

## Assessment of Challenges facing Secondary School Guidance and Counselling Teachers in Nyamira District, Kenya.

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### ABSTRACT

Guidance and counselling services are part of a broader delivery system designed to enhance the success of all learners. This study assessed different challenges that guidance and counselling teachers in secondary schools in Nyamira County encounter in providing this vital service. The study employed an ex-post facto descriptive survey design. It was limited to 21 secondary schools: Fourteen day and seven boarding secondary schools in Nyamira County with Practicing Guidance and Counselling teachers. Sex was not a factor in the study. In all, there were 147 respondents (21 Head teachers, 21 teacher counsellors and 5 students from each of the selected schools). Purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used in selecting the sample for the study. Three four-point likert type scale questionnaires were used to obtain data for the study; Secondary school students' Questionnaire (SSSQ), Secondary school teacher counsellors' Questionnaire (SSTCQ); and Secondary school Head Teachers' Questionnaire (SSHTQ). The reliability coefficient on SSSQ and SSTCQ of 0.65 and 0.67 respectively were obtained while an alpha coefficient of 0.80 was established for SSHTQ. The data was analyzed by use of descriptive statistics and the chi-square test, using the SPSS package. The findings indicate that there are a number of challenges facing the provision of guidance and counselling services. These include: lack of adequate guidance and counselling training for teacher counsellors; inadequate resources; and lack of requisite support to guidance and counselling programmes among other challenges. Recommendations made on ways of overcoming the challenges in order to improve the quality of counselling services include; a need for schools to provide basic counseling materials, a counselling office equipped with career resources and school administration endeavouring to reduce teacher counselor workload so as to have enough time to offer the guidance and counseling service.

**Key words:** Assessment, Guidance and Counselling, Resources, Attitude, Nyamira county.

### 1.0 Introduction

Formal guidance and counselling can be traced to America in the late 1890s and the early 1900s. Frank Parsons who has been called the father of vocational guidance was among the pioneers of the guidance and counselling movement. Through his efforts, guidance and counselling became an organized service and it gained recognition for its important contribution in society. Parsons established the first career institution in the USA, and set the pace for the development of psychological testing. Gradually the guidance and counselling movement developed into an organized service, which has continued to make a significant contribution to the development of society (Makinde, 1984). Guidance and Counselling plays a significant role in the overall growth and development of a high school student and is therefore an essential part of school curriculum. This is because high school students are at the stage of adolescence which is characterized by many physical and psychological changes which pose a number of personal, social and educational challenges (Mutie & Ndambuki, 1999).

Guidance and counselling was not emphasized in Kenya's education system which was adopted by the government after independence. This was probably because at the time, it was assumed that guidance and counselling could be provided at home by parents and the community or in religious set ups by ministers and religious leaders (Mutie & Ndambuki, 1999). And as a means of instilling discipline among school age children, the education system encouraged physical punishment that included caning and manual work. The last half of the 1900s and the early 2000s, have witnessed a rise in the cases of indiscipline and unrest in secondary schools in Kenya (Achieng, 2007). This state of affairs coupled with social, economic, political, educational and leisure changes has necessitated the introduction of guidance and counselling as a means to counter this trend.

According to Ngumi (2003) the provision of guidance and counselling in secondary schools is riddled with a number of problems which are attitudinal, structural, human and cultural. These include failure to engage in a careful diagnosis of the organizational problems that guidance and counselling was designed to solve. There is also lack of trained school counsellors in institutions of learning, and lack of enough time and facilities and reference materials for use by counsellors. It was against this background that this study purposed to undertake

an analysis of the challenges facing the provision of guidance and counselling services in secondary schools in Nyamira County.

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

The Ministry of Education has directed all schools in Kenya to establish guidance and counselling departments. This is because caning and other forms of physical punishment have been banned and guidance and counselling is used to instill discipline and achieve positive growth and development in students. It is assumed that trained teachers can serve as providers of guidance and counselling service in secondary schools. However, the question that arises is whether these teachers have the prerequisite professional training in guidance and counselling to enable them effectively provide this vital service. Further, it is important to establish whether there are other challenges that teacher counsellors encounter in their duty of guiding and counselling students. It was thus hypothesized that inadequate training of guidance and counselling personnel, lack of resources, lukewarm support to guidance and counselling programmes and negative attitude to guidance and counselling services will not significantly influence the quality of guidance and counselling services provided to high school students in Nyamira County.

### **1.2 Purpose of the Study**

This study assessed the challenges that guidance and counselling teachers in secondary schools in Nyamira county face in their day-to-day execution of this important duty. To attain this objective, the researcher examined the availability of the necessary resources and the guidance and counselling teachers' attitudinal and professional preparedness to provide the guidance and counselling services. The researcher too was interested in establishing the attitude of high school students and stakeholders towards guidance and counselling and how this impacts on the quality of guidance and counselling services provided to high school students in Nyamira county.

### **1.3 Significance of the Study**

Guidance and counselling is a process of helping individuals to understand themselves by discovering their needs, interests and capabilities in order to formulate their own goals and make plans for realizing those goals. An assessment of the challenges confronting guidance and counselling teachers in the provision of quality guidance and counselling services is of paramount importance, hence this study.

The results from the study will help shed light on the challenges facing providers of guidance and counselling services in secondary schools in Nyamira District. In addition, it will provide vital information to education planners which can be used to come up with a policy on how to strengthen guidance and counselling programmes in secondary schools – through provision of adequate resources besides organizing seminars and workshops for guidance and counselling teachers. The results from this study can also assist education administrators to understand the need for having trained teacher counsellors as well as the need to support guidance and counselling programmes in secondary schools. Lastly, as the direct consumers of guidance and counselling services, students stand to benefit once any necessary remedies are instituted to improve the guidance and counselling programmes.

## **2.0 Methodology**

The study adopted an ex-post facto descriptive survey design. The scope of the study covered selected day and boarding schools with practicing teacher counsellors in Nyamira County. Purposive and simple random sampling techniques were employed in selecting the sample for the study and utilized 147 respondents; 21 head teachers, 21 teacher counselors, and 5 students from each of the selected schools totaling to 105 students.

### **2.1 Instrumentation**

Three different four-point likert type scale questionnaires were designed to obtain data for the study. These were:-Secondary School Students Questionnaire (SSSQ); Secondary School Teacher Counsellors Questionnaire (SSTCQ); Secondary School Head Teachers Questionnaire (SSHTQ). The SSSQ consisted of two sections: Section A: 10 items eliciting information from respondents about their attitude towards counseling. Section B: 8 items requesting information from respondents about their assessment of the adequacy of counseling services.

The SSTCQ consisted of two sections: Section A: 12 items eliciting information from respondents about their level of training in guidance and counseling. Section B: 10 items seeking information from respondents regarding availability of counseling resources.

The SSHTQ also consisted of two sections : Section A: 10 items eliciting information from respondents about the degree of support to guidance and counselling programmes from stakeholders. Section B: 8 items requesting information from respondents about their assessment of the adequacy of counseling services.

The respondents in each case were requested to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed to each item. The scoring of the instruments followed the design thus; strongly 4, Agree 3, Disagree 2, strongly Disagree 1 mark

This was the case for all positive worded items while the reverse was the case for all negative items.

## 2.2 Validity and Reliability of Instruments

Both construct and face validity was established. From the pilot study, the reliability coefficient of 0.65 was established for the instrument for students (SSSQ) the reliability coefficient of 0.67 for the instrument for teacher counsellors (SSTCQ) and an alpha coefficient of reliability of 0.80 for the head teachers instrument (SSHTQ).

## 2.2 Analysis of Data

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. Some of the data obtained was nominal and the chi-square test was used for analysis. The chi-square was performed at a significance level of 5%.

## 3.0 Results

**Table 1: Students attitudes to guidance and counselling.**

Item	Responses				
	Positive	%	negative	%	%
Guidance and counselling boosts student's ability to make informed decisions.	45	42.8	60	57.2	100
Guidance and counselling enhances students' self-understanding.	38	36.2	67	63.8	100
Guidance and counselling assists students in career choice?	49	46.6	56	53.4	100
Guidance and counselling services are a necessity in schools	46	43.8	59	56.2	100

Table 1 above indicates that 56.2% of the students did not consider counselling necessary in the schools while only 43.8% felt it necessary. It is also clear from the table that only 38% of the students consider guidance and counselling essential in boosting their self understanding. Besides, the table shows that only 49% of the students felt that guidance and counselling has a role to play in enhancing their ability to choose careers. These findings concur with Kombo's (1998) findings that students have a somewhat negative attitude towards guidance and counselling services.

**Table 2: Students assessment of counselling resources**

Resource	Adequate		Inadequate	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Time for guidance and counselling	40	38.0	65	62
Guidance and counselling books	30	28.6	75	71.4
Guidance and counselling office	45	42.8	60	57.2
Career resource centre	25	23.8	80	76.2

According to table 2, students felt that the available counselling resources were inadequate to meet their counselling needs. The table shows that only 38% of them felt the time allocated for counselling was adequate while 62% thought it was not. This is in line with Crutchfield and Boarders (1997) who have cited lack of time as a handicap in the provision of guidance and counselling, stating that most teachers are overloaded and often suffer from professional burnout. They also considered the guidance and counselling office, and career resource centre insufficient (57.2% and 76.2% respectively).

**Table 3: The Professional Training of Teacher Counsellors**

Professional training of teachers as counsellors	Frequency	%
Trained	8	38.1
Untrained	13	61.9
Total	21	100

Table 3 shows that only 38.1% of the teacher counsellors had obtained professional training while 61.9 were professionally untrained as teacher counsellors. The number of professional teacher counsellors is low meaning that guidance and counselling service is mostly handled by teachers without professional training on guidance and counselling.

**Table 4: The Level of qualification of teacher counsellors**

Qualification level of teacher counsellors	Frequency	Percentage
M.A./M.Ed	2	9.8
B.Ed/B.A	5	66.6
Diploma in Education	14	23.8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>100</b>

Further inquiry into the level of training of teacher counsellors indicated that only 9.6% of the teacher counsellors had obtained a masters degree, while 66.6% had university education at Bachelor of Education level and 23.8% had Diploma in education certificate (Table 4). In spite of these levels of training the study established that the number of trained teachers offering the counselling service was small. Besides, these teachers did not cover sufficient guidance and counselling courses in their teacher training programmes to enable them effectively render the guidance and counselling service (Ngumi, 2003). These findings agree with Makinde (1984) who contends that inadequate training in guidance and counselling has hindered its development and success.

**Table 5: The Resources for Guidance and Counselling**

Facility	Available		Not Available	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Reference books	6	28.6	15	71.4
Counselling office	13	61.9	8	38.1
Guidance and Counselling manual	10	47.6	12	52.4
Career resource centre	4	19	17	81

Table 5 shows that few schools had the resources required for Guidance and Counselling. For instance only 28% of the schools studied had reference books and only 19% had a career resource centre. Although 61.9% of the schools had a counselling office, the percentage of the schools without was quite big (38.1%) and yet a counselling office is critical for any effective guidance and counselling programme. These findings concur with Makinde's (1984) observations that there is lack of counselling facilities which hinder the provision of guidance and counselling service.

**Table 6: Teacher counsellor's teaching work load**

Teacher Counsellor's teaching load	Frequency	Percentage
Relieved (less than 18 teaching lessons per week)	2	9.6
Not relieved (18 teaching lessons and more per week)	19	90.4
Total	21	100

Table 6 indicates that only 9.6% of the teacher counsellors handled a workload of less than 18 lessons per week. This means that the teacher counsellors had the normal teaching load besides providing the guidance and counselling service. This indicated that teacher counsellors did not have sufficient time to devote to the provision of the guidance and counselling service.

**Table 7: School administration support to Guidance and Counselling**

Teacher Counsellor's teaching load	Frequency	Percentage
Financial assistance	6	28.6
Availing of competent teacher counselors	7	33.3
Organizing for guest speakers	10	47.6
Sending teacher counsellors for seminars	11	52.4
Giving teacher counsellors less teaching load	3	14.3
Monitoring guidance and counselling in the schools	3	14.3

From table 7, it can be seen that head teachers gave minimal support to guidance and counselling. For example the results indicate that only 28.6% of the schools studied offered financial assistance; 33.3% availed competent teacher counsellors; 47.6% arranged for guest speakers to their students; 52% sent teachers for guidance and counselling seminars; 14.3% gave teacher counsellors less teaching load; and 14.3% monitored the guidance and counselling programme in their school. This state of affairs is unfortunate as without support from the school administration teacher counsellors will find it difficult to render the counselling service.

**Table 8: Head Teachers' Attitude towards Guidance and Counselling**

Resource	Adequate		Inadequate	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Is Guidance and Counselling necessary in your school?	6	29	15	71
Can guidance and counselling services improve students' discipline?	10	48	11	52
Can guidance and counselling services improve students' academic performance?	5	24	16	76
Do guidance and counselling services boost students ability to make informed career decisions?	14	66.7	7	33.3

The results from table 8 show that majority of the head teachers had a negative attitude towards guidance and counselling. For instance 71% agreed that guidance and counselling is not necessary in the schools; 52% of the head teachers agreed that guidance and counselling cannot boost discipline among the students; 76% felt that guidance and counselling cannot improve students' academic performance and only 66.7% felt that guidance and counselling can enhance students' ability to make informed career decisions. This negative attitude towards guidance and counselling by head teachers posed a big challenge to provision of effective guidance and counselling. This concurs with Were's (2003) opinion that the attitude of head teachers towards guidance and counselling impact negatively on the guidance and counselling programme in the schools.

#### 4.0 Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that there are a number of challenges facing the secondary school guidance and counselling teachers in Nyamira District. These challenges have broadly been classified in this study into attitudinal, structural and lack of professional preparedness on the part of the service providers. These challenges have negatively impacted on the quality of guidance and counselling services provided to secondary school students in the study locale.

##### 4.1 Guidance and Counselling facilities and quality of counselling services

Quality guidance and counselling services require a number of facilities. These include: office space, bookshelves, drawers, files, finance, time, reference books, guidance and counselling manuals, psychological test materials etc. The findings of this study indicate that the available guidance and counselling facilities are inadequate. Table 5 indicates that although 61.9% of the guidance and counselling personnel had an office, 38.1% which is a high percentage did not. This is a great challenge which conforms to Achieng's (2003) views that without a private accommodation delivery of counselling services will not be effective. Besides, contrary to Kiragu's (2002) recommendation, most school counsellors' offices do not have the basic guidance and counselling facilities such as reference books, guidance and counselling manual and career resource materials.

##### 4.2 Guidance and Counselling and stakeholders' support

It was also observed that the guidance and counselling personnel did not receive sufficient amounts of support from the school administration to enable them render quality services. Table 7 shows that only 28.6% of the schools studied gave financial assistance to the guidance and counselling department, only 52.4% sent teacher counsellors for seminars; only 14.3% gave teacher counsellors less teaching load, only 14.3% monitored guidance and counselling in their schools and only 33.3% availed competent teacher counsellors in their school. These findings go to stress the point made by Mullan (1990) that the successful implementation of guidance and counselling programmes depends on support from the stakeholders.

##### 4.3 Students and Head Teachers Attitude to Guidance and Counselling and quality of counselling Services



Table 1 indicates that students had a generally negative attitude towards guidance and counselling as only a small percentage thought it had a role to play in boosting their ability to make informed decisions (40%); only 38% regarded guidance and counselling necessary in enhancing their self understanding; and only 46% deemed guidance and counselling generally necessary in the schools. These findings concur with Kombo's (1998) that high school students have a somewhat negative attitude towards guidance and counselling. Besides, the study also established that head teachers also had a negative attitude towards guidance and counselling. It was observed that only 29% felt that guidance and counselling is necessary in the schools; 24% thought it had a role to play in improving students' academic performance and only 48% deemed it necessary in enhancing the level of student's discipline. This negative attitude of both students and head teachers towards counselling does not auger well for provision of quality guidance and counselling services in secondary schools.

#### **4.4 Level of training of teacher counsellors and quality of counselling services**

The findings from the study indicate that only 38.1% of the teacher counsellors had obtained professional training. This means that 61.9% of the guidance and counselling service providers are untrained in guidance and counselling. These findings also agree with Ngumi's (2003) views who argues that even the trained teachers do not cover sufficient courses in guidance and counselling to enable them effectively render the guidance and counselling services.

#### **4.5 Teacher counsellors teaching workload and quality of counselling services**

The data in table 6 above revealed that teacher counsellors handled the normal workload (more than 18 lessons) per week and only 9.6% handled less than 18 lessons per week. This means that teacher counsellors have little time to dedicate to provision of guidance and counselling services and this has compromised the quality of the counselling services provided.

### **5.1 Conclusions**

Based on the findings of this study which have been discussed in the foregoing sections, the following conclusions have been drawn:

- ❖ There are insufficient guidance and counselling resources in secondary schools in Nyamira county.
- ❖ Most guidance and counselling teachers are not adequately trained on guidance and counselling.
- ❖ The attitude of students and head teachers towards guidance and counselling is negative.
- ❖ The support given to guidance and counselling departments in secondary schools is not sufficient.
- ❖ Guidance and counselling teachers are not sufficiently relieved from their teaching duties to have adequate time to devote to guidance and counselling.
- ❖ These challenges: Inadequate guidance and counselling resources; negative attitude towards guidance and counselling from students and head teachers; lack of adequate support from stakeholders to guidance and counselling programmes; insufficient training of teacher counsellors on guidance and counselling; and overburdening of teacher counsellors with heavy teaching work load have sufficiently influenced the quality of guidance and counselling services in secondary schools in Nyamira District.

### **5.1 Recommendations**

For guidance and counselling to play the role for which it was intended in secondary schools, it requires concerted efforts from all the stakeholders in the education process. In the light of this, the researcher offers the following recommendations.

- ❖ All schools should provide basic resources for guidance and counselling. These include a counselling office equipped with reference materials as well as adequate career resource materials.
- ❖ The school counselling teacher should endeavour to mobilize other teachers to assist in creating awareness and advising students on the importance of counselling services.
- ❖ There is need to offer guidance and counselling department all the necessary assistance and support it deserves such as financial and moral support.
- ❖ There is need to organize for seminars and workshops to offer continuing education in guidance and counselling. This will equip the teacher counsellors with latest theories and techniques of counselling to make them effective counsellors.
- ❖ Teacher counsellors should be allocated less teaching lessons to reduce their work load so as to get enough time for guidance and counselling.
- ❖ All teacher training institutions and universities should review their programmes to ensure that they

include more mandatory courses on guidance and counselling.

The researcher recommends further research in guidance and counselling and especially in the following areas.

- ❖ The attitude of guidance and counsellors towards their role.
- ❖ Continuing education and training needs of teacher counsellor.
- ❖ The role of parents in enhancing guidance and counselling among secondary school students.
- ❖ Assessment of students counseling needs.
- ❖ The use of counselling in determining the career choices of the secondary school students.
- ❖ The impact of counselling in enhancing discipline among secondary school students.

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