

Guiding and Counselling Pupils in Kenyan Public Primary Schools: Headteachers and Teacher Counsellors Role Perception and Experiences

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the role perceptions of head teachers and the teacher counselors in the guidance and counseling of pupils in public primary schools of Embu District, Kenya as well as determining whether there were any qualitative different ways in which respondents (head teachers and teacher counselors) viewed and experienced these roles. In addition, the study established whether there were any significant differences between the respondents' role perceptions in guiding and counseling pupils and the selected demographic variables of age, sex, marital status, academic qualification, teaching experience, experience in management, training in guidance and counseling, school category and geographical location of school. The study also established if there existed any significant differences between head teachers' perceptions of teacher counselor's role and the teacher counselors' perceptions of their role. The study used a survey design with a multi-strategy research approach which provided both quantitative and qualitative data through questionnaires, interviews and observations. The data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The inferential statistics employed were t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), which were used to test the hypotheses of the study at significance level of 0.05. The interview data were analyzed phenomenographically. Both the head teachers and the teacher counselors had high levels of perception of their roles in the guidance and counseling of pupils (4.57 and 4.52 respectively out of a maximum of 5.0). The head teachers' level of perception of the teacher counselors' role was 4.54. The results obtained after testing the hypotheses indicated that there were no significant differences between head teachers' role perceptions and the independent variables of age, gender, marital status, academic qualifications, training in guidance and counseling, administrative experience, teaching experience, school category and geographical location of school. There were also no significant differences between teacher counselors' role perceptions and the independent variables of age, gender, marital status, academic qualifications, training in guidance and counseling, administrative experience, and school category. In addition, there was no significant difference between the head teachers perception of the teacher counselors' role and the perception of the teacher counselors about their role. There was however a significant difference realized between teacher counselors' role perceptions and the geographical location of school. Over half of the teacher counselors (55.6%) and the majority of the head teachers (71.4%) had not received any basic training in the guidance and counseling skills. Observations carried out revealed that 90.7% of schools had not time-tabled for guidance and counseling and was only done when need arose. The majority did not have guidance and counseling offices (93.3%), reference materials (79.0%) and training materials (76.5%). Counseling atmosphere in more than half (57.0%) of the counseling sessions was found to be either tense or suspicious.

Phenomenographically analysis of data revealed that there were qualitative different ways in which the respondents viewed and experienced their roles in the guidance and counseling of pupils. The pupils who needed guidance and counseling in public schools had socio-cultural, socio-economic, and academic problems or needs. Drug abuse (socio-cultural) was ranked as the most serious with alcohol being most abused. Early pregnancies and marriages were the leading causes of girl school drop outs, while drug abuse and child labor were the leading causes of the boys drop outs. The majority of the teacher counselors (89.1%) and the head teachers (94.9%) missed out many functions despite having high role perceptions. Lack of support from the stakeholders; intensive poverty and widespread illiteracy; cultural/traditional practices; and negative media influence, were recorded as interfering with their role performance. Several suggestions to solve these problems were offered. Although the respondents listed several indicators of poor role performance in the guidance and counseling of their pupils, the majority still perceived their role performances to be either good or fair. The research findings have justified the need for change in the management of guidance and counseling and several recommendations have been put forward. Some suggestions for further research have also been included.

Keywords: Education, Educational counseling, Kenya

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