

Effectiveness of Guidance and Counselling Services in Enhancing Students' Adjustment to School Academic Environment in Public Boarding Secondary Schools in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

School adjustment is the process of copying in a new school environment in order to attain the individual and school's set goals and aspirations. The government, education managers, and parents have expressed the need to strengthen school Guidance and Counselling services in order to enhance students' adjustment to the school environment. Public boarding secondary schools are expected to implement Guidance and Counselling policy of the Ministry of Education and help students adjust to the secondary school environment. This study investigated the effectiveness of Guidance and Counselling services in enhancing students' adjustment to school academic environment in public boarding secondary schools in Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive research survey design. The study target population was 36,671 comprising of 35,659 Form 3 students, 506 Form 3 class teachers and 506 teachers in charge of Guidance and Counselling from boarding secondary schools in Kitui, Nyeri and Nairobi counties in Kenya. Purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used to select 756 respondents comprising of 720 Form 3 students, 18 Form 3 class teachers and 18 teachers in charge of Guidance and Counselling from 18 secondary schools for the study. Questionnaires were used to collect data from Form 3 students and their class teachers while an interview schedule was used to collect data from teachers in charge of Guidance and Counseling. A pilot study involving 76 respondents was carried out in three public boarding secondary schools from Machakos, Kirinyaga and Thika counties. Using Spearman Brown Prophecy formula by split half technique reliability coefficient of 0.745, 0.746 and 0.736 were realized for students, class teachers and teachers In charge of Guidance and Counseling respectively. This was accepted because an alpha value of 0.7 and above is considered suitable for making group inferences that are accurate. The data were analyzed by use of descriptive statistics with the help of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17.0 for windows and presented in frequency distribution tables, percentages and bar charts. The study also found out that Guidance and Counseling were effective in helping students adjust to school physical, social and academic environment. The findings of this study provide information to school administrators, policy makers, parents and other stakeholders on various issues that need to be addressed in Guidance and Counseling like strengthening individual counseling, training of peer counselors and gender balance in the appointment of school counseling personnel to enhance students adjust to the school environment. The

study further suggests ways of improving Guidance and Counselling services in order to make it more effective in public boarding secondary schools.

KEY WORDS. Guidance and Counselling, student adjustment, school environment, school academic environment, academic adjustment

1.0 Introduction

Gonder and Hymes, (1994) in American Association of School Administrators observe that a school environment has physical, social and academic aspects. The physical environment includes school buildings, the noise levels, text books, recreational facilities and the neighborhood (New Detroit, 2003). Adeyemo (2001) in his studies in Nigeria postulates that when students join secondary schools, they find themselves in a more expensive school environment, larger classroom and an environment that has more noise than what they were used to in their relatively smaller primary schools. In Britain, it was observed that students who transit from primary to secondary schools are faced with difficulties in adjusting to the new environment (Galton, Grey & Ruddock, 1999). In New Zealand Cottrell (1982) observes that school adjustments imply some form of orientation between a child's perception of the school environment and the abilities they bring to the situation. Students, therefore, need to adjust to this new, expansive and challenging environment in order to get maximum benefit from the school.

According to Cotton (1996) in America, school academic environment includes the systems that the school put in place to promote learning by emphasizing on academics while respecting the various levels of students' intelligence and competence. Sara (2009) who also did a study in America observes that school academic environment includes the expectation that the school management has for students and procedures that are used to encourage the student to succeed. A school academic environment also includes the designed teaching procedures and the programs that the school has put in place to facilitate students' adjustment to the academic system (Richardson, 2002). Students who transit to public boarding secondary schools are introduced to new subjects like Chemistry, Biology, and Physics; they are expected to learn new study skills, testing, and techniques of answering questions. These students, therefore, are expected to adjust to their new school academic environment in order to cope with the new challenges.

Richardson (2002) found that Adjustment to the school academic environment in New Zealand was a challenge to students who transit to secondary school because they find themselves repeating primary school work while they expected to learn new and challenging things. This is similar to the findings of Lynette (2006) in Australia that students who transit to secondary school have to adjust to an expanded curriculum, specialized approach to teaching and the new methods of evaluation. The indicator of students' adjustment to the school academic environment according to Richardson(2002) is a proper use of school learning resources, good study habits, an academic performance that reflects one's potential, adherence to the school curriculum, doing assignments, participating in academic discussions and effectively participating in school academic trips. In Kenyan secondary schools there are reports of poor academic performance, lack of time management skill, low motivation of learners, lack of set goals and noise making

in class which suggests that maladjustment is a challenge in secondary schools (The Republic of Kenya, 2001). This, therefore, made it necessary to carry out a study to investigate the effectiveness of Guidance and Counselling in enhancing students' adjustment to the school environment.

Guidance and Counselling services began in America in early 1900 to help students in their educational development and career aspirations (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001). In Hong Kong Guidance and Counselling services were introduced of the increased developmental, personal and social challenges, lack of motivation towards work, disruptive behavior and the rise of juvenile delinquency (Yuk Yee & Brennam, 2004). School Guidance and counseling were introduced in Botswana to help students navigate through their personal and interpersonal challenges (Navin, 1989). Maluwa – Banda, (1998) states that Malawi introduced Guidance and Counselling in secondary schools to address the many social, personal, educational and vocational issues and concerns that had arisen. In Zimbabwe student Guidance and Counseling services were introduced to help students overcome problems which would lead to better school adjustment and improved academic achievement (Regis, 2006). The Government of Kenya emphasizes on Guidance and Counselling as a means of assisting students to adjust to the school environment and the society (The Republic of Kenya, 2009). The goal of Counselling service is to change the learner's behavior, beliefs and values, coping skills, decision making and emotional distress (The Republic of Kenya, 2009).

Despite the emphasis given to Guidance and Counselling in schools, there are indicators that maladjustment still remains a challenge in public boarding secondary schools. This has cast doubts on the role being played by Guidance and Counselling in helping students to adjust to the school environment. There was, therefore, need to assess the effectiveness of Guidance and Counselling services in enhancing student adjustment to the school environment. This study investigated the effectiveness of Guidance and Counselling services in enhancing students' adjustment to the school environment in public boarding secondary schools in Kenya.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Transitions of learners from primary to secondary school create adjustment needs in the physical, social and academic environment. Guidance and Counselling have been introduced in all secondary schools in Kenya to help learners adjust to the diverse environments. Cases of indiscipline, drug abuse, school dropout, school unrest, absenteeism, and violence are on the rise in Kenyan secondary schools. These are blamed on students' maladjustment to the school environment. This raises the question of the effectiveness of Guidance and Counselling in enhancing students' adjustment. Students who are maladjusted often miss a critical stage of interaction with peers and minimize academic progress and success. This can undermine the Kenya Vision 2030 overall goal of providing a globally competitive and adapting human resources base to meet the requirement of a rapidly industrialized economy through lifelong education and training. The current study, therefore, sought to determine the effectiveness of Guidance and Counselling services in

enhancing students' adjustment to school academic environment in public boarding secondary schools in Kenya.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study was to establish the effectiveness of Guidance and Counselling services in enhancing students' adjustment to school academic environment in public boarding secondary schools in Kenya.

2.0 Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Data was collected from Form 3 students and their class teachers using a questionnaire that was both open and closed ended. Data was collected from the teachers in charge of Guidance and Counselling using an interview schedule. The respondents were requested to give their opinion on whether Guidance and Counseling were effective in enhancing students' adjustment to school physical, social and academic environment. The respondents were encouraged to volunteer information on the relationship between guidance and counseling and students' adjustment freely. The study focused on studying the variables as they are and there were no attempts to manipulate them.

2.1 Study Population

According to the Ministry of Education, the country has 4,781 boarding secondary schools with 1,208,818 students. The population of Form three in these boarding schools is 302,204. The accessible population in the three counties targeted in this study is 506 secondary schools with a population of 35,639 students, 506 teachers in charge of Guidance and Counselling and 506 Form three class teachers.

2.2 Sampling Procedures and Sample Size

This study adopted purposive as well as simple random sampling techniques in the selection of the respondents. Three counties were purposively sampled for this study, that is, Nairobi, Kitui, and Nyeri to represent urban, rural marginal and rural potential public secondary schools strata respectively. The three counties sampled for this study have a population of 36,671 comprising 35,659 form three students, 506 Form 3 class teachers and 506 teachers in charge of Guidance and Counselling. A normal sample size for a population of 36,671 is 379 according to Kathuri and Pals (1993).

The purposive sampling design was also be used in the selection of Form 3 students because they have been in secondary school for a relatively long period and so are likely to have been counseled on school adjustment. They are also likely to have information about their friends who have been counseled on adjustment issues. Taking that the enrollment is 40 students per class and that in every school sampled the study responses were solicited from 1 class teacher and 1 teacher in charge of Guidance and Counselling as respondents, the number of schools was 379 divided by 42 which give 9 schools. However, for this study, the sample was doubled so as to minimize errors associated with sampling. So the number of schools was

18 with 756 respondents comprising of 720 Form 3 students, 18 from 3 class teachers and 18 teachers in charge of Guidance and Counselling.

Nonproportionate sampling was used to select 240 students from each stratum that is, urban, rural marginal and rural potential school strata. This means that 6 boarding secondary schools were selected from each of the three strata through Simple random sampling designs comprising of three girls school and three boys schools representing national, extra- county and county schools. Simple random sampling was also used in selecting one Form 3 stream from schools with more than one stream.

2.3 Data Analysis Procedures

Data collected from the field were edited and categorized. Data were inspected to identify the items not responded to, such as blank spaces left unfilled by the respondents. The data was then analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The researcher coded the data from the questionnaires and analyzed it using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17.0 computer program. The data generated from the research involved both qualitative and quantitative analysis procedures. Qualitative data were analyzed by establishing common themes, whereby similar responses were tallied to come up with frequency counts. Percentages calculated based on the total number of responses from the tallies.

Quantitative data obtained was presented by the use of descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages based on the total number of responses. According to Bell (1993) when making the results known to a variety of readers, percentages have a considerable advantage over more complex statistics. A t-test was used to test the hypothesis. Frequency distribution Tables, bar graphs, and pie charts were used to present results of the analysis.

3.0 Results and Discussions

The objective of the study sought to determine the effectiveness of Guidance and Counselling in enhancing student adjustment to school academic environment. Information was sought from Form 3 students and triangulated with responses from their class teachers and teachers in charge of Guidance and Counselling on the issues that schools addressed to help student adjust to school academic environment. Responses from students and class teachers are shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Responses from Form 3 Students and Class Teachers on Issues Addressed by Guidance and Counseling to Enhance Students’ Adjustment to School Academic Environment

Issues	Students		Class Teacher	
	Frequency(F)	Percentage (%)	Frequency(F)	Percentage (%)

Time Management	615	85.4	17	94.4
Study Skills	571	79.3	16	88.9
Career Choice	569	79	15	83.3
School Curriculum	510	70.8	15	83.3
Setting Goals	505	70.1	14	77.8
How to Achieve Potential	500	69.4	13	72.2
Balancing Activities	427	59.3	13	72.2
Personal Organization	360	50	12	66.7
Remedial	344	47.8	11	61.1
Academic Trip	334	46.4	10	55.6

According to the information in Table 1, the majority (85.4%) of the students and 94.4% of the class teachers identified time management as an issue that was addressed by Guidance and Counselling to enhancing student adjustment to school academic environment. The item of organizing and taking students for academic trips had 46.4% and 55.6% of the students and the class teachers, respectively.

Information collected from teachers in charge of Guidance and Counselling concurred with that of students and class teachers. When interviewed with the help of interview schedule they indicated that time management, setting academic goals, guidance on academic programs, guidance on career choice and schools’ academic expectations were addressed in Guidance and Counselling to enable students’ adjustment to school academic environment. The other issues that they indicated include study skills, personal organization, the history of school performance, examination answering technique, involving parents in the academic clinic, balancing between co-curricular and curricular activities, balancing subject performance of the respondents and guidance on organizing discussion groups. Findings presented above imply that majority of students and teachers agreed that Guidance and Counselling were effective in helping students adjust to school social environment.

The study further sought for information from students and teachers on whether Guidance and Counselling were effective in enabling students to adjust to school academic environment. The responses from students are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Student Responses to Effectiveness of Guidance and Counseling in Enhancing Students’ Adjustment to School Academic Environment

Counseling issues	N	SA %	A %	U %	D %	SD %
Guidance on how to discover my potential in academics helped me adjust to the school academic environment.	720	52.5	36.3	11.3	0	0

Guidance and Counselling on study skills helped me adjust to the school academic environment.	720	41.7	45.8	12.5	0	0
Guidance on setting academic goals is helped me adjust to the school academic environment.	720	44.9	42.4	12.8	0	0
Guidance on career choice helped me adjust to school academic environment	720	36.3	45.7	18.1	0	0
Guidance on time management helped me adjust to school academic environment	720	40.3	47.1	12.6	0	0
Counseling on personal organization helped me adjust to the school academic environment	720	30.1	51.7	18.2	0	0
Counseling balancing between co-curricular & curricular activities helped me adjust to the school academic environment	720	33.3	46.5	20.1	0	0
guidance on subject clusters for various careers helped me adjust to the school academic environment	720	37.2	43.5	19.3	0	0
academic trips to industries & institutions of higher learning helped me adjust to the school academic environment	720	36.8	46.7	16.5	0	0
Remedial teaching helped me adjust to the school academic environment	720	37.5	47.2	15.3	0	0
Overall mean	720	39.1	45.3	15.6	0	0

According to information in Table 2, 88.3% of the respondents agreed that guidance on how to attain their potential in academics enabled them to adjust to school academic environment. Students who agreed that being guided to organize academic trips to industries enabled them to adjust to school academic environment were 83.5%. 84.4% of the students indicated that in the overall they agreed that Guidance and Counseling helped them to adjust to school academic environment. An average of 84.4% of the students agreed that Guidance and Counseling were effective in enhancing student adjustment to school academic environment.

Responses from class teachers are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Class Teachers Response to Effectiveness of Guidance and Counseling on Students’ Adjustment to School Academic Environment

SA

	N	A %	U %	D %	SD %
Academic adjustment					
Guidance how to achieve academic potential has enabled our students to adjust to school's academic environment	18	50.0	50.0	0	0
Counseling our new students on study skills have helped them adjust to school's academic environment	18	22.2	77.8	0	0
Guiding and Counselling students to set achievable academic goals has enabled them to adjust to school's academic environment	18	27.8	66.7	5.6	0
Guidance on career choice has enabled our students to adjust to school's academic environment	18	33.3	55.6	11.1	0
Guidance and Counselling on time management has helped our students adjust to school's academic environment	18	38.9	55.6	0	5.6
Counseling our students on personal organization has enabled them to adjust to school's academic environment	18	27.8	66.7	5.6	0
Counseling our students to balance between co-curricular & curricular activities has enabled them to adjust to school's academic environment	18	38.9	55.6	0	0
Guiding and Counselling our students on choice of subjects has enhanced their adjustment to school's academic environment	18	44.4	44.4	11.1	0
Taking our students for academic trips has helped them adjust to school's academic environment	18	38.9	50	5.6	5.6
Having remedial teaching for slow learners has enabled our students to adjust to school's academic environment	18	50.0	50	0	0
Overall				1.7	
	18	37.2	56.2	3.90	0

The findings in Table 3 shows that all (100%) of the respondents indicated that they agreed that guidance on how to achieve academic potential, Counselling on study skills and remedial teaching were effective in helping students adjust to school academic environment. 94.4% of respondent agreed that Guiding and Counselling students to set achievable goals, counseling on time management, counseling on personal

organization and counseling students’ to balance co-curricular and curricular activities enabled them to adjust to the school academic environment. 88.8% of the class teachers agreed that Guidance and Counselling on the choice of subjects and taking student for academic trips enabled students to adjust to the school academic environment. An average mean of 93.4% of the respondents agreed that in the overall Guidance and Counselling was effective in enhancing students’ adjustment to school academic environment.

Teachers in charge of Guidance and Counselling were also probed on the aspects of Guidance and Counselling that enhances students’ adjustment to school academic environment, and their responses are as shown in Table 4

Table 4

Teachers In Charge of Guidance and Counselling Responses to Effectiveness of G&C in Enhancing Students’ Adjustment to School Academic Environment

Counselling Issues	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Counseling students to discover and work toward achieving their potential	16	88.9
Helping students to balance co – curricular and curriculum activities	15	83.3
Counseling students on time management skills	15	83.3
Guiding students on Setting academic goals	15	83.3
Organizing and taking students out for academic trips	15	83.3
Guidance and Counselling on Career choice	14	77.8
Guidance and Counselling on personal organization	14	77.8
Guidance on study skill	13	72.2
Guidance and Counselling on subject choice	11	61.1
Helping the weak students through remedial teaching	10	55.6
Guiding students on how to answer exam question	10	55.6
Joint Counselling through academic clinics	9	50
Overall		72.7

Findings in Table 4 indicate that majority (88.9%) of the respondents pointed out that Counselling student to discover and work towards achieving their full potential enabled them to adjust to the school academic environment. 88.3% of the respondents indicated that guiding students to balance co-curricular and curricular activities, Counselling students on time management skills, guiding students to set achievable academic goals and guiding students to organize and go for academic trips enabled them to adjust to school academic environment. 50% of the respondents said that involving parents in joint Counselling which was

mostly done through academic clinic days was effective in enhancing students' adjustment to school academic environment. On average 72.7% of the respondents suggested that in the overall Guidance and Counselling was effective in enhancing students' adjustment to the school academic environment.

3.1 Discussion of Results

The study established that the issues that were addressed by Guidance and Counselling to enhance students' adjustment to the school academic environment where time management, career choice, setting goals, how to achieve one's full potential, study skill, personal organizations, balancing the co-curricular and curricular activities, personal organization, and remedial teaching and subject choice. These findings concur with related studies in America by Cotton (1996) who observed that school academic environment is the systems that the school has put in place to promote learning by emphasizing on academics while respecting the various levels of students' intelligence and competence.

This study found out that guiding students on how to achieve their full potential, counseling them on study skills, helping students to set academic goals, guiding them on the subject and career choice and counseling than on personal organization enhanced their adjustment to the school academic environment. these findings concur with findings of a related study by Richardson (2002) in New Zealand who observed that school academic environment includes the designed teaching procedures and programs that the school, has put in place to facilitate students' adjustment. This further concurs with related studies by Regis (2006) who in his studies in Zimbabwe argues that academic Counselling should include issues like study skills, how to develop a study timetable, note making, self-testing and how to handle examinations.

This study established that Guidance and Counselling were effective in enhancing students' adjustment to school academic environment. The majority of the student respondents indicated that Guidance and Counselling enabled them to adjust to the school academic environment. The implication of these findings is that Guidance and Counselling are useful in enabling students to adjust to the school academic environment. Guidance and Counselling should, therefore, be strengthened to become part and parcel of every school culture. It should also be incorporated all aspects of school life and also prepare students for their life outside a secondary school in line with the government's recommendation that curriculum for schools should be designed and taught in a balanced manner to justify good virtues in the youth. They should also learn respect for one another, honesty and cooperation (The Republic of Kenya, 1999).

The finding of this study concurred with the findings of other related studies in American whose policy explains the value of Guidance and Counselling as an equal partner in the education system (Gysbers & Hendersen, 2001). The findings are also in line with Hong Kong Education Commission which states that a school provision for Guidance and Counselling is considered an indicator of quality education (Hui, 2002). Findings further concur with related studies from New Zealand by Mullins and Irvin (2000) who assert that students adjust to secondary school academic environment better if they are taught more strategies that would enable them to learn on their own. The study found that when students were counseled on study

skills, they adjusted to the school academic environment. The findings of the study also concur with findings of a related study by Wigfield and Eccles (1991) who found that in Australia students' academic performance is affected by decreased interest in academic activities and increased interest in non-academic activities including sports. This agrees with this study's findings that Counselling students to balance co-curricular and curricular activities helped them adjust to the school academic environment. The study established that Counselling students on study skills and setting academic goals enabled them to adjust to the school environment. This agrees with the assertion by Campbell (2001) from related studies in America that Guidance and Counselling train students on study skills and goal setting to help them adjust to the school academic environment. The study also established that Guiding and Counselling students on the subject and career choice, study skills and goal setting enabled students to adjust to school academic environment. This is in line with observations from related studies by Hartman (1999) that in Canada school counselors provide students with an experience that increases knowledge of occupation training path, lifestyle, and job seeking skills, decision-making strategies and knowledge of self. This makes students value school which facilitates their adjustment to its environment. Shumba (1995) observes that school counselors in Zimbabwe provided students with accurate information about the world of work and existing career opportunities, assesses students' interests and abilities which help them make appropriate subject and career choice.

The study also established that taking students for academic trips helped them adjust to the school environment. This is in line with Stead (1987) observations that in South Africa school counselors organized trips to career exhibitions, community services sites, colleges and universities and local career centers. These trips help students to relate what they learned in school and what was happening in the colleges and universities as well as the world of work they were expected to join after school. This motivates them to adjust to the school academic environment as they work hard to achieve the set goals.

4.0 Recommendations

From the findings, it is evident that though teachers and students have confidence in the ability of Guidance and Counselling services in helping student adjust to school academic environment the services have weaknesses that need to be addressed in order to make them more effective.

- i. There is need strengthen and empower the peer counselors to make them more effective. The Ministry of Education can enhance the achievement of this by developing a training syllabus and a clear policy on the role of peer counselors in schools.
- ii. It is necessary to strengthen individual Counselling in secondary school to supplement the group guidance which seems more established in schools. This can be done by reducing the teaching load of teachers in charge of Guidance and Counselling so that they can be able to attend to the students who need Counselling.

- iii. To further strengthen individualized Guidance and Counselling, the Ministry of Education needs to consider decongesting the school curriculum so that the school routine can be relaxed. This will give students more free time which will enable those with Counselling issues to attend Counselling sessions. A relaxed school routine will also give class teachers and other teachers' ample time to attend to the students' need.
- iv. There is a need for school management to an emphasis on age and experience when appointing class teachers and teachers in charge of Guidance and Counselling. The old and experienced teachers may have acquired more skills of handling student issues especially those that are sensitive. The age and experience of teachers may also earn them more respect and confidence from the students who would then make it easy for them to seek counsel from them.

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