

Establishment of Best Practices in Guidance and Counselling Services in Kenyan Secondary Schools

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Abstract

Despite educational commissions recommending the establishment of guidance and counselling services in Kenya since 1976, schools have not fully implemented guidance and counselling programmes. In the year 2001, corporal punishment was banned in Kenyan schools. What alternative did the Government give the teachers? Did the Government take the initiative to prepare the teachers and learners for an environment where there was no corporal punishment? The objective of the study was to establish why the best practices in guidance and counselling services are still not being adopted in Kenyan schools. A qualitative research approach was used based on Social Learning Theory. A survey was conducted among fourth year students who had completed guidance and counselling practicum. Purposive sampling was used and data was collected using interviews, focus group and documents. Data was thematically coded. The study established the challenges faced by the school counsellors as: no offices, negative attitude of the school community towards counselling, culture of caning in the schools, interference from school administrators and no time scheduled for guidance and counselling. The factors identified as hindrances to best practices are: lack of budgetary allocation, lack of trained personnel, cultural beliefs, teachers and students negative attitude towards guidance and counselling services, lack of support from the administrators and the large number of students in school. Best practices in Guidance and Counselling would help the students better understand themselves, accept themselves therefore using their resources fully to contribute positively in technological development.

Key words: Guidance, Counselling, Best practices

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Background of the Study

Guidance and Counselling was started in America at the beginning of the 20th Century as a reaction to change process in an industrialized society. Similarly guidance and counselling was introduced formally in Kenya in 1967 under the Ministry of Education (Nasibi, 2003) and has been a concern for about 5 decades as evidenced by many

education commissions. In 1976 for instance, the Gachathi Report recommended that the Ministry of Education expand its services to include guidance and counselling to learners. The head teacher of each school was to assign a member of staff to be responsible for providing information on guidance and counselling to all stakeholders. It was recommended that each school was to build and use a cumulative record of students' academic performance, home background, aptitudes and interests and special problems to facilitate guidance and counselling. The Report also recommended the establishment of courses at the university for training professional workers in guidance and counselling. The Kamunge Report (1988) further recommended that schools should establish guidance and counselling services and senior teachers should be responsible. The Presidential Committee on Students' Unrest and Indiscipline in Kenyan Secondary Schools (2001) attributed the problem of indiscipline in schools to a culture of violence in institutions partly because of poor guidance and counselling services. The importance of Guidance and Counselling in Kenya was yet again emphasized by the Ministry of Education Science and Technology when it proposed alternatives to corporal punishment through a circular. The circular stated that students/pupils should be disciplined with care and love without necessarily using the cane or harming them in the process. How this discipline with care and love was going to be implemented has never been clarified.

A study conducted by Kiprop (2004) established that teachers lacked the necessary skills to implement guidance and counselling programmes. Teachers felt that the Ministry's emphasis on guidance and counselling failed to take into account the fact that

many schools were staffed with ill - prepared teachers and also lacked necessary resources like books and offices. It was also found out that guidance and counselling as a method of disciplining learners is not comprehensive. The reason given was that teachers were not willing to subject students to guidance and counselling because it is demanding in terms resources (time, space and cost) and does not produce instant results.

Best practices in guidance and counselling help in establishing good learning environment which leads to quality education. Quality education drives economic growth, fuels innovation and creates jobs, equips countries – and people – with the skills they need to escape from poverty and build shared prosperity. In addition, it enables people to build secure livelihoods, enjoy better health and participate in political processes that affect their lives (United Nations Fund for Population, 2014) (UNFP). This means that the guidance and counselling services have a lot of benefits both for the students and teachers.

Teacher to student ratios in Kenyan schools are incredibly unhealthy. In some instances, one teacher is responsible for a classroom of as many as 100 elementary-aged children. These troubling deficiencies make quality education nearly impossible (UNFP, 2014). The same study also showed that a 1/3 of Kenyan sixth graders cannot read or write. There are negative forces involved in the Kenyan school child's reality. Children are often kept home from school to babysit their younger siblings or to work to financially support their families. Thus a true cycle of poverty exist which breeds hopelessness, apathy, and

despair. After all, if poverty prevents the child's education and that lack of education leads to poverty, what is the solution? And can a developing nation with a fragile economy progress without planning for the young population?

So what does the Kenyan education system have to do with all this? The answer can be summed up in one word: examinations. In kindergarten, children are made to clap for the child who draws all the shapes correctly, and the one who wins the short race gets to lick glucose to his/her heart's content. In primary school, the top three children take home all manner of stationery, cutlery and crockery. Then the parents reinforce this by buying presents as rewards for the children who excel academically. In high school, the top ten get to take a "walk of fame" around the school's assembly grounds. All others assume an inferior posture in almost all of their interactions with these special ones who have the ability to remember definitions and derivation formulas. And since everyone wants to be significant in that warped reality, they all strive to outdo one another in cramming "what's going to be examined" (Ravitch, 2010). This mentality is crippling Kenya's education system especially in the creative and technological development hence the declaration that Kenyan education is a factory of Zombies.

According to teachers and parents as long as a child passes examinations and scores 400 marks in primary and an "A" at secondary level all is fine. No one cares whether the children can reason or think. The scores are more important than the scorer (child) (Amutabi, 2003). A system that negates all the work done over the course of an 8 year period such as primary school and only takes into account the events of three days can

hardly be described as fair. How then do we give our children relevant skills and test them effectively? Do examinations results really reflect a child's true capabilities? How is education going to allow children bring out their best and be fully functional individuals? There has to be an increased accountability that measures the actual learner competencies to boost quality (Kimani, 2010). This paper explores the place of best practices in guidance and counselling in Kenyan schools so as to empower children and help them to be fully aware of their potentials. Examinations' oriented education system is not conducive to developing talent. Failure in these examinations normally spells doom to students who give up on life, as they feel their dreams are shattered when they score below the average marks. Kenya has witnessed an escalating number of suicide cases every time the KCPE and KCSE results are released. This would not be the case were schools to employ best practices in guidance and counselling as they prepare students for the post examination period.

Learners particularly the adolescents, must be equipped with the right information. Parents also need to open new discussion lines with their children. Teachers, too, must be armed with the right education. Times have changed and this demands that society changes perceptions on handling education. Pregnancy among teenage girls is very common and this means that most of these girls have their education dreams shattered and thus consigning them to the vicious poverty cycle. Even those who decide to be in school are faced with stigma, which stems from the way society perceives sexually active school-going children (Obegi, 2014).

Kirui, Mbugua and Sang (2011) in their study of public secondary schools in Kisii County in Kenya, noted that, 88.9 per cent of the schools have a guidance and counselling department but most lacked teachers with the necessary qualifications to run the departments. Nyaegah (2011) reiterate the fact that counselling is a profession and as such it requires competence, knowledge and skills which cannot be acquired unless one undergoes specific relevant training. Are the teachers equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge of guidance and counselling during training?

According to The community of St Martin CSA, (2011), it is disappointing to see hundreds of frustrated Form Four graduates who do not even know the careers they want to pursue even after their results are out. Much worse seeing students dropping out of University midway through their course, simply because they have come to realize that they are pursuing the wrong career, either because they followed the crowd, peers or perhaps because they were forced into it by their parents. Where is the career guidance and counselling when students go all the way to colleges and still are not sure of the careers they want to pursue? This is wasting the scarce resources and time not only for the individuals' concerned but also for institutions and the nation. Because best practices in guidance and counselling in schools are almost non-existent, majority of the students are graduating from high school lacking social skills, having no career information hence make important decisions based on ignorance or peer pressure. It is against this background that I conceptualised this study.

Research Approach

The study was conducted in a public University in, Eldoret, Kenya. The University is the only one in Kenya that is offering a Bachelor Degree in Educational Guidance and Counselling. I sought to find out:

- i. The respondents' experiences during the practicum in schools?
- ii. Challenges encountered during practicum?
- iii. The reasons why best practices in guidance and counselling are not being realized in Kenyan secondary schools?
- iv. Ways of improving guidance and counselling services in schools?

To get responses to the above objectives I used qualitative research approaches to collect, analyze data and represent the findings. The approach was important because it helped me understand the experiences and attitudes of student teacher counsellors. The experiences also helped me to establish the challenges faced by the participants. Open-ended questions allowed me to access greater variety of responses from the participants.

Sample and Sampling techniques

The sample comprised of fifteen students pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Educational guidance and counselling. The sample size was determined by conducting interviews until there was no new information from the participants, this means I had reached 'saturation' point. I purposively sampled this particular group of student-teacher counsellors because they have unique characteristics that were of interest to my study. The participants were undergoing training

in educational guidance and counselling at the university, they had just come from the field and I felt they were well placed to identify challenges faced in the field and give suggestions in establishing best practices in guidance and counselling services in high schools.

Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

I used interview guide and documents to collect data. As observed by Sheperis, Young and Daniels (2010) an interview allows long response, flexibility, follow-up and in-depth inquiry; therefore helping to verify and get a deeper insight of the phenomena under study. I did face to face in-depth interviews to explore in detail the respondent's own perceptions and accounts of the guidance and counselling services in various schools. I also used one focus group which helped me gain more insight into guidance and counselling phenomena.

Documents Analysis

Use of document analysis method in Social Research revolve around the interrelated trinity of production, function, and content analysis of documents (Prior, 2003). Instead of viewing timetable and school routine documents as static objects, the study viewed the documents in terms of fields, frames and networks of action. The documents I considered were the timetable and school routines in the 15 schools involved in the study.

Pilot Study

Before engaging the students who were doing their practicum, I did a pilot survey with five students who had done their practicum the previous year. After an intervening period of two weeks I engaged the same students. This helped polish the instruments where necessary to minimize threats to validity and reliability. The data was classified into themes based on experiences, challenges and the suggestions given by the respondents.

Ethical Considerations of the Study

I obtained a research permit from the Ministry of Higher Education Science and Technology through the National Council of Science, Technology and Innovation. The permit was presented to the specific public University where the study was conducted. I briefed the respondents before conducting my study. All my respondents remained anonymous to ensure confidentiality. The names used in the findings are not real names of the respondents.

Results and Discussions

I sought to find out from the respondents what is going on in schools as far as best practices in guidance and counselling services are concerned. I discussed the results under the following sub headings: the experiences, challenges, and impediments of the programme and suggestions from respondents on how to improve guidance and counselling in schools.

Experiences in the Field

There were 15 schools and 15 respondents respectively. There were seven co-educational schools, and eight single sex schools, four boys and girls only schools respectively. This gave me a good representation of the experiences and challenges in different type of schools. An excerpts from one of the respondents 'James' in a co-educational institution said, *“it was a very enriching experience where I gained a lot of insight in counselling but it was full of challenges.”* The participants had just concluded their practicum and they all agreed that the field is in need of injection of best practices. 'Mark' from another co-educational school said *"Once I reported to school I was introduced as a teacher counsellor by the Principal and I felt very good and I didn't want to let the Principal down. At the end of the exercise I was happy and I felt I did my best".*

The student counsellors in girls only schools found more support and one of the respondents 'Ruth' strongly felt that:

Girls' schools are embracing guidance and counselling, for me I had very many clients and the teachers in the department agreed that they were learning a lot from me. I was given an office though small and ill equipped I had a place to operate from.

Wilson a respondent from a boys only school had this to say: *"teachers strongly believe a boy child is a hard nut to crack and there was no place for guidance and counselling. You can't achieve much with boys by talking but with a cane my friend things will move."*

The seven teacher counsellors who did practicum in coeducational schools confessed that they handled more female clients than male clients. 'Joy' who was in a co-educational school had this to say:

I had a very serious case of a school captain who was involved with a cougar and he was getting overwhelmed by everything around him that he resolved to sneaking out of school and by the time he came to me he wanted to give up school altogether. Shockingly all this had been going on for more than a year and the teachers had no idea. No wonder he was a captain.

According to the above excerpts, the experiences were varied while some were pleasant others were unpleasant depending on the school and school leadership. In schools where the principal had a positive attitude, support was given and the work load was bearable; whereas if the administration did not support the programme, then the whole school community was against it and operations were difficult for the teacher counsellor. The student teacher counsellors identified a number of challenges which are discussed in the next sub heading.

Challenges faced

As I conducted the study I wanted to find out the challenges faced by my students in the field. These challenges affected their performance and thus become bottlenecks to establishment of best practices in guidance and counselling. As I listened to the student teacher counsellors I summarised the challenges as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Challenges Faced by Student-Teacher counsellors

Challenge	No. of respondents	%
Lack of offices	10	67
Negative attitude	12	80
School culture	15	100
Lack of Confidentiality	13	87
Threats to the occupants of G & C office	5	34
Heavy Workload	15	100
High Enrolment	9	60
Lack of self awareness	11	73
Religion vs Guidance & Counselling	8	53

****The totals are more than 15 because respondents gave as many responses as possible***

The contents of the above table are discussed below.

Lack of offices

Guidance and counselling as a practice demands that privacy and confidentiality is guaranteed to a client. Lack of offices was identified by 10 out of 15 respondents as one of the barriers to the establishment of best practices in the various schools.

Negative attitude

Out of the participants who responded 12 indicated that the teachers and students have a negative attitude towards guidance and counselling services. The teachers and students believe caning is the easiest and most effective way of disciplining learners.

Guidance and counselling is associated with the western culture and allegations made

are that it's not African or Kenyan. One of the respondents 'Mary' from a girls only school was told by a teacher *"caning has been there since time memorial who are you to introduce new things that do not work."*

The teacher counsellor was taken aback and expressed it thus: *"This really took me aback and wondered will guidance and counselling ever find its place in this hostile environment"*? This means teachers believe guidance and counselling cannot work and so teacher counsellors do not get any support from such teachers. The students have also been socialised to believe caning is the only way to punish. Alex from a boys' only school had this to say: *One day I found boys on the wrong and I was talking to them about the misbehaviour, and one of the student blatantly told me "teacher stop taking so much of our time just cane us."* This shows clearly that according to students, guidance and counselling is a waste of time and they would prefer caning. But is it effective?

School Culture

All respondents observed that schools have traditions of corporal punishments that have become normal practice for generations. When the respondents tried to bring in new ideas to promote guidance and counselling as an alternative to corporal punishment, the idea was not received kindly. According to many professional teachers guidance and counselling is not viewed as a better alternative to corporal punishment. 'Frank' from a co-educational school said; *"in my case I was always being reminded of a popular saying that 'an African Child cannot learn unless caned.'" I found myself also using the cane to discipline my students"*. This creates conflict because caning causes

injury, fear and lowers the dignity of a learner while guiding and counselling on the other hand preserves the dignity, creates trust and respect.

Heavy Workload

All the respondents agreed that workload was a major challenge to all the participants. Once in the office the respondents found their schedules very tight because they had to teach two subjects and at the same time undertake counselling. 'Veronica' who was in a girls' only school had this to say: "*Preparing for two subjects for assessment and at the same time prepare for guidance and counselling sessions was very tedious*". Still 'John' from a co-educational school had this to say:

During this exercise I had to be assessed in the two subjects and also in guidance and counselling which is done outside the lesson hours, so for me it was double work. Now I understand why many teachers do not want to engage in this exercise.

Lack of Confidentiality

In other instances, the head teachers wanted to know what is going on in the counselling office. The principle of confidentiality not being observed was noted by 13 of the respondents. 'Peter' from a boys only school reported that:

In many instances the head teacher would call me and start interrogating me in an effort to find out the issues I am handling in the guidance and counselling office. When I refused to divulge any information this created bad blood between me and the head teacher. I know it is against the standards of practice to divulge information about a client unless the client gives consent to the same.

This means that the head teachers are not conversant with the counselling standards of practice hence creating challenges that should not be there.

Insecurity in the Guidance and Counselling office

According to five of the participants, teachers occupying the office of guidance and counselling saw some of us (the student-teachers) as a threat to their positions because they are not trained as teacher counsellors. 'Jack' from a co-educational school felt that heads of guidance and counselling department are a hindrance to the institutionalization of best practices and he had this to say:

When I was introduced as a teacher counsellor by the Principal in the school the teacher in charge of guidance and counselling office at that time did not take it kindly. She made my operations in that office very difficult and we ended up with cases in the Principals office. The end result was that this particular teacher was transferred from the school ... to take off. I introduced new information and skills into the services offered which this particular teacher was not aware of.

This means then that some teachers occupying the guidance and counselling office are an impediment.

High Enrolment

According to nine participants, the large numbers of students enrolled in secondary schools are a challenge to guidance and counselling. 'Daisy' who was in a girls only school had this to say:

The total enrolment in my school was 1210 girls and it was impossible to reach out to all these students. In some instances I had to use group approach but still I had to use individual approach because of the confidentiality of the case.

In counselling, a group cannot be made of more than 12 members so that means reaching out to all these student by one counsellor is not easy and this means there should be more than three teacher counsellors in such a school for counselling to be effective.

Lack of self awareness

Self-awareness is about being aware of who we are. It can relate to knowing your own values, your beliefs, personal preferences and tendencies. This means one staying true to self, understanding one's strengths and limitations and giving opportunities that may not be available. When people experience self-awareness, they have honest and genuine relationships. 11 of the respondents expressed that there is no self-awareness among the students. 'Gladys' from a boys' only school had this to say:

In my Form Two class I wanted to find the level of self-awareness and I asked them to write without giving names who they think they are. ... responses. "I am lost, confused and I don't know where I am going" "I do not know" "may be my parents would be in a better position to explain who I am" I found myself helping them to discover themselves

Students who lack self-awareness are not easy to guide and counsel because they have to discover themselves before they can start consuming the guidance and counselling services.

Religion vs Guidance and Counselling

Eight respondents reported that their respective schools seem to believe counselling is all about ones faith (religion). *"I noticed with a lot of concern that the Christian Union patron was also the counselling teacher and also the peer counsellors were the Christian Union officials"* said 'Peter'. Another respondent had this to say: *"counselling is not preaching, it is not a confession and it is not judgmental, and both teachers and students in the school where I was were not drawing a clear line between the two."*

When this confusion occurs, then the consumers of the services offered keep off because they are not sure of what is being offered to them. A very clear distinction need to exist between religion and counselling exercise to encourage best practices in guidance and counselling.

Reasons for not realizing best practices in guidance and counselling

I also sought to find out why the best practices in guidance and counselling are not institutionalised in Kenyan secondary schools. The findings are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Impediments' to Realisation of Best Practices in G & C

Reasons	No. of respondents
No budgetary allocation	10
Shortage of qualified human resource	12
Heavy Work load	15
Poor infrastructure	11
Guidance & Counselling is a part time engagement	14
Mean syndrome	15
Lack of Political Will	13
Negative attitude of teachers and students	14
Use of cronies and friends as heads of G & C	9
Generational gap	8
Cultural practices	10
Christian Union Patrons used to guide and counsel	8

****The totals are more than 15 because the respondents more than one responses***

Budgetary Allocation

Ten respondents confirmed that schools do not allocate budget for the guidance and counselling programmes. Schools have annual budget for all departments and allocations are done according to their importance as perceived by the one who has authority to incur expenses. The schools are in positions where they can source for external financial resources to boost guidance and counselling programme and

services. Unfortunately guidance and counselling is said to be an expensive exercise, without budgetary allocation and infrastructure the best practices becomes unattainable.

Shortage of Qualified Human Resource

According to 12 respondents, there are few or no trained teacher counsellors in Kenyan schools to offer quality services in the area of guidance and counselling. The teachers involved in guidance and counselling are not professional counsellors in Kenyan schools. A department of guidance and counselling exists in many schools but the personnel managing the department lack the necessary knowledge and skills. The practice of having personnel teaching and at the same time being a counsellor leads to a dual relationship between the teacher and the learners which is against the standards of counselling practices. The teacher and the learner finds it very difficult to separate the subject he or she is teaching from the ongoing counselling process therefore compromising best practices in guidance and counselling.

Heavy Workload

All respondents agree that the guidance and counselling teachers' workload is higher than for other teachers. This is because despite a teacher offering guidance and counselling services, he/she will have two teaching subjects. The guidance and counselling is not scheduled in the school routine and this means the teacher concerned has to create time to offer guidance and counselling services to the students. In such environment where the teacher has to deal with students assignments, teach, set and mark examinations with deadlines to be met, finding time to offer quality

guidance and counselling services becomes elusive. Establishing best practices in schools is a challenge because Teachers Service Commission (TSC) does not employ teachers who are fulltime counsellors.

No infrastructures

Most schools have no infrastructures for guidance and counselling programme. This can be attributed to inadequate or lack of budgetary allocation. The facilities to accommodate the programme are either non-existent or poor. According to 'Joy' *'there are no offices, no furniture and no stationary and reference materials for guidance and counselling programme'*.

Guidance and counselling as a Part-time engagement

Most of the counsellors in secondary schools work part-time. One 'Mwajuma' from a co-educational school had this to say: *'Mwalimu (teacher) there is no school that has a counsellor who does not teach* The first duty of a teacher is to teach the subjects one is trained in, as per the appointment letters from the employer. This makes school counsellors part-timers because they have a full workload of teaching and counselling is viewed as extra work.

The Mean syndrome

All respondents agreed that one major impediment to establishment of best practices in guidance and counselling practices in a school is the hunt for a high mean score. Every teacher is assigned subjects to teach according to the terms of service. The

performance in the subject a teacher is teaching is always the responsibility of the teacher concerned. This means that schools cannot help realise best practices in guidance and counselling because the mean score of a subject is of utter most importance to the teacher in the appraisal reports. The teachers also need promotion and the 'mean score' is taken into consideration; so the teacher counsellors put in more energy in teaching. The teachers, students and the administration suffer from the "*mean syndrome*" hence the guidance and counselling programme does not receive the attention it deserves. Guidance and counselling is not examinable thus teachers' effort in this department is hard to evaluate. 'Ruth' had this to say:

This 'mean' in a subject is used as an evaluation to determine teachers who are working and those who are not. The Kenyan educational system is examination based where passing the national examinations is more important than character building, self-awareness, interests and aptitudes which are concerns of guidance and counselling

Lack of political will

Thirteen participants reported that most of the school administrators are not supportive of the guidance and counselling programme. The teachers in the department do not receive any incentives from the school administration despite the fact that counselling is an extra workload. The same administrators do not giving positive publicity to the programme within the school and surrounding community. 'Peter' expressed these sentiments are follows:

Some administrators want to access confidential information from the office of guidance and counselling. These administrators do not seem to understand the professional code of ethics for counselling services so a teacher who is aware

and wants to keep information confidential finds him/herself in trouble with the school administrator

Negative attitude by teachers and students

Eight out of 15 respondents indicated that the teachers and students have a negative attitude towards guidance and counselling services. As noted in the challenges, both the teachers and students believe caning is the easiest and most effective way of disciplining a student. Any teacher who does not cane is viewed as weak and when a student is either guided or counselled after a mistake that is not viewed as a disciplinary measure. From this attitude, it is very clear that the teachers do not seem to differentiate between discipline and punishment. 'Mary' from girls only school had this to say: *'the Ministry of Education has not given clear policies on the way guidance and counselling services should be conducted in schools'*. This has caused confusion among teachers and they have continued to use caning despite the fact that it is illegal. 'Wilson' noted this behaviour and expressed the following:

Some teachers who are not in the office of guidance and counselling do not seem to understand how guidance and counselling services should be conducted because they interfere with the operations of the office as they try to gain confidential information about students from the guidance and counselling office

Use of cronies and friends as heads of Guidance and Counselling

From the responses given, nine of the participants revealed that school administrators have appointed their friends and cronies to be in-charge of guidance and counselling services to ensure they get information from Guidance and Counselling Office. These cronies discuss with the head teachers the issues that emerge and when students

realize that, they lack confidence in the office. With no assurance of confidentiality then, counselling cannot take off in such schools. Frank' who was in a co-educational school witnessed the behaviour and described it as follows: "*a student came to me and told me, I feared opening up to you because the office is known for not respecting our privacy as students.*" Such a behaviour by counsellors work against the whole guidance and counselling programme.

Generational gap

Eight of the participants acknowledged that there is a generational gap between the old teachers who are appointed to manage the guidance and counselling office; and the learners. The teachers' age is used as a criteria to appoint them to the guidance and counselling office. For the senior most teachers who have not undergone any training their many years is what they use as reference.

According to students, the older teachers use a common phrase -- "*during our days ... this and this used to happen*". The young learners look at them and they see dinosaurs. As the former Education PS James Ole Kiyapi put it: "*there is no single system of education across the world that can serve all generations all the time*". Teachers need to understand that they are operating in a different dispensation which is very different from their generations. Therefore, they need to make the necessary adjustment to fit in the young 'people's world'.

Cultural practices

The findings show that the school community's negative attitude has been reinforced by culture which also acts as an impediment to the provision of quality guidance and counselling services in the Kenyan schools. Cultural practices have influenced boys more than girls because they have been socialized to be men and real men do not express their feelings or emotions because this is a sign of weakness. There is this popular saying among boys "*Mwanaume ni Effort*" (a man is worthy his effort). Men are socialised to be strong and therefore counselling services are not for the "strong" men but for the weaklings like girls. On the other hand, the girls do not consume the services because they believe counselling is for those with a milliard of problems. 'Mark' expressed that attitude thus: "*Nobody wanted to be seen anywhere near the guidance and counselling offices because of the stigma that comes with one being counselled*".

Christian Union Patrons used for guidance and counselling

The observations made by a number of respondents is that a number of schools appointed Christian teachers to the office of guidance and counselling. This means a teachers religious standings (especially the Christian Union Patrons) is used as a criteria to choose who to offer guidance and counselling services. This creates a lot of resistance on the part of the learners. A substantial number do not visit the office because the Christian teacher counsellors use counselling sessions as preaching forums.

Document analysis

I analysed the school timetable and the school routine documents in order to find out if there was official time scheduled for Guidance and Counselling within school activities. The teacher counsellor conducted counselling sessions either during lunch hour or after 4pm with the permission of the teacher on duty because other activities were scheduled in the school time-table earlier. There was a Life Skills (LS) lesson but teachers used it for remedial classes or to catch up with the missed lessons. Teachers allocated those lessons had no idea what it was all about because they were not trained to teach such lessons. Among the schools involved, 10 did not have time scheduled for guidance and counselling in their routine. Five schools, where four were girls only and one co-educational had a time schedule for guidance and counselling after classes mainly on Thursday and Friday. This gave insight into the place of guidance and counselling in secondary schools. Boys' only schools did not factor guidance and counselling in their routine and could be due to cultures and attitude of both the teachers and the students. Such a negative attitude makes the teachers and students to believe that there is no need to guide and counsel the boy-child.

Conclusion

Best practices in guidance and counselling prepare students to change from within. Unfortunately from the discussions above, the programme has not been implemented as planned. Best practices in schools if developed and institutionalised will provide a road map for the children to learn to respect and not fear, and at the same time, learn

that being the best is not everything; but being true to themselves is even more important.

Way Forward

I sought to find out from the respondents what they think can be done to promote best practices in guidance and counselling in Kenyan schools. The participants gave the following suggestions:

- a) The Ministry of Education need to:
 - i. Provide a blue print of the guidance and counselling programmes at all levels of learning in order to promote the best practices in guidance and counselling.
 - ii. Provide basic training in guidance counselling to all school managers to help them understand standards of practice.
 - iii. Create intensive programmes to educate parents, teachers, learners and society at large on the importance of embracing best practices in guidance and counselling at home, school and society.
 - iv. Ensure guidance and counselling services are institutionalized in all educational institutions/schools as an alternative to corporal punishment.
- b) The Government of Kenya through the Ministry of Education and the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) need to provide enough guidance and counselling teachers..

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