Dilemma of School Districts in Managing Career Counseling in South Africa

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Abstract
Historically most of the privileged white schools offered career guidance opportunities to their learners. Prior to 1994 career guidance was compulsory for white learners. Black education operated under the Department of Education and Training and some of the schools did offer guidance services through auxiliary services. School districts in South Africa are faced by the following challenges, namely: limited resources, lack of expertise and knowledge by some members of Institutional Learning Support Teams in managing multicultural counseling. Clustering of schools can help school districts and schools in sharing of expertise, resources, comparing of standards and for cooperative working
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Keywords: career counseling, white school, white learners, black education, South Africa
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INTRODUCTION
This article emanates from a paper that was presented at the 5th International Symposium on Educational Reform (5th ISER) in Finland (2009). This article explores the management challenges faced by school districts in dealing with guidance and counseling. These services are only available at schools for LSEN (Learners with Special Educational Needs) not ordinary public schools. The management of guidance and counseling in South African schools is not coherent.

In this article, guidance and counseling will be referring to aspects such as personal, social and emotional, vocational and educational, guidance and counseling. The common practice in most South African schools where guidance and counseling are available has been an emphasis on secondary school learners, especially the grade 12 learners. Schools and school districts respond only when there are problems. Schools deal with their own challenges and refer them to the districts if the challenges remain unresolved. The paper will also try to explore some possibilities in dealing with the problems.

School guidance in South Africa is very broad and may lead to generality and superficiality in its presentation. It is not implemented fully in all public schools. Prior to 1994 guidance in schools was compulsory for white learners. Black education operated under the Department of Education and Training and some schools did offer guidance services through their auxiliary services. Historically most of the privileged white schools offered career guidance opportunities to their learners. These opportunities included guidance regarding the selection of school subjects and study field choices. Many of these schools used the services of psychologists who conducted psychometric testing in order to determine learners' potential and vocational interests.

Currently the Revised National Curriculum Statement Policy of 2002 of the Department of Education makes provision for career guidance from grade 1 to 9 under the learning area Life Orientation. Since 2006 career guidance has been given the status of a school subject from grade 10 to 12. The Department of Education categorizes subjects as core, fundamental, or electives. Career guidance is now classified as a fundamental subject and all learners will have access to it and any services that are offered in this regard (du Toit, 2005).

Historically, guidance activities were present for all groups, however, the introduction of guidance on a formal basis was introduced for Whites in 1967 when a new, comprehensive National Guidance Services for Whites was legislated through the National Education Policy Act. This Act (39) of 1967, introduced the concept of differentiated education (Gannie, 1996). Guidance was introduced for Africans only in the eighties (Ibid, 1997).

Challenges Facing School Districts Limited Resources
The challenges that face schools in South Africa include financial resources (insufficient resource allocation); guidance and counseling knowledge; information technology and shortage of staff (human resources); district programmes being full; guidance and counseling services are based at district offices and not at schools; providing proper services only to the grade 12 learners and neglecting lower grades. Limited resources impact negatively on the management of guidance and counseling services in schools. District officials find it difficult to visit schools due to transport problem.

To illustrate the challenge facing school districts, in District D15 of the Gauteng Province eleven (11) staff members (Inclusion and Special Schools Unit) cater for 140 schools. Only two (2) psychologists, two (2) student psychologists doing masters degrees, and one (1) staff member with a counseling qualification do school guidance and counseling work for the 140 schools. (Discussion with Mrs Ntuli, NP, 2009, 03, 20)

The Manner in Which Institutional Learning Support Teams (Ilsts) Deal With Issues at School Level
The ways through which ILSTs deal with issues in schools are the following, namely:
- Identification of the problem by teachers in class;
- Dealing with the problem internally by ILSTs;
- Writing a letter to district office informing them about the problem by schools
- District office providing an alternative solution to the problem;
- District facilitating the process further in helping the schools;
- In an emergency, schools phone the district immediately informing the district about the problem.

This is a challenge because it takes a lot of teaching time for teachers. Some of the ILSTs members do not have the expertise and knowledge to deal with the challenges. The government has proposed a new way of providing support and guidance to schools.

Government Proposals in Providing Support to Schools
The National Treasury has made an additional amount of R30 million (2.7 million euros) available to Provinces according to the equitable share formula for the creation of substantive posts for Social Support and Counseling Services to schools in disadvantaged areas. The motivation made by Government to Treasury emphasized the following:
- An urgent need exists for social support and counseling services to schools and learners in deprived areas;
- A variety of problems need to be addressed by these counselors such as
- violence in schools;
- teenage pregnancies;
- child abuse and
- The challenges faced by learners affected by HIV and AIDS.
- Drug use and abuse.
- One approach would be to provide each of the 30 nodal areas as well as other identified deprived areas with posts at district level to render a service to schools according to their needs.
- The work that needs to be performed by these officials will be in terms of a detailed job description that will be provided.
- Addressing these needs effectively would require the creation of approximately 150 posts, which would amount to approximately R30 million per year.
- The creation of these posts and the services rendered in the particular communities will be done in close collaboration with the department of Social Development.
- The creation of these posts at promotion levels would also contribute to improving career path opportunities in education for teachers.

The National Department of Education issued 450 posts for counselors to the Gauteng Department of Education. The Gauteng Department of Education has to allocate these posts to the 15 districts in the Province. For the effective utilisation of these posts, the Province (Gauteng Department of Education) has formulated a Task Team with 1 representative from each district. The Task Team is mandated to come up with the following requirements for these posts, namely:
- Job description;
- Qualification;
- How many posts per district (according to the districts' needs).

In most cases the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) deals with learners with social as well as scholastic problems in most cases. The GDE is not satisfied with these posts to be occupied by counselors only. The department also needs educators who can support the learners academically. One of the suggestions is to employ educators who have counseling and guidance, remedial education and/or special needs education as a qualification. Another option is to employ social workers plus educators with the above qualifications to occupy those posts. In the true sense, people who fit well in the issued posts are educational psychologists but because of the shortage of educational psychologists these posts are a challenge. The Gauteng Department of Education has mandated the districts to choose who they want to occupy those posts. The districts are faced with the challenge that may not be easy to deal with (Discussion with Mrs Ntuli, N.P., 20 March 2009).

The next sub-section will be looking at the functions and responsibilities of the proposed school support counselors.

Functions and responsibilities of the proposed School Support Counselors (their job description)

- Running support and intervention programmes in targeted schools for vulnerable children;
- Coordinating the assistance programmes of the social partners in an area;
- Ensuring the effective functioning of health advisory structures and monitoring the service delivery;
- Supporting the development of Institutional Level Support Teams through ongoing mentoring, consultation and monitoring;
- Building capacity of teachers to provide curriculum support to learners who experience barriers to learning;
- Providing counseling and intervention strategies for schools;
- Performing crisis intervention;
- Coordinating programmes for street children and other groups of out of school children and youth;
- Coordinating Community Development/
- Rehabilitation programmes in collaboration with other service providers.

Qualifications will assist in appointing staff in the guidance and counseling in the districts. Officials should have a three-year degree or equivalent qualification in education or social sciences and additional experience in learning support, social support, counseling and community development. This will minimize the risk of employing staff members who did not have guidance and counseling in their training.

The next sub-section will be looking at the operational considerations of the proposed school support counselors.

Operational Considerations

The success of the proposed support school counselors' structure will depend on the implementation. The officials will be accountable to the district office but will be physically based at a site as close as possible to the schools or cluster of schools where services will be delivered. The division of work in terms of time spent on various activities will be as follows:

- 75% in schools, managing, coordinating, monitoring a range of support programmes which have been developed.
- 25% in the office/sites outside the school to administer and process reports and conduct meetings with other service providers in the area. These officials will not spend much time in workshops and formal capacity building events. They will be working with schools to ensure the effectivity and availability of support to all learners who need it.

Depending on the structures in the provincial organogram, the officials will report to a Deputy Chief Education Specialist (DCES) in the Inclusive and Special Schools (ISS) Unit Education Sub-directorate with matrix management reporting obligations to the District Based Support Teams. It is vital that district officials work within the paradigm outlined in Education White Paper 6(acknowledges that many children experience barriers to learning) where the emphasis is providing support to schools, educators and managers in terms of mentoring, consultation, monitoring and networking with schools. Some of the barriers are extrinsic (outside), e.g. socio-economic and cultural and some are intrinsic (within) the learners. This article argues that there are possibilities available in dealing with guidance and counseling challenges.

Possibilities That the Article Proposes in Dealing with Guidance and Counseling

This article suggests three practical ways in dealing with guidance and counseling challenges in schools, namely: the clustering of schools; the use of non-government organizations (NGOs) and the employment of full-time counselors and psychologists.

Clustering of Schools (grouping of schools)

Clustering is the grouping of schools together. It is necessary in order to utilize the available resources to the benefit of those schools who have limited resources. Before clustering can take place there should be a session between the combined schools to establish trust. Teachers should get to know one another to find out whether or not they could cooperate. Clustering might encourage collaboration between schools. The main challenge in clustering of schools is the question of sustainability. The management challenges in the way of sustainability include, amongst others, namely: The time factor, the financing factor and the transport factor. (www.schoolclusters.com)

The proximity is important in clustering. Schools are to be clustered according to location and distance. Transport costs are some of the challenges that may hamper some schools from benefiting from clustering. The challenges experienced outside South Africa indicate how people may be challenged by clustering, e.g. the Namibian experience. School clusters are being implemented in all regions of Namibia. The most serious problem in some regions is still the full support from the regional offices. For clustering to work, decisions need to be taken at school and cluster centre level, and then reported up to the inspectors and the regional office. But in many cases, the decisions of principals and inspectors are not acknowledged by the regional offices. Thus there is an uncertainty regarding the support and cooperation (www.schoolclusters.com).

This article argues that there are advantages in the clustering of schools.

Advantages of clustering schools
Schools will benefit by:

- Sharing of expertise;
- Comparing standards and practice
- Enhancing collaboration and partnership;
- Encouraging cooperative working;
- Sharing of resources
- Giving schools a democratic character (SASA Review Task Team document: Prepared for the Deputy Minister.7th August 2006. p.7.

The advantages of clustering schools are relevant in this paper because it give the reason why the paper sees clustering as a possibility in dealing with the management challenges (guidance and counseling).
The involvement of non-government organizations in guidance and counseling is another possibility.

The Use of Non-Government Organizations (NGOs)
This article also proposes the involvement of NGOs in dealing with guidance and counseling challenges. At times NGOs are more resourced than schools. There are different models in dealing with the self. This paper is based on an African perspective model of guidance and counseling where the self is viewed as interdependent. This is the reason why NGOs are seen as part of the solution to guidance and counseling challenges.

The Western Model of the Self
Great importance is attached to being independent of others and being able to discover one's own special attributes. The self is perceived as being separate, autonomous and interested in personal independence that sets one apart from others (Mwamwenda, 2004).

The African Model of the Self
The self is viewed as interdependent, with the emphasis on connectedness, relatedness and interdependence. Africans view the world and others as extensions of one another (Ibid, 2004:324). Embracing the African model is the term '**ubuntu'** **(humanness)** reflects anything good for human life as against anything that is not good for life for an individual and for all people) (Discussion with Mr Ntuli, M.S (Principal) on the 4th May 2009)

World-View of Supportive Organizations
The idea of involving non-government organizations (NGOs) in guidance and counseling is a worldwide phenomenon. An overview of non-government organizations involvement in guidance and counseling from countries such as South Africa, the United Kingdom, Europe, USA, Australia, and New Zealand will be looked at. NGOs from these countries are discussed here to illustrate that supportive organizations are important in dealing with guidance and counseling challenges.

South Africa
Non-government organizations have played an important role in the development of career guidance and placements for unemployed work seekers. Examples are Youth Development Trust, Khulisa, Business Skills Development Centre, and the Career Research Information Centre.

Most of these agencies operate in the informal sector and do training for work placement, employment through job creation in collaboration with business partnerships (du Toit, 2005). These centres help schools by giving information about their services and what skills they may offer to those learners who are unable to go to institutions of higher learning.
The United Kingdom

The ABC Peer Support Scheme
The ABC Peer Support Scheme creates the opportunity for a broad range of students to learn about dealing with conflict and bullying in a safe and positive environment. It works upon the principle that young people can be empowered through trust, training and support to help their peers find solutions to their issue of bullying in the school community. www.aclandburgley.camden.sch.uk.

The Coram Family
The Coram Family works with vulnerable children and young people to promote resilience, enabling them to take responsibility for their own lives and achieve their full potential (www.coram.org.uk).
Europe

Mental Health Europe
It is a non-governmental organization committed to the promotion of positive mental health and the prevention and mental distress, including for children and young people. It organises projects and events and has links with many other European organizations (Ibid, 2004).
United States of America

Centre for Social and Emotional Education (CSEE)
It is a non-profit, international organization founded in 1996 by leading educators, parents and health care professionals. CSEE provides parents, educators and mental health professionals with resources, tools and educational offerings that promote social and emotional skills and knowledge in children and adolescents. There are links to a number of organizations that can support parents and professionals understanding of children, social emotional education including: professional associations and organizations (Ibid, 2004)

Public Education Network
The School and Community Services Initiative aims to develop and strengthen the links between public schools and community based services. The goal is to provide children and youth with a comprehensive set of support services that will help them achieve both in and out of school (http//www.publiceducation.org.) Australia.

Australian Association of Infant, Child, Adolescent and Family Mental Health
The association's aim is to actively promote the mental health and well-being of infant, children, adolescents and their families and /or careers in Australia. Has links to information on the latest conferences happening in infant, child, adolescent and family. (http://www.aicafmha.net)

Family Room
It is intended to help parents plan ahead in their parenting, rather than reactive. It gives information about what is normal parenting and for young people's behavior (Weare, 2004)
New Zealand
The New Zealand Association for Adolescent Health and Development (NZAAHD).This is a national network organization for people working with young people (those aged 12 to 25) in health, education, social work and other sectors to promote adolescent health and development. (http://www.nzaahd.org.nz) (Ibid, 2004)

Skylight
This is a New Zealand support agency for children and young people who are facing change, loss and grief, provides support both in urban and rural areas.

School Districts Could Employ Full-Time School Counselors and Psychologists to be Based in Schools
Counselors who are perceived by their clients as credible (expert and trustworthy) are able to exert greater influence than are those perceived as lacking in credibility and attractiveness (Sue & Sue, 2002). Regardless of the counseling orientation (person-centred, psychoanalytic, behavioral, etc) the therapist's effectiveness tends to depend on the client's perception of his or her expertness, trustworthiness, and attractiveness (Ibid, 2002). This article argues that the employment of qualified full-time counselors and psychologists could alleviate the guidance and counseling challenges faced by schools.

This paper argues that school counselors and psychologists must have knowledge about multicultural counseling. This is because of the diverse cultures that are found in schools.

Multicultural Counseling
South African schools are multicultural and multicultural counseling is very important to school counselors. People are multi-dimensional in that they simultaneously belong to racial, ethnic, gender, religion, age, and class groups as well as affectional orientations. It is neither appropriate nor beneficial to use a narrow perspective to define people or counseling processes (Trusty et al., 2002). The competencies used to become a skilled counselor must be used to inform practice. Counselors should be likeable, trustworthy, accepting and acceptable, valuing and open, helpful, respectable and non-threatening (Mwamwenda, 2004).

There are two major types of guidance and counseling used, namely: individual (personal) counseling where the counselor deals with one person at a time; and group counseling where several people are given counseling simultaneously on the same or similar problem (Ibid, 2004).

Guidance and counseling at primary schools can assist to prevent problems that learners might experience in the future. Some of these problems include learning difficulties and acting out behavior related to fights, quarrels, disruptions, restlessness, impulsiveness and obstinacy). The rationale for guidance r and counseling at primary school is based on the idea of early detection and prevention of problems (Ibid, 2004)

Guidance and counseling at secondary school level differ from that of primary school level, primarily owing to the transitional period that secondary school learners experience as they enter the threshold of adulthood (Ibid, 2004). In secondary schools guidance and counseling is more on emotions and behavior.

Counseling with Multiple Cultures in Mind
Culture may be thought of as a support system for human beings. It is a way of life transmitted from one generation to the next (Lee et al., 2009). Individuals are shaped by the network of institutions into which they are born. They are also molded by large **systems** over which they may have little or no control.

The First System is the Universal Culture
No matter where they are located in the world, humans, like other animals, mate, reproduce, mature, grow old and die. During life, humans need shelter, food, clothes their fellows, a god or supreme entity, and many other things requisite to being human. In this instance they need guidance and counseling. Thus, humans are culturally alike in terms of adjusting to and maintaining the organism in which each resides (Ibid, 2009).

The second system that dictates the way of life of a people is the Ecological Culture (how individuals live in a given geographical area)

The third system that contributes to a culture or way of life is the Nation in which people live. In general, each country has a national language, a manner of dressing, a set of laws and procedures that set it apart from most other nations. Often immigrants new to a national culture are challenged in adjusting to it. In large countries, such as the United States and Nigeria, there are regional cultures within national boundaries. For example, American citizens living along the Mexican border may be culturally more Mexican than American. Nigerians in the north of their country next to Niger may be more like people in that country than they are like their national fellows. In France, many immigrants from former African colonies continue to live in enclaves in their host country the same way they live "back home" It should be clear from this discussion that culture affects counseling and is a challenge to cross-cultural counselors (Ibid, 2009).

Counseling a learner who has a supportive background is more manageable than a learner who does not have. In the past it was difficult for White parents to be referred to and trust Black counselors, and vice versa. It was easy for Black parents to refer their children to White counselors. This was due to the past apartheid regime which once ruled and divided South Africa along racial lines prior to 1994.

The Limitations of Group Counseling
Every person does not feel safe in a group and certain individuals may be not ready to invest emotionally in the group experience. Some individuals may feel more comfortable and safe in one -to-one relationship. Age between learners may be a limitation (Berg et al., 1998). Therefore, the group counseling with the grade 12s which is done by districts may have a limited benefit to some learners.

RECOMMENDATIONS
This article proposes that local and international non-profit organizations are invited to provide schools with information for career choices. South African schools should blend the Western and the African models of guidance where local and international non-profit organizations are invited to provide schools with new information available. These non-governmental organizations should operate in the formal sector of our education system and this need to be legislated by Government. In dealing with schools, these local and international organizations should keep multicultural and universal culture in mind.

CONCLUSION
The clustering of schools, the use of NGOs and the employment of full-time school counselors and psychologists may help to alleviate the problems faced by school districts in dealing with guidance and counseling. This argument is based on an African view of the world and others as extensions of one another (globalization).

Clustering of schools can help school districts and schools in sharing of expertise: comparing standards and practices, enhancing collaboration and partnership; encouraging cooperative working; and the sharing of resources. If problems arise from the child's home environment, it makes little sense for teachers to attempt to modify their behavior management systems in an effort to improve the child's performance (Rathvon, 1999). Schools are to obtain help outside of the school e.g. NGOs and full-time counselors should be employed and be available at school level. If the child's problem emanate from home, it is more beneficial to help the parents as well.

Well established functioning units for Guidance and Counseling in school districts are still lacking. The human and physical resources are also lacking. The Government's proposals in providing support and counseling to schools give a beacon of hope to all South Africans although not yet implemented.

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