

EFFECT OF TEACHER COUNSELLORS' PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING SERVICES IN BARINGO CENTRAL SUB-COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract

This study sought to examine the influence of teacher counsellors' professional qualifications on the implementation of guidance and counselling services in secondary schools within Baringo Central Sub-County, Kenya. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design with a sampling frame of 36 secondary schools, 36 principals and 72 teacher counsellors. In addition, the study employed questionnaires as a means of data collection and the results were analysed using SPSS version 22. The study used descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations and frequencies) in data analysis. The study found that very few teacher counsellors had been fully trained on the interpersonal skills necessary to undertake guidance and counselling within secondary schools. This was bound to negatively affect the implementation of guidance and counselling services in the schools. Therefore, it was recommended that the Ministry of Education and the Teachers' Service Commission develop clear policy guidelines on the appointment, training of teacher counsellors, workload, remuneration and responsibilities of school s.

Key terms: Guidance, counselling, teacher counselors, professional qualification.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, guidance and counselling services have become a necessary part of all schooling systems in society. This is because guidance and counselling processes have been found to be the best approach to help children and their family members deal with frustrating issues (Ngumbi, 2012). An effective guidance and counselling programme has the necessary components: guidance curriculum, responsive services, individual planning, and system support (Ojwang, 2010). The guidance and counselling components include educational and academic matters, vocational matters and personal or psychological counselling (Mungai, 2010). In addition, guidance and counselling services are organised around appraisal services, informational counselling, planning, placement and additional follow-up and evaluation services (Igoki, 2013).

Guidance and counselling traces its origins as a formal discipline in institutions of learning and other institutions in the United States of America (USA) (Njimu, 2013). The guidance movement grew out of voluntary efforts in educational, civic and social work, leading to formal guidance and counselling in the United States (Gitonga, 2014). This movement later led to the growth of counselling psychology in the 20th century. This was based on people's concern for fellow humans and their well-being, particularly the younger members of the society (Orange, 2011).

The deteriorating level of the guidance and counselling status in the Kenyan education sector was noted by the Totally Integrated Quality Education and Training (TIQET) report on the Educational System of Kenya (Orange, 2011). The report stated that the guidance and counselling unit at the Ministry of Education had been neglected over the years, reducing the unit's efficiency (Njimu, 2013). Furthermore, most of the professionally trained personnel in the unit retired or had been deployed to other sectors. Therefore, the institutional and field staff within the school systems did not have places or personnel to provide them with guidance (Igoki, 2013). This advice would help them carry out the guidance and counselling duties effectively. The TIQET observed that a large number of learners in education and training institutions were in dire need of guidance and counselling services (Njoroge, 2014).

Within the education system, guidance and counselling services are fundamental to the functioning of the school system. They help to realise and maintain a healthy and motivated school workforce and appropriate student discipline and enable the students to make appropriate life decisions. In Kenya, guidance and counselling is mandated by the Ministry of Education as a requirement in schools. Moreover, teacher counsellors are appointed and posted to schools by the Teachers Service Commission (TSC). However, schools still experience a lot of problems relating to student indiscipline. Scholarly reports indicate that guidance and counselling programmes are inefficient for several reasons, among them being constraints of time, finances, negative attitudes from students, teachers, parents and administrators and the challenges of the changing society. Other challenges affecting the guiding and counselling departments are poor training of the guidance and counselling teachers and a low state of planning and support (Republic of Kenya, 2001).

The Report of the Task Force on Student Discipline and Unrest (Republic of Kenya, 2001) recognised the use of guidance and counselling in the management of student discipline in schools due to its proactive

approach. The fact that guidance and counselling is a recognised means of discipline management in schools, and considering that, it is an institutionalised aspect of the schooling system in Kenya, one is forced to call to question the delivery of counselling services in view of the lapse in students' discipline in Kenya. The fact that many schools nationwide are experiencing indiscipline cases in schools as evidenced by students' unrest, destruction of school property and drop-outs, casts doubts on the implementation of guidance and counselling services. The unrests are violent and destructive, premeditated and have caused maximum harm to human life (Nyamwange et al., 2012). This scenario suggests a lack of adequate alternative strategies to contain student indiscipline, and Baringo Central Sub-County is not an exception. The level of indiscipline in schools and social ills such as teenage pregnancy, drug addiction, alcoholism, school dropouts and school strikes indicate an increasing need for proper guidance and counselling sessions in schools (Gikandi, 2012). Therefore, the study examined the effect of teacher counsellors' professional qualifications on the implementation of guidance and counselling services in Secondary Schools in Baringo Central Sub-County.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Professionally trained guidance and counselling teachers play a critical role in the implementation of guidance and counselling services in schools. The training and professional qualifications of the guidance and counselling teachers affect the implementation process and effectiveness of the guidance and counselling curriculum. Studies have shown that the necessary training of the guidance and counseling teachers positively affects the effectiveness of the services they provide in enhancing discipline in schools. For instance, Gitonga (2014) notes that the guidance and counselling teacher must have personal competences in self-acceptance and interpersonal working relationship. This is because the guidance and counselling teachers interact with other people, including students, school administrators and other teachers, and their interpersonal working relationships will highly determine their success (Orange, 2011). Proper and adequate professional training on these aspects ensures that the teacher is competent in line with the personal behaviour expected of him/her (Ojwang, 2010). However, there is an acute lack of adequate training and information on guidance and counselling guidelines for teachers. In most cases, the guidance and counselling teachers wait until students' emotional experiences have developed into problems.

Ngumbi (2012) argues that the most critical issue facing counselling is the quality of s' preparation and guarantee of competence for school s in their roles. This shows that counselling needs to be provided by people who must have some training for this work. It also reflects negatively on the concept of the teachers in Kenyan schools because any person in a school who is interested in helping the students can guide and counsel, for example, administrators, teaching staff or the school chaplain (Igoki, 2013). This is a defective view because counselling, like any other profession, requires thorough preparations in the theories and practical skills to carry it out effectively (Mungai, 2010). The aspects of guidance and counselling on which teachers need to be trained include knowledge of theories of personality and psychotherapy, the diagnostic and behavioural intervention techniques, as well as dynamics of human behaviour (Aura, 2003).

In most secondary schools in Kenya, guidance and counselling is not a fully-fledged department with adequate resources and competent skills (Wairagu, 2013). In fact, guidance and counselling teachers in most secondary schools are nominated by the school head teacher or voted in by the staff members (Njoroge, 2014). Therefore, guidance and counselling is assumed to be a less important section or service, and there is no consideration of whether the teacher possesses appropriate skills and knowledge in guidance and counselling to undertake that office. Such teacher counsellors have proved ineffective because they do not understand their role in guidance and counselling (Mungai, 2010).

There have been recommendations that school principals and senior teachers supervise guidance and counselling programmes that had been established in secondary schools (Ojwang, 2010). Still, training was not considered a necessity; one only needed to be the head or senior teacher to oversee guidance and counselling programmes. This scenario led to the failure of schools to offer the required and relevant guidance and counselling services. In an attempt to enhance guidance and counselling, the government also proposed in-service courses and short-term seminars for all practising teacher counsellors in secondary schools. However, these initiatives were not evaluated for their effectiveness in secondary schools (Kamau, 2010). In addition, the guidance unit at the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) is mandated with the organisation and coordination of county-level in-service training (Gitonga, 2014).

3.0 METHODS

The study was conducted in Baringo Central Sub-County. It adopted a descriptive survey research technique. The target population was all the secondary school teachers within the study area. At the time of the study, the Sub-County had 36 secondary schools with 72 guidance and counselling teachers. The research used all 36 schools. Out of the 367 teachers, the research purposively sampled the school-counselling teachers. All the 36 principals in these schools and a total of 72 counselling teachers (two from each school) were thus sampled. This gave a total sample of 108 respondents. To collect data, a structured questionnaire was used. Once the filled questionnaires were collected, they were sorted out to eliminate those with incomplete responses. The questionnaires were then coded into the SPSS software version 22 for the purposes of data analysis. Descriptive statistics used in the study-included means, standard deviations and frequencies.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

The research sought to establish the educational levels of the respondents. The findings are as shown in Figure 1.

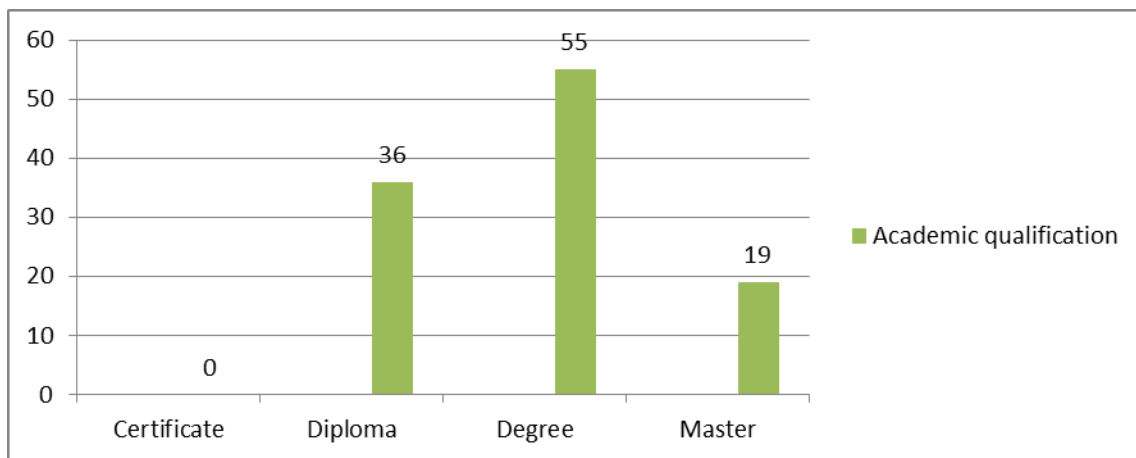


Figure 1: Education Level of Respondents

The findings in Figure 1 above show that 36 per cent of the respondents had attained a college diploma, 55 per cent had attained a degree and only 19 per cent postgraduate level. Kamuli and Katahore (2003) assert that the level of training and education for employees influences their skill power and ability to adjust to new situations. Therefore, teachers' level of training and education determines their perception and appreciation of complex issues of education, such as guidance and counselling programmes.

Professional Guidance and Counselling Qualifications

The research also attempted to determine whether the respondents had acquired professional guidance and counselling qualifications. Such skills were deemed to influence the ability of the teachers to appreciate and more ably facilitate guidance and counselling programmes.

Table 1: Professional Guidance and Counselling Qualifications

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	35	38.9%
No	60	61.1%
Total	95	100

Table 1 indicates that a majority (61.1%) of the teachers had not been trained in professional in guidance and counselling. This implied that there was a significant shortage of teachers with adequate professional guidance and counselling skills, which could negatively affect the services they rendered to students in need of such services.

Duration of Service as a Teacher

The study aimed to find out how long the respondents had served in the teaching profession. The length of service was assumed to enable the teachers to provide reliable information regarding the implementation of guidance and counselling services in their schools.

Table 2: Length of Service

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 5 years	9	9.8%
5-10 years	28	29.4%
10-20 years	34	35.3%
More than 20 years	24	25.5%
Total	95	100

Source: Field data (2015)

The majority of the teachers had served for 10-20 years, representing 35.3 per cent of the respondents. These were followed by those who had served for 5-10 years at 29.4 per cent and 20 years at 25.5 per cent. The least were teachers who had served for 0-5 years, representing only 9.8 per cent of the respondents. A teacher's length of stay at a particular school and experience in teaching determines their capacity to give valuable information about the issues affecting their school.

Teachers' Qualification and Implementation of Guidance and Counselling Services

The researcher sought to determine the effect of teacher counsellors' professional qualification on the implementation of guidance and counselling services in Baringo Central Sub-County secondary schools. To achieve this objective, the respondents were given various statements on teachers' professional training in guidance and counselling. They were then asked to indicate their extent of agreement with each statement on a five-point Likert scale where 1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Neutral, D=Disagree and 5=Strongly Disagree. The findings were as indicated in Table 3.

Table 3: Teachers' Training and Implementation of Guidance and Counselling Services

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
I am fully trained on the interpersonal skills necessary to undertake guidance and counselling within secondary schools	30%	27%	5%	23%	15%
I regularly attend workshops, seminars and conferences on guidance and counselling aspects to improve my skills in guidance and counselling in secondary schools	25%	33%	13%	10%	19%
I often attend refresher courses on guidance and counselling to improve my skills in the guidance and counselling within secondary schools	14%	22%	10%	30%	24%
I feel I am adequately trained and professionally exposed to deal with any guidance and counselling needs from my students	15%	30%	13%	23%	19%

Table 3 above indicates that a majority (30%) of the respondents strongly agreed that they were fully trained on the interpersonal skills necessary to undertake guidance and counselling within their secondary schools. Another 27 per cent agreed with the statement. Very few were neutral, while 23 per cent disagreed and 15 per cent strongly disagreed. Therefore, the study found that most respondents had been fully trained on the interpersonal skills necessary to undertake guidance and counselling within their secondary schools. Still, many respondents had not been trained in the necessary schools to undertake guidance and counselling.

Moreover, 25 per cent strongly agreed that they regularly attended workshops, seminars and conferences on guidance and counselling to improve their skills in guidance and counselling in secondary schools. Another 33 per cent agreed with the statement. Meanwhile, 13 per cent were neutral on the statement, whereas 10 per cent disagreed and 19 per cent strongly disagreed. These findings suggested that most of the respondents regularly attended workshops, seminars and conferences on guidance and counselling to improve their skills in guidance and counselling in secondary schools. However, a significant number of others had not attended such workshops, seminars and conferences. On whether they often attended refresher courses on guidance and counselling to improve their skills in the guidance and counselling within their schools, 14 per cent of the respondents strongly agreed, and 22 per cent agreed. Another 10 per cent were neutral on this question, while 30 per cent disagreed and 24 per cent strongly disagreed. Therefore, the study deduced that many of the respondents often attended refresher courses on guidance and counselling to improve their skills in the guidance and counselling within their schools. However, a significant number of others never attended such refresher courses on guidance and counselling.

Finally, 15 per cent of the respondents strongly agreed, and 30 per cent agreed that they felt adequately trained and professionally exposed to deal with their students' guidance and counselling needs. Only 13 per cent were neutral on this statement. Meanwhile, 23 per cent disagreed, and 19 per cent strongly disagreed. As such, it was deduced that many of the respondents felt adequately trained and professionally exposed to deal with their students' guidance and counselling needs. However, a good number of them never felt adequately trained and professionally exposed to deal with any guidance and counselling needs from their students.

According to Gitonga (2014), the guidance and counselling teacher must have personal competences in self-acceptance and interpersonal working relationship. However, the study findings showed that this was not the case in many schools. Ngumbi (2012) also argues that the most critical issue facing counselling is the quality of preparation and guarantee of competence for school s in their roles. This suggests that counselling is provided by a person who must have some training for this work. However, as shown in the study, many teachers had not been exposed to opportunities to enhance their competences. This reflects negatively on the concept of the teacher s in Kenyan schools because any person in a school setting, as long as he/she is interested in helping the students, can guide and counsel, for example, administrators, teaching staff or the school chaplain (Igoki, 2013).

5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions: The researchers concluded that most of the teacher counsellors had been fully trained on the interpersonal skills necessary to undertake guidance and counselling within their secondary schools. Nevertheless, many of them have not been trained in the necessary schools to undertake guidance and counselling. Additionally, the majority of the teachers regularly attend workshops, seminars and conferences on guidance and counselling aspects to improve their skills in guidance and counselling in secondary schools. On the contrary, many others have not attended such workshops, seminars and conferences. Moreover, many of the teachers often attend refresher courses on guidance and counselling to improve their skills in the guidance and counselling within their schools. However, a significant number of others never attend such refresher courses on guidance and counselling. Lastly, many of the teacher counsellors feel adequately trained and professionally exposed to deal with their students' guidance and counselling needs. Nevertheless, a good number of them never felt adequately trained and professionally exposed to deal with any guidance and counselling needs from their students.

Recommendations: Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education and the Teachers' Service Commission should come up with clear policy guidelines on the appointment, training of counsellors, workload, remuneration and responsibilities of school counsellors. There is also a need to have professionally trained school counsellors to effectively deliver guidance and counselling services. In addition, guidance should be conceptualised in a broader, more comprehensive, holistic view, incorporating vocational and other aspects of development.

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