



Effects of head teacher mentoring on the practices of guidance and counselling teachers towards ending child marriage: A case study of selected schools in Katete District of Eastern Province, Zambia.

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Key words: mentoring, guidance and counselling, teacher support, continuing professional development, ending child marriage

Abstract

Guidance and counselling teachers have been facing a myriad of challenges. One of such challenges has been inadequate support from their supervisors – the head teachers as they offer guidance and counselling services in schools since most of them were not trained in guidance and counselling. This was impacting negatively on the learners.

An intervention with support of UNICEF was carried out in 2022 to mitigate this challenge in Katete district of Eastern Province in Zambia. The intervention was called effects of head teacher mentoring on the practices of guidance and counselling teachers towards ending child marriage. The intervention targeted the head teachers by training them in guidance and counselling and mentorship so that in turn they would mentor and support their guidance and counselling teachers in their schools. Special focus was on basic counselling skills, menstrual hygiene management, school related gender based violence, school leadership and mentorship and on effects of child marriage and how to end it.

A total of 32 head teachers were purposively sampled and subsequently trained in guidance and counselling and school based mentorship. After they were trained and mentored they were in turn asked to mentor and support their guidance and counselling teachers in their schools.

The findings of the study were that head teacher mentoring had positive effects on the practices of guidance and counselling teachers. The baseline monitoring of the schools revealed a number of challenges that were faced such as inadequate support and mentorship from head teachers to guidance and counselling teachers, increased teen pregnancies among the learners, increased school related gender based violence, increased absenteeism especially by girls, unsupportive parents towards programmes in the schools, inadequate support from traditional leadership, non-reporting of child pregnancies and child marriage by parents among other challenges. After the intervention there was reduction in pregnancies and early marriage among learners, school related gender based violence, and in absenteeism. Parents were more supportive towards school programmes and education in general. More parents

were willing to report cases of early marriage and pregnancies. Traditional leaders (chief and headmen) were proactive in coming up with by-laws against early child marriage, teenage pregnancies and traditional harmful practices.

INTRODUCTION

The core mandate of educational institutions such as schools is to provide learners with knowledge and skills by offering various subjects. However, this can only be successfully achieved if the optimum emotional and psychosocial well being of learners is taken care of (MESVTEE, 2014). It is against this background that guidance and counselling provision in all learning institutions in Zambia is believed to be the means through which a number of issues affecting learners can be addressed. Without guidance and counselling in schools children will have low self-esteem, will not know how to relate with others, will have maladaptive behaviour and misfits in society, will have poor personal and academic performance, parents will not get involved in the education of their children to mention but a few.

To amplify the point above, Katete district was one of the districts with high numbers of teenage pregnancies and early marriage. The rate of absenteeism was very high. School related gender based violence was very prevalent in schools. Parents did not see the importance of having the girl child in school and did not get involved in supporting schools towards the education of their children. One of the ways that was thought would help to mitigate the problem was using guidance and counselling as a vehicle to address the challenge. It was discovered that guidance and counselling, though a good tool to resolve a number of problems affecting learners, was not effectively provided in schools. This was because many of the schools in the district did not have trained guidance and counselling teachers. Unfortunately, even the few schools with trained guidance and counselling teachers were not doing well because the guidance and counselling teachers were not receiving adequate support from their head teachers to effectively carry out their duties. This is just one of the many problems affecting guidance and counselling teachers as indicated by Mwanza and Chuunga (2022). Therefore, through the support of Ministry of Education Headquarters (School Guidance Services Unit) and UNICEF an intervention was put in place to try and solve the problem.

Some of the interventions that were put in place over a period of time were improving sanitation in schools by building appropriate toilets and improving water reticulation. Others

were training stakeholders including guidance and counselling teachers in menstrual hygiene management (making reusable sanitary towels), basic counselling, managing school related gender based violence, grievance redress mechanism as well as mentorship of guidance and counselling teachers by head teachers among other measures.

It was thought that if the head teachers knew their roles in the provision of guidance and counselling services, this would in turn make the guidance and counselling teachers perform their duties more effectively. They would support the guidance and counselling teachers. This would ultimately trickle down to the learner who would be the main beneficiary. Therefore, the concept of mentoring and supporting head teachers came into the fore so as to improve the practices of guidance and counselling teachers.

This view is supported by the Ministry of Education's School Programme of In-service for the Term (SPRINT). This is a programme that was introduced in Zambia in 1996, a school based system of continuous professional development for teachers (MOE, 2010). It is a cheaper way to provide in-service training to teachers since teachers on their own and in their own schools are able to build capacity in each other using minimal resources.

Mentoring is widely used in many countries as a form of teacher support. But what is mentoring? Sweeny (2008, p. 2) defines mentoring in education as "the complex developmental process that mentors use to support and guide their protégé through the necessary transitions that are part of learning how to be effective educators and career-long learners". From this definition it can be deduced that mentoring is complicated i.e. Comes in different forms; it changes from simple to advanced and it is a process. It is a form of support that the more experienced (mentor) helps the less experienced towards improving one's professional performance. This is in tandem with what Irby, Lynch, Bosswell and Hewitt (2017) contend that the mentor is one with more experience to offer support and guidance. It is for this reason that Chambers, Luttrell, Armour, Bleakley, Brennan, and Herald (2015), say that mentorship is a partnership that has specific benefits to both the mentor and the mentee.

Many researchers cite a number of benefits from mentorship. For instance, Robinson, Walters and Walters (2020) carried out a study in Canada to find out the benefits of mentorship on novice teachers by experienced teachers. Their findings were that mentoring had potential benefits to both the mentor and the mentee. To the mentees, mentoring enhances their classroom practices which ultimately improves the learners' outcomes. Hudson and Hudson (2016), an Australian based researcher, adds that mentoring helps in retention of new teachers in the teaching profession. Similarly, to the mentor and mentee it improves their teaching practice – it is a kind of a learning process for both. It also provides an opportunity for

mentors to reflect on their practice and make adjustments where necessary. Finally, it enhances the mentor's career and professional development thereby leading to self – actualisation (feeling a sense of satisfaction).

From the afore-mentioned it can be argued that the benefits of mentoring cannot be over-emphasised. But one may argue that the current SPRINT initiative in teacher education is adequate to provide teachers with in-service training and make them relevant to the profession. A study conducted in Kenya by Wasonga, Wanzare and Dawo (2015), suggests mentoring as one of the options for continuing professional development. This researcher shares this view that although the SPRINT model has been used to improve capacity among in-service teachers the aspect of mentoring has not been used to effectively deal with issues of inadequacies felt by some teachers. It is in this context that the principle was applied to deal with challenges faced by guidance and counselling teachers in order for them to effectively do their job.

In order for mentorship to succeed, goal setting is cardinal. According to Hudson (2016, p. 51), first the mentor must be given necessary skills, followed by establishment of mentor-mentee relationship. Then the needs of the mentee must be clearly identified followed by a needs –based plan. Then the implementation comes in followed by evaluation in order to see the results. In this regard, training of head teachers to understand what mentorship is all about was very important.

METHOD AND TOOLS

The question that this study attempted to answer was: Does head teacher mentoring have effects on practices of guidance and counselling teachers? To answer this question, a case study design was seen as appropriate. According to Gall, Gall and Borg (2007, p. 447) a case study is an “...in-depth study of one or more instances of a phenomenon in its real-life context that reflects the perspective of the participants”. Therefore, four aspects have been highlighted in this definition: (i) a detailed account (ii) phenomenon (iii) real life context (iv) perspective of the participant. In this regard, this study sought to investigate effects of head teacher mentoring on practices of guidance and counselling teachers. The phenomenon in this case is head teacher mentoring. This was done in the schools where the participants reside. Lastly, the focus is on the views of the participants and not those of the researcher as supported by Cresswell and Cresswell (2018). This was a single case study design in 32 schools of Katete district. The unit of analysis is how head teachers support guidance and

counselling teachers in these schools. The purpose of this case study was to evaluate if head teacher mentoring has effects on practices of guidance and counselling teachers.

Purposeful sampling was used to head teachers and guidance and counselling teachers. Schools with high numbers of teenage pregnancies and early marriage were purposefully sampled. According to Cresswell and Cresswell (2018), in qualitative research, participants are purposefully selected to help the researcher understand the phenomenon at hand. This agrees with what Gall, Gall and Borg (2007, p. 178) refer to as cases that are likely to be information-rich.

Data from the participants was collected mainly through interviews but focused group discussion and document analysis were also used to corroborate the responses. Use of more than one method to collect data in case study is often done to enhance the validity of the case study findings. This is what is referred to as triangulation of data (Gall, Gall and Borg, 2007). The tool had two parts: Discussion part as well as the Guidance and Counselling checklist part (See appendix 1). As can be seen on the interview schedule, the purpose of the interview is outlined as required (Gall, Gall and Borg, 2007, p. 243). The face to face interview was done with head teachers and guidance teachers. Focused group discussion was also used in some cases. Structured questions were asked to the participants. There were both open-ended and closed ended questions. The responses of the participants were noted down by the interviewers and in few cases recorded after obtaining permission from the respondents.

Interpretational analysis was used. The data was analysed through themes, constructs and patterns that were derived from the questions. This was done immediately data was being collected.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study attempted to answer the question: Does head teacher mentoring have effects on practices of guidance and counselling teachers towards ending child marriage? The intervention was done in all the 32 schools. After six (6) months, monitoring was done to appreciate how the implementation of school based mentorship programme had been done. Of the 32 schools, only 6 were secondary schools while 26 were primary schools.

Types of schools under the intervention

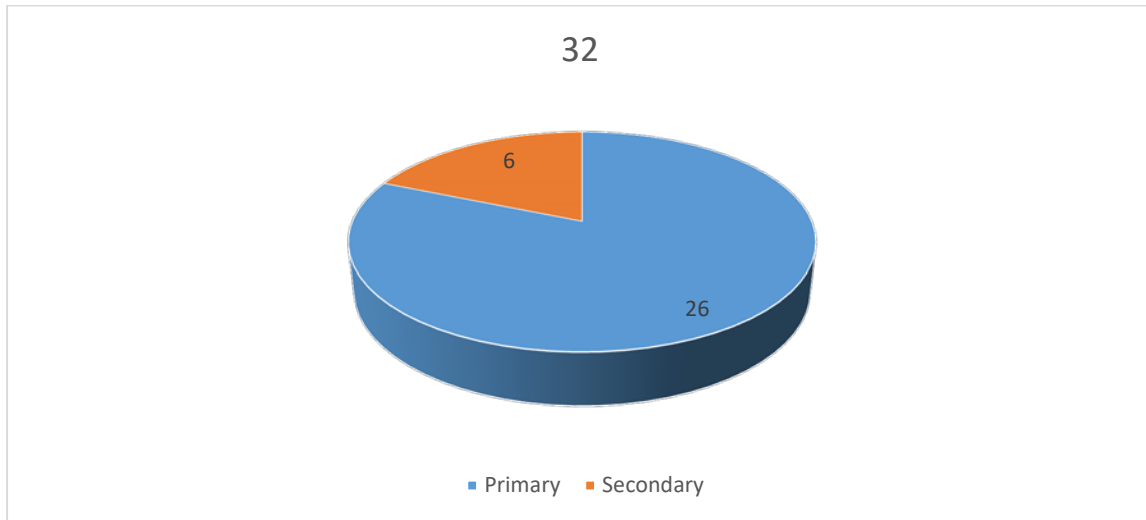


Figure 1

Out of the 32 schools, interviews were successfully conducted in 31 of them while in 1 of the schools, the participants were not found during the scheduled time for interviews:

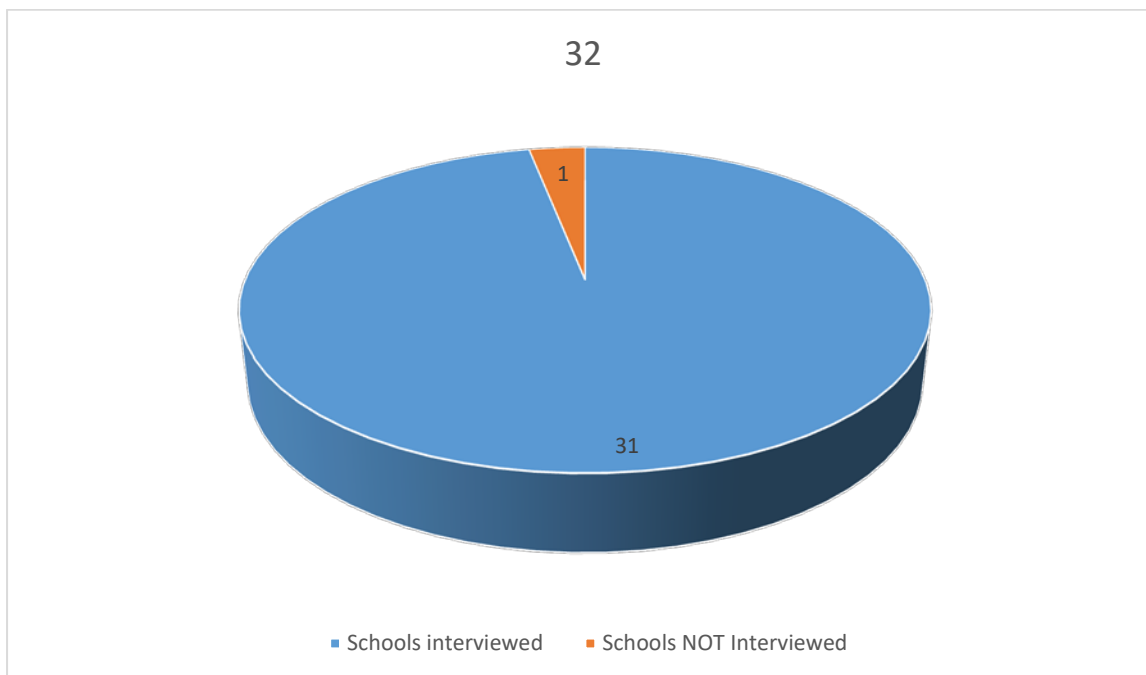


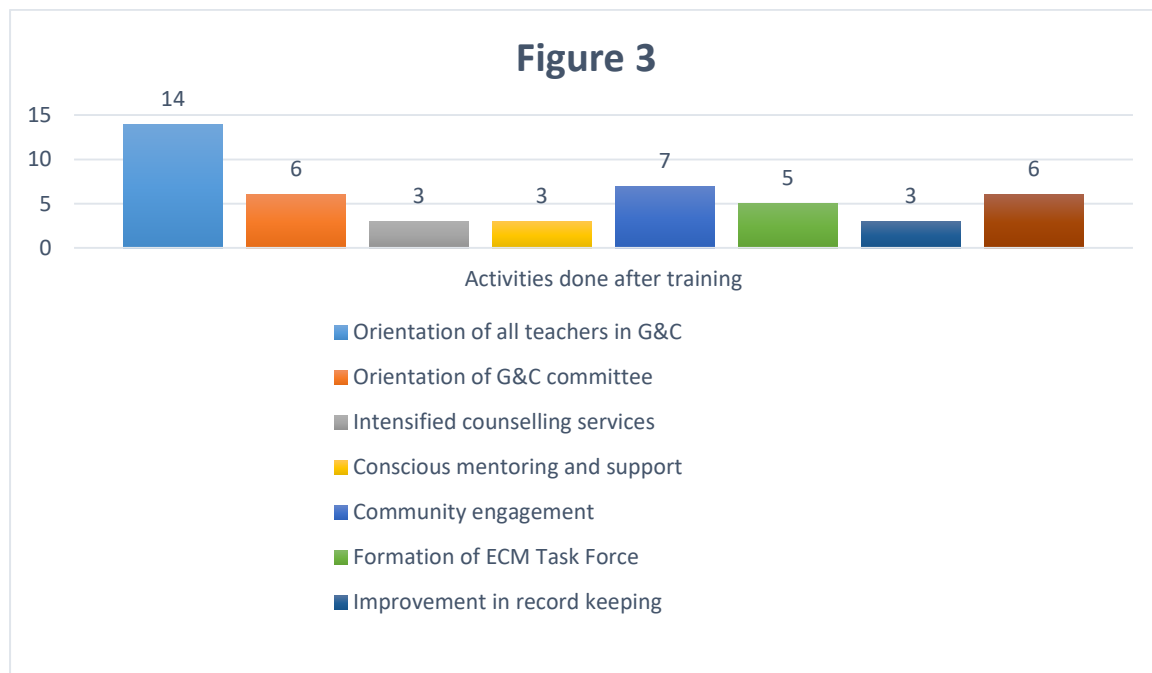
Figure 2

To investigate the phenomenon, the interview questions focused on the following (i) activities conducted in the schools after the training of head teachers in school based mentorship; (ii) needs that were addressed after the intervention; (iii) how the mentorship programme contributed towards ending child marriage; (iv) challenges that the schools faced during the implementation of the mentorship programme; (v) how the said challenges were addressed and (vi) support that the mentor and mentee needed in order to make the

mentorship relationship more effective. These questions were consequently turned into sub-headings that have been used in discussing the findings.

1. Activities conducted since the training in school based mentorship

When the participants were asked what activities they had conducted after the training in school based mentorship in guidance and counselling, they responded that they had carried out sensitisation of learners on drug abuse, health talk and importance of education. They had also oriented the guidance and counselling committee and all the teachers in guidance and counselling programmes. They had also intensified counselling services in the schools. Conscious mentoring and support sessions were being spearheaded by the head teachers. Apart from that community engagement and sensitisation meetings were held, and Ending Child Marriage Task Force/Committee or Come Back to School campaign formed. The participants further acknowledged that there was improvement in record keeping as they were always reminded to produce evidence of what they had done. Sensitisation of the school and stakeholders on teen pregnancies and early marriage had also been intensified.



It is clear from the data presented above that after undergoing the training in school based mentorship, schools under study were able to implement a number of activities that they could not implement before the training. Therefore, there was significant and positive gain in terms of the guidance and counselling teachers being actively involved in implementing a number of activities towards ending child marriage.

2. Direct Benefits of School Based Mentorship in Guidance and Counselling

When asked what needs were addressed after implementing a number of activities as indicated in 1 above, the participants had the following to say: *“More pupils that had dropped out of school due to pregnancies and other reasons have come back to school”* said one of the participants. This response was given in many schools that were visited. This therefore, makes practical the implementation of the re-entry policy where now more children are benefiting unlike before.

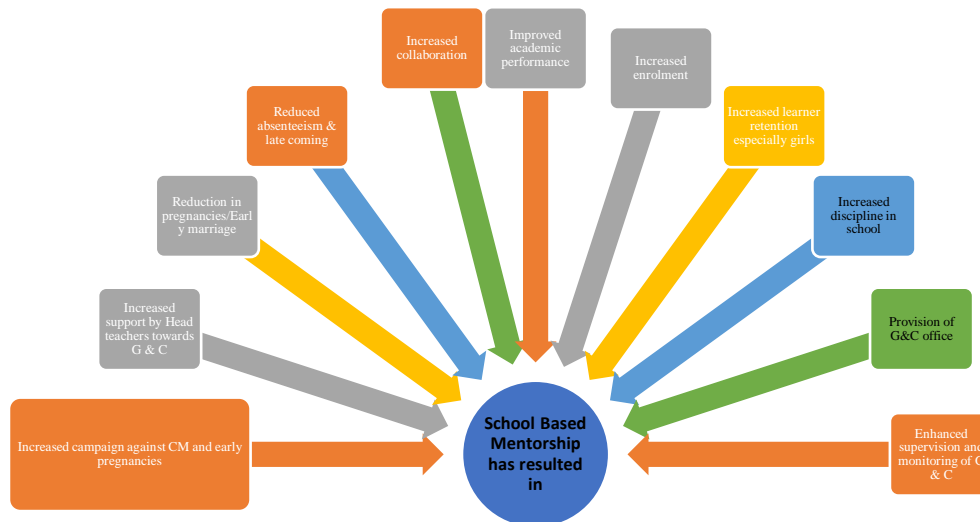


Figure 4

Another benefit that was recorded was that guidance and counselling teachers, and Maso a Mambo (Chief’s Induna) were given platform during school assemblies to address learners on various issues affecting them. In this way, support from traditional leaders was enhanced unlike before when community members looked at the school as a solitary institution which they had nothing to do with. This would not have been achieved without school based mentorship.

3. How the mentorship programme helped towards ending child marriage

When asked how the mentorship programme helped the schools towards ending child marriage a number of responses were given by respondents. One of the respondents had this to say, *“Child marriage has reduced because traditional leaders and section chairpersons are now involved in the campaign against it. For instance, the ‘Back to school campaign’ has been useful in bringing back to school more children by working with community leaders”*.

Reduction in teenage pregnancies was another way in which the school based mentorship contributed in ending child marriage in that when children do not become pregnant they are more likely to attend school. The opposite is also true in that many

parents would force their daughters into marriage if they fall pregnant as the child is seen as disgrace to the family.

There is also increased awareness about importance of school and effects of child marriage and pregnancies among community members. This means that what the schools were saying to the learners was also shared by parents in the communities. As for the parents that were marrying off their children respondents said that the chief summons parents to the palace if they marry off their child or allow their child to stay away from school. Since the subjects fear their chief and other traditional leaders, they have been cooperating for fear of being summoned by the chief. For instance, Chieftainess Kawaza has come up with by-laws aimed at ending child marriage in her chieftaindom. One of such by-laws is Back to School Campaign. It was learnt that many of the schools were following the Chieftainess' directives towards ending child marriage so much that even villagers were involved in sensitising others against child marriage. In addition to that there was increased collaboration between schools and parents in many communities.

As a result of the intervention, many girls were removed from early marriages. The respondents also said there was increased guidance and counselling provision in the schools as learners were more open to share problems.

4. Challenges in implementing school based mentorship programme

In spite of the above scored benefits, the programme had challenges during implementation. Some of the mostly cited challenges were cultural practices of chinamwali (initiation to adulthood for girls) that was still being practised though during the holiday whose syllabus may not guarantee absence of advanced teaching of sexual content. This was therefore, exposing girls to early sex as they would always want to experiment what they are taught during initiation. It was for this reason that the respondents said that some traditional practices were still impacting negatively on girl education e.g. Chinamwali and on boy education e.g. Nyau (initiation to adulthood for boys). In the case of Nyau, the boys that refused to take part in the practice were severely punished. This was leading to trauma and eventual dropping out of school. Additionally, the holding of these events during week days was also contributing to learners being absent from school as they were too tired to attend class.

Another challenge was cattle herding by boys that was still affecting their school attendance leading to dropping out. In this custom, the boys are promised a cow after herding cattle for a period of time. This leads to dropping out of school as cattle have to be looked after daily even on school days. There is also a feeling among boys that looking after cattle had visible and immediate benefits compared to school whose benefits were unforeseen and far-fetched. This was contributing to a belief among the locals that 'opunzila anakwana kale' 'the educated are so far enough, no need for more'. This was making children lose interest in school. Consequently, some girls were seeing it fashionable getting pregnant deliberately.

Respondents also said that the re-entry policy was not well followed as some girls often want to return to school immediately after delivery; yet other girls just disappear after falling pregnant without applying for maternity leave. Another challenge was that those responsible for pregnancies were not willing to come forward to sign forms.

It was learnt during the interviews that despite the traditional leadership being proactive in combating child marriage, some parents were still secretly marrying off their children. There was therefore, a pocket of resistance by some parents whenever the school tries to engage them on issues of teenage pregnancies, early marriage and absenteeism.

Another challenge that was prevalent in most schools was poor sanitation. This was consequently, making older girls that had reached puberty to stay away from school during menses. The sanitary conditions in the school were not conducive for them to be in school during those five or so days. At the end of a term or a year, these learners lag behind in academic performance. Eventually, they drop out of school. There were efforts though to improve sanitation in these schools but at the time of this intervention, more still needed to be done.

There is also the issue of long distances from schools/homes to health facilities. The respondents recounted how the learners face difficulties in accessing health services whenever they were referred.

Low staffing levels was another challenge that was being faced by many schools. More than half of the schools visited cited inadequate staffing as contributing to difficulties in implementing school based mentorship in guidance and counselling.

This was leading to more work in terms of teaching load. So the mentor and mentee, did not have adequate time to engage one another on guidance and counselling matters. This challenge was there because the Government had not yet recruited the 30,496 teachers which happened in August 2022 just after the interviews. The situation could have changed for the better now.

Another major challenge among these communities was high poverty levels. This was leading to some parents being uncooperative parents when required to come to school unless they were reported to the traditional leaders. Due to poverty, some parents still wanted to settle matters of child pregnancies outside court by conniving with perpetrators after receiving inducement. This to some extent was negating the fight against the vice. Suffice though to state that this was slowly disappearing as parents were becoming enlightened regarding the law and consequences of the law on parents who marry off their children.

It was also established that in some schools there was lack of confidentiality among teachers. This was leading to learners not being willing to share what they were going through. The lack of sharing, was leading to dropping out of school. This was common in schools that did not have trained or well oriented guidance and counselling teachers.

When asked why they had not implemented some of their planned activities some mentors said this: *“Zonal meetings affect school programmes. As a head teacher, I do not have time to schedule contact time with the mentee as I’m required to attend zonal meetings.”* For this reason, only very few contact sessions had been done in some schools.

Farming activities were also limiting parents’ participation in meetings. It was learnt that some parents who were mostly peasant farmers were not willing to attend meetings called up by the school because they opted to go to their fields. So this too was making the fight against child marriage difficult.

Another common challenge in the schools was inadequate office space and lack of counselling rooms. Teachers were finding it difficult to do their work as they did not have an office of their own let alone counselling rooms where to conduct face to face or one-on-one counselling sessions with individual learners.

5. How the challenges were addressed

On the challenge of some traditional cultural practices such as Chinamwali and Nyau, the traditional leaders had put measures in place. For instance, girls were not allowed to enter Chinamwali during school days but during the school holidays. This was helping the girls to have access to education during the school term while undergo the initiation process when schools are on recess. Secondly, there were efforts aimed at revising the 'curriculum' especially in terms of content. The 'Alangizi' traditional teachers for the girls, were not allowed to introduce explicit sexual content to the young girls but should only teach them about personal hygiene and other moral issues.

Regarding the boys and the Nyau custom, the traditional leaders have passed a by-law that no Nyau dance should be held during the week. All Nyau dances must be held over the weekends in order to enable the school going children have rest and attend school without disturbances. Schools also have continued sensitising learners on the importance of school.

In order to increase awareness, Her Royal Highness Chieftainess Kawaza was involved in sensitising stakeholders such as parents and head teachers on ending child marriage and teenage pregnancies. The Chief's Induna as well as head men and women were involved in the fight against child marriage and teenage pregnancies unlike in the past when they fought school administrators for talking against the vice. In these areas, uncooperative parents were reported to the Chieftainess for punishment. For fear of being punished, many parents were afraid of marrying off their children let alone hiding a pregnancy or letting a child stay away from class. Because of the Chief's intervention, schools were able to summon parents and engage them on matters relating to their children and development of the school. Parents were more cooperative than before.

Through guidance and counselling services, teachers, parents and learners have been reached out. Sensitisation meetings were successfully held to try and change attitudes. Myths and misconceptions have been busted and facts clearly presented. This has led to an informed community.

On the challenge of low staffing levels, most schools that were understaffed were able to beef up staffing levels using volunteer teachers. This was a short term measure

though. Many of the head teachers were hopeful that the impending recruitment of teachers then, would solve part of the problem as they might be given new teachers.

Coming to the issue of poor sanitation especially regarding girls during their menses, schools were making reusable sanitary pads. As indicated in the background, the Ministry of Education through UNICEF had trained the guidance and counselling teachers and head teachers on how to make reusable sanitary pads.

In order to get around the challenge of lack of office accommodation for guidance and counselling teachers, sharing office space was common. For instance, some deputy head teachers and senior teachers were sharing office space with guidance and counselling teachers. Though somewhat helpful, this was creating a problem whenever a learner wanted to have face to face session with the guidance and counselling teacher. This was leading to one of the officers sharing the office, to temporarily leave the room to enable the counsellor and counselee conduct their session freely.

Regarding the challenge of long distances from homes to school, some schools were providing weekly boarding facilities to the learners. However, these boarding facilities were not adequate and were makeshift in nature. Therefore, instead of solving the problem, it was presenting another problem where the girls in these makeshift and unsupervised boarding facilities were exposed to abuse especially sexual abuse from the men. These men were taking advantage of the girls' vulnerability as such were bribing them with groceries so that they could consent to sexual relationships.

Generally, most of the challenges that learners were facing were being resolved through constant talking to the learners during assemblies. Some schools had also partnered with the Drug Enforcement Commission (DEC) in creating awareness on dangers of drug abuse. The Ministry of Health was also involved in training peer educators as well as providing reproductive health services to the youths.

6. Support needed to make the mentoring relationship more effective

When both the mentors and the mentees were asked what type of support they needed to make their mentoring relationship more effective they said they needed more

continuous training. This could be achieved through continuing professional development that was already being provided through School Programme of In-service for the Term (SPRINT) (MoGE, 2015). Continuing professional development (CPD) is the cheapest way for in-service training. Instead of just supervising, the administrator or supervisor is also able to provide mentorship and support to the subordinates. This agrees with Ambrosetti, Dekkers and Knight (2017) who contend that mentorship has become a prominent approach and has almost replaced supervisory model.

The mentees also wished they could have frequent meetings with their mentors as they felt that they could benefit more. This is understood because mentorship is complex. It is for this reason that some scholars say that mentorship is relational, developmental as well as contextual (Ambrosetti, Dekkers and Knight, 2017). It is developmental in that it is a gradual process that has a beginning and end. It is also relational in that the involved parties develop a relationship and understand each other in a more detailed way. Above all it is contextual in that it depends on the context or environment in which it is being implemented. This study therefore, is underpinned by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In order for the guidance and counselling teachers to effectively perform their duties, there are a number of factors that may contribute to their performance and these factors are interlinked.

CONCLUSION

This study sought to investigate the effects of head teacher mentoring on practices of guidance and counselling teachers. The study began with a training of headteachers in school based mentorship. Thereafter, an intervention was carried out in 32 schools of Katete district. The findings of the study were that there was significant change on the practices of the guidance and counselling teachers. This ultimately positively affected the learners in the guidance and counselling services provided by the teachers. It was also established that through the school based mentorship programme, school head teachers were able to engage communities and sensitised them on ending child marriage and reducing teenage pregnancies. The study further established that there was increased collaboration between traditional leadership and school administrators towards combating child marriage. If school based mentorship was rolled out to all the schools in Katete, there would have been increased

retention of both girls and boys, reduced teenage pregnancies, and reduced child marriage among other positive gains.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are hereby made:

- There is need for reduction in their teaching load in order for the guidance and counselling teachers to have time for counselling and giving guidance to learners.
- Most guidance and counselling teachers in the intervention schools did not have permanent offices or counselling rooms. There is need for offices where these officers could operate from in a professional manner.
- Due to long distances from school to learners' homes, there is need for bicycles to enable guidance and counselling teachers reach out to distant villages.
- Going by their desire and request, there is need for more capacity building of both the head teachers and guidance and counselling teachers.
- In order to make the mentoring relationship more real and effective, there is need for frequent meetings between the mentor and mentee.
- While government has tried to produce a number of materials, there is need for continued supply of guidance and counselling materials in the schools.
- School based mentorship should be used as continuing professional development activity in other districts.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1.

Monitoring tool for the School Based Mentorship Programme

Name of the mentor:.....Name of the mentee:.....

School:..... District:.....

Purpose of the monitoring:

- Provide necessary support to both the mentor and mentee.
- Give on the spot advice in order to help participants meet programme expectations.
- Help mitigate any challenges that may arise in the context of the school-based mentoring.
- Appreciate the quality of the mentoring relationship in order to ensure that the mentee benefits from the experience.

PART A: DISCUSSION

1. What activities have you conducted since the last training in School Based Mentorship programme?
2. What are some of the achievements (or needs that have been addressed) you have recorded so far? Cite some of them.
3. How has this mentorship programme helped you towards ending child marriage in your community? Why do you say so?
4. Have you had any challenges? Cite some of them.
5. How did you resolve them or hope to resolve them?

	other stakeholders			
	Follow up activities			
Guidance and Counselling Services provided by the School	Personal, social, educational, career and counselling programmes conducted			
	Evidence of reports, case records, minutes			
	Motivational talks, career talks, exhibition, Career Days, educational tours			
Guidance and Counselling Records	Evidence of updated necessary records both confidential and open on guidance and counselling:			
	Learners' Counselling record			
	School based assessment results			
	Academic Examination Certificates			
	Examination results analysis			
	Information posters, charts and pamphlets			
	Career and occupational information			
	Records of orphans and vulnerable children and children with SEN			
	Record on students' bursaries			
	Record on re-entry cases/drop outs			
Record of pregnant girls				



Name of Monitor:.....

General comment of the monitor.....

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Date:.....

Author's Biography

Mathias Shimanga Chuunga, holds a Master of Philosophy in Special Education from the University of Oslo in Norway. He also studied Special Education and Linguistics and African Languages. Has held a number of positions in the Ministry of Education in Zambia as English and African Languages Teacher, Lecturer at a Primary Teachers' Training College, Education Standards Officer in charge of Special Education, Senior Education Officer in charge of Guidance and Counselling and now District Education Board Secretary. Research interests include special needs education, teacher mentoring and support, early childhood education and development, early grade literacy and guidance and counselling among others.