THE KENYA SECONDARY SCHOOLS HEADS ASSOCIATION

FUNDING OF POST-PRIMARY EDUCATION AS A TOOL FOR POVERTY REDUCTION

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THE ROLE AND FUNCTION OF THE SECONDARY SCHOOL GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING PROGRAMME

Geoffrey Wango

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Rationale

In Kenya, counselling in the school has been promoted to help improve participation and achievement of students, especially girls, in education. In 1971, the Ministry of Education introduced guidance and counselling in schools in recognition that academic work alone would not help the students. This and other programmes such as the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation programme on guidance, counselling and youth development for Africa (UNESCO Modules 1-8, 2000) that promotes guidance and counselling as an integral part of education are meant among other things to enhance the participation and achievement in education. However, despite the importance that seems to have been attached to guidance and counselling services in Kenyan schools, the programme has not been evaluated fully as to the extent to which it is implemented in line with Ministry of Education policies. The present study aimed to evaluate the secondary school guidance and counselling programme.

Overview

This presentation deals with the findings of a PhD study on Policy and Practice of the Secondary School Guidance and Counselling Programme in Kenya.

Findings revealed as follows:

1. Guidance and counselling department. Though there was guidance and counselling department in several schools, it was seen as a department in the school and not as a service. The development of guidance and counselling programme therefore depended on particular school and the teacher counsellor.

2. Definition of counselling. There was lack of clarity on what is counselling and as a result, the guidance and counselling programme did not seem to follow a clear Ministry policy or guideline, nor was it linked to other schools programmes and policies.

3. Challenges in the provision of guidance and counselling services. Several factors affect the provision of effective guidance and counselling services in schools such as lack of
resources including finance, counselling room, lack of time and traditional (cultural) beliefs. This in effect meant that few students sought counselling and were provided with the services.

The presentation will focus on four aspects. Firstly, the presentation and our discussion will primary focus on the school guidance and counselling policy. Secondly, there is the availability and use of resources and the relationship between policy and the education system with an emphasis on service delivery. Thirdly, evidence about various factors that affect the school guidance and counselling programme is presented and analysed as part of school level and out of school factors. Finally, it is highly suggested that professional forums such as the Kenya Secondary School heads association meetings provide a linkage to policy and practice that in turn can enable improve school services including guidance and counselling of students.

Definitions and Major Areas of Concern
Guidance and counselling is a term that encompasses two related but overlapping concepts; that of advice and information giving (guidance) and personal help in a formal setting (counselling). It was evident in the study findings that a greater understanding of the terms guidance and counselling is really necessary if the teacher counsellor and other teachers are to function effectively in the school setting. This is because there seems to be a continuum of helping strategies available in the school that range from information giving, directing, advising, consultation, mentoring, coaching, career guidance and support. When teachers use the term counselling, they are referring to some or all of these approaches and they tend to use more helping strategies at the directing and advising end of the continuum rather than at the supporting and counselling end (Lane, 1996).

However, the two fields of guidance and counselling maintain links with each other especially in the school (and in a more traditional setting) where to a large extent the two are complementary
and counselling a critical part of the guidance process and provision of guidance services (Lane, 1996; Watts & Kidd, 2000).

For the sake of clarity, the term guidance will refer to information giving of more factual nature given on educational, career and social decisions, evident for example in talks to students in groups, while counselling will be confined to the more personal and psychological issues, the helping relationship and the process (Egan, 2002; McGuiness, 1998; Williams, 1973). The term guidance and counselling will refer to the entire guidance and counselling programme in the school. In all cases, the term teacher counsellor, guidance and counselling teacher or counsellor will be used to refer to the teacher responsible for guidance and counselling in school. I use the term client, student or counsellee to refer to the person seeking and receiving help in counselling. The phrase situational difficulty, need or issues of concern are used in place of problem. This is because words like ‘patient’ to refer to the client and ‘problem’ to refer to the issue of concern tend to have a negative connotation, for example, patient is more inclined to sickness, while problem is associated with a solution (rather than resolving an issue that is more favourable in the context of counselling). Areas of difficulty for the student might be in career choices, academic or personal life.

**Guidance and Counselling Service Delivery**

For the purpose of this conference, I will discuss the guidance and counselling evaluation format that is meant to enable teacher counsellors and schools organise an effective and purposeful guidance and counselling programme. Any meaningful guidance and counselling school programme must target the pupil or student taking into account the context of the school and thus adopts the four P’s: it must be Purposeful, Practical, Preventive and Programmed (Wango and Mungai, In Press). This will allow us to discuss the role and function of the programme in the school and within the broader educational goals. This format was developed from elements in the research questionnaire after it was found that all the schools that took part in the research requested a copy of the questionnaires. The format could be very valuable in that it will enable individual schools and teachers to both design and evaluate the school guidance and counselling programme that includes interventions on behaviour. The programme will have defined aims and objectives and thus clearly designed to enable effective implementation.
Table 1. Guidance and Counselling School Evaluation

<table>
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<th>GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING CHECKLIST</th>
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This checklist is concerned with aspects of the school guidance and counselling programme and how it is implemented in the school. It is meant to enable the school evaluate the programme and thus assist the teacher counsellor and the guidance and counselling team to improve the programme.

<table>
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<th>Role and Function of School Guidance and Counselling Programme</th>
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Referral services | There is a standardized procedure for referring students for specialized counselling | [a] [b] [c]
Counselling supervision | Teacher goes for counselling supervision | [a] [b] [c]
| Follow up is done to assist such students | [a] [b] [c]
| Other members of counselling team go for counselling supervision | [a] [b] [c]

The format has nine components as follows: the school guidance and counselling department; counselling team or committee; counselling training; guidance and counselling programme; peer counsellors; policy guidelines; confidentiality; referral services; and, counselling supervision. It is simple to use since it requires that the school ensure essential aspect of the programme are institutionalised (*Appendix 1 and II*).

**Enhancing Secondary School Education**

By looking at each of the aspects of the school guidance and counselling programme, there is a role and a function that is expected within policy. For example, the purpose of having a teacher appointed is for him or her to coordinate the programme by working together with other members of staff. Similarly, the purpose of a counselling room is to enable the student consult the teacher in confidence. In my own view, the programme needs to relate to the general education curriculum. For example, when students are admitted, they can be inducted into the school by elaborating on both rules and regulations and the programmes available in the school.

It needs to be appreciated that there are several factors within and outside the school that affect the programme and as I went along with my presentation, I did highlight my findings in various areas and in turn, you were able to comment on various issues and suggest several intervention strategies. One of the areas is the fact that schools are different and have diversity resources (Harber & Davies, 1997). This and other issues can be the focus of discussion in this and future conferences especially as you discuss on the funding of post-primary education as a tool to reduce poverty. My study singles out education as a powerful tool for poverty reduction and economic growth (UNESCO, 2005; World Bank, 2002) and views secondary education in particular as a very significant turning point in the education process for all persons. Further, the study and our discussions uphold the need for enhanced participation of all stakeholders in the school / educational programmes. It is important therefore that the school assists all students to achieve more by adopting strategies such as life skills through guidance and counselling.
Way Forward

The Ministry is in the process of reviewing the Education Act. This will allow schools to conduct various programmes, including academic and co-curricular activities better with more consistency and certain standards can be established. I am pleased that in my discussion with the chairman of the Secondary Schools Heads Association, there was a bold request that I make the paper presentation practical to schools. I had also been requested to draft policy guidelines to be included in the Education Act and one of the suggestions I have made was that each school should have a written guidance and counselling programme plan that is reviewed and updated annually by the school counsellor(s) in consultation with the principal and school administration team, that is, teachers, students, parents, Parent Association and the Board of Management. Let us look at the following suggested school guidance and counselling programme and discuss potential areas of strength and weakness in the system.

Conclusion and Final Reflections

I have noted that you raised several issues that you would like to be investigated and included in future forums on education and guidance and counselling in schools. They include the following:

- Issues that can be addressed directly through guidance and counselling such career choices, teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, school dropout and child discipline need to be defined.
- The over emphasis of examinations and grades in the Kenyan system.
- Counselling training including head teachers, teachers and teacher counsellors.
- The dual relationship where the teacher is also a counsellor and thus perhaps the need for a professional counsellor in the school.
- The role of the Ministry of Education, for example, a code of conduct for counsellors and to identify training institutions and referral services.
- The role of others in counselling including parents, the school chaplain, school sponsor and nongovernmental organisations.

Guidance and counselling is among other programmes in the school and as well thrives on the good will of the school administration and the involvement of all teachers. The issues you have raised are pertinent and as the Ministry of Education review the Education Act, it is hoped that
part of this will be an inclusion of other areas that had hitherto been side-lined such as guidance and counselling services.

Acknowledgements

(1) I am sincerely grateful to the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission for the PhD scholarship. Additionally, the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission provided the air tickets to conduct the research in Kenya and attend the conference in Nairobi.

(2) I wish to acknowledge with utmost gratitude all the participants who took part in the study on policy on guidance and counselling in secondary schools in Kenya.

(3) Cross Reference was made of the following in developing the proposed guidance and counselling policy guidelines (Appendices I and II):

(a) Chesterfield County Public Schools (CCPS) (1996)
(b) Elk Island Public Schools Board of Trustees (2006)
(c) Fairfax County Public Schools in Virginia (Revised 2004)
(d) Government of Alberta (Updated 2003)]

References


APPENDIX I: The School Guidance and Counselling School Programme

1.0. Preamble

The school recognizes that guidance and counselling is an important part of the total programme of instruction and should be provided in accordance with state laws and regulations and Ministry of Education policies and regulations, and available staff and programme support. The general goal of this programme is to help students achieve the greatest personal value from their educational opportunities. The school affirms that parents are the student's first teachers and that the school serves to strengthen family and parental support. No student will be required to participate in any guidance and counselling programme to which the student's parents object.

1.1. Procedure

- The school guidance and counselling programme is comprehensive in scope, developmental in nature based on the national standards for school counselling programmes, and is delivered by counsellors, both individually and in collaboration with other professionals and through programmes and activities, to every school student.

- For the purpose of this policy, the following definitions apply:
  a) *Educational and academic guidance and counselling:* This will assist students and their parents to acquire knowledge of the curriculum including subject choices available to students, to plan a programme of studies, to arrange and interpret academic issues, and to seek post-secondary academic opportunities;
  b) *Career guidance and counselling:* This will help students to acquire information and plan action about work, jobs, apprenticeships, and post-secondary educational and career opportunities;
  c) *Personal and social guidance and counselling:* This will assist a student to develop an understanding of themselves, the rights and needs of others, how to resolve conflict and to define individual goals, reflecting their interests, abilities and aptitudes.

Such guidance and counselling may be provided either (i) in groups in which generic issues of social development are addressed or (ii) through structured individual or small group multi-session counselling which focuses on the specific concerns of the participant(s).

- Information and records of personal or social counselling shall be kept confidential and separate from a student’s educational records and cannot be disclosed to third parties without prior student consent or as otherwise in accordance with professional ethics and the law.

1.2. Guidelines

- The School guidance and counselling programme will:
  - Provide staff with meaningful information which can be utilized to improve the educational services offered to individual students;
- Provide students with planned opportunities to develop future career and educational plans;
- Refer students with special needs to appropriate specialists and agencies;
- Aid students in identifying options and making choices about their educational programme;
- Assist teachers and the school administration in identifying the academic, social and emotional needs of students;
- Provide for a follow-up of students who further their education and/or move into the world of work; and,
- Solicit feedback from students, staff and parents for purposes of programme improvement.

- All staff shall encourage students to explore and develop their individual interests in career and vocational technical programmes and employment opportunities without regard to gender including reasonable efforts encouraging students to consider and explore "non-traditional" occupations for men and women.
- The school counsellor will work with the staff, community and appropriate agencies to develop, implement and regularly evaluate this programme.
- The school counsellor is authorized to develop and implement the necessary regulations for the administration of this policy.
- Parental permission is not required for short duration personal/social counselling which is needed to maintain order, discipline or a productive learning environment in the school.
- At least annually, parents shall be notified in writing about the academic and career guidance programmes, and the personal/social counselling, programmes which are available to students.
- Information and records of personal/social counselling shall be kept confidential and separate and not disclosed to third parties without student prior consent and further parental consultation as necessary in accordance with professional ethics and as provided by law.
- Parents will be advised concerning the purpose, general description of the programmes, how parents may review materials to be used in the programmes, and procedures by which parents may limit the students' participation in the programme.
- Parents may be required to seek further consultation on counselling needs that are beyond the scope of the professional certification or training of the counsellors.
- School officials may permit on-going, structured personal/social counselling for children whom they believe would benefit from such counselling but whose parents fail to respond affirmatively or negatively to reasonable requests for consent.
- It shall be the policy of School Board with respect to personal/social counselling that parents will notify the school division in writing if the student is not to participate in the personal/social counselling programme of a generic nature (Opt - Out).

1.3. Conclusion

The school is committed to making guidance and counselling services available to all students as a part of school programmes and services. The school principal assisted by the teacher counsellor shall be responsible for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the guidance and counselling services in the school, in accordance with these procedures.
### APPENDIX II: Proposed Guidance and Counselling Policy Guidelines

1. All pupils and students from Early Childhood Education (ECD) through primary and secondary school shall have access to guidance and counselling services as required in the context of the resources available to the school.

2. Guidance and counselling services shall meet identified needs in three key areas:
   - 2.1. Educational development;
   - 2.2. Personal and Social development; and,
   - 2.3. Career development.

   Counselling services may be developmental, preventive or crisis-oriented.

3. School counsellors shall respect the confidentiality of information received in accordance with professional ethics and the law.

4. Principals shall ensure that guidance and counselling services are available to students as outlined in this policy.

5. Schools through the Teachers Service Commission shall engage professionally trained counsellors who have had successful certified teaching experience.

6. Counsellors should be qualified professionally, and where this is not currently the case, the principal shall recruit the services of counsellors so qualified, as the opportunity arises or provide training to a suitable candidate on staff.

7. The roles and responsibilities of counsellors shall include the following:
   - 7.1. Group and individual counselling of pupils and students of an educational, career, and personal/social issues and difficulties.
   - 7.2. Facilitating the transition from one school or grade to another by acting as a liaison with feeder schools and post secondary institutions.
   - 7.3. Acting as a resource person to teachers in the planning, delivery, and evaluation of special needs programs by sharing expertise with staff, parents, and community agencies.
   - 7.4. Consulting with parents, administrators, teachers and community agencies.
   - 7.5. Coordination of community services with school programs.
   - 7.6. Provision of, or referral to services, which assist pupils and students in coping more effectively with behaviour adversely affecting their school progress and personal relationships.
   - 7.7. Assistance in relating pupil/students’ educational and career plans to their abilities, interests, and aptitudes.
   - 7.8. Other duties and responsibilities that emerge within the culture of a particular school.

8. Each school shall have a written guidance and counselling program plan that is reviewed and updated annually by the school counsellor(s) with consultation with the principal and school administrative team, teachers, pupils/students and the board, as appropriate.

9. Principals shall be responsible for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the guidance and counselling services in the school, in accordance with these procedures.