

The Learner friendly School Approach in Kenya: An Examination of the Role of Guidance and Counseling in Secondary Schools

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ABSTRACT

Numerous empirical evidence from around the globe, suggest that guidance and counseling programs are critical in the establishment of learner friendly schools for all children. This paper sets out to examine the role of guidance and counseling in creating learner friendly secondary schools in Kenya. An exploration of the impacts of guidance and counseling on academic development of students in secondary schools is also done. To this end, focus is set on student's discipline, student's personal and social development and their academic development. A discussion is further made linking effective study skills, students' discipline, classroom behavior and improved interpersonal relationships. It is inferred here that students will understand themselves better, accept others and obey authority. Guidance and counseling therefore is an invaluable asset in creating learner friendly environment in the school.

1. Introduction

Life is so complex and dynamic that a child cannot go through it successfully without guidance from older people. The child is overwhelmed by multiplicity of activities taking place within his/her body or in the environment around him/her to an extent of losing his own power of orderly reactions. For this reason, children need to learn in a school that provides proper guidance in order to direct and mold their personality. Such a school environment enables students to achieve high standards that they can use in their future education or the workplace (Sink, 2003). In the school, guidance and counseling plays a major role in developing the students' beliefs, attitudes and competencies, which effectually make them morally mature and responsible members of the society.

Students need to be helped to make wise choices in various aspects of their life. The school is best suited for that kind of guidance because it is in school where students spend most of their time. It is imperative therefore that Guidance and Counseling be incorporated in the development of a learner friendly school. This therefore necessitates that there should be a good guidance and counseling program in the school to help the youngsters develop to their full potential.

2. Guidance and Counseling creating Learner Friendly Schools

Guidance and counseling is critical for establishment of learner friendly schools for all children. Biswalo (2006) explains that the need for counseling today could be due to the ever-growing complexity of the society and the people have to learn how to cope with the upcoming challenges. These challenges affect also the students in secondary schools who have to cope with emotional baggage generated from the family and the society. Therefore, guidance and counseling comes in handy to help the students to cope with social challenges and overcome emotional baggage that might affect their academic and personal development.

In Nakuru Kenya, Head teachers who attended a UNICEF workshop on Child friendly schools made observations on this approach in their schools (UNICEF, 2012). They noted amongst other things, a learner friendly school is one in which students feel loved and accepted. In the school, students are given freedom to express themselves and their participation considered in decision making process. It is the school in which students achieve high standards that they can use in their future education and in the work place; and where students feel safe and happy. It is the school which promotes those values that will help students to become good and responsible citizens, enable them to become involved in their community and become good family members.

David and Ashley (2005) note that it is expected that in an effective and learner friendly school, all children whether they be male or female, rich or poor, will learn at least the essential knowledge, concepts and skills needed so that they can be successful at the next level. Further, it has been found that when school improvement processes based upon the effective school research are implemented, the proportions of students that achieve academic excellence either improves, or at the very least, remains the same. There are many characteristics of a learner friendly school, but most important being that the student should be able to live in a safe and orderly environment which encourages good behavior and high level of achievement. To attain this, guidance and counseling should be taken seriously.

Repetto et al. (2007) observe that Guidance can be viewed as the provision of information to groups or individuals so that those individuals can reach informed decisions. The guidance services aims at bringing the students into contact with the world of reality in such a way that they acquire life skills and techniques which allow them to direct themselves completely in the educational, personal and social spheres and the world of work in order to progress and survive effectively. Rossberg and Crammer (2004) state that counseling is largely concerned with the normal individuals in a bid to increase such individuals' self-awareness, helping improve problem-solving skills, educating the individual and supporting that individual.

Engelkes and Vanderfoot cited in Nyaga (2011) note that the foundation of guidance and counseling is rooted in the development of psychology in the 19th Century. Early psychologists comprised of Wilhelm in Leipzig in Germany and his psychological experimental laboratory in 1879, G. Stanley in the psychological laboratory at John Hopkins University in 1883 and Sigmund Freud with his studies on Psychological development in the 1890s. Through these early psychologists, there emerged others like Jesse Davis who initiated guidance procedures in Michigan schools as early as 1898 and Fran Person, who founded a vocational Bureau to advice young men in securing jobs. Other early scholars in the field of psychology who contributed remarkably to the development of guidance and counseling include:

- a. Ann Reed credited with participation in the programming of academic guidance and counseling.
- b. Carl Rodgers who came up with dimension of counseling therapy.
- c. Skinner B.S, who contributed by developing the principles of behavior.
- d. Donald Supper who promoted career counseling
- e. Robert Carkhuff who highlighted counseling procedures.

3. Guidance and Counselling in Schools

The concept of counseling has been there for many years. According to Ndondo (2004) the realization that one can be helpful to another by sharing insight, perspectives, understanding, warmth and acceptance can be witnessed in many instances in human history. The need for counseling services today can be attributed to the ever-growing complexity of the society and people have to learn how to cope with the upcoming challenges. These may include but are not limited to increasing social, economic, personal and even educational challenges in the modern society. The unprecedented expansion of educational institutions and learners in Kenya has created a number of psychological problems that are personal, vocational and social. Counseling therefore is normally seen as an invaluable tool for a one to one relationship between a counselor and a client whereby the counselor attempts to help the specific individual make personally relevant decisions that he or she can live with. School counselors assist students to understand themselves and their opportunities, to make appropriate adjustments and decisions in the light of this insight, to accept personal responsibility of their choices and to follow courses of action in harmony with their choices.

Guidance and counseling has been used interchangeably yet they are two independent concepts. Watt and Kidd (2005) distinguish the two concepts thus. They note that, some aspects of guidance are more concerned with provision and interpretation of information while Counseling is concerned with feelings of the heart and has more to do with helping as a process. Therefore, Counseling is more of an interaction relationship rather than that of giving advice or information. They further argue that guidance is a process and not a product, it is a means but not an end and the heart of guidance is to meet people's immediate needs and also help them to clarify their long term goals.

Brown (2009) observes that a key distinction between guidance and counseling lies in the role of information. He further elaborates that Information is required in guidance which encompasses informing, advising, advocating, assessing. On the other hand, in counseling, the role of information is more modest and the focus is in helping the client meet their need. The common tendency therefore is to use the term guidance to refer to the more factual information and to reserve counseling for the more emotional and personal issues. This is because while aspects of guidance are much more concerned with provision and interpretation of information, counseling is concerned with feelings of the heart and lays more emphasis on helping as a process.

4. The importance of guidance and counseling in schools

Guidance and counseling is very crucial in molding the discipline and good morals among the youth so as to make a good society (Eshiwani, 2001). Guidance of the youth and in some cases adults has been practiced for as long as man has lived. Men and women have always sought advice and consent of others who have superior knowledge, insight or experience. Guidance and counseling in schools was introduced for different reasons in different countries. Henderson (2001) states that the guidance and counseling in schools began in America in the early 1900s to assist students with their educational development and career aspirations. Herr (2001) add that guidance and counseling services were introduced in America during the industrial revolution, a period of rapid industrial growth, social protests, social reform and utopian idealism. Guidance was introduced to address the negative social conditions associated with the industrial revolution.

The rationale to offer guidance and counseling services to high school students cannot be overstated. This is because the high school years represent a period of academic, social, personal, emotional and intellectual growth for the young adolescents. By resolving physical, emotional, social and academic difficulties of the students and by helping students understand their learning strengths and weaknesses, their academic achievement can be improved and their overall development can be enhanced (Watts and Kidd, 2005). Taking into account the

increasing complexities in the society, industrial and technological development, changes of the nation's educational system and increasing number of students necessitated the provision of effective guidance and counseling service.

Thompson and Rudolph (2000) indicate that many school children have emotional and behavioral problems, hence the need for effective guidance and counseling. Counseling has been viewed as a particularly powerful means of giving pupils support and help with individual. Teachers, it is argued are in an ideal situation to help children and young people with their social and emotional development for several reasons. The first reason is that they are in regular contact and spend long periods with the students. The second is that the teachers have extensive knowledge of their students' development gained over time. Thirdly, the students are more likely to open up to their teachers, for instance class or subject teacher because they are familiar and may trust them. Lastly, teachers can be said to be in an ideal position to offer help at a time of need to the students. This is especially to those in boarding schools where some may be in positions of responsibility and serve on behalf of the administration to bring issues of concern to relevant persons such as other students or teachers, parents or other members of staff (Hornby, 2003).

The role of Principals is enumerated by Nwaokolo (2006) with regard to the provision of guidance and counseling services. One of these roles is to encourage board participation and to arrange for guidance activities in the timetable. Another role is to recommend competent individuals for in service training in guidance and counseling. They also commend teachers and careers masters, and encourage them in their efforts in guiding and counseling students. The principals are also tasked with providing dynamic leadership within their institutions and also making budgetary provisions for guidance and counseling activities.

Empirical evidences show that guidance and counseling has a direct impact on the schools life and activities in various ways. For instance, guidance and counseling programs in schools have had significant influence on improving discipline problems and strengthening of the student's social skills (Baker and Gerler, 2001). These programs were also found to enhance students examinations grades (Brown, 2009). Zhan et al. (2002) observe that guidance and counseling helps students to make wise decisions on career development and college choices. Abid (2006) also found that they help to develop positive study habits and study skills.

It has further been observed that guidance is important for developing self-concept and character formation in students. Self-concept in this case refers to a student's perceptions of competence or adequacy in academic and nonacademic domains for example, social, behavioral and athletics. It is best represented by a profile of self-perceptions across domains (Manning Bear and Minke, 2006). Interventions for students with low self-concept should be individualized and should involve building students' skills in areas which have deficits. For example the students who express low academic self-concept and experience reading difficulties may benefit from interventions designed to build their literacy skills (Zhan, Hu and Pope, 2002).

Bear et al. (2002) highlight the fact that students do not have to experience success in every possible domain to develop adequate or high self-concept. They simply must experience success in a few domains that they value. Interventions that promote academic competence and better behavior will not only enhance education objectives and school success but can also engage higher levels of parent support and consequently student self-concept (Elbaum, 2002). At times, students may lack accurate perceptions of the skills or support they have. In such cases, students may benefit from therapeutic techniques that help them see that they are more competent or more supported than they believe.

5. Guidance and Counseling in Kenyan Schools

Guidance and counseling was introduced in schools in Kenya when a commission chaired by Professor Simeon Ominde recommended that all schools should offer guidance to the students and that the children should receive

courses of education and training best fitted for their needs (GOK, 1964). The commission emphasized the provision of career opening for employment to students so as to guide the students to the careers there are best suited for. The Kenya National Committee on Educational Objectives and Policies Report, also recommended the introduction of career oriented guidance and counseling, which was not to be a requirement of regular duties of a teacher, but rather a voluntary service to the students (GOK, 1976). The report further recommended that teachers be given professional training in guidance and counseling and assigned to the guidance and counseling department. The need for students' records containing academic achievement, home background, interests and special problems was emphasized in order for a counselor to effectively carry out guidance and counseling. Guidance and counseling was also to be integrated with other topics as careers choices, human relation, family life and sex education (Nyaga, 2011).

Kenya's Ministry of Education therefore, introduced Social Education and Ethics in the curriculum to teach moral values at secondary school level. The Ministry of Education developed the school guidance and counseling handbook which directed that head teachers take charge of the guidance and counseling programs in the schools. Universities and Teacher training colleges had guidance and counseling initiated in their educational curriculum to equip graduates with guidance and counseling skills. According to Sessional Paper No.6 of 1988, guidelines were given on the implementation of the recommendations of the Kamunge Report (GOK, 1988). It indicated the Governments intentions to continue the expansion and supervision of guidance and counseling in secondary schools. In this respect, the number of school inspectors and counselors was increased. School heads and senior teachers were trained to supervise the guidance and counseling programs. Consequently, guidance and counseling departments were established in schools (Wango, 2006).

6. Role of Guidance and Counseling in Promoting Students Discipline

Indiscipline in Schools has hitherto, been an issue of concern for educators, policy-makers and the general public. There are numerous reasons that have been advanced for this. They include the outbreak of aggressiveness among pupils, violence within teacher-student relationship and incidents of vandalism. Indiscipline is a multifaceted phenomenon which is manifested in its displays and causes, as well as its "meanings" and "functions" in the social, psychosocial and pedagogical fields (Amado and Freire, 2009)

A number of possible causes of indiscipline have been advance. They include: student's idiosyncrasies, their social and family context, external influences, social, economic, cultural, and generational nature. Other causes are related to the personality and professionalism of the teachers and also those associated with school as an organization or education system as a whole. Amado (2005) further observes that some indiscipline cases like violence and fights can be caused by the student's effort to defend his or her dignity and respect. Steinberg and Morris (2001) argue that a significant number of students may also indulge in drugs, truancy, poor discipline and other misdemeanors as a result of intense external pressures.

A teacher counselor may help the students to view themselves positively and realistically. They should help them understand their weaknesses and strengths and aid in making efforts to improve the weak point, and enhance the strong aspect. Failure to do this, the students will have a negative self-concept and may engage in misconducts that will predispose the school authorities to feel their presence. This consequently exacerbates performance as indiscipline takes root in the students' character. Scheltzer and Peters (1974) noted that adolescents with negative views about themselves are hostile, disobedient, less interested in academics, less future oriented, easily influenced by peer, and are more likely to engage in bad habits like alcohol and drug abuse.

Most students in secondary schools are in their adolescence and they experience rapid growth and change-physically, emotionally, intellectually and socially. These changes occur at a time when the environmental

stressors for example parental and teacher pressures, peer pressure to experiment with drugs and sex, conflicts at home, loneliness and pressure to make career choices are at their peak. Bruce and Cockreham (2004) indicate that the adolescents often bring the problems into the classroom and hence develop discipline problems. UNESCO (2002) estimates that 80% of the students who are involved in school violence live in distressed families. Distressed families may arise from instances where parents are divorced or separated, where family conflict occurs and where diseases such as Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) are rampant.

Guidance and Counseling helps to counteract all these negative influences through conducting student needs assessments and developing comprehensive guidance and counseling services. Adolescents are also taught to understand and accept themselves and hence become more understanding and accept others. Through guidance and counseling, the students are helped to confront and deal with their family problems and hence reduce their hold over them (DeMato and Curcio, 2004). Guidance and counseling also enhance the character of the student, improve performance and prepare the student for the world of work and life (UNESCO, 2002). Borders and Drury (2002) point out that the students who receive guidance and counseling services have shown significant increases in academic persistence and achievement, school attendance, classroom behavior, better self-concept and improved attitudes towards school work and peers.

Empirical evidences show that guidance and counseling programs normally have significant influence on improving discipline problems, enhancing student's grades, strengthening social skills, helping students make wise decision on career development and college choices and developing positive study habits and study skills (Baker & Gerler, 2001).

7. The Role of Guidance and Counseling in Promoting Students' Academic Development

The academic development of students enables them to make realistic progress in their educational programme. The student will be able to solve academic problems, perform tasks or moving towards set objectives. According to Mohanty (2003) academic competence enables the students to pursue the right type of education in which the required balance is met for accommodating the manpower needs of the economy. At high school level, students are assisted through academic counseling to choose appropriate subjects and not to choose them for prestige purposes.

Academic guidance and counseling is therefore important for assisting students to meet their educational opportunities. It would therefore entail educating them towards becoming cultivated individuals and preparing them for participation in activities that are socially satisfying and useful. The academic guidance and counseling offers opportunities to students to discover their own abilities. These services further help students to make suitable educational and vocational plans therefore preparing them to realize their capabilities and interests. DeMato and Curcio (2004), affirms that guidance and counseling instills in the students mastery over academic processes. The process complements the institutional process and together they constitute the educational processes in school setting. They further state that guidance and counseling instills in students effective study skills that will enable them to achieve higher academic performance. Being successful in school requires a high level of study skills. Students must learn these skills, practice them and develop effective study habits in order to be successful. Good study habits include many different skills which include time management, selfdiscipline, concentration, memorization, organization and effort.

Repetto and Pena (2006) indicate that guidance and counseling, is important in schools so as to promote motivation and improve learning in all students, particularly those coming from other cultures, who could have learned hopelessness experiences and erroneous beliefs that might persists during their entire adult life.

Moreover, these students usually show lack of confidence in their abilities, intensified by discriminatory treatment. Guidance and counseling comes in handy in promoting the students confidence and motivate them to develop their abilities and academic achievement. Guidance and counseling also stimulates social and emotional learning and influence variables responsible for academic success, observed in positive attitude, behavior and school marks (Zins et al. 2004). Repetto and Pena (2006) observe that guidance and counseling can improve negative attitudes through demonstrating the relevance of formal learning for work life; through clarifying the relationships between education and the achievement of professional objectives.

8. Role of Guidance and Counseling in personal and social development

Personal development comprise of the activities that improve awareness and identity, develop talents and potential, build human capital and facilitate employability, enhance quality of life and contribute to the realization of dreams and aspirations. Social development describes actions that are taken to build positive outcomes and prevent negative social outcomes that can adversely affect a community. These outcomes include issues ranging from crime, poverty, gang activity, school disengagement, teen pregnancy, addictions and substance abuse, obesity and poor health.

Personal development in students infers that they have suitable knowledge on how to deal with personality maladjustments such as happiness, annoyance and anger, inability to meet needs and get aspirations into fruition. According to Frank and Karn (2005), factors that may hinder personal development include stress and anxiety neurosis, excessive frustration, lack of knowledge and partial or total failure. The main factor affecting student personal development is low self-esteem. Low self-esteem in students is brought about by problems related to self, parents, family, loneliness, failure, feelings of inadequacy and sometimes inferiority. Jarvis and Chandler (2001) associated low self-esteem to loneliness. These sometimes create serious emotional conflicts in the students and hence they need effective personal counseling to help them through various psychological problems.

Through guidance and counseling, the students are able to acquire information on sex and family life education so that they are able to deal with related social relationships. Guidance and counseling is vital for students in providing understanding of the internal issues and problems and thus trying to help them with genuine sympathy. This will include providing inspiration and encouragement to overcome the difficulties and pursue activities according to personal interests.

Mutie and Ndambuki (2004) add that guidance and counseling enables the adolescents cope with the challenges associated with growing up. This is the period when they experiment with drugs and personal relationships such as dating and they also get in trouble with authority. They face identity crisis and hence are easily influenced by peers into engaging in bad behaviors. Their personal relationships such as dating and love gain acceptance in the adolescents' life yet majority lack adequate knowledge on these issues including the coping and decisionmaking skills. They lack courage or self-esteem needed to seek explanations or dialogue with significant others. Effective guidance and counseling will enable the students to acquire coping and decision-making skills, courage and high self-esteem.

Social development means that the students have sufficient information about various social issues. To this end, guidance and counseling helps students to develop the right ideals and conduct for living in a socially useful manner and providing opportunities for training and education to work and play effectively and joyfully. According to Melgosa (2005) sociability is a basic instinct and each person impulsively searches for companionship with others like themselves. Guidance and counseling therefore enables the students acquire social skills which will be vital in interacting with other students, teachers and the administration. It develops respect to others and authority. Casel (2003) explains that guidance and counseling prevents to great extent risk

factors in the classroom, reduces the number of classroom expulsions and the rate of aggressions, and improves levels of well-being and psychological adjustment and satisfaction in students' interpersonal relationships. Thus, opportunities increase for these students to take part in pro-social activities and to gain affective rewards for their participation.

Zins et al. (2004) emphasize that application of guidance and counseling programs helps the students develop socio-emotional competence. The socio-emotional competence not only enrich the students' emotional vocabulary, but also help them learn to use coping strategies in emotionally difficult situations and attaining emotional self-control, so that they can adequately manage emotions and conflicting impulses. These selfregulating strategies are very useful in school contexts, when for instance, academic tasks are being undertaken, and are also effective in non-school contexts, whether family or social.

9. Conclusion

The importance of guidance and counseling in secondary schools cannot be gainsaid. It has been amply substantiated above. The role it plays in students' discipline, personal and social development and academic development, have been noted too. It can therefore be inferred that Guidance and counseling is crucial in molding the young adolescents by inculcating discipline and good morals among them for their benefit and society as a whole. Its importance has also been observed in resolving physical, emotional, social and academic difficulties of the students and by helping them understand their learning strengths and weaknesses. Their academic achievement can also be improved and their overall development enhanced.

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