



THE ROLE OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING IN PROVIDING SCHOOL-WIDE INTERVENTION TO POTENTIAL DROPOUTS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN AINABKOI DIVISION, KENYA

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Abstract:

This paper looks at the perceptions that head teachers and teachers had towards guidance and counselling role in providing school wide interventions to potential dropouts in public primary schools in Ainabkoi Division, Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. This study involved collection of data from selected head teachers and teachers from 11 public primary schools in the division. The head teachers were selected through purposive sampling method while teachers were selected through random sampling method. Data was collected through questionnaire for teachers and interview schedule for head teachers. Data was analysed through descriptive statistics and content analysis for qualitative data. Research findings showed guidance and counselling play a role in providing school-wide intervention to potential dropouts. The teachers believed that guidance and counselling helped in reducing cases of delinquent behaviours, cases of truancy, and absenteeism, working with school administration to reform school environment, providing information to parents about pupils' progress, providing classroom curriculum and referring pupils to service providers, identifying help for pupils outside school and liaising with parties involved in pupils' education. The study recommends that teacher counsellors need to improve guidance and counselling programmes to ensure that learners' challenges in learning are addressed.

Keywords: guidance, counselling, teacher, head teachers, targeted wide interventions

1. Introduction

Teacher counselors are expected to develop programs that promote academic success for all students, including those at risk for dropping out of school (Dockery, 2014). Teacher counselors in primary schools strive to prepare all learners for secondary education and life; however, too many pupils leave school early without completing their education cycle (White & Kelly, 2010). Identifying learners who might be susceptible to dropping out and providing appropriate school wide interventions to support these pupils are important challenges facing schools not only in developed

countries by developing ones as well including Kenya (Alika & Egbochuku, 2009; Al-Hroub, 2014; Edwards, 2014). Effective teacher counselors may hold key roles in dropout prevention efforts, however, in order to support the successful retention and graduation of all learners, they must have an understanding of the trends, factors, and recommended interventions related to dropping out. The purpose of this paper is to present the perceptions that teachers and head teachers have towards the function of guidance and counseling in providing school wide interventions to potential dropouts in schools in Ainabkoi division, Uasin Gishu County, Kenya.

1.1 Literature Review

Loxley in Hussien (1985) views dropouts as those pupils who leave school before the final year of the educational cycle in which they are enrolled, which could be primary, ordinary or advanced level, or even college or university levels. Chivore (1986) views a dropout as a pupil who ceases to attend school either temporarily or permanently, before completing the given educational cycle. Prevatt and Kelly (2003) argue that there are various ways of calculating the dropout rate. Event rate indicates the number of pupils who leave school each year and is compared with previous years. Status rate denotes the proportion of all individuals in the population who have not completed school and were not enrolled at a given point in time. Cohort rate describes the number of dropouts from a single age group or specific grade (or cohort) of pupils over a period of time. Drop out problems in schools has been an issue within the developed and developing countries context although the dropout rate is higher in Sub Saharan African Countries (including Kenya) as opposed to Western countries.

According to Cristenson, Sinclair, Lehr, and Godler (2001), leaving school early is the outcome of a long process of disengagement from the school. They further point out that dropout is preceded by indicators of withdrawal (poor attendance) or unsuccessful school experiences (academic or behavioural difficulties) that often begin in primary school. Overt indicators of disengagement are generally accompanied by feelings of alienation, poor sense of belonging, and a general dislike of school. In the United States of America dropping out of high school is related to a number of negative outcomes. For example, the average income of persons ages 18 through 65 who had not completed high school was about 20,100 in 2005. By comparison, the average income of people's ages 18 through 65 who completed their education with a high school credential, including a General Educational Development (GED) certificate, was nearly 29,700 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). Dropouts are also less likely to be in the labour force than those with a high school credential or higher and are more likely to be unemployed if they are in the labour force (U.S. Department of Labour, 2006). In terms of health, dropouts older than age 24 tend to report being in worse health than adults who are not dropouts, regardless of income (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). The department further observes that dropouts also make up disproportionately higher percentages of the nation's prison and death row inmates.

School dropout is the difference between the number of pupils/students enrolled at the beginning of the year and the number of those who remained at the end of the year (Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development - MGLSD 2002), Statistics. According to UNICEF (2003), the global estimate shows that 115 million school age children are out of school. Still there are many children who never enter primary school, more who will enter late (and over-age), and others will enter and drop out before completing full cycle of primary schooling regardless of Universal primary Education (UPE) existence. This is as a result of factors such as policy problems, lack of access to schools, poor quality education, high schooling costs and low returns to education among others which gang up to push children out of UPE schools (Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development - MFPED, 2002). In developed countries where education is universal and compulsory, a study on the determinants of school drop-out done by (Cardoso & Dorte, 2006) indicated that dropping out of UPE schools is not seen as a policy problem. They further observe it as resulting from factors such as; drug use, alcohol consumption, and parents' psychiatric disorders. In the developing countries much of dropout cases and education failures are traced both within and outside the education policy (Galimanka, 2008).

In most developing countries, school dropout has been a subject of interest to many academicians, researchers, and policy makers for a long time. A comparative research carried out by MFPED (2002) found out that although the findings of various studies on school dropout differ depending on the different country specific situations, factors such as; rural- urban divide, gender bias, organization and governance of the education policies, civil conflicts and war, poverty/ vulnerability-costs, impact of HIV/AIDS and distance to school appear to be the most common elements that lead to primary school dropout in all studies. In Kenya Elimu Yetu Coalition (2003), conducted a comparative survey and found out that Tharaka District had the highest dropout rate in primary schools which stand at 32.7 percent and 47.45 percent for boys and girls respectively. The findings further established that Kajiado district experienced a high male dropout rate in primary schools. This is also reinforced by Somerest (2007) who reveals that drop-out rate in Kenyan primary schools remain high since 1970 to 2006 and it will still increase. Wachira, Mwendwa, Muthaa and Mbugua (2011), observed that in Embu district enrolment increased with Free Primary Education (FPE). They added that while enrolment increased, the rate of dropout also increased. Information as to why they dropped out was not available. Republic of Kenya, (2005) projected that the national average dropout rate stood at 30% by the year 2005.

2. Guidance and Counselling Strategies for Preventing School Dropout

Guidance and counselling is a professional field which has a broad range of activities and services aimed at assisting individuals to understand themselves, their problems, their school environment and their world (Egbochuku 2008; Oniye and Alawane 2008; Eyo *et al.* 2010; Lunenburg 2010). Oniye and Alawane (2008) add the development of effective study habits in relation to how one can utilise his/her assets and manage

his/her abilities for optimal development as an essential service of guidance and counselling services. White and Kelly (2010) discuss ideas on how to decrease school dropout rates from a development perspective. White and Kelly (2010) also include several statistics that describe the problem. For they asserted that though national graduation rates have improved from 72% to 74% in 2004, this still means that 1 in 4 students is not graduating from high school. They argue that it is important to conceptualize dropping out as the *“culminating event in a process of alienation from school that is the result of both negative forces (risk factors) and a lack of sufficient support (protective factors).”*

Lunenburg (2010) reiterate that successful programs and initiatives may be designed by school counsellors themselves. They reported that the weakness of such programs tends to be its long-term viability. Without consistent support from teaching and administrative staff, efforts to identify students with high rates of absenteeism and other signs of withdrawal may be more difficult. Although there is not an abundance of empirically based literature on school dropout prevention, the interventions described in the six studies reviewed for this article are consistent with a previously published comprehensive review of evidence-based intervention programs for school dropout prevention (Prevatt & Kelly, 2003). Drawing on both our current review of the school counselling literature and that of Prevatt and Kelly, we can identify several specific strategies that school counsellors can incorporate into effective prevention programs. Overall, Prevatt and Kelly (2003) and Schargel and Smink, (2001) results of dropout prevention showed that some programs were effective but there was great diversity in programs and outcomes. However, results also point to a need to explore more individualized diagnostics and better predictors of who will drop out. Researchers found that risk factors commonly used by dropout-prevention programs to identify likely dropouts often do not predict accurately which students will drop out, which can undermine program effectiveness. They also looked at whether school performance and other factors can be used to identify girls at risk of teenage parenthood, noting that frequent absenteeism is the most important predictors. Wirth-Bond *et al.*, (1991) study found that students identified as at risk for dropout and placed in a vocational special needs program with high counsellor availability had a surprisingly low dropout rate (8.4%; Wirth-Bond *et al.*, 1991). Despite these difficulties and complexities in studies related to guidance and counselling on school dropouts, the ASCA (2003) National Model for school counselling programs challenges school counselling personnel to be results-oriented in demonstrating the effectiveness of their programs. In particular, it instructs individuals involved in these programs to examine long-range results, as well as short-term and intermediate outcomes, because they both apply to student progress. Monitoring, intervening with, and evaluating students to ensure that they complete the journey to high school graduation are very important elements in the long-range accountability picture.

As applied to the goal of school completion, the accountability task just alluded to is difficult when one considers the complex developmental pathways that lead to school dropout (Prevatt & Kelly, 2003). However, conceptualizing school dropout as the

culminating event in a process of alienation from school that is the result of both negative forces (risk factors) and a lack of sufficient supports (protective factors) may provide school counsellors with a framework for intervention. Programs and strategies that address both sides of the equation - reduction of risk factors and enhancement of protective factors - early in a student's academic career will be more likely to have a positive effect on the academic trajectory of identified students. Were (2007) study on determinants of teenage pregnancies in Busia District in Kenya established that primary school girls dropped out of schools due to teenage pregnancies and 33% of respondents attributed this to inadequate provision of guidance and counselling programmes in schools. According to Wasanga, Ambia and Mwai (2010) who established that at primary school level there is no systematic monitoring of who drops out and why. Elimu Yetu (2004) show that teachers were of the view that FPE has positively impacted on the dropout rates. Avenstrup, Liang and Nellemann (2004) on the experience in Malawi, Uganda and Lesotho pupils dropped out of school because they could not cope. On a survey in Embu West District, Wachira, Mwenda, Muthaa and Mbugua (2011) the most difficult areas of pupils management were identified by the head teachers as overcrowding (25%), absenteeism (12%), discipline (25%), and 38% indicated that there some pupils with special needs which were not easy to meet since the schools are not prepared or facilitated to handle such needs. The Constitution of Kenya (2010) Article 43(1) (f) and Article 54(1) (b) disallow discrimination and or denying individuals access to education based on their unique features.

One protective factor contributing to decreased likelihood of school dropout is degree of social support, including peer social support (Stearns & Glennie, 2006), a supportive family, positive school experiences, and religious involvement (Doll and Lyon, 1998; Dubow, Edwards, and Ippolito, 1997; Jackson and Frick, 1998). Providing social support for students during early adolescence appears to be a potentially valuable intervention. Early adolescence is a critical developmental period during which many students acquire negative and oppositional attitudes toward school and authority figures and begin their association with peer groups that may exert a strong and negative influence. Blum and Jones (1993), hypothesizing that enhanced that there is an increasing recognition within the counselling and psychotherapy profession that development of research informed practice is critical to improved understanding of the nature of our work with students. Research activities, both quantitative and qualitative in style, are ongoing in a number of organisations, ranging from the well-established NHS-based methodology of the CORE system group (1998) through conventional self-assessment questionnaires to a variety of contemporary qualitative approaches (McLeod, 2000).

There have been few substantive research studies exploring the explicit relationship between counselling provision (and efficacy) and student retention. However a recent review of the literature carried out by the Oxford Student Mental Health Network (2001) identified over 60 studies published during the period 1964 - 2001, in which a variety of attempts have been made to ascertain the factors and relationships determining the qualitative nature of the student experience whilst in

higher education. Issues such as withdrawal rates, retention, homesickness, transitional phenomena, counselling efficacy, psychological and psychiatric morbidity, student stress, cultural indicators, social support, suicide rates and indicators, student support mechanisms, economic and financial indicators of stress have been explored. Approaches adopted in these studies included survey questionnaires and standardised self-assessments although other methodologies such as interviews and analysis of student records were also employed. The following studies of particular relevance to this review are: Rickinson and Rutherford (1995) studied the effectiveness of counselling interventions at two key transition points: first year entry and final year completion. For both groups of students, it was observed that retention was affected by the individual student's capacity to adapt to the inevitable change and transitional processes triggered by attending University. Evidence was presented indicating the positive impact of counselling on retention through addressing some of the underlying developmental themes. Students attending counselling appeared to be better equipped to manage the challenges of University life.

In a cohort study at the University of Cambridge (Surtrees *et al*, 2000) the mental health of a sample of undergraduate and postgraduate students was monitored through their University careers. 8% of the cohort attended the student counselling service during that period. They reported an increased prevalence of psycho-social problems - of these students, 75% reported that they had benefited from counselling. Szulecka *et al* (1987) in a large scale survey of first year students at University of Nottingham reported that emotional factors were more significant than academic pressures or intellectual difficulties in predicting student withdrawal. Positive associations were established between withdrawal and pre-existing difficulties in particular, poor quality relationships with family members and previous psychological difficulties. Both Manthorpe and Stanley (1999) and Monk (1996) observed that awareness and accessibility of student counselling services were key determinants in coping with the emotional and psychological pressures and difficulties that are experienced by students and tutors. The Brunel University Counselling Service Evaluation study (Caleb, 2002) noted a self-reported increase in coping by students from 10% before counselling to over 50% after counselling. Levels of motivation increased from 2% before, to over 50% after counselling. Over 80% of students participating in the survey commented that counselling had helped their studies to a significant extent.

The economic impact of changes in student financing is now well established with levels of individual debt at the end of primary school. What is not so clear is the full psychological impact of these changes on the student experience. However, it is not at all uncommon for financial pressures to be a contributory factor in the emotional (and academic) decline of vulnerable students. The relationship between ill-health, financial stability and student retention is of increasing interest and has recently been reviewed (Roberts & Zelenyanszki, 2002). In addition, a significant number of schools both new and old currently employ some form of self-assessment questionnaire to ascertain impressions of student satisfaction and counselling efficacy. A consistent finding from such approaches is that in excess of 60% of student respondents

consistently make an explicit link between their positive experience of counselling and their capacity to stay engaged with their academic work. The above studies highlight the importance of the connection between the provision of emotional and psychological and emotional support through counselling (and other sources such as guidance and counselling) and the ability to fully engage with the academic and developmental tasks associated with being a pupil.

3. Materials and Methods

The study utilized descriptive survey design. The surveys are useful in collecting information about people's attitudes, opinions, perceptions, habits, views or any of the issues of education and social issues (Orodho 2009). The study was carried out in Ainabkoi Division, Uasin Gishu County. The area was considered appropriate for the study because this area experienced high school dropout compared to the other divisions. The study targeted 38 head teachers and 320 teachers. Head teachers of the sampled schools were purposively picked for the study while proportional and simple random sampling technique was used to select the teachers. The study developed a questionnaire for teachers and an interview guide for head teachers. Data collected from research instruments were processed and analysed based on the research objectives using descriptive statistics that involved frequencies and percentages. This was done with the aid of a computer programme-Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. Qualitative data from interview guide were summarised and interpreted using thematic content analysis.

4. Results

4.1 The Role of Guidance and Counselling in Providing School - Wide Intervention to Potential Dropouts

The objective of the study was to establish teacher perceptions on the role of guidance and counselling in providing school-wide interventions to potential dropouts in primary schools in Ainabkoi Division Uasin Gishu County. The study sought head teacher perceptions by conducting interviews on the role of guidance and counselling in providing school wide interventions to potential dropouts. The head teachers perceived that guidance and counselling provide school- wide interventions to potential dropouts by giving the following responses. Head teachers number 2, 4 and 6 who said that:

"It helps to reduce the number of dropouts within the community."

Other head teachers' number 1, 3 and 5 supported these statements by saying that:

"It is a real tool that can be used in a school to get rid of dropouts and the like by making pupils realise areas of weakness in academic."

These statements were further supported by head teachers 8, 10 and 12 who said:

“...the role of guidance and counselling in providing school- wide interventions is “To help the pupils realise the cause of the problem of dropping out and how to overcome it and it also helps reduce truancy in school”.

Head teachers 7, 9 and 11 supported these statements by saying that:

“Having guidance and counselling sessions with truant children together, counselling the children and parents and giving solutions for the problems and recommending them to the administration.”

The responses made by head teachers indicated that guidance and counselling provide school- wide interventions to pupils at risk of dropping out of school therefore reducing dropout in primary schools in Ainabkoi Division. Their responses are in agreement with the studies of Korkut (2004)who found out that guidance and counselling provide school–wide interventions by helping pupils in their academic life in identifying areas of weakness and strengths to foster, promote and increase interpersonal competencies and academic achievement. Moreover, the study established teacher perceptions on the role of guidance and counselling in providing school-wide interventions to potential dropouts in primary schools in Ainabkoi Division Uasin Gishu County. To establish their perceptions, teachers were required to respond to ten statements on a 5 point Likert scale as strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree and strongly disagree. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Teacher perceptions on the role of guidance and counselling in providing school wide intervention to potential dropouts

Statement	Responses									
	Strongly agree		Agree		Uncertain		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Works with teachers to provide classroom guidance curriculum	38	22.8	61	36.5	19	11.4	34	20.4	15	9.0
Provides information to parents about pupil progress	37	22.2	68	40.7	11	6.6	37	22.2	14	8.4
Works as a liaison between parties involved in pupil education	26	15.6	61	36.5	28	16.8	35	21.0	17	10.2
Assists identify help outside the school	31	18.6	64	38.3	21	12.6	37	22.2	14	8.4
Refers pupils to service providers to meet pupil needs	39	23.4	60	35.9	17	10.2	41	24.6	10	6.0
Works with teachers and school administration to reform school environment	57	34.1	50	29.9	11	6.6	36	21.6	13	7.8
Guidance and counselling helps reduce truancy cases in schools	59	35.3	49	29.3	12	7.2	36	21.6	11	6.6
Guidance and counselling helps in	52	31.1	54	32.3	7	4.2	47	28.1	7	4.2

Penninah Chebon
THE ROLE OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING IN PROVIDING SCHOOL-WIDE INTERVENTION
TO POTENTIAL DROPOUTS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN AINABKOI DIVISION, KENYA

reducing cases of absenteeism										
Guidance and counselling helps in reducing cases of delinquent behaviours	62	37.1	47	28.1	8	4.8	36	21.6	14	8.4
Guidance and counselling helps in dealing with drugs and substance abuse cases	31	18.6	38	22.8	16	9.6	58	34.7	24	14.4

Source: Field Data.

The results from the Table 1 indicated that 61(36.5%) of teachers agreed and 38 (22.8%) strongly disagreed that guidance and counselling works with teacher to provide classroom guidance curriculum while 15(9.0%) disagreed and 34(20.4%) strongly disagreed with the statement. Further, 68(40.7%) of the teachers agreed and 37(22.2%) strongly agreed while 37(22.2%) disagreed and 14(8.4%) strongly disagreed that guidance and counselling provided information to parents about pupil's progress. This implied that most teachers involved parents and updated them on behavioural, disciplinary and academic progress of their pupils during parents meetings and academic days. Similarly 61 (36.5%) of teachers agreed and 26(15.6%) strongly agreed while 35 (21.0%) disagreed and 17(10.2%) strongly disagreed that guidance and counselling worked as a liaison between parties involved in pupil's education.

On identification of help outside school, 65(38.3%)and 31(18.6%) of the teachers agreed and strongly agreed respectively that guidance and counselling assisted pupils identify help outside school while 37(22.2%) of the teachers disagreed and 14(8.4%) of the teachers strongly disagreed with the statement. This indicated that majority of the teachers assisted pupils to identify, consult and seek help outside school during counselling sessions in their schools. Moreover, 60(35.6%) of respondents agreed and 39(23.4%)strongly agreed while 41(24.6%) disagreed and 10(6.0%) strongly disagreed that guidance and counselling referred pupils to service providers (teacher counsellors, matrons and nurses) to assist pupils who needed guidance and counselling for cases that were beyond teacher's capacity. This point is in agreement with Ministry of Education (2012) which noted that through guidance and counselling pupils are referred to qualified counsellors who provide individual and small group interventions in areas of personal/social, educational, emotional and vocational. In addition, Dynarski *et al.*, (2008) recommended that guidance and counselling teachers should assign adult advocates to students at risk of dropping out. Most of the teachers 50 (29.9%) agreed and 57 (34.1%) strongly agreed that guidance and counselling worked with the teachers and school administration to reform school environment while 36 (21.6%) of them disagreed and 13(7.8%) strongly disagreed. This implied that teachers involved other stakeholders in the school to enhance guidance and counselling services. The results further revealed that 49 (29.3%) of the respondents agreed and 59 (35.3%) strongly agreed that guidance and counselling helps reduce truancy cases in their schools. This was an implication that guidance and counselling services are offered to pupils on truant behaviours (being absent from school without an apparent reason) and their consequences when they are identified hence reduce dropout.

More study findings indicated that 54 (32.3%) of the teachers agreed and 52(31.1%) strongly disagreed that guidance and counselling helped in reducing cases of absenteeism amongst pupils and 47 (28.1%) agreed and 62(37.1%) strongly agreed that guidance and counselling helped in reducing cases of delinquent behaviours amongst pupils in primary schools. These findings concur with those of Blue and Cook (2004) that absenteeism is as a result of environmental factors (home and school). Home factors include poverty, while school factors include distance to school, school rules and punishment as reported by the respondents. This was an implication that teachers and other stakeholders in the school offer guidance and counselling services to pupils with delinquent behaviours about delinquency and its consequences. This is in agreement with Dynarski *et al* (2008) who argued that guidance and counselling provides school-wide interventions through school community collaboration whereby all groups in the community provide collective support to pupils in areas of behaviour such as drug abuse, truancy, absenteeism among others. Edwards (2014), also concurs with this statement when he stated that members of the community both parents and non-parents, participate in regular meetings about the school structures, pupil life (in and out)s of school, and school-community relations and pupils who drop out of school as school-wide intervention to dropout.

Study findings showed that 58(34.7%) of the respondents disagreed and 24(14.4%) strongly disagreed that guidance and counselling helps in dealing with cases of drugs and substance abuse while 38(22.8%) agreed and 31(18.6%) strongly agreed with the statement. This meant that teachers had almost similar perceptions on the role of guidance and counselling in providing targeted intervention when dealing with pupils at risk of abusing drugs and other substance. This might be due to the fact that some schools hardly experience pupils abusing drugs since most pupils in primary schools are day scholars and those who abuse drugs might be doing it outside school (at home or elsewhere). Some Pupils abuse drugs due to influence by neighbours as it was reported by the respondents. This point supports the point of Sahina (2012), who noted that a child is affected by his/her environment and is open to any kind of learning drug abuse being one of them. This implied that some schools had recorded minimal or zero incidences of learners abusing drugs and other substance.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

The research found out that guidance and Counselling was a way that provided school-wide intervention to potential dropouts in public primary schools. Guidance and Counselling helped in reducing cases of delinquent behaviours, cases of truancy, and absenteeism. Guidance and Counselling worked with school administration to reform school environment, provided information to parents about pupils' progress, provided classroom curriculum and refers pupils to service providers. Lastly, guidance and Counselling identified help for pupils outside school and liaised with parties involved in pupils' education about education matters of pupils. The study therefore suggests

that teachers should enhance provision of guidance and counselling that assist pupils cope with academic challenges.

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Penninah Chebon
THE ROLE OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING IN PROVIDING SCHOOL-WIDE INTERVENTION
TO POTENTIAL DROPOUTS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN AINABKOI DIVISION, KENYA

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