school counsellors

A number of technical problems hampered the provision of counselling services in schools. The problems include but are not limited to the following: lack of adequate resources; lack of proper and adequate orientation to help students differentiate school counsellors from other teachers; heavy workload of school counsellors; and inadequate cooperation from other members of staff and sometimes strong resistance by them.

Besides these technical problems that need to be addressed in collaboration with the school management, the other problem is lack of commitment. It was noted that some school counsellors were not committed to their counselling work and therefore were not giving time to work with their students. Commitment is one of the qualities of a good counsellor (McLeod, 1994, 1998, 2003 Corey, 1996, Okun, 1984), but some of them lack this important quality yet do not want to admit their weaknesses.

Training Needs

We have already noted that counsellors not receiving adequate training is one of the main reasons for the inadequate provision of counselling services in schools. School counsellors mentioned that they need training in counselling in general, and in specific areas, including exploration of the problem, proper relationship building to allow freedom of expression concerning the problem, changing from being a teacher to a counsellor, general knowledge on life skills, record keeping in counselling, and general and specific counselling skills. Other specific areas include group counselling, referral services (when and where to refer clients), and general knowledge on HIV and AIDS and HIV/AIDS counselling. Moreover, it was learnt that some counsellors had received counselling training more than once with different facilitators from different organisations besides the MoEVT. This discrepancy needs to be looked into so as to give counsellors an equal amount of training for the benefit of students across the country.

Table 3: Counsellors Training needs

S/N	Training needs	frequency			%
		M	F	TOTAL	
1	Counselling process	24	12	36	37.5
2	Exploration of the problem	10	12	22	22.9
3	Proper relationship building	40	48	88	91.6
4	Changing from being a teacher to a counsellor	48	48	96	100
5	General Knowledge on life skills	24	18	42	43.7
6	Record keeping in counselling	12	16	28	27
7	General and specific counselling skills	24	26	48	50
8	Group counselling	4	12	16	16.6
9	Referral services	36	40	76	79.1
10	HIV/AIDS counselling	42	48	90	93.7

Table 3 indicates that all counsellors felt that it was difficult to change from being a teacher to counsellor and therefore they needed more training to gain confidence in fulfilling the two roles adequately. Other areas which most counsellors showed the need for more training in includes HIV/AIDS counselling (93.7%), proper relationship building (91.6%) and referral services (79.1%).

Discussion

Visiting the schools has revealed a gap in the provision of counselling services in many secondary schools in Tanzania. While some counsellors are working very hard to ensure the adequate provision of counselling services, others are not making much effort. A number of counsellors are not working diligently because they are not motivated to do so due to the lack of necessary resources and the support of the school management. Professionally, an effective counsellor needs to possess the qualities needed for that work. Many writers in the field of counselling such as Corey, (1996), McLeod, (1994 and 1998) and Okun, (1987) have mentioned qualities such as respect for and appreciation of themselves and other human beings, openness, tolerance, empathy, being authentic, sincerity, honesty, having a sense of humour, congruence, integrity, trustworthiness and interest in the welfare of other people. At this juncture, one may wish to ask what role is actually assumed by the school counsellor in secondary schools in Tanzania. Drawing examples from developed countries where counselling is more prominent, the American Association of Counselling (2005) points out that the role of school counsellor includes provision of a wide range of services based on individual student needs and interests such as mental, emotional, social and behavioural development, academic guidance and support services that include organisational, study and test-taking skills, services for students with special educational needs, career awareness, exploration, planning and decision-making services, and school crisis intervention and response.

All these are very important and need committed counsellors with a sense of humour, respect and recognition of such roles (Sima 2006). This is not the case in Tanzania because the profession is new and there is limited counselling training (Sima 2007). Looking intently into these qualities and the roles to be assumed, one can easily conclude that there are counsellors in schools who do not qualify even though they have been placed in such positions. The MoEVT has issued a circular to give guidance on the selection of counsellors with some or all of the mentioned qualities. Moreover, there is discrepancy in the level of training that counsellors receive. Whereas some counsellors have attended training courses twice, some have done so only once and others not at all. There is a need to equalise such training opportunities. All in all the training time scheduled for school counsellors seems not to be adequate and therefore the skills that they get in that short time inadequate. The training materials prepared for school counsellors need to allow time for more practice, so that counsellors can gain experience in changing from being a

teacher to a counsellor. Once they gain that experience it will no longer be a problem. Frequent monitoring exercises are needed to enable counsellors to assess their performance.

Summary and Conclusions

This study was conducted in selected secondary schools to evaluate progress in the provision of counselling services. The aim of the study was to see whether counselling was adequately provided in schools after the training of school counsellors. Counsellors had been trained in 96 schools within six regions in Mainland Tanzania. This was regarded as a pilot study so that the success of the training would enable the MoEVT to train counsellors in all the schools in the country.

The study revealed that in most schools the HoS use Ministry directives to ensure that counselling services are available in schools to serve students. However, there are still some problems that need to be rectified to ensure the effective provision of counselling in schools. Counsellors' workload was one problem that needs to be looked into. It seems that they are so overloaded with many school activities that they hardly get enough time to work with students in counselling sessions. The other problem is lack of counselling resources including counselling rooms. Without a proper place for counselling it is difficult to fulfil the counselling requirements, particularly the issue of confidentiality which is at the heart of the counselling profession.

In conclusion, the MoEVT is urged to ensure that counselling in secondary schools is given the required attention since that is the time when students are at the adolescent stage which is one of the most sensitive stages in human development. If we want to have functioning and productive nationals, then proper services including counselling have to start at this stage.

Recommendations for action

In the light of the foregoing findings and discussions, the paper puts forward the following recommendations for further action and follow-up.

1. Now that the MoEVT is committed to having school counsellors in every school, it should also think critically about establishing a special counselling programme in teachers colleges to train school counsellors.

2. The school counsellor position should be created in the school structure to allow for the employment of counsellors who will work in that capacity rather than the current practice where a teacher is selected for that position.
3. The MoEVT should issue a circular or directive to HoS in secondary schools instructing them to relieve school counsellors from non-teaching duties to give them more time for counselling.
4. The MoEVT should have a budget for counselling activities.
5. HoS should ensure that counselling is given priority in their schools and enforce working spirit in trained counsellors.
6. There should be frequent monitoring of counselling services in schools to ensure their adequate provision. This will make schools good places in which students can study comfortably. The monitoring will also help the MoEVT to evaluate the implementation of counselling programmes.

References

- American Association of Counselling (2005), School Counsellor at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/School_counselor cited in 2007
- Biswalo, P. (1996) Introduction to Guidance and Counselling in Diverse African Context, Dar es Salaam: Dar es Salaam University Press.
- Corey, G. (1996). Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy, (5th Ed), Washington: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company
- Dornbusch, S.M. (2000) Transitions from Adolescence, Journal of Adolescent Research, vol. 15 No. 1, January 2000 173-177, Sage Publications, Inc.
- Fraenkel, J. R. and Wallen, N. E (2000) *How to Design and Evaluate Research in Education* (4th Ed). Boston: McGraw Hill.
- Gall, M. D., Borg, W. R., Gall, J. P. (2003). Educational research: An introduction, (7th Ed). White Plains, New York: Longman.
- Greenbaum, T. L. (1993) The handbook of Focus Group Research, Kentucky: Lexington Books.
- <http://www2.edtrust.org> (2006)
- Haki Elimu (2004) Haki Elimu Annual Report 2004, Dar es Salaam: Haki Elimu
- McLeod, J. (1994) An Introduction to counselling, Buckingham: Open University Press.
- McLeod, J. (1996) Doing Counselling Research, Buckingham: Open University Press.
- McLeod, J. (1998) An Introduction to counselling (2nd Ed) Buckingham: Open University Press.
- McLeod, J (2003) An Introduction to Counselling (3rd Ed) Maidenhead: Open University Press
- Mizelle, N. B., & Irvin, J. L. (2000). Transition from middle school to high school, Middle School Journal, 31(5), 57–61.
- MOEC (2000) Guidance and Counselling Programmes, Ministry of Education and Culture, Dar es Salaam.
- MOEC (2001) Circular No 11 of 2001 Ministry of Education and Culture, Dar es Salaam.
- Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (2006) Guidance and Counselling services; A guide for counsellors in schools and teachers colleges, Dar es Salaam
- Morgan, L. P., & Hertzog, C. J. (2001). Designing comprehensive transition plans, Principal Leadership, 1(7), 10–18.

- Okun, B.F. (1987). *Effective Helping*, (3rd Ed), Monterey, California: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.
- Santrock, J. W. (2004) *Life-Span Development*, Boston: McGraw Hill.
- Schiller, K. S. (1999). Effects of feeder patterns on students' transition to high school, *Sociology of Education*, 72(4), 216–233.
- Sima R.G. (1997) *Counselling need in schools: Needs assessment for secondary school students in Tanzania*. Unpublished M.A. in Counselling Studies, Keele University .
- Sima R.G. (2002) *Possibilities and Constraints of integrating Counselling with Traditional healing in Tanzania: Counsellor and traditional healer experiences*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Manchester.
- Sima, R.G. (2006). *School, Guidance, Counselling and Learning*, In Omari (Ed.) *Educational Psychology for Teachers: Dar es Salaam: DUP*, pp 293-312
- Sima, R.G. and Mkumbo, K. (2005). *A Study on Analysis of Counselling services in Secondary Schools* (Research Report to UDSM -NORAD).
- Sima, R.G. and Mkumbo, K. (2006) *Counselling services in Secondary Schools as a Strategy to address HIV/AIDS* (Research Report- UDSM-NORAD).
- Sima, R. G. (2007) *Characteristics of Counselling Seekers in Tanzania in the era of HIV/AIDS*, In *Papers in Education (PED) No 27*, pp 88-104
- United Republic of Tanzania (URT) (1995) *Education and Training Policy*. Dar es Salaam : Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC).
- Zeedyk, M. S., Gallacher, J., Henderson, M., Hope, G., Husband, B., & Lindsay, K. (2003). Negotiating the transition from primary to secondary school: Perceptions of pupils, parents, and teachers. *School Psychology International*, 24(1), 67–79.