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GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING IN SCHOOLS IN KENYA: PRINCIPALS' USE OF COUNSELLING SKILLS

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Abstract

Child or student counselling is a process in which the counsellor attempts to understand and help clarify those feelings in a child or student that may, and can, impede growth, maturation and overall well-being. The counsellor in the school has to regularly confront sensitive issues in the lives of the pupil or student, families and members of teaching and support staff. Issues include love relationships, depression, suicidal attempts, alcohol and drug abuse, sexual activity, parent-child relationships and self-injurious behaviours. The manner in which these issues are handled has profound effects on the well-being of pupils and students, their relationship with teachers and family, the school's relationships with families, school culture, and on learning and general achievement. It must be emphasized that the school principal as chief executive bears the ultimate responsibility for all school programmes — including the school guidance and counselling programme. To fulfil the academic and other responsibilities, principals must understand counselling programmes and procedures, and work with the counsellor in the school to ensure they maximally benefit pupils and students within their jurisdiction. In particular, principals and counsellors must maintain amicable relationships with pupils and students, teachers, parents and support staff. Principals must consult with the counsellor about the handling of cases which present particular difficulties and others that touch upon the school's interests, including acute cases of emotional disturbance, illness, indiscipline, crime, violence and drug abuse. This paper advances that while both the principal and counsellor require training in counselling, principals should make use of counselling skills to function within counselling professional, ethical and legal guidelines.

Keywords: School guidance and counselling, Principals, Student counselling, Counselling skills

The Principal in the School

School effectiveness, through effective school leadership, must go beyond administration and management to bring about desirable positive changes (Pashiardis, Thody, Papanoum & Johansson, 2003). Principals as school leaders must offer more than the traditional role of administration and management, shaping the organizational conditions for successful and sustained implementation of school programmes and best practices (Diebold, Miller, Gensheimer, Mondschein & Ohmart, 2000; Davies, 2007; Jackson 2007; Wango, 2009). This includes astute management of school resources (Teachers Service Commission, 2015a, 2015b; Wango & Gatere, 2012) to incorporate all programmes such as guidance and counselling.

The provision of counselling psychological services has steadily increased in the world and in Kenya (McLeod, 2012; Wango, 2015), and guidance and counselling services have been extended to schools (Republic of Kenya, 1964, 1976, 1981, 1999, 2009, 2012). Part of the effectiveness of the counselling programme is to amass the synergy among teaching and support staff, parents and students

