

A FRAMEWORK OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING PROGRAMME
FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Persons with disabilities need guidance and counseling to enable them to be productive participants in society. However, such counseling must be broadly planned and organized to cater for the varied interests of all involved. To achieve this, a baseline data for developing a comprehensive guidance and counseling programme for Kenyan students with special needs was sourced in a larger study (Wamocho, 2003), in which Shostrom's (1987) personal orientation inventory was used to measure the needs of 229 Kenyan students with visual, hearing and physical impairments. The findings pointed to issues and themes and resources needed for developing such a comprehensive guidance and counseling programme. The result guided our vision in the proposed framework of Guidance and Counselling programme for students in special Education Institutions in Kenya.

Key Words: Kenya, Framework of Guidance Programme, Students with Special Educational needs.

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Background

In his now classic book, *Motivation and Personality*, the second Edition of which was published in 1970, Abraham Maslow made the important point, corroborated and taken up by Carl Rogers (1961, 1985) that the ultimate goal of every human being is to fulfill his/her maximum potentials. Expanding on such a view, Maslow (1970) further teaches that each human individual needs to have an organizing goal in life; a goal that would enable the individual concerned to become the best that s/he is capable of becoming. Furthermore, the same Maslow (1970) places enormous emphasis on the need for a nurturing environment to be made available to each developing human self. Part of the implication of this proposition is that all individuals including those with special needs have a right to be given proper and wholistic attention, including some vital constructive guidance and counseling principles by which to live.

Adding to the above, Mukhopadhyay (1989) and Indire (1979), point out that guidance and counseling services are meant to make a disabled individual happy, successful and able to adjust within the environment s/he lives. On the other hand, Myerson and Michael (1965) blame the adjustment problems faced by individuals with disability on the debilitating context of the psychological environment in which they live. This, in their view, means that various environments in which the disabled individuals live must be fashioned in such a way as to enable them to gain appropriate understanding of themselves, in order that they could develop healthy self-attitudes, and ultimately to become productive participants and social fits in the society.

Arguing in similar vein, Boyd, Candles and Evans (1973) assert that actualization function of the school is to provide the student with the very best or better than what the child can obtain from his/her home. This, by implication, means that special educational

institutions in Kenya must contain resources that complement those which the students can find available in their homes; particularly those that will enable them to gain self-acceptance, enhance their self esteem and appreciative abilities, and ultimately to find joy in life. In that way, students with special educational needs will be able to leave the institution feeling more self-fulfilled.

To enable the Special schools in Kenya to achieve these lofty objectives, availability of formal school guidance and counselling programmes become a necessity. Such programmes, as already highlighted above, help individuals to understand themselves in relation to their needs and the demands of their environment so that, ultimately they would be able to live effective life and develop into responsible citizens. It is perhaps against this understanding that Rothney (1976) pointed out that a group which has received guidance has better academic records, are better satisfied with their high school experiences, are progressive in their employment activities and satisfied with their lives. Williamson and Bordin (1965) similarly agreed that counselled students are rated significantly higher than their non-counselled counterparts.

Myerson and Michaels (1965) and Shertzer and Stone (1971), in giving further support to these views, argue that guidance programme in special institutions is justified due to the important services they offer which facilitate students' personal development and constructive learning about the universe in which they live, including gaining of critical horizons about how to live in that universe. Through appropriate guidance and counseling, students are helped to understand and accept themselves, and make appropriate plans for developing educationally, vocationally, personally and socially. This is in line with Barki and Mukhopadhyay's (1989) view that the programme of guidance and counselling is designed to help students with disability in areas like education, recreation/leisure, vocation, socialization and health.

In the Kenyan context, Mwathi (1997) in her study indicates that to improve negative self-concept and low educational aspirations among students with disability, a guidance and counselling programme is vital as it would help these students to appreciate

themselves by focusing on their strengths and individual differences within specific disability type.

The Problem

The major obstacle against effective use of these understandings is that although the Government of Kenya has currently started to devote improved attention to issues and resources for the promotion of education of students with special needs. Yet such efforts, and the policies that go with them, have continued to be weak. For as far as the Government's commitment in the area of provision of adequate guidance and counseling to students with special needs are concerned national aspirations and expectations have not matched the existing needs. For example the KESSP (2005 – 2010) document made it clear that up to today, there are no comprehensive guidance and counseling services yet in place. Yet such programmes are crucial since they are aimed at giving students with special educational needs the direction and orientation on how to manage and contain their mental health as well as how to tackle the insecurity imposed on them by their handicapping conditions and some of their hostile social environments.

To ameliorate the situation and facilitate the development and entrenchment of such programmes in Kenyan Institutions and Training Centres for the education of students with special needs, the first author of this article conducted a larger study under the supervision of the other authors, aimed at collecting a baseline data for use in coming up with a comprehensive Guidance and Counselling programme to be made available in Kenyan institutions for special education. Such a programme is planned to embrace process management other than just a programme that is introduced at peak times. Consequently, based on findings expected to emerge from Wamocho's (2003) study, a framework of guidance and counseling programme for students with special educational needs in Kenyan was anticipated to emerge

Objective

The purpose of this article is to outline the issues, resources and themes that should make up a framework for developing guidance and counseling programme for students with

special educational needs, as emerging from the exploratory study by Wamocho (2003). This will be supported by further review of literature on the contents and structure of such a programme.

Methodology

To arrive at the Framework of Guidance and Counselling, suggested and clarified below, relevant findings from Wamocho (2003) study of Personal Orientation of 229 students with special educational needs in Kenya, were drawn upon, to ensure that the services recommended in the programme are based on empirical data based on the needs of real students in the Kenyan environment. To ensure accuracy in inventorying the personal orientation of the students sampled, Shostrom's personal orientation inventory (POI) was availed of as standardized instrument for data collection. And the ensuing data were analyzed based on the standard scoring guideline provided in the POI manual.

Results

Based on the results and the further review of relevant literature on the theme of basic steps to be followed in developing a service programme (Tyler, 1949), some critical elements to make up a framework for a comprehensive guidance and counseling programme for students with special educational needs in Kenya came to the fore. These elements/ingredients, targeted at addressing the factors and conditions that have prevented students with special needs from reaching their potentials towards self-actualization as reflected in POI scores were suggested by Wamocho's (2003) study. The identified services to compose the programme are expected to help students with special needs to develop holistically and to discover their real selves.

The KESSP (2005-2010) document shows that the Government of Kenya is striving to implement measures which are aimed at improving participation of children with special needs. The proposed guidance programme will be in line with such a plan. The current guidance and counseling programme will also be able to address the vocational, educational and social personal needs of non-disabled students. It will further address these students' psychological needs and problems adequately, compared to the current

programme. Other aspects of the recommended framework will help students to respond to life situations appropriately, including the ability to compensate for or ‘live with’ those conditions that cannot be corrected, eliminated or even materially reduced.

In this way the guidance programme to emerge from the proposed framework holds the potential to improve the current Kenyan Government’s effort that has not been able to fully reach the students with special needs; being focused as they were, more on preparing non-disabled students for career choices during their final year in secondary schools.

Based on the above, the major goals of the programme suggested will be to give students with special educational needs the direction and orientation on how to manage and contain their mental health as well as to tackle the insecurity imposed on them by their handicapping conditions and their social environment. Such programme will embrace process management instead of operating merely as a programme that is introduced at peak times. Therefore, based on findings of Wamocho’s (2003) study, a framework of guidance and counseling programme for students with special educational needs in Kenya has been proposed and outlined below.

Outline of the Proposed Programme Framework

The outline of the proposed programme framework encompasses the following:

A. Basic Steps for Guidance programme development

Following insights from Tyler’s (1949) curriculum development theory, the following four steps’ sequence model of school guidance and counselling programme development are proposed, consisting of:

1. Establishment of Programme Aims and Specific Objectives.
2. Development of Programme Contents, consisting of services to be provided in order to achieve the stated objectives of the programme.
3. Statement of Methods to be used in implementing the stated contents of the programme.
4. Identification of programme evaluation strategies, necessary for monitoring the

extent to which the stated objectives of the programme are or are not being achieved.

In line with the above, and based on the insights drawn from Wamocho's (2003) study, the following objectives are proposed for Guidance and Counselling programmes in the Kenyan school context, namely to:

:

- Develop efficient time competence in students with special needs.
- Promote capacity for psychological independence in students with special needs.
- Empower students with special needs to take reasonable initiative to actualize themselves.
- Make available to them the kind of counseling services that will re-educate their way of judging themselves and others.
- Develop and improve awareness of their own self and feelings.
- Promote their ability to express their feelings in spontaneous manner.
- Empower them to develop confidence and positive regard for themselves in relation to their ability.
- Develop their acceptance of self despite their deficiencies.
- Make available to affected students relevant counseling services that will promote cognitive behavioural changes in their approach to life.
- Create their awareness and positive acceptance of life.
- Develop meaningful contactful relationships with other human beings.

B. Proposed Programme Content/Services

To achieve the above stated objectives, the following services, theories and techniques should be incorporated in the programme to enable students to understand themselves, adjust realistically to life and its problems and to become productive and happy members of the society.

- Orientation services
- Cognitive behaviour modification

- Stress and trauma management
- Self-planning
- Vocational guidance and counselling
- Behaviour modification
- Assertiveness training
- Social skills training
- Career day celebrations
- Psycho-educational counseling

C. Theories/Techniques

The following counseling theories are recommended to be mastered in integrated fashion for implementing the programme:

- Rational emotive therapy
- Trait – fact or therapy
- Structural family therapy
- Decision-making therapy
- Psychoanalysis
- Expressive Arts
- Client –centered therapy

D. Personal /professionals

According to the type of guidance programme above proposed, Opoku (1975) and Indire (1979) suggest that effort should be made in such a programme to ensure that trained professional counselors/ allied personnel with relevant training, experience and qualifications are enlisted to serve in it. Adding another angle to the above, Nwoye (1988) suggests that for a counselor to be effective in counseling persons with disabilities, s/he needs to have the spirit of dedication and professional knowledge so as to be able to counsel persons with disability. He further points out the need to involve parents and other family members, classmates of students with disabilities and their possible employers if counseling is to be effective. This is because according to Nwoye (1988) there are direct or indirect counseling services that can be made available to

people special educational needs. In this context, direct counseling is the type which the counselor directly provides to the target clients. Indirect counseling for the disabled, on the other hand, refers to the one which the counsellor provides to the target students but indirectly through their parents, peers, their teachers and their potential employers.

Reasoning along the same lines, Napier (1972) states that a programme for children/students with disability should involve a joint effort of many persons since such a programme will have to focus on all sorts of complex problems involved in the provision of guidance services for non-disabled plus the additional problems placed on them by their disabling conditions. This point is vital and was put into consideration while constructing the proposed framework of the guidance and counselling programme being discussed in this paper. Consequently, the implementation of the proposed guidance programme will entail the effort of a multi-indisciplinary team of qualified professionals who will be involved in consultation about each student. Such a team will include among others, the following professionals.

- School counsellor
- Rehabilitation counselor
- Special education teacher
- Physio/occupational teacher
- Medical personnel
- Psychometrist
- Social worker
- Speech therapist
- Art therapist
- Audiologist
- Dentist
- Counseling psychologist
- Ophthalmologist
- Teacher
- Administrator

It is envisaged that through a total, coordinated programme involving the services of the above mentioned persons an effective guidance and counselling programme for use in the Kenyan educational system will be accomplished.

E. Facilities, Finance and Time for Guidance

Based on insights from Wamocho 's (2003) study and from the suggestions made by Opoku (1975) and Indire (1979) we emphasize that a full-fledged guidance and counseling programme must be based on a firm structure of proper budgeting, physical facilities support and time. In the light of this, we propose the need for adequate provision of the programme resources that would encompass the following:

F. Physical Facilities

Here, we note that a conducive physical setting is vital in a successful implementation of a school guidance programme. For this reason we have in mind the need for an office complex that will consist of the following compartments:

- Reception area
- Waiting rooms
- A special room for counsellor's office with private exit without returning through the reception or waiting room
- A conference room, for case conferences and consultation involving about ten persons. This can be used for small group testing.
- Multi-purpose guidance room, about the same size as a regular classroom, to be used for group guidance, group testing, staff sessions and can be used as the guidance information centre.
- Storage closets
- Clerical space
- Reading rooms

Adjoining waiting rooms should also be comfortable and pleasant, with particular attention given to pleasing layout and colour, furnished with a home-like atmosphere that will encourage a relaxed feeling in the students. Attractive lamps, flowers and pictures can help formulate this type of atmosphere.

G. *Equipment and Furniture*

Under this heading, we propose the availability of the following:

- Desks / Tables
- Chairs and sofa sets
- Fitting cabinets
- Bookcases
- Bulletin board in the waiting room
- Projection equipment
- Tape recorders
- Computer / typewriter
- Record player / stereo
- T. V. and DVD player
- Different films

H. *Materials and Supplies*

To implement the programme successfully, provision of the following materials and supplies is also proposed.

- Stationery
- Referral materials
- Psychometric tests
- Films for group guidance
- Cassette tapes
- Refreshments
- Reading materials like magazines, brochures on different subjects etc.
- Toiletries etc.
- Materials on career vocation

I. *Budgeting of Guidance Services*

Here, what is to be emphasized is appropriate budgeting of guidance services that will

take into account the following sources of expenditure in the running of the programme:

- Staff personnel costs, including salaries for counsellors, secretary, receptionists, clerks and any other staff members.
- Materials and supplies. These include things used by guidance staff in their relations with pupils, staff members, parents and community agencies.
- Regular office supplies, including textbooks and booklets used in guidance and counselling and other meetings; tapes and videos, materials for printing or duplicating local forms and inventories.
- Equipment and maintenance. Tape recorders, computers, projection equipment, record players, desks, file cabinets, chairs, tables, data processing devices, braille, white cane, wheelchair other mobility aids. Depreciation of equipment is rapid and should be provided for in the general school budget by formula.
- Travel and other out-of-school expenses. Travel allowances for the guidance service staff should be provided; for attendance at professional meetings, travel to referral consultative agencies and travel for home visitations. Money for field trips with guidance class groups and for internal and external seminars must also be factored into the budget.

J. Service Charges

This means the need to make provision in such a programme, for mailing costs, telephone, fax, internet charges that often go with the running of a counselling office. In some cases these can, of course, be lumped under general administrative costs provided by the overhead item.

K. Time for Counseling and Guidance

Normally in each institution of learning, day-to-day activities are scheduled based on academic curriculum. In such a context, the guidance programme is forced to be squeezed within the existing academic time table structure, so that it does not decrease or interfere with teachers' class hours. In place of this traditional model, we recommend the following alternative time structure for provision of counseling services to the students:

- Students to be allowed to visit the counsellor's office during private study period.
- Student's to be released from non examinable subjects such as physical education etc, after they have finished assigned work.
- Students to be excused from games time, and some chunk of time also to be set aside over the weekend for few hours and after classes in the evening, to encourage student consultation with counsellors.
- Time to be arranged for crucial cases, to meet the counsellor whenever necessary.
- Time to be made available for: record keeping; home and family visitation; personal and social counselling; students interests and hobbies.

L. Programme Evaluation

Evaluation of guidance programme is desirable as it gives a careful examination of the purpose of the programme and the initial accomplishments. It also helps to adopt new plans for better results. We therefore propose that guidance and counseling programme of any institution in Kenya should be evaluated against the background of clearly stated objectives of the programme concerned.

M. Method of Evaluation

- Psychological assessment of students before and after the implementation of the programme. With this the impact of the programme on the personal orientation of the students will be determined. Using this approach, students can be evaluated using POI (personality orientation inventory) just after they join the secondary school as form ones or the vocational rehabilitation centre as first year; and then in form three for the secondary school student and during second year for those in vocational rehabilitation, to see whether there is any change in their personal orientations.
- Student problem checklist, to explore areas in which students do have problems, and aspects of their personal social life that need further improvement or planning for.

- Programme perception assessment. This will be helpful in obtaining indications from students, parents, teachers and community agencies and organizations on how the programme is doing and what areas might need modification or being given further attention in the future.
- Appraisal through student interviews in order to obtain suggestions for making the services provided, more customer friendly.
- Comprehensive evaluation of the programme through student's follow-up; to gather information concerning the performance characteristics of the total guidance programme.

N. The Guidance Committee

Based on the literature review conducted, and the specific position by Auld and Stein's (1965) on the above theme, the proposed guidance and counseling programme for students with special educational needs in Kenya must be administered through the operation of a Guidance Committee. To be effective we propose that such a Committee should be designed to own and market the vision of the guidance programme, so as to enlist the co-operation of the administration, guidance personnel, teachers, medical personnel, parents and students. Such a Committee should consist of a representative of all these groups. In addition, although often parents and students may be excluded in the membership of such a Committee, it would be appropriate to obtain their views on certain issues concerning the content and running of the programme. When well established such a Committee will serve the following among other additional purposes:

- Developing and maintaining policy on guidance programme in the institution
- Marketing the programme within the school / institution and the community
- Ensuring that various aspects of the guidance programme are properly co-ordinated.
- Helping to clarify particular roles and offer support when these roles are challenged
- Arranging for guidance personnel to function in co-operation with community agencies such as employers groups, welfare agencies, associations for the disabled etc.

- Planning for in-service courses on guidance and counseling in their school.

Policy Implications

The above observations and suggestions clearly demonstrate that establishing and managing successful school guidance and counselling programmes particularly those intended to cater for the interests and problems of students with special educational needs in Kenya is a capital intensive undertaking. Consequently for successful planning and management of such programmes the following issues must be put into consideration:

- Provision of adequate financial support for the programme.
- Need for administrators in special education institutions to be adequately informed about the basic philosophy of guidance work generally and the need for an organized guidance programme in their institutions.
- Use of appropriate criteria in identifying adequately trained professional counsellors who would implement the programme to be established. Such professionals should be graduates who have knowledge of different categories of students with special educational needs, and the kind of strategies which could be effective in handling services made available for them. Those recruited should have professional training with exposure to various courses, such as human development and personality, tests and measurements, psychology of exceptional children, counselling theories and techniques, career development and assessment methods, data interpretation and student records maintenance. In addition, for the programme to be effective, the professional counsellors will need to work collaboratively with the teachers, parents and other multi – disciplinary professionals in special education institutions in enhancing the programme. In this way, they need to create conducive environment which is more supportive and one that helps the individuals with special needs develop time orientation and inner directedness values.
- Need for administrators in special education institutions to understand that orientation service is a key educational guidance item. Through such orientation, students are enabled to develop positive attitudes towards

whatever problems they may face in their adaptation to the institution, recognize their own individual learning problems and the curriculum areas to be tackled, and accept their personal physical differences from other students in development, function and interests. It is expected that once students are able to recognize their areas of special needs, they will be able to seek for appropriate help that will be readily provided to them through the guidance and counselling programme of the institution concerned.

- Need to incorporate in the programme, some services aimed at helping to increase students' self-acceptance, confidence and esteem.
- The programme of guidance and counselling needs to be subjected to a comprehensive evaluation with the help of relevant experts.
- Need to equip school counsellors with basic skills, tools and techniques to enable them to deliver appropriate guidance services to students with special needs. In this regard, there is need to organize for them some in-service training through workshops and seminars.

Policy Recommendations

Finally, based on the literature reviewed on approaches for developing of programme of guidance and counseling and insights'from Wamocho's (2003) study, the framework above proposed needs to be:

- Piloted on the field, after being developed, to test its relevance and impact initially on a smaller scale before being widely adopted for use in the generality of Kenyan Institutions.
- Evaluated using POI after piloting/implementing to test its continued applicability and where some changes in either content or methods may be adjudged mandatory.

Conclusion

This article makes an important contribution to the literature of guidance and counselling practice in Africa. It is designed to close the gap presently existing on the question of

issues and themes to be covered in the task of developing a standard guidance and counselling programme for students with special educational needs in Kenya. In this context, it needs to be noted that although a lot of textbooks and policy documents are presently available that emphasize the need for guidance and counselling in the effective education of the disabled children in Kenya, none contains a chapter on the crucial matter of the framework plus the basic ingredients to make up the various aspects of a full-fledged guidance and counselling programme. It is against this background that the present article should be recognized as one that attempts, in spite of its imperfections, to answer to a real existing need.

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