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## **The Principals' and Teacher Counsellors' Perception of the Factors Influencing Effective Delivery of Guidance and Counselling Services in Public Secondary Schools in Laikipia District (Pp. 266-281)**

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### **Abstract**

*Despite the institutionalization of guidance and counselling programme in Kenyan public secondary schools, cases of indiscipline are still rampant. This study investigated the factors that influence the delivery of effective guidance and counselling services in all the 45 public secondary schools in Laikipia District as perceived by school principals and teacher counsellors. Two questionnaires, one for principals and another for teacher counselors provided data which was analysed using descriptive statistics and t-test. The findings showed that there is no significant difference in the perception of the effect of training, experience, workload, age and gender of the teacher counsellors and students' attitudes on delivery of guidance and counselling between the principals and teacher counsellors. There is a statistically significant ( $P < 0.05$ ,  $t = -2.115$ ) difference in the perception of the effect of availability of facilities on delivery of guidance and counselling services between the principals and teacher counsellors. It was concluded that, although principals and teacher counsellors understood what is required for*

*effective counselling, they have not done much to ensure the success of the programme. In order to have effective delivery of guidance and counselling services, there is need to provide sufficient facilities and training for teacher counsellors.*

### **Introduction**

Secondary school students are in the adolescence stage which is characterized by intense developmental changes. These changes cause confusion and restlessness and departure from socially acceptable behaviour to a more disturbing manner of behaviour (Wotuka, 2002). Adolescents have a higher tendency of rebellious behaviour, emotional instability, and antisocial behaviour than any other stage in life. Some of them experience problems of sexuality and HIV/AIDS for which they require psychological support and counselling. Counselling is very important at this stage because adolescents try all sorts of adjustment mechanisms to get their needs fulfilled.

The Ministry of Higher Education and Science and Technology has a Guidance and Counselling Unit which is responsible for the organization and management of the guidance and counselling programme in schools. Most schools have set up departments of guidance and counselling. The Teachers' Service Commission (TSC) appoints senior teachers to head these departments (Republic of Kenya, 2001). Where it is properly done, guidance and counselling can be the most effective method of maintaining school discipline as compared to the use of corporal punishment, suspension or expulsion (Wotuka, 2002). Use of guidance and counselling as a method of solving discipline problems makes students feel closer to the teacher, thereby establishing a friendly relationship. This enables the teacher to get to the root of the problem. Thus, guidance and counselling have a long lasting effect since students have the freedom to talk and to realize the consequences of their behaviour (Ayieko, 1988).

The school principal provides the environment through which the counselling services thrive and also appoints the teacher counsellor or recommends him or her appointment by the Teachers' Service Commission. It follows therefore that the level of perception on factors that affect delivery of guidance and counselling services may determine the amount of support the principal will give the programme. The teacher counsellor provides the actual services. To be effective in their work, they need to have proper perception of guidance and counselling services. Despite the existence of guidance and counselling in our public schools, there seem to be an upsurge of indiscipline.

On the basis of the foregoing, there is need to find out whether principals' and teachers' perceptions are among the factors that may influence the delivery of effective guidance and counselling services.

Guidance is a systematic process of helping an individual through education and interpretative procedures to gain a better understanding of his/her own characteristics and potentialities and relate himself/herself more satisfactorily to social requirements and opportunities. Counselling refers to a process which involves talking with a person in a way that helps that person solve a problem or helps to create conditions that will cause the person to understand and/or improve his/her behaviour, character, values or life circumstances (<http://www.dougwoods.com/counselling.html>, Retrieved April 1, 2009).

The school counsellor is supposed to facilitate the optimum development of students, remedy faulty development and prevent shortcomings (Makinde, 1984). The principal as the head of the school is responsible for planning, executing, appraising, and interpreting the various programmes and activities of the school (Ministry of education, 1977). To a large extent, the success of the school counselling programme depends on the support of the school principal through the provision of funds and facilities.

To be a counsellor, one requires training on the use of counselling theory and techniques to assist clients change behaviour (Hohenshill, 1979). Teacher trainees take a compulsory course in guidance and counselling while practicing teachers are supposed to be provided with in-service courses (Republic of Kenya, 1976). Seminars and workshops help counsellors to keep pace with developments in the profession. Most teacher counsellors are not formally trained in guidance and counselling and therefore, their perception of their role may be that of a discipline master rather than that of a helper. Their professional training as teachers does not adequately cover this element of their work as school counsellors.

A principal who has a high or positive perception on the role of training in delivery of guidance and counselling services is likely to sponsor the school counsellor for training, seminars, and workshops. The principal will also appoint teachers with the highest level of training as counsellors. A teacher counsellor with a positive perception will seek training opportunities to sharpen his/her skills and keep pace with the current knowledge in the profession.

Teacher counsellors are loaded with lessons just like the other teachers, leaving them with little time for counselling (Tumuti, 1985; Republic of Kenya, 1976; Mutie & Ndambuki, 1999). They do counselling during the evenings and weekends. Counselling is not provided for in the teaching time table and therefore teacher counsellors lack time to offer the service (Mwirigi, 2002). If principals have a positive perception on the effect of workload on the guidance and counselling services, they are likely to apportion work in such a way to give the counsellor ample time for counseling duties. A survey conducted on 20 secondary school counsellors from Malawi revealed that they were all full-time classroom teachers and had no formal training (Maluwa-banda, 1998). Hence they may not be effective in their counselling.

Available literature supports the provision of facilities for effective counselling (Egbochuku & Iyamu, 2000; Mutie and Ndambuki, 1999; Mullum, 1990; Makinde, 1984; Ipaye, 1983; Engelkes & Vendagroot, 1982). A principal who has a positive perception of the effect of facilities on counselling is likely to provide the necessary amenities for the programme. Likewise, students who have a positive attitude towards guidance and counselling are likely to seek the service. Women are likely to seek help than men (Saunders, 1996). Male students hold more negative attitudes towards seeking guidance than female students (Khan & Nauta, 1997). A principal with a positive perception of the students' attitude towards seeking guidance and counselling services is likely to deal with issues that deter students from seeking help such as allocating an office that provides some degree of privacy.

Female counsellors are more able in dealing with clients than male counsellors according to study findings by Wanjohi (1990) and Maithya (1998). Literature on age and effectiveness as counsellors is not conclusive. Aging comes with experience in the profession. Some students are comfortable with young counsellors while others will want to seek help from the relatively older counsellors (Sunguti, 2003; Republic of Kenya, 1999; Wanjohi 1990).

A study by Charema (2008) done in Botswana revealed that training, lack of time for counselling, facilities (e.g. a private room, reading and counselling materials) and teaching workload were some of the factors hindering effective counselling in secondary schools as perceived by school counsellors. Another study on 420 secondary school students in Benin

City(Nigeria) found that insufficient counsellors; inadequate availability of counselling facilities; and the qualification of guidance and counselling personnel have an impact on the quality of guidance and counselling services (Egbochuku, 2008). In this study, a significant positive relationship was reported between qualifications of guidance and counselling personnel and the quality of guidance and counselling services. According to Oladede (1987), the quality of counselling services rendered depends a great deal on the training of the counsellors. Other studies (Pérusse & Goodnough, 2005; Sumarah & Lehr, 2002; Bezanson & Kellet, 2001) have shown that support by teachers, parents, school administration and principals as well as training are necessary for successful counselling.

A study (Gathuthi, Wambui & Kimengi, 2007) conducted in Keiyo District of Kenya identified some of the roles of head teachers that would contribute to a successful guidance and counselling programme. They include provision of material resources, ensuring students' awareness, ensuring teacher counsellor competency and involving other teachers in the programme. In this study, the head teachers gave priority to classroom instruction over other duties.

Biological theories assume that different people are genetically predisposed to perceive things differently. Environmental theories assume that we learn to respond differently to stimuli in our environment. Cognitive theorists argue that our mental appraisal and analysis of a situation will determine the way we respond. Although the three theoretical orientations are relevant, the latter two seem to be more appropriate in explaining the way principals and teacher counsellors form their perceptions on guidance and counselling services. Our education system places a lot of emphasis on examinations to the extent that counselling and other non-academic activities take the background in the school environment. Principals and teacher counsellors know that recognition and promotions are based on good academic results and therefore counselling may not be a priority even when they know its importance to the development of the individual learner.

The aim of this study was to find out how principals and teacher counsellors perceive some of the factors that influence the delivery of guidance and counselling services in secondary schools.

### **Methodology**

The ex post-facto research design which attempts to discover causes after changes have taken place without controlling or manipulating variables was

used. The subjects of study comprised of 45 school principals and 45 teacher counsellors from all the 45 public secondary schools in the Laikipia District of Rift Valley Province. Since the target population was small, all the principals and teacher counsellors were included in the study. Twenty percent ( $n = 9$ ) of the principals were females while 80% ( $n = 36$ ) were males. Twenty two (48.9%) of the counsellors were females while 23 (51.1%) were male. The age range for the principals was 38-54 years while that of the teacher counsellors was 27-55 years.

Two questionnaires, one for the teacher counsellors and the other one for the principals were used. The instruments solicited information about the respondents and their perceptions on the variables of interest. Both questionnaires had 24 similar, five-point likert type items that measured perceptions on the factors influencing delivery of guidance and counselling. After scoring these items, the means for the two groups were worked out and comparisons made using the t-test. The instruments were pilot-tested on a similar sample of 16 teacher counsellors and 16 principals from Nyeri District.

The researchers visited the schools, explained the purpose of the study, issued the questionnaires to the respondents and gave them time to fill. After the respondents filled the questionnaires, they were collected for analysis. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and t-test.

### **Results**

The first hypothesis stated that there is no significant difference in the perception of the effect of training of teacher counsellors on delivery of guidance and counselling services between the principals and teacher counsellors. The results of t-test in table 1 shows that there is no significant ( $P > 0.05$ ,  $t = -0.304$ ) difference between the way principals and teacher counsellors perceive the effect of training on guidance and counselling.

The second hypothesis stated that there is no significant difference in the perception of the effect of experience of teacher counsellors on delivery of guidance and counselling services between the principals and teacher counsellors. The independent sample t-test showed that there is no significant ( $p > 0.05$ ,  $t$  value = 0.965) difference between the way principals and teacher counsellors perceive the effect of experience of teacher counsellors on the delivery of guidance and counselling services (See table 2).

The third hypothesis stated that there is no significant difference between the perceptions of principals and teacher counsellors on the effect of workload of the teacher counsellors on delivery of guidance and counselling services. The results of t-test in table 3 showed that there is no significant ( $P > 0.05$ ,  $t = -1.891$ ) difference between the way principals and teacher counsellors perceive the effect of workload on guidance and counselling.

In the fourth hypothesis, it was stated that there is no significant difference in the perception of the effect of the availability of facilities on delivery of guidance and counselling services between the principals and teacher counsellors. The t-test results in table 4 showed that there is a significant ( $P < 0.05$ ,  $t = -2.115$ ) difference between the way principals and teacher counsellors perceive the effect of availability of facilities on guidance and counselling.

The fifth hypothesis stated that there is no significant difference between the perceptions of principals and teacher counsellors on the effect of students' attitude towards seeking help on delivery of guidance and counselling services. The t-test results in table 5 showed that there is no significant ( $P > 0.05$ ,  $t = 0.609$ ) difference between the way principals and teacher counsellors perceive the effect of students' attitude towards seeking help on effectiveness of delivery of guidance and counselling services.

The sixth hypothesis stated that there is no significant difference in the perception of the effect of the age of teacher counsellors on delivery of guidance and counselling services between the principals and teacher counsellors. The results of the t-test are presented in table 6.

The seventh hypothesis stated that there is no significant difference in the perception of the effect of gender of the teacher counsellors on delivery of guidance and counselling services between the principals and teacher counsellors. The t-test results presented in table 7 show that the observed mean difference was not statistically significant ( $P > 0.05$ ,  $t = 1.553$ ).

## **Discussion**

The findings in table 1 imply that both the principals and teacher counsellors appreciate the importance of training on effective delivery of guidance and counseling services. Previous studies have shown that training is necessary for effective guidance and counselling in schools (Charema, 2008; Egbochuku, 2008; Gathuthi et al., 2007; Bezanson & Kellet, 2001; Oladede' 1987). Despite this realization, only 6.7% of the principals indicated that they

base the appointment of teacher counsellors on training. Only 11.1% of the teacher counsellors had training up to degree level. This left the principals with the option of considering other factors such as age, experience, religion and seniority when appointing teacher counsellors.

Both the principals (88.9%) and teacher counsellors (88.9%) had attended seminars and workshops on guidance and counselling. Six percent of the teacher counsellors had attained diplomas in guidance and counselling. This shows that, both consider training important for the guidance and counselling programme to achieve its goals. Nevertheless, there is no government policy or programme on training in guidance and counselling. The Ministry of Education (Republic of Kenya, 2001) agrees that those who have some form of training in guidance and counselling is as a result of their initiative to seek such training.

The results in table 2 suggest that both the school counsellors and principals feel that the experience of a teacher counsellor is important in effective delivery of guidance and counselling services. Most of the principals (93.4%) and teacher counsellors (86.8%) agreed that the experience of teacher counsellors is critical in effective delivery of counselling services. The research showed that 51.1% of the teacher counsellors felt that they were appointed counsellors on the basis of their seniority and experience. Also 40% of the principals indicated that the major consideration in appointing teacher counsellors was the teacher's seniority and experience. The study further revealed that 71.2% of the teacher counsellors had over ten years of teaching experience and only 28.8% had less than ten years of teaching experience.

The results agree with previous findings that have shown that experienced counsellors are surer of themselves, more flexible and open, more interpretative and focus more on clients (Wanjohi, 1990). Experienced counsellors are likely to understand the operations and challenges of the guidance and counselling programme. However, experience needs to be supplemented by training.

The findings in table 3 suggest that both principals and teacher counsellors have a high perception on the effect of workload on effective delivery of guidance and counselling services. A mean score of between 4 and 5 implies that most of their responses ranged between agree (A) and strongly agree (SA). Further analysis of the results showed that majority of the principals (86.7%) and teacher counsellors (93.3%) agreed that the workload of teacher

counsellors influence their effectiveness. However, the teacher counsellors had a similar workload as other teachers in the school in addition to guidance and counselling responsibilities. With the severe understaffing in schools, it is not possible to have a teaching load of about 15 lessons in a week as recommended by the Teachers, Service Commission. Only 4.4% of the teacher counsellors had a workload of 15 lessons per week, 57.8% had a workload of between 24 and 35 lessons per week. The study also revealed that 75.6% of the teacher counsellors had other duties such as class teacher, examinations and heads of tuition departments. This heavy workload impacted negatively on the delivery of guidance and counselling services. Because of pressure to produce good results, the teacher counsellors may concentrate more on teaching than on counselling (Tumuti, 1985). These findings are in agreement with several studies that found out that teaching is the priority and counselling is done on a part-time basis when the teacher counsellor is free (Egbochuku, 2008; Gathuthi et al., 2007; Ng'ang'a, 2004; Mwangiri, 2002; Wanjohi, 1990; Republic of Kenya, 1976). The teacher counsellors need adequate time to be able to carry out their counselling duties effectively.

The results presented in table 4 suggest that there is a likelihood of teacher counsellors to recognize the important role played by the availability of facilities as compared to the principals. Teacher counsellors seem to be more aware of the facilities they need to deliver the services effectively than school principals. In a study done by Charema (2008) in Botswana; availability of facilities (e.g. a private room, reading and counselling materials) was perceived by schools counsellors as one of the factors that hinder effective counselling in secondary schools. In this study, it was observed that 54% of the teacher counsellors indicated this as one of the major hindrances to the delivery of guidance and counselling as compared to 31.6% of the principals. None of the 45 schools studied had a vote head covering guidance and counselling and hence the inability to provide facilities.

This finding is in agreement with a report by the then Ministry of Education (Republic of Kenya, 2001) that school administrators are reluctant to finance guidance and counselling related activities. Also, at the provincial and district levels the coordinators of guidance and counselling activities have no provision for funding. Makinde (1984) recommended budgetary allocation for guidance and counselling activities.

The results in table 5 suggested that both the principals and teacher counsellors perceive students' attitude towards seeking help as crucial in the delivery of guidance and counselling services in a school. The success or failure of the guidance and counselling programme is therefore dependent on the attitude of students. Fifty-four percent of the teacher counsellors indicated that they only counsel about one student per week. The findings of this study seem to agree with Khaemba's (1986) study that showed that many students do not feel part and parcel of the guidance and counselling programme and are not free and open when it comes to individual counselling.

Despite the principals' and teacher counsellors' recognition of the importance of students' positive attitude towards successful guidance and counselling, they have not done much to improve the ambivalent attitude towards seeking help among the students. This study revealed that most of the teacher counsellors' offices were located next to the staffroom, the deputy principal or the principal's office. This could deter students from visiting the teacher counsellor's office. The study also indicated that the head of counselling department was part of the school administration and therefore he/she may sometimes perform duties that may conflict with the role of guidance and counselling. Students are not able to see the role of the teacher counsellor independent from that of a teacher, disciplinarian or an agent of the school administration and hence students do not feel free to reveal their problems or seek help (L'Abate, 1985; Migiro, 1996).

The observed mean difference in table 6 was not statistically significant ( $P > 0.05$ ,  $t = 1.642$ ). This finding suggests that both the principals and teacher counsellors agree that the age of a counsellor affects delivery of guidance and counselling services. Sixty percent of the principals considered age when appointing teacher counsellors. Experience and seniority, which are age related, were ranked first by 31.1% and 29% respectively by the teacher counsellors. Only 28.8% of the teacher counsellors had less than 10 years of teaching experience whereas 71.2% had over 10 years experience. This finding tends to agree (Wanjohi, 1990) and also disagree (Sunguti, 2003) with previous views.

The results in table 7 suggested that both the principals and teacher counsellors have more or less the same perception about the effect of gender on delivery of guidance and counselling services. However, the perception levels seem to be low indicating that the principals and teacher counsellors do not regard gender of the teacher counsellor as a crucial determinant of service delivery. No respondent indicated gender as a consideration in the appointment of teacher

counsellors. The gender distribution of the teacher counsellors in Laikipia District was 51.5% male and 48.9% female counsellors. The study also found out that most of the schools had guidance and counselling committees comprising of male and female teachers. However, it has been found that students may not be very comfortable when being counseled by counsellors of the opposite sex (Maithya, 1996; Republic of Kenya, 1999).

### **Conclusions**

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that:

- i. Both the principals and teacher counsellors understood the guidance and counselling programme in the same way, including its role in the school and the factors that determine its success in terms of service delivery.
- ii. Both principals and teacher counsellors perceive training, experience, workload, age and students' attitude towards guidance and counselling as important factors in effective delivery of guidance and counselling services in secondary schools.
- iii. With a positive perception as observed, it is expected that the counselling programmes would be successful. However, the principals and teacher counsellors had not done much in addressing these factors and as a result, the delivery of services was largely constrained. This can be attributed to lack of clear policy guidelines by the Teachers' Service Commission and the Ministry of Education.
- iv. Teacher counsellors have a better understanding of the importance the effect of facilities in delivery of guidance and counselling services as compared to the principals. This could explain why none of the schools studied had an equipped guidance and counselling center including an appropriate office.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations were made:

- i. There is need to have professionally trained school counsellors for effective delivery of guidance and counselling services.
- ii. There is need to reduce the teaching load of teacher counsellors so as to allow them more time for guidance and counselling services.

- They should be freed from other responsibilities that may interfere with their responsibilities as counsellors.
- iii. There is need for sufficient facilities and finances for effective delivery of guidance and counselling services.
  - iv. The schools need to assist and encourage students to develop a positive attitude towards guidance and counselling.
  - v. The Ministry of Education and the Teachers' Service Commission should come up with clear policy guide lines on appointment, training of counsellors, workload, remuneration and responsibilities of school counsellors.
  - vi. There is need for further study on factors that influence students' attitude towards seeking counselling services.

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Table 1: A t-test comparing the perception on the effect of training of teacher counsellors between principals and teacher counsellors

Variable (Designation)	Perception N	Mean (mean)	Mean difference	t-value	Sig.( 2 tailed)
Principals	45	4.47		-0.04	-
Teacher counsellors	45	4.51			-

0.304  
0.762  
p > .05

Table 2: A t-test comparing the perception on the effect of experience of teacher counsellors between principals and teacher counsellors.

Variable (Designation)	Perception N	Mean (mean)	Mean difference	t-value	Sig.( 2 tailed)
Principals	45	4.11	0.18	0.965	0.337
Teacher counsellors	45	3.93			

P > 0.05

Table 3: A t-test comparing the perception on the effect of workload between principals and teacher counsellors.

Variable (Designation)	Perception N	Mean (mean)	Mean difference	t-value	Sig.( 2 tailed)
Principals	45	4.11	-0.33	-0.891	0.062
Teacher counsellors	45	4.44			

p > 0.05

Table 4: A t-test comparing the perception on the effect of availability of facilities between principals and teacher counsellors

Variable (Designation)	Perception N	Mean (mean)	Mean difference	t-value	Sig.( 2 tailed)
Principals	45	4.41	-0.24	-2.115	0.037
Teacher counsellors	45	4.71			

P < 0.05

Table 5: A t-test comparing the perception on the effect of students' attitude towards seeking help between principals and teacher counsellors

Variable (Designation)	Perception N	Mean (mean)	Mean difference	t-value	Sig. (2 tailed)
Principals	45	4.59	0.089	0.609	0.544
Teacher counsellors	45	4.49			

P > 0.05

Table 6: A t-test comparing the perception on the effect of age of teacher counsellors between principals and teacher counsellors

Variable (Designation)	Perception N	Mean (mean)	Mean difference	t-value	Sig. (2 tailed)
Principals	45	3.58	0.40	1.642	0.104
Teacher counsellors	45	3.18			

P > 0.05

Table 7: A t-test comparing the perception on the effect of gender of teacher counsellors between principals and teacher counsellors

Variable (Designation)	Perception N	Mean (mean)	Mean difference	t-value	Sig. (2 tailed)
Principals	45	2.84	0.38	1.553	0.124
Teacher counsellors	45	2.47			

P > 0.05