

Challenges of Primary Schools' Guidance and Counselling Programme for the Hearing Impaired in Selected Counties of Kenya

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Abstract: This study investigated the challenges that could be facing the guidance and counseling programme in schools for the hearing impaired pupils in the counties of Nakuru, Nairobi, Kiambu and Machakos. These counties have a total population of 776 pupils, 90 teachers and 9 head teachers. Pupils in class six to eight who comprised 243 were selected for the study. This was an ex-post facto descriptive survey that used self-administered questionnaires and interview guide for data collection. A pilot study preceded the main study to ascertain the reliability of the questionnaire items. Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha method was used to measure the internal consistency of items. Descriptive statistics and chi-square test were used to analyse the data using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The results yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.77, 0.70 and 0.71 for the pupils' questionnaire, teacher counselors' questionnaire and head teachers' questionnaire respectively. Frequencies and percentages were used to describe the quantitative data. Chi-square test was used to show the existence or none existence of relationships between the independent and dependent variables. Content analysis was used to analyze data from the open-ended questionnaire items. Qualitative data generated after the analysis of information obtained was used to describe the various aspects of the study and drawing conclusions and recommendations. Findings revealed that the teacher counsellors did not have adequate facilities and resources and they had not received adequate training. Lack of confidentiality, uncooperative parents and negative attitude of teachers towards guidance and counseling also affected the effectiveness of guidance and counseling programme. Adequate training, provision of adequate resources for the programme, creation of awareness among parents and other teachers on the importance of the guidance and counseling programme were recommended.

Keywords: Guidance and counseling programme, Hearing impaired learners.

INTRODUCTION

Hearing impaired learners encounter many challenges, which are caused by their inability to hear and effectively use oral language. A functional guidance and counseling programme has a pivotal role in providing the hearing impaired learners with life skills to enable them live effective lives despite their handicap. Guidance and counseling programmes in educational systems play a significant role in an individual's life. Wamocho and colleagues [1] suggest that availability of formal school guidance and counseling programmes for learners with disabilities will enable them gain self-acceptance, enhance their self esteem and appreciative abilities, and ultimately find joy in life.

Availability of guidance and counseling services for the hearing impaired learners is also believed to make the students aware of the various opportunities that will help them adjust to their environment maximally [2]. Through counseling, the hearing impaired may be facilitated in working towards living a more satisfying and enjoyable life [3]. The programme should also be developmental so as to help

students develop into full human beings capable of maximizing their potential [4, 6]. The government's initiative to establish formal guidance and counseling in Kenyan education system dates back in 1963, when the commission to review the education system was formed.

The Ominde Report [7] recommended that schools should provide guidance and counseling to all children in Kenya in order to ensure children were given education and training best fitted for their needs. For learners with disabilities, the MoE through the National Special Needs Education Policy of 2009 MOEST [8] recommended the establishment of guidance and counseling programmes in special education institutions. This was to provide services to the learners and their families and to develop self reliance and confidence in the students in order to improve placement. However, some of the challenges that were noted at the time included understaffing within learning institutions and personnel with specialized training that addressed the situation of learners with special needs and disabilities. The schools did not also have trained guidance and counseling

teachers and the few who were there were not trained in Kenyan Sign Language (KSL) and other special skills to handle children with special needs. This was due to lack of adequate teachers trained on special education in Kenya. African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect [9] adds that implementation of this policy was hampered by lack of clear implementation guidelines, coordination and monitoring of the education accessed by deaf children.

Despite the commitment of MoE in ensuring that guidance and counseling is offered in all Kenyan schools, several studies on hearing learners [10, 12] have indicated challenges that affect the effectiveness of guidance and counseling programmes such as lack of training for teacher counselors, inadequate facilities and resources, heavy workload and lack of support by head teachers. Time allocated for guidance and counseling was also regarded as inadequate. This affected teachers' willingness to practice guidance and counseling [13].

Hearing impaired learners face numerous challenges in life due to communication barrier. The Ministry of Education recommended that specialized guidance and counseling programmes be established in all special schools in Kenya to cater for the varied needs of learners with special needs. The programme was meant to promote overall pupils' development and success. This can be categorized as personal, social, educational and career development. For this to be realized there was need for a well coordinated and effectively implemented guidance and counseling programme. Despite the above efforts, implementation of this policy was hampered by lack of clear implementation guidelines, coordination and monitoring of the education accessed by deaf children. Studies on implementation of guidance and counseling programmes in Kenyan schools have also indicated several challenges in provision of these services such as inadequate facilities, insufficient training of teacher counselors and lack of support from the administration. This could be attributed to inadequate systems and facilities.

Guidance and Counseling Programme Challenges

Mutie and Ndambuki [14] noted that Kenya had a long way to go in school guidance and counseling due to; lack of trained personnel in the area, most schools did not have sufficient funds to carry out the programme effectively because teacher counselors were overloaded with lessons and therefore unable to give proper guidance in schools. Furthermore, the teachers were mainly involved in career guidance thus leaving out other aspects needed in guidance and counseling like discipline issues and social relationships. MOEST [15] also reported that there was inadequate training of guidance and counseling personnel in Kenya.

More recent research done in Kenya for example in a study done in Nyamira County, results indicated that there was low training of teachers in guidance and counseling and that it was handled by teachers without professional training [16]. This in turn affected teacher's attitude towards practicing guidance and counseling. Owino and Odera [17] did a study in Kisumu, Kenya on constraints experienced by teacher counselors in primary schools and found out that most teachers were not trained in guidance and counseling. Inadequate facilities and resources, heavy workload and unsupportive parents in the schools also affected teachers' willingness to practice guidance and counseling. Time allocated for guidance and counseling was regarded as inadequate. In a similar study [18] conducted in South Africa, it was revealed that inadequate financial and human resources and lack of knowledge on the part of implementers were the major barriers.

MOEST [19] concur that financial resources and lack of proper guidance and counseling facilities in primary schools in Kenya such as equipment, room, and secure storage affect the effectiveness of school guidance and counseling programme in schools. In addition, introduction of FPE left teachers with heavy workload and little time to offer to the learners. Auni and colleagues [20] shows that most heads of guidance and counseling department lack adequate facilities to run the programme. Although some schools has rooms set aside for guidance and counseling offices, other facilities such as motivational books, charts and counseling literature was not available. The study further revealed that guidance and counseling took place in the games field or under trees since the schools did not have enough buildings and rooms for offices. Njoka [21] adds that majority of head teachers in primary schools had not allocated any specific room or office for use in guidance and counseling of pupils and that guidance and counseling had not been timetabled. Aura [22] on implementation of guidance and counseling programmes in ButereMumias County in Kenya reported that inadequate training and lack of support from the administration were the major constraints.

Some parents' negative attitude towards guidance and counseling has been cited as one of the major challenges in the provision of guidance and counseling services to primary schools in Kenya. Republic of Kenya [23] Kenya Education Sector Review reported that Kenyan parents were too busy to attend to issues affecting their children. In support of this, Ogonya [24] and UNESCO [25] agree that parents had little time with their children thus leaving their role of parenting to teachers. In a study by Hlatywayo and

Muranda [26] in Nigeria on the involvement of parents in the literacy development programmes for deaf learners, it was observed that parents had a misconception that educating the student with hearing impairment was the responsibility of the specialist teacher alone. Parental involvement was also limited due to poor relations between educators and parents.

On the contrary, a study by Myrick [27] revealed that parents were always supporting guidance and counseling in schools and they responded to teachers when called and supported various programmes. Concerning learners with hearing impairments, the National Deaf Children's Society [28] comments that parents play a vital role in supporting their child's communication and language development and their learning in general. This is because they are able to provide useful information about their child's development, their child's hearing loss and its impact, and how their child is most effectively supported in their own home. Szymanski and colleagues [29] did a study in America on critical needs of students who are deaf and found out that lack of collaboration among all stakeholders involved in deaf education was a barrier to deaf students achieving their academic, linguistic, and social-emotional potential. Parents were cited as being important to the success of the students and therefore needed to work together with teachers to provide the optimal learning environment for deaf children. In addition, educators, parents, and health care professionals were reported to set much too low academic expectations for deaf children because they thought that deafness and lesser degrees of hearing loss were an excuse for not providing the opportunities and tools to foster successful achievement. The study stressed the need for family involvement and support of their deaf or hard of hearing children at home, in school, and in the community.

Williams and Abeles [30], in a paper on implications of deaf culture in therapy argue that deaf culture provides unique challenges that can impact standard therapeutic techniques. Given that communication is critical for all aspects of the therapeutic processes, the paramount issue that arises in working with deaf clients is the language barrier. Further, the act of breaking eye contact in a visually based conversation destroys the communication bridge and deaf clients tend to be highly attuned to messages delivered through facial expressions and body language when communicating with others. Peters [31] concurs that individuals who are deaf have developed a distinct cultural identity based on several factors.

These factors centre on the need to accommodate to living in a hearing world, and they are both a product of deaf individuals' shared language and

their treatment by people with normal hearing. In order to engage effectively in a counseling relationship with a deaf client, it is necessary to examine the counselor's views and biases related to groups that are different from his or her own. This helps the counselor to avoid perpetuating views on them [32, 33]. Lynn [34] adds that counselors need to be aware that many of these students may be part of a different culture than that of their hearing peers and this may help them understand issues and situations that affect their life. Counselors need to read on deaf identity development noting that most deaf children are born in hearing families [35]. Lynn [36] goes on to suggest that school counselors who are working with deaf students or hard of hearing, must be aware of and understand the issues these students face in their daily lives, in and out of the school setting that are often different from their hearing peers. Peters [37] further argues that counselors can gain exposure by attending functions for individuals who are deaf, sitting on sign language classes, reading books about the deaf culture, and viewing movies that focus on people who are deaf.

William and Abeles [38] note that deaf clients are often concerned about confidentiality and for many of them hearing people have talked about them and made decisions for them without their input, so they expect similar problems with therapy. In addition, the presence of an interpreter may heighten the client's anxieties and concerns about self disclosure and confidentiality. Alternatively, it may lead to client using interpreters as the helpful professionals and therapists as outsiders. Whyte and colleagues [39] recommends that when in session, the counselor to discuss the seating arrangements with the deaf client and ask where the client prefers the interpreter to sit. The British Association for Counseling and Psychotherapy [40] recommends that a school should ensure that counseling services are tuned to specific needs of deaf children and young people. This way, deaf pupils can access the service if/whenever they want to. Some of the recommendations given include; getting the environment right. This is because many deaf children rely on lip-reading and access to sound in order to communicate. It is therefore necessary to ensure that a room is both well lit and quiet. The counselor also needs to make eye contact and use visual techniques during sessions such as demonstrations, videos and flip charts. Agreements/actions/decisions should be written down in plain language and the child should be asked the form of communication they would prefer to use during the session. Finally, an appropriate interpreter should be booked and their presence acknowledged but teacher counselor to maintain eye contact with the deaf pupil.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Challenges to Guidance and Counseling Programme

The fifth objective of the study was to determine the challenges encountered by the teacher counselors in establishing and implementing the guidance and counseling programme. The research findings are presented in this section.

Self Reported Challenges by Teacher Counselors

Teacher counselor respondents were asked to indicate the challenges they face in the course of discharging their duties of counseling services in their school. The findings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Self-Reported Challenges Faced by Teacher Counselors

Challenges faced by teacher counselors	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Other duties to carry out	1	8.3
Lack of recognition	2	16.7
Uncooperative parents	5	41.7
Lack of confidentiality	4	33.3
Lack of time for counseling activities	7	58.3
Lack of counseling office	6	50
No vote head	4	33.3
School head not trained in special needs education	4	33.3
No counseling manuals	4	33.3
negative attitude towards counseling	5	41.7
Unsupportive administration	4	33.3

As indicated in Table 1, the most common challenge that teacher counselors faced in offering guidance and counseling services was lack of time for counseling activities (58.3%) followed by lack of specific counseling office (50%), negative attitude of some teachers and the school administration towards guidance and counseling (41.7%) and lack of cooperation from their clients' parents (41.7%). The least challenge faced by teacher counselors was being overloaded with other duties (8.3%).

Self Reported Challenges by Head Teachers

Head teachers were asked to indicate the factors that pose challenges to the guidance and counseling program in their school. The findings are presented in Figure 1.

According to data presented in Figure 1, 75% of head teachers indicated that one of the challenges counselling programme in their school was lack of adequate personnel trained in KSL. It was observed that 50% of head teachers indicated that negative attitude by teachers also posed a challenge to the implementation of successful guidance and counseling programmes in their schools, with 50% indicating that their schools lacked adequate trained staff in guidance and

counselling and 50% indicating that lack of confidentiality was also a challenge. Finally, 75% of head teachers identified lack of adequate facilities as a challenge to the guidance and counselling programme.

These results indicate that the majority of the teacher counselors (58.4%) did not have time to organize counseling activities. This could be attributed to high workload challenges as indicated by 8.3% of the teacher counselors. These findings agree with Owino and Odera [41] that teacher counselors in primary schools lacked time to practice guidance and counseling and this was attributed to teachers being busy with examinable subjects and mean score syndrome on performance. Ondima and colleagues [42] argue that teacher counselors in Kenyan schools are not sufficiently relieved from their teaching duties to have adequate time to devote to guidance and counseling. The teacher counselors argued that they were overburdened with heavy work. Charema [43] reveals lack of time for counseling and teaching workload as some of the factors hindering effective guidance and counseling in school. ASCA [44] has it that that school counselors should spend most of their time in direct service to and contact with students.

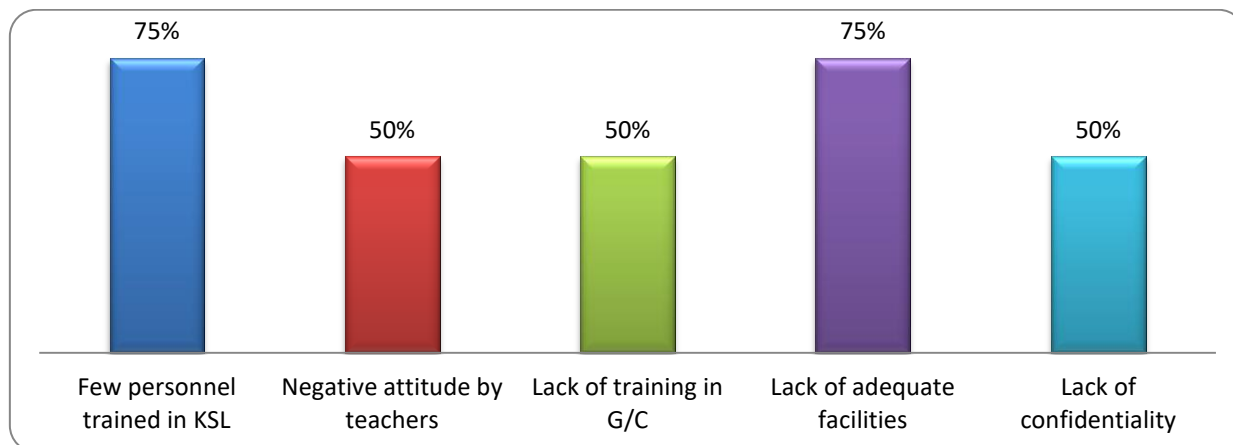


Fig-1: Challenges as Reported by Head teachers

The school counselor is also expected to focus their duties on the overall delivery of the total programme through guidance curriculum, individual student planning and responsive services. Further, 41.7% of the teacher counselors indicated that parents were uncooperative in the guidance and counseling of their children. These findings are similar to Owino and Odera [45] study that parents of children in primary schools were not willing to support teachers in guidance and counseling. Similar findings by Republic of Kenya [46] Kenya Education Sector Review reported that Kenyan parents were too busy to attend to issues affecting their children. In support Ogonya [47] and UNESCO [48] argue that parents had little time with their children, thus leaving their role of parenting to teachers. Hlatywayo and Muranda [49] observe that parents of children with disabilities had a misconception that educating the student with hearing impairment was the responsibility of the specialist teacher alone. On the contrary, Myrick [50] reveal that parents are always supporting guidance and counseling in schools and they respond to teachers when called and support various programmes, the National Deaf Children Society [51] comments that parents play a vital role in supporting their child's communication and language development and their learning in general. This is because they are able to provide useful information about their child's development, their child's hearing loss and its impact, and how their child is effectively supported in their own home.

Another challenge to guidance and counseling as reported by the teacher counselors and head teachers of the schools was lack of confidentiality (33.3% and 50%) respectively. These results concur with Owinona Odera [52] study that teacher counselors did not observe confidentiality to information entrusted to them by the pupils. Lack of confidentiality could deter the pupils from seeking guidance and counseling services. William and Abeles [53] stress that deaf clients are often concerned about confidentiality in therapy. K.I.E

[54] has it that a viable guidance and counseling programme needs to have open communication, trust and confidentiality. Kute [55] notes that students particularly the adolescents value the level in which their issues are treated and they are concerned about their self-image. They value confidentiality and do not wish to be seen as having issues or problems.

Negative attitude towards guidance and counseling by the teachers was indicated by 41.7% of the teacher counselors and 50% of the head teachers. Negative attitude could be attributed to inadequate training of teacher counselors on guidance and counseling as indicated by 50% of the head teachers. These results agree with Owino and Odera [56] that inadequate training was likely to affect teacher counselor output and outcome of guidance and counseling sessions. Simatwa [57] posits that some teachers perceived guidance and counseling services in schools negatively and as a waste of time. This was attributed to lack of qualified guidance and counseling administrators or deficit of guidance and counseling resources, facilities and materials in Kenyan schools. Inadequate facilities were also indicated among challenges facing the guidance and counseling programme in schools by 75% of the head teachers. The teacher counselors had also indicated that they did not have enough facilities for guidance and counseling. The findings of this study agree with Owino [58] that inadequate facilities could affect the teacher's willingness to practice guidance and counseling in schools.

Head Teachers' Role in Addressing Guidance and Counseling Challenges

As indicated earlier, head teachers were asked to indicate the challenges they had perceived to be hindering successful implementation of guidance and counseling programmes in their schools. The respondents were also required to indicate how their role in addressing the challenges they had identified as

a means of supporting guidance and counseling program in their schools. The findings are presented in

Figure 2 below.

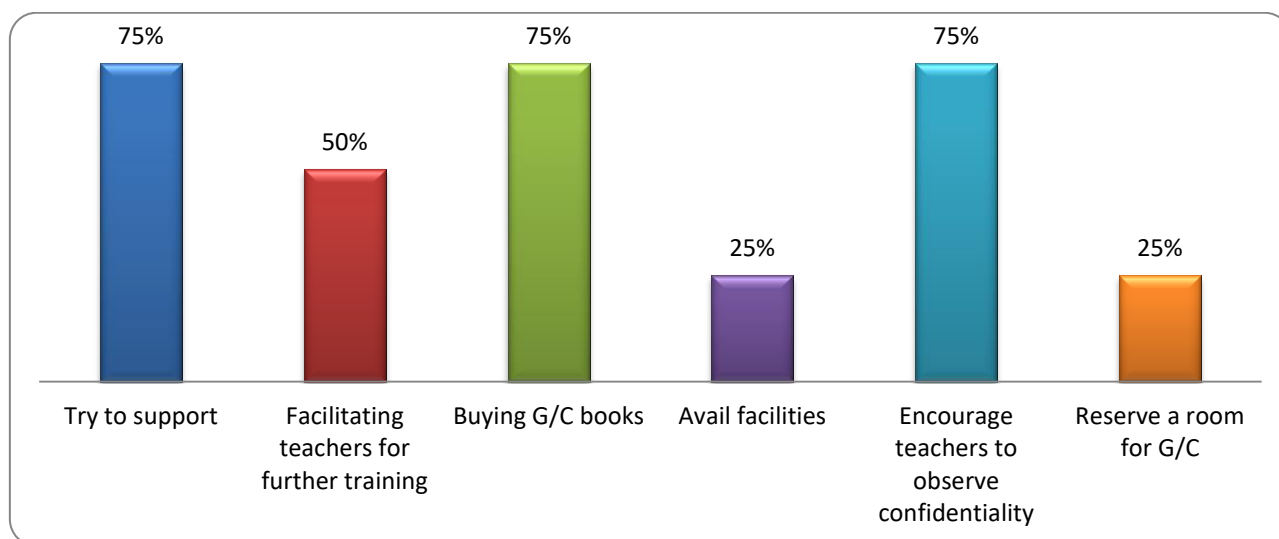


Fig-2: Head teacher's Role in Addressing Challenges

Figure 2 indicates that 75% of respondents indicated they tried to support their teachers in their efforts of counseling pupils, with 75% indicating they helped by buying guidance and counseling books and 75% indicated that they encouraged their teacher counselors to observed confidentiality. It was also established that 50% of respondents indicated they helped by facilitating teachers to attend workshops, seminars and in-services training to gain counseling skills. Finally, 25% indicated they supported the program by availing resources and 25% indicated they reserved a room for guidance and counseling activities.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The Challenges Encountered by the Teacher Counselors in Establishing and Implementing the Guidance and Counseling Programme. The study findings show that the self-reported challenges by teacher counselors were as follows; lack of time for counseling activities; lack of specific counseling office; negative attitude of some teachers and the school administration towards guidance and counseling and lack of cooperation from their clients' parents. According to the head teachers, challenges faced by the Guidance and Counseling Programme were: lack of adequate personnel trained in KSL; negative attitude by teachers, lack of adequate trained staff in guidance and counselling; and lack of confidentiality. The role the head teachers have played in addressing the challenges facing implementation of guidance and counseling varied. 75% of respondents indicated they tried to support their teachers in their efforts of counseling pupils; 75% indicating they helped by buying guidance and counseling books; 75% indicated that they encouraged their teacher counselors

to observe confidentiality and 50% of respondents indicated they helped by facilitating teachers to attend workshops, seminars and in-services training to gain counseling skills.

CONCLUSION

There are several challenges that teacher counselors face in establishing and implementing the guidance and counseling programme as indicated in the findings of the study. Some of these challenges are solvable by teacher counselors while others require stakeholder support. The schools for the hearing impaired need to organize awareness seminars and counseling of parents of hearing impaired children. This is to make the parents and the general public to understand the problems faced by the hearing impaired children in the society. These activities will indicate to the parents that they are valued partners in the overall development of their child and that schools value the connection between the home and the school.

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