

## **The Influence of Teacher Counsellors' Training on Provision of Vocational Guidance in Public Secondary Schools in Kandara Subcounty, Muranga County, Kenya**

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**Abstract:** Provision of effective vocational guidance in Kandara Sub County public secondary schools has not yet been realized fully. This is probably because teacher counselors are not well equipped and are therefore professionally incompetent in this area. Insufficient vocational guidance in the mentorship programmes provided in public secondary schools of Kandara Sub County due to inadequate teacher counsellors' training can lead to wrong subject choices and therefore wrong career choices by many students which eventually leads to job dissatisfaction, disappointments and reduced productivity in person's' work life. The study aimed at assessing the influence of teacher counsellors' training on provision of vocational guidance in public secondary schools of Kandara Sub County, Murang'a County. The study objective was to examine the influence of the teacher counsellors' training on vocational guidance. The study was mainly guided by the Parson's trait & factor theory and also the vocational theory of John Holland. The teacher counsellors' training was the independent variable while the dependent variable was vocational guidance. The study employed mixed methods approach and concurrent triangulation design. The total target population comprised of 275 guidance & counseling HODs together with teacher counselors. The study sample comprised of 110 respondents, among them 22 heads of guidance and counselling department and 88 teacher counselors. All the 22 HODs responded to the interviews while 83 teacher counselors returned the questionnaires. Stratified random sampling and simple random sampling techniques were employed in the study. Prior to actual analysis, a pilot study was carried out in Kigumo Sub- County in order to ascertain reliability, validity, dependability and credibility. The importance of piloting was to assist in identification of misunderstandings, ambiguities, uselessness and inadequacy of the items present. Self-administered questionnaires for the teacher counselors and interview schedules for the guidance and counseling department heads were utilized for data collection. Data collected from the field was both quantitative and qualitative in nature. Quantitative data obtained was analysed using both descriptive & inferential statistics such as means, standard deviations, frequencies, percentages and ANOVA using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 23.0). The qualitative data was analysed by categorizing it into semantic themes and presented in narrative forms. The results of the analysis were then presented using tables, charts and graphs. The research revealed that majority of the teacher counselors had not attained any qualification in guidance & counseling and attended workshops related to vocational guidance only once per year. The research findings indicate that the existing mentorship programmes in schools are not adequate to provide the required vocational guidance to the students.

**Key words of the abstract** Teacher counsellors' training, vocational guidance

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### **I. Introduction**

One of the key components of guidance and counselling programmes in secondary schools should be provision of vocational guidance (VG) to the learners. This involves assisting the learners to make informed vocational decisions as per their capabilities, desires, knowledge, attitudes and the prevailing labour market conditions (OECD, 2004). Since one of the key educational goals is to arm the learners with the appropriate knowledge and techniques to plan for their future, VG and counseling is very paramount for the modern students who happen to exhibit great motivation but without focus (Schneider & Stevenson, 1999). According to NCES (2001), students in USA are highly ambitious, look forward to attain quality education and get great jobs but research indicates that many of them have no concrete plans for achieving their goals. In Europe, mentoring and VG has been existence since ancient Greek times (Parsloeet et al., 2000).

In Africa, mentors were grown-ups who supported young people and mentored them to become well-adjusted people in the society. African guidance & counselling programmes were aimed at realizing psychological, social, spiritual, professional as well as academic goals (Maloner, 2011). Research shows that students at all levels of education can benefit from guidance programmes facilitated by well trained and experienced mentors e.g. in making career decisions since this is one of the adolescent developmental tasks (Maloner, 2011). The major question here is whether effective formal or informal vocational guidance programmes exist and if they do, who mentors the students and to what extent?

According to Orenge (2011), career services in Kenyan schools started in 1920's before the country's independence. The service was geared to assist the colonial masters in obtaining the labor required for their economic exploits by then. However, there was need to change the purpose of the career guidance services after the country's independence so as to match with the prevailing economic needs. The Kenyan Education system was then reviewed by the Gachathi Commission (1976), where new and expanded objectives for the career guidance in Kenyan secondary schools were documented. This led to the publication of a Guidance Counselors' Handbook in 1977 which was dispatched to schools for the implementation of the programme. The Ministry of Education (MOE) issued a directive that each school establishes a G & C department whose main task was to provide VG. The MOE had a G & C section that was established in the 1970s (Orenge, 2011) in order to offer G & C services in teacher training colleges, secondary schools and facilitate in-service training for practicing teachers. This MOE unit mandate has continued to expand in order to respond to the emerging issues being experienced by the entire stakeholders within the entire education sector. Despite the Government support in providing G & C services educational institutions, the expected outcome has not been realized, an indication that new strategies need to be employed to achieve the desired results. There is therefore great need for development of an elaborated national programme for the sake of training G & C teachers to enable them to execute their mandate in a professional manner. In addition G & C services in educational institutions should be strengthened by ensuring that teacher counselors have the necessary knowledge and skills required for effective provision of these services.

The MOE (2007) policy documents indicate that VG and counseling should be part of the G & C support services provided to learners. According to the Careers Guide Book for Schools (2009), many schools have G & C teachers appointed by the Teachers Service Commission (TSC). However, there is no readily available data on the current status of career G & C services in most Kenyan public secondary schools. Sindabi & Wanyama (1996) indicates that despite the introduction of G & C services in Kenyan schools in 1960's, there still remains a gap in establishment of the status of VG in Kenya. A research done by Karanja et al., (2014) indicated that 18.18% of all the issues referred to the G&C teachers in Mbooni East district were career related. These findings revealed VG is one of the key areas which the high school students desires to be enlightened on. This study also indicated that there are no formalized structures for mentorship programmes but are usually incorporated in the G & C programmes. Consequently, some areas such as VG are not adequately addressed. This study further indicates that about 66% of the secondary school graduates join colleges & Universities after secondary school but more than 33% of this number drops out within two years before completing their education probably because they were not properly guided. According to Ogolla (2002), if students receive proper VG, they place themselves where in their most suitable vocations. On the other hand, if they are not well guided, they make wrong vocational choices and end up becoming dissatisfied at their work places, frustrated and live unproductive lives. VG together with academic guidance can therefore appropriately prepare and enable the students to set and achieve their academic and vocational goals. VG is meant to assist learners to acquire self-awareness as well as career management skills even as the labor market keeps on changing.

Mentorship programmes in Kenyan educational institutions have remained unpopular and in the few places they are in existence, they are executed ineffectively, while some of the guidance areas like VG are being ignored significantly. One of the reasons for this scenario is due to the fact that the most teacher counselors Kenyan public secondary schools are inadequately trained and are therefore professionally incompetent in this area (Ogolla, 2002). Consequently, many secondary school graduates students have not been able to make correct informed career choices. A study done by some Quality Assurance Officers in Marsabit Central district supports this observation by indicating that it is only less than 50% of the fourth form students in this district who obtain VG (Ministry of Education, 2007). In most cases the form four candidates are issued with the University career booklets to refer to when selecting the University courses without any comprehensive VG and therefore end up making uninformed career choices (MOE, 2012). If this problem is not alleviated, unprofessionalism, frustrations and decreased productivity in work places will characterize the job market. Very scanty research on this area has been done in Kandara Sub County and this triggered the researcher to assess the influence of teacher counsellors' dynamics on provision of vocational guidance in Kandara Sub County public secondary schools.

## **II. Statement of the problem**

Provision of effective vocational guidance in Kandara Sub County public secondary schools has not yet been realized fully. This is probably because of the teacher counselors' dynamics where these counsellors are not well equipped and are therefore professionally incompetent in this area. Lack of sufficient vocational guidance in these schools could lead to wrong subject choices and therefore wrong career choices by many students which in turn would contribute to job dissatisfaction, frustrations and reduced productivity in someone's work life. Students in Kandara Sub County public secondary schools seem not to have sufficient knowledge concerning their abilities, limitations, are unsure about their career aspirations and have very scanty information regarding the job market. This has been evidenced by the fact that even at form three or form two level when students are expected to choose subjects in line with their career aspirations, many still do not have a clear idea of what they want to pursue in life. Many students seem to select subjects based on those that have been selected by their peers and on their preference to the subject teachers instead of their career aspirations. This fact makes them select careers that are not in line with their abilities and aspirations which would eventually lead to frustration, low morale to work, job dissatisfaction, reduced productivity and some even drop out of college on realization that they chose inappropriate courses. If this problem is not alleviated education wastage, job dissatisfaction and low human productivity even at school will continue to characterize the population in this Sub County. In the literature reviewed by this researcher, no study on the influence of teacher counselors' dynamics on provision of vocational guidance to public schools' secondary students has been done in Kandara Sub County. It is with the intention to fill this knowledge gap that this study focused on assessing the influence of teacher counselors' training, motivation, workload and managerial support on provision of vocational guidance.

### **Study purpose**

The study purpose was to assess the influence of teacher counselors' training on provision of vocational guidance in the public secondary schools of Kandara Sub County, Murang'a County

### **Research objective**

To examine the influence of the teacher counselors' training on vocational guidance in Kandara Sub county, Murang'a County.

### **Research question**

How does the level of training of teacher counselors influence vocational guidance in Kandara Sub County public secondary schools?

### **Significance of the study**

It is anticipated that study findings will enlighten the stakeholders in the education sector e.g. the MOE, the teacher training colleges, TSC and school management on the importance of teachercounsellors' training in offering relevant vocational guidance to the learners. This will in turn assist in improving the teacher counsellors' training in the area of career guidance so as to equip them with knowledge on how to match individual students' abilities and aspirations with the job market.

Eventually, the study findings will contribute to increasing the effectiveness of mentorship programmes in offering career guidance to secondary schools learners, thus enabling them to choose appropriate vocations where they can utilize their personal resources and enjoy working while realizing maximum results.

## **III. Literature review**

### **3.1 Vocational guidance in schools**

In a school situation, vocational guidance involves assisting learners to make informed career choices depending on their talents, aspirations, capabilities, personality and the labour market (OECD, 2004). It is aimed at providing meaningful educational and career experiences that are most suited to each learner's needs and developmental stage. At the exploration level, VG would assist the students to understand their abilities, talents, interests and aspirations and then match them with the available career opportunities. This would enable to acquire appropriate career behaviours such as selection of suitable study subjects, selection of relevant areas of specialization, acquisition of appropriate work attitudes and also have increased motivation in education.

There are four aspects of VG: (a) assisting the learners to acquire improved self-awareness (b) availing career-related information to the learners, (c) assisting them to make informed career decisions based on their individual characteristics and (d) preparing the learners to actively manage their career profiles as they develop professionally throughout their life span (UNESCO, 2002). In order to achieve vocational satisfaction, a person must be able to match his/her personality with the appropriate career options. VG enables individuals to comprehend what normally happen and what should happen in work places e.g. work ethics and value for work.

Most secondary school leavers receive inadequate VG and therefore chose careers that do not match with their personalities, talents and aspirations, making them regret in their entire lives because of the wrong choices made. More often than not, the parents unknowingly misguide their children in making vocational choices since they are also not well informed in this area (Kurgat, 2005). Consequently, it is crucial to assess the teacher counselors' factors/dynamics that determine the effectiveness of VG in secondary schools for the purpose of enhancing it.

### **3.2 Influence of teacher counsellors' training on provision of vocational guidance**

The major guidance areas in secondary schools include academic guidance, VG that focuses on career-related issues, and social-personal & psychological guidance which concentrates on family issues, emotional adaptability and both inter & intrapersonal interactions. VG is quite complex and requires the TC not only to have the guidance skills but also to be well versed with other relevant aspects such as the labour market dynamics, skills required to prepare somebody for different roles at work places, methods of performing vocational assessment and techniques of modifying behavior, mental outlook & emotion at the work place when needful. A TC providing VG should therefore undergo periodic training to enhance his or her understanding of this task so as to practice it effectively and adequately. This would provide the TC with the required information and ability to offer the VG services and is therefore able to carry out individual assessment for students, offer updated and detailed occupational information and advise them on appropriate career placements. Brown and Brooks (1991) advocates that a career counselor must be skilled in techniques such as setting of goals, self-understanding, making of decisions, exploration of occupations, career lifelong integration and terminating of a career counseling sessions. He/she should be knowledgeable about labour market, employment trends, career development concepts, decision making theories, resources and techniques that can be used with special groups, systems for storing and using occupational information, changing roles gender roles and linkages among diverse roles in life. Well-structured G & C pre-service and in-service courses should also be organized at all educational levels to equip the teacher counsellors (KESSEP, 2005). The implementation of career guidance and counselling by the Government of Kenya is based on a number of recommendations and guidelines contained in various education commission reports, national plans and government sessional papers such as the Ominde report of 1964, the 1974-1976 Development plan, Gachathi report of 1976, Kamunge report of 1988, and sessional paper no.6 of 1988 (MOE, 2007).

The Ominde report of 1964 stated the need to re-assess expatriates' guidance in schools. He found that the provision of vocational guidance was not adequate. The 1974-1976 Development plan advised teachers to assist learners to resolve their psychological problems by providing G & C services. The Gachathi report of 1976 advocated for training of G & C teachers. The 1973-1983 Development Plan recommended that G & C should be a component of the curriculum at the colleges and universities where teachers are trained. This was emphasized in the Kamunge report of 1988 that made various recommendations for training and provision of G & C e.g. the decentralization of G & C to district levels where the senior teachers were to oversee the programmes; TSC to appoint G & C HODs in schools; Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) was to develop appropriate curriculum and the relevant support materials such as the G & C handbook; training of teacher trainers and teacher counselors as well as the introduction of peer education and counselling clubs in educational institutions. The 1988 Sessional Paper No.6 placed emphasis on educating the G & C providers and inspectors for better service provision. The 2001-2002 Development Plan recommended that teachers proceeding for G & C studies should be fully paid by the TSC while on such leave. If effectively implemented, the above policies would ensure that learners acquire the necessary life-skills required in the workplace. Despite the MOE effort to ensure that teachers are equipped with knowledge and skills necessary to manage and cope with emerging issues and challenges involving learners, there is often a disconnect between policy and practice. This is especially common in the examination orientated school system where to many educationists in Africa, either a trained or an untrained teacher can be assigned the G & C work even without being conversant with the responsibilities of a TC.

Mukwana (2005) found that inadequate training time was a major barrier to effectiveness in delivery of career G & C services in Kenyan schools. Nyamai (2008) in his study on effectiveness of G & C in the Mukuru slums in Nairobi found that G & C was not effective in secondary schools since there was a discordant between its implementation and the qualification of teacher counselors. It is therefore evident that a lot needs to be done in order to make career G & C effective within the Kenyan education system where non-examinable programmes are ignored despite their importance. A study done by Lutomia (2012) revealed that many career guidance teachers lack training and may therefore fail to realize that their contribution has a very key role to play in the vocational choices made by learners. Additionally, a study done by Orange (2011) in Nairobi province revealed that only 23% of teacher counselors had at least attended a career related in-service training course and 77% of the teachers rarely attended career related workshops and seminars. This could have been due to lack of awareness of the importance of workshops/seminars as avenues for experience sharing and

updating of career related information or because the opportunities are not availed to them by the school management. Nyutu (2007) asserts that career masters in Kenyan secondary schools including those in Murang'a County are inadequately trained and their main role is to help the students fill the university application forms. He further indicates that very little information is provided with regard to available career options for the students upon graduation and this makes students select college courses with little knowledge of the work environments to which these courses will lead them.

Mwaniki, (2008) found that basic qualification for a TC in Kenyan secondary school is being a teacher. Ndambuki and Mutie (1999) supported this fact when they concluded that anybody working in a school and is interested in guiding & counseling the students can always be made a TC without any formal training in this area. It is on this foundation that the researcher aimed at examining the influence of the teacher counsellors' training on their effectiveness in providing VG.

#### **IV. Research methodology**

Mixed methods were applied in this study where both qualitative and quantitative approaches were utilized. The two approaches were used in order to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data in order to make generalizations about the entire population and at the same time generate some detailed information to assess the reality of VG in Kandara Sub County secondary schools. Concurrent triangulation design was employed in this study where both quantitative and qualitative methods were utilized to confirm, cross-validate or corroborate findings within the study. The purpose of this design was to obtain different but complimentary data on the same topic to best understand the research problem (Morse, 1991). Data collection was done in a concurrent manner. The H.O.Ds responses were obtained using qualitative data while the teacher counselors' responses were obtained quantitatively and the findings from each level merged together into one overall interpretation. To obtain the correct sample population, stratified sampling and simple random sampling were utilized.

The study target population was 275 teachers, comprising the 55 G & C departmental heads and 220 teacher counsellors of the 55 public secondary schools in Kandara Sub County. A Sample size 110 respondents that comprised 22 HODs and 88 teacher counselors was used. The research instruments used were questionnaires for the teacher counselors and interview schedules for the H.O.Ds

#### **Research findings, analysis and discussion**

The study findings indicated that 48 (57.8%) teacher counselors had not attained any qualification in guidance and counseling, 26 (31.3%) had attained certificate in guidance and counselling, 3 (3.6%) had a degree and 4 (4.8%) had master's degree in guidance and counselling. Among the HODs, 8 (36.4%) had not attained any qualification in guidance and counseling, 7 (31.8%) had attained a certificate in guidance and counseling while the rest had attained a Diploma (9.1%), a bachelor's Degree (4.5%) and Master's degree (18.2%) in guidance and counselling respectively. This shows that a significant proportion of teacher counselors and HODs had not attained any qualifications in guidance & counseling as well as in vocational guidance. In line with these findings, Lutomia (2012) revealed that many career guidance teachers lack training and may therefore fail to realize that their contribution has a very key role to play in the vocational choices made by learners. Similarly, Nyamai (2008) in his study on effectiveness of G & C in the Mukuru slums in Nairobi found that G & C was not effective in secondary schools since there was a discordant between its implementation and the qualification of teacher counselors. The study further found that only 36.1% of the teacher counselors and 54.5% of the HODs have ever attended a workshop on vocational guidance respectively. This implies that majority of the HODs have ever attended workshops and seminars related to career guidance compared to teacher counselors. The low number of trained teacher counselors could be explained by lack of opportunities availed to them by the school management. In addition to this, further analysis showed that there was a significant relationship between teachers' training and vocational guidance, ( $r=0.000$ ,  $p<0.05$  level of significance). This means that teacher counsellors' training had a great impact on vocational guidance they offer to students.

#### **V. Conclusion**

In conclusion, majority of the guidance & counseling H.O.Ds and teacher counselors in Kandara Sub-county had not attained any qualification in guidance and counseling and they attended workshops related to vocational guidance only once per year. This means that they are not adequately trained in offering vocational guidance

#### **Recommendation**

Teachers in-charge of guidance and counseling should be facilitated for capacity building courses as well as workshops geared towards promoting vocational guidance to make them better equipped to handle the task.

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