

## **Geoffrey Wango, A Biographical Note**

**By Kariuki Mungai, Friend and Colleague, and Co-author**

**3<sup>rd</sup> September, 2016, Happy 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday my brother and friend**

To cite this article: Mungai, K. (2016). *Geoffrey Wango, A Biographical Note*. Nairobi: The Counsellor Magazine.



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### **The man and a dream ...**

We had promised to write Dr Geoffrey Wango a biographical note on his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday, that is on 3<sup>rd</sup> September, 2016, together with Mr. Kariuki Wangai but in the end, we decided that everyone write on their own. It is befitting to applaud a friend - and a colleague, teacher, author, inspirational speaker and a successful public servant, especially when the world seems to highlight so many aspects of our lives leaving out countless significant others. I wanted to write about my friend because of his great accomplishments in the following areas: counselling psychology; education; school administration and management; gender and development studies; and, policy development in Kenya and in the developing world. I choose the date with precision, his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. I honestly thought he had 50 publications only to realise much later that he had way exceeded that number and hence I was excited to commemorate the day.

I first met Geoffrey Wango in January 1999 when we were appointed as Inspectors of Schools (Quality Assurance and Standard Officers) in the Ministry of Education, Inspectorate Headquarters, Jogoo House Nairobi. We were both working in the Inspectorate

Department (Quality Assurance and Standards) and were sharing office. I was mainly involved in the School Guidance and Counselling Section, while Wango was in the Gender and Education Section. Wango had a Master in Linguistics (Wango, 1998a) and he was always keen on reading and writing papers (Wango, 1998a; 1998b). I was immediately amazed by his yearning for reading and research and his obvious obsession with books, reports, research and publications. I promised to better myself also and equally obtained my Master's Degree in Education through his inspiration. I thank you brother for that.

Wango wanted to know so much about me and in turn I got to know a lot about him. Since this is about him, I will try to say as much. Wango was born in Githiga on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1966 and went to Githiga Primary School. He then schooled at Kagumo High School (1981 to 1986) and then Kenyatta University where he graduated with a Bachelor of Education (Arts) degree in Literature and English. He was a teacher at Kawethei Secondary School (1992 – 1993) before joining Kenyatta University for a Master of Arts in Linguistics (1998). He was teaching at Riabai High School (1996 – 1998) and recruited in the Ministry of Education. I had been teaching at Nginda Girls and we shared our experiences on various aspects including life, teaching and learning, gender, guidance and counselling. Wango was later to pursue a PhD in guidance and counselling.

### **A passion and even greater passion ...**

Wango was appointed a Senior Lecturer in the Ministry of Education, Kenya Education Staff Institute (KESI now Kenya Education Management Institute (KEMI)) in 2001. We sustained our respectful friendship and because of his reverence and appreciation of my skills, he extended invitations to me to facilitate in many seminars in KESI and other Conferences. By then, he had been writing several papers and I remember telling him that KESI was best suited for his reports, training, research and publications. He laughed in his own way. In fact, Wango eventually had so many papers on education that I keep telling him that they will overwhelm his counselling. Indeed, in a lunch date to complete the autobiography Wango told me that he was more cited on Google Scholar for his books particularly on *School Administration and Management* (Wango, 2009) than his counselling and that he had embarked on several Journal papers and publications to counteract the effect.

In 2003, Wango was awarded a deserved Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the United Kingdom to pursue a PhD Programme in Guidance and Counselling in schools. He spent three years in the United Kingdom at the University of Birmingham, United Kingdom (September 2003 to October 2006). I must say I did not miss him as much since we were in constant touch and he came to Kenya three times, for his research in September 2004 to January 2005, when his father passed on in October 2005 and to present a paper at the Kenya Secondary Schools Heads Association (KSSHA) conference in July 2006. I must say Wango is a sincere and genuine friend, devoted and faithful one at that. Besides, we were writing a book on Guidance and Counselling in Schools (Wango, G. M., & Mungai, E. K. (2007). *Counselling in the School: A Handbook for Teachers*. Nairobi: Phoenix Publishers). We have since done several papers on: Education, Gender and Education, Guidance and Counselling and Policy Education Development.

On return to Kenya in October 2006, I was excited to be with my friend and colleague. Then, we were working under the Kenya Education Sector Support Programme (KESSP), a programme with several investment areas in education in Kenya. Wango and I were working in the Policy and Planning Division of the Ministry of Education. In 2007, Wango was appointed the Gender Officer and was in charge of Gender and Education Investment Programme. Of course, one of the major outcomes was the gender policy in education, gender mainstreaming in education and sanitary towels for needy girls in schools. Wango has three daughters and I think I just admire his passion for girls' education.

In January 2011, Wango was appointed a Lecturer at the University of Nairobi. That morning, I was in the office when he came in and gave me the letter to read. I was tongue tied and I remember him vividly shaken. He asked me if I was ok, or had he made a mistake? I must say that I was overwhelmed with joy because I knew that Wango liked research and writing. This man was going to be great and a professor after all. At the time, Wango had over 30 titles of papers and books and publications that he wanted to work on. He had just authored *School Administration and Management* (2009). Two books, one on *School Finance Management* (2012) and the other on *Counselling Psychology in Kenya* (2015) were almost complete. Besides, Wango had been highly instrumental in several publications in the

Ministry and often this went unnoticed because Wango is a rather shy and very quiet person. In fact, despite his seemingly booming personality and the way Wango is known, he is actually a very private person who rarely discusses anything about himself. He also keeps away from people he is not so familiar with, which I find very interesting because everyone thinks Wango is social and gregarious, while he is actually a very hushed person.

### **Dreams about the future**

If, as I see possible, the big story of Wango will certainly turn out to be on the impact of his writings in Kenya and in the developing world. Wango is a committed Christian and I admire his devotion and passion for God. He is humble, soft spoken and ever smiling. But behind the smile is a highly trustworthy person with a lot of passion. Wango is conscientious and devotes time and energy to a task. He will work relentlessly at what he feels is virtuous. Although he is impatient, he is straightforward and honest – I think that is what I like most about him, I just think highly of his sincerity. Wango will tell you something, good or bad, and whether he meant it or not, a joke or advice, he does not take it to heart. In fact, Wango is a special person in that even if you differ with him, he says you simply had an argument and you are entitled to your opinion. Wango is industrious, but he works smart, he says your dreams should be gigantic but realistic.

Wango, on the human and intellectual level, will have made an impact in the lives of ordinary people as is his extraordinary story (he says his life is ordinary and a gift from God). This, if it happens, will not be statistically out of the geographical widespread but for great amount of time and energy Wango devotes to reading and writing. Important and impressive as it is, Wango has always wanted to impress on young people significant values and virtues such as honesty, working hard and smart, sense of responsibility and accountability. It was Wango who told me about this great quote by Winston Churchill: ‘History will be kind to me for I intend to write it’. Wango writings are a part of great history. I am certainly convinced as he says that our service is to God.

One of the major areas I have always talked to Wango about is how to bring guidance and counselling to the level of ordinary people, to meet the needs of the common population and

to address issues faced in ordinary living. I must say I have been excited that he talks more about this than he talks about books and journals. For despite the advancement in science and technology, our people remain largely deprived. Therefore, we need to reach out to them in more practical terms.

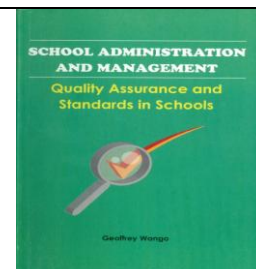
I sat down with Dr Wango the other day and we discussed the importance of guidance and counselling in schools, counselling psychology in Kenya and overall counselling psychological services especially as it relates to health and wellness. I did express my own conviction that for any generation and for all kinds and conditions of people, a society or community must work out their future. This is the vitality of our faith just as it is a product of our world. Amazingly, Wango was highly impressed and added that we must work with zeal for making sure that our knowledge is commensurate with our lives.

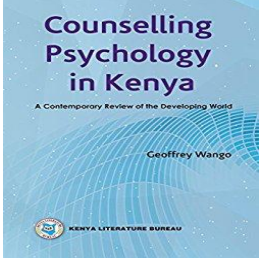
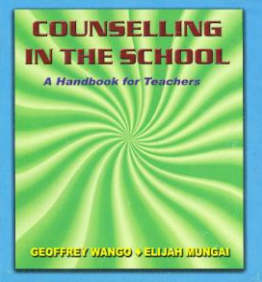
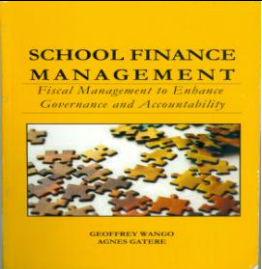
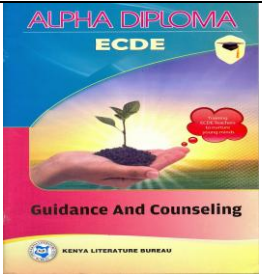
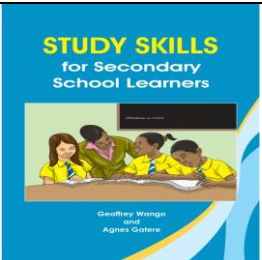
Wango has several, over 100 publications including books, Journal articles, Modules, conference papers and other contributions that incorporate 21 Postgraduate (Masters and PhD) and 23 undergraduate research reports. We agreed between us, that is, Wango, Wangai and I that all the publications, papers and various contributions be put together so that they are available to a wide audience. Hence Wangai's autobiography will include more publications and works than I have just outlined. Also, I have included only the books because I am really proud of Wango and I did not want to duplicate the search to include all of the publications.

When I met Wango in 1998, he had only two publications, the Master thesis and a seminar paper based on the thesis. He has multiplied the publications by 50 to over 100 and in excess of 170 citations on Google Scholar. Happy 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday Dr Wango, my brother and friend.

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Wango, G. M. (2009). *School Administration and Management. Quality Assurance and Standards in Schools.* Nairobi: The Jomo Kenyatta Foundation.



<p>Wango, G. M. (2015). <i>Counselling Psychology in Kenya: A Contemporary Review of the Developing World</i>. Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau.</p>	
<p>Wango, G. M., &amp; Mungai, E. K. (2007). <i>Counselling in the School: A Handbook for Teachers</i>. Nairobi: Phoenix Publishers.</p>	
<p>Wango, G. M., &amp; Gatere, A. W. (2012). <i>School Finance Management: Fiscal Management to Enhance Governance and Accountability</i>. Nairobi: The Jomo Kenyatta Foundation.</p>	
<p>Wango, G. M., Kimani, P. W., Osaka, J., Githinji, S. N., &amp; Amayo, R. A. (2015). <i>Early Childhood Development Education Guidance and Counselling</i>. Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau.</p>	
<p>Wango, G. M., &amp; Gatere, A. W. (2016). <i>Study Skills for Secondary School Learners</i>. Nairobi: The Jomo Kenyatta Foundation.</p>	
<p><i>Kariuki Mungai is the co-author of Counselling in the School: A Handbook for Teachers.</i></p>	