

Challenges Facing Guidance and Counselling Coordinators in Senior High Schools in the Kumasi Metropolis in Ghana

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Abstract

The study investigated the challenges that guidance and counselling coordinators face in senior high schools in the Kumasi Metropolis in the Republic of Ghana. It examined the availability of facilities and challenges associated with guidance and counselling in schools. Three hundred and sixty respondents comprising 23 Guidance and Counselling Co-ordinators/teachers and 337 students were selected using purposive and simple random sampling techniques respectively. Descriptive research design was employed with structured questionnaire was used to collect data. The reliability coefficient after pilot test was Cronbach Alfa of 0.78. The results were analyzed using frequencies and percentages. The data showed lack of basic facilities like films/videos and counselling handbooks for guidance and counselling. In addition, lack of funding and heavy teaching load were the major challenges affecting guidance and counselling co-ordinators/teachers. It is recommended that heads of senior high schools should provide offices with films/videos and counselling handbooks for guidance and counselling. Further, the Ghana Education Service should provide adequate funding for guidance and counselling programmes. Finally, heads of schools should reduce teaching loads on school counsellors to enable them focus on their core responsibilities.

Key words: *Guidance, Counselling, Co-ordinators, Challenges, students.*

1.0 Introduction

The concept of guidance and counselling has evolved since the beginning of human civilization. In the view of Herr (2001), the introduction of guidance and counselling services into American schools emanated from the rapid industrial growth, social upheavals and transformation that were associated with the Industrial Revolution. Hence, the establishment of guidance and counselling was to respond to the negative social impact associated with it. Hughes as cited in Chireh (2012) notes that counselling in schools in the United States of America originated with focus on vocational issues, and aimed at helping individuals to choose and adequately prepare for a career. Similarly, in Africa the introduction of guidance and counselling services in education was apparently to address the socio-economic changes in the continent.

Tracing the history of guidance and counselling in Ghana, Buku (2016), claims that it started as far back as 1955 when the Government tried to establish a national system of vocational guidance by setting up youth employment services for all youth under 20 years who had the Middle School Leaving Certificate. This was in response to the outcry of Ghanaians for meaningful education for their children which reflected the manpower needs of the country. In the view of Mapfumo

and Nkoma (2013), pupils experience a number serious social, economic, mental and emotional challenges which disrupt their academic progress. This thus, underscores the growing need for the services of qualified school counsellors to implement programmes that will deal with such challenges.

According to Aglazor, (2017), through teacher training programmes, teachers have been prepared to assist students to develop socially acceptable behaviour in order to promote effective teaching and learning processes to ensure high standards in education. *Mutie and Ndambuki* (2003) assert that through guidance and counselling activities, teachers are expected to help pupils to explore and resolve difficult thoughts, clarify conflicting issues they face as they grow, learn alternative ways of managing themselves, their relationship and make decisions about the best course of action in different situations.

It is obvious that school counsellors are always confronted with a number of challenges which sometimes place them in difficult situation which affects their ability to perform effectively. Consequently, several emerging issues that should have been dealt with still persist. Among these are students' riots, classroom indiscipline, examination malpractices, learning challenges, etc. It was against this background that this study investigated the challenges confronting guidance and counselling coordinators/teachers in the discharge of their duties in senior high schools in the Kumasi Metropolis.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Guidance and counselling programmes are designed to prepare young students for adult life as well as help them acquire appropriate lifelong attitudes and values that allow them to become productive and active members of their communities (Itayi and Ncube, 2015). In 1976, the Ghana Government came out with a policy through a directive by the Ghana Education Service for the establishment of guidance and counselling in second cycle institutions (Buku, 2016). This was further strengthened in 2007 when the Education Ministry issued a directed that required all schools at the second cycle level to take the necessary steps including appointment of guidance and counselling coordinators/teachers to help effectively implement the necessary programmes.

In spite of theses interventions, it appears the implementation of guidance and counselling services in the educational system has not received the needed attention (Taylor and Buku, 2010; Asamari, 2018). Report on President's Committee on Review of Education Reform in Ghana [RPCRERG] (2002), found poor guidance and counselling as a key factor responsible for the increasing level in crime in the nation, high level of indiscipline among students, increase drug use, and high school drop-out rates among others. Without an appropriate study that will put the problem into context, the challenges of guidance and counselling in schools will not be understood in a manner that will lead to its effective implementation and full utilization to achieve the desired outcomes.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The following are the objectives:

- a) Examining the availability of counselling facilities in Senior High Schools.
- b) Identifying the challenges counsellors/coordinators face in Senior High Schools
- c) To determine the influence of counselling services on students.

1.3 Research Questions

The study sought to address these specific questions:

- a) What facilities are available for counselling programmes in schools within the Kumasi Metropolis?
- b) What are the challenges confronting counsellors/coordinators in the delivery services in schools in the Kumasi Metropolis?
- c) In what ways do counselling influence students in schools in the Kumasi Metropolis?

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 The concepts of Guidance and Counselling

Guidance refers to a “programme designed to help the individual to make diligent and useful decisions of life and to relate well with other people” (Buku, 2016: 16). Similarly, Bedu-Addo (2014) describes guidance as the process of assisting a person to understand themselves relative to their personality, as well as their human and physical environment so as to be able to take right decisions and make good choices which will ultimately improve their functionality. Guidance, therefore implies the process of assisting an individual to be able to understand themselves better and the world around them.

Counselling on the other hand, is seen as a one-on-one relationship that focuses on a person's growth and adjustment, problem solving and decision-making skills. It is a client-centred relationship that requires confidentiality (Gibson and Mitchel, 2005). Similarly, Bark (2003) describes guidance and counselling as the assistance provided by a professionally trained person to an individual of any age to guide him deal with his own life activities, develop his own points of view, make his own decisions and carry his own burden. Okobiah and Okorududu (2004) suggest that counselling involve services which are intended to support students gain better understanding of themselves, their peculiar challenges and their environment in order to develop the needed capabilities for effective decision-making. Though, the two concepts appear distinct, they however play complementary roles in education to achieved desired objectives.

2.2 Importance of Guidance and Counselling in Schools

It is widely acknowledged that guidance and counselling assist the individual to design appropriate solutions critical to one's life (Dogar, *et al*, 2011). Braddock (2001) suggests that it helps to enhance student's academic performance, promote positive attitudes to studies, encourage acquisitions and utilisation of conflict resolution skills, and a decline in school dropouts. Similarly, Rao (2003) posits that it seeks to help students choose the program of studies relevant to their career aspirations. This implies that students must be encouraged to decide responsibly on what course to offer rather than being compelled to course of studies of career path.

According to Collins (2007), it is essential to help young persons to become disciplined and develop the ability to handle difficulties and realities they face in their dynamic world, achieve their capabilities, and recognise opportunities in a world where the potential for further training and access to jobs continue to decline. Guidance and counselling services enhances learner's academic performance, curbs the level of school dropouts and trains students for the job market and real life (Chireshe, 2012). In the view of Modu and George (2013), pupils who have experienced educational

guidance and counselling achieve positive learning outcomes compared to their colleagues who are not fortunate to access these services. Therefore, school guidance and counselling programmes help learners to utilise their educational opportunities.

Thus, the basic purpose of guidance and counselling in schools is to assess individual learners so as to identify their capabilities, interests as well as needs, in order to assist them properly adjust to the school environment and to model their goals. Lonborg and Bowen (2004) argue that in America, effective school guidance and counselling creates a secured school environment. This sort of environment creates a sense of attachment for students. Lambert and Barley (2002) maintain that the goal of educational counselling is to assist pupils gain an understanding of the beginning and development of psychological challenges, resulting in an increased ability to take reasonable control over emotions and actions. In fact, guidance and counselling in schools essentially enhances the holistic development of students (Bedu-Addo, 2014).

2.3 Factors Affecting School Guidance and Counselling

Studies have showed that there are several impediments to the smooth implementation of educational guidance and counselling. One of these factors has to do with inadequate resources, Facilities such as office space and equipment, psychological test manuals and reference books, among others, have been found to be lacking among school counsellors (Nyamwange *et al.*, 2012). Whiles this may be the reality in developing countries like Ghana, elsewhere in American, Lehr and Sumarah (2002) reports that schools have adequate resources, equipment and space to carry out guidance and counselling services not only for students, but parents and teacher as well.

Another challenge is lack of reasonable time allocated. In some schools, counselling teachers are made to take up other responsibilities which takes away a chunk of their time from the discharge of their core responsibility. For example, in Namibia, school counsellors apart being responsible for guidance and counselling also have teaching workloads (Nyamwange *et al.*, 2012; Mushaandja *et al.*, 2013). Besides, others have to include administrative assignments and sports co-ordination, among others, to their roles as counsellors (Dahir, *et al.*, 2010).

Inadequate funding has also been recognized as a challenge. The Australian Psychological Society [APA] (2013) in their guidelines for successful implementation of psychological services in schools propose that school counsellors be allocated a budgetary allowance per annum to cater for needs such as in-service professional development, professional books, journal subscriptions and psychological tests, among others. However, these propositions have been observed to be lacking in schools, as school counsellors lament the lack of funds for the running of programmes, which in turn negatively impacts on provision of psychological services (Anagbogu *et al.*, 2013).

Inadequate support from both teachers and headteachers also has the potential to negatively impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of school counsellors. It has been established by earlier studies that some teachers and school heads perceive guidance and counselling negatively, consequently they tend not to co-operate in the implementation of such services. Studies have revealed that among the challenges school counsellors face is inadequate support from school heads, particularly in terms of arrears in funds provision, funding their participation at professional programmes, reduction of teaching workload to give room for counselling and lack of monitoring of counselling activities (Nyamwange *et al.*, 2012).

Finally, the attitude of students toward counselling was discovered to be another challenge that counsellors have to contend with. Alavi *et al.* (2012) submit that students are not willing to discuss their challenges with the school counsellors due to the negative attitude they have towards the profession. Students did not patronise the counselling services because they were afraid to do so, while Mushaandja *et al.* (2013) state that students did not have a good attitude towards counselling

services because they had no trust in the counsellors and thus found it difficult to disclose their problems to them.

3.0 Materials and Methods

3.1 Research Design

Descriptive survey design was employed to determine the challenges facing guidance and counselling co-ordinators in senior high schools.

3.2 Population of the Study

The target population in this study constituted all guidance and counselling co-ordinators and all Form Three (3) students in senior high schools in the Kumasi Metropolis.

Sample and Sampling Technique

A sample size of 360 persons which comprised 337 students and 23 guidance and counselling co-ordinators/teachers. This sample was determined and calculated using Krejcie and Morgan (1970)'s Sampling Table at 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. The simple random sampling technique was employed to select the students which ensured that all members of the accessible population had an equal and independent chance of being included in the random sample. In all, 23 teachers comprising one guidance and counselling co-ordinator and two teachers each from eight schools who are members of the guidance and counselling committee were selected using purposive sampling.

3.3 Data Collection Instrument

Questionnaire was used as the main data collection instrument for this study. The questionnaire was designed based on the four-point Likert scale. This provided options for respondents to indicate their degree of agreement or disagreement to the question items. The questionnaire was made up of three sections. Section 'A' elicited information on the availability of guidance and counselling facilities in schools. Section 'B' focused on the challenges confronting guidance and counselling coordinators, while Section 'C' was based on the impact of guidance and counselling on students. Pilot-testing of the instrument with ten (10) guidance and counselling co-ordinators indicated the instruments to be reliable as the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.78 was established.

4.0 Results and Findings

Research Question One: What facilities are available for guidance and counselling programmes in senior high schools in the Kumasi Metropolis?

Table 1: Availability of Guidance and Counselling Facilities

Statement	Not available	Inadequate	Adequate	Very adequate
Films/videos on counselling	19(82.6%)	4(17.4%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)
Handbooks for different educational opportunities	14(60.9%)	4(17.4%)	3(13.0%)	2(8.7%)
Career booklets on guidance and counselling	13(56.5%)	7(30.4%)	2(8.7%)	1(4.3%)
Guidance and counselling rooms	10(43.5%)	8(34.8%)	3(13.0%)	2(8.7%)
Books on guidance and counselling	1(4.4%)	9(39.1%)	11(47.8%)	2(8.7%)

Office accommodation	1(4.4%)	3(13.0%)	14(60.9%)	5(21.7%)
Student's files/inventory	1(4.4%)	4(17.4%)	6(26.0%)	12(52.2%)

Data in Table 1 demonstrates that senior high schools lack basic facilities for guidance and counselling. From the results, 19(82.6%) of the respondents claimed that films/videos on counselling were not available. This study corroborates that from Nyamwange, *et al* (2012) that there are no videos that teacher counsellors can use to educate students and make them understand better when guiding and counselling them. Similarly, while 14(60.9%) of the respondents were of the view that handbooks for different educational opportunities was not available, 4(17.4%) claimed it was not adequate and 3(13.0%) said it was adequate. With respect to career booklets on guidance and counselling 13(56.5%) of the respondents stated that it was not available while 7(30.4%) said it was inadequate. Owusu, *et al.* (2018) also made similar findings. They claimed that books and booklets on different educational opportunities as well as career booklets should not only be made available to the counsellors but also be accessible by students to help guide them in their life choices. Guidance and counselling rooms were also found not to be adequate as indicted by 10(43.5%) of the respondents. Mander (2013) in a similar study found that guidance and counselling rooms were not available. This means that there were no rooms specifically set aside for guidance and counselling services, this has dire implication for the work of the counsellors in terms of ensuring confidentiality.

Table 1 further shows 11(47.8%) of the respondents said books on guidance and counselling were adequate. Makewa (2008) notes that the teacher counsellors should keep abreast of knowledge and changing times since lack of reference books poses a threat to the teacher counsellors understanding of their students. Further to this, 14(60.9%) of the respondents claimed office accommodation were also adequate. Luyando (2015) in a study in Lusaka concluded that in guidance and counselling offices were available in schools. He however noted that counsellors complained they were not conducive for quality delivery of guidance and counselling services. A little over half 12(52.2%) of the respondents claimed that student's files/inventory were very adequate. This contradicts the position of Mander (2013) who found in a study that most of the schools did not have students' files. The finding implies that the guidance and counselling department in senior high schools have at least some information on the history of students they deal with.

Research Question Two: What are the challenges confronting counsellors in delivery services in schools in the Kumasi Metropolis?

Table 2: Challenges Facing Guidance and Counselling Coordinators

Statements	Very serious challenge	Serious challenge	Minor challenge	Not a challenge at all
Lack of funding for running counselling programmes	19(82.6%)	4(17.4%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)
Lack of counselling materials	17(73.9%)	3(13.0%)	2(8.7%)	1(4.4%)
Heavy teaching load for the school counsellor	14(60.9%)	7(30.4%)	2(8.7%)	0(0.0%)
Lack of computer for data storage	5(21.7%)	13(56.5%)	3(13.0%)	2(8.7%)
Students unwillingness to discuss their problems	4(17.4%)	13(56.5%)	5(21.7%)	1(4.4%)

Lack of guidance and counselling office	2(8.7%)	4(17.4%)	15(65.2%)	2(8.7%)
Lack of corporation from school heads	1(4.4%)	2(8.7%)	6(26.0%)	14(60.9%)

Table 2 illustrates the responses of the respondents on the challenges facing Guidance and Counselling Coordinators. From Table 2, 19(82.6%) claimed that lack of funding was a very serious challenge. This finding agreed with Owino and Odero (2014) assertion that the major impediment to guidance and counselling programmes in schools is financial challenge. Okere (2005) also bemoans poor funding of counselling programmes in schools. Similarly, 17(73.9%) agreed lack of counselling materials were very serious challenges affecting guidance and counselling. This study is consistent with previous studies from Denga (2001) and Asamari (2015) which found that inadequate guidance and counselling materials were a major barrier to successful delivery of guidance and counselling services in schools. Table 2 further shows 14(60.9%) of respondents identified heavy teaching load for the school counsellor as a very serious challenge. Ogola (2008) observes that in some schools, guidance and counselling teachers, in addition to discharging their core duties as counselors are also allocated subjects on the timetable to teach. This finding implies that guidance and counsellor co-ordinators who are also having teaching responsibilities do not have precise time for counselling, it is mostly likely that the time that they might need to attend to issues affecting students, they might be in the classroom teaching. This therefore, make workload of teachers a major challenge that affects effective implementation of guidance services in the schools.

Table 2 further demonstrates that lack of computer for data storage was a serious challenge as suggested by 13(56.5%) of the respondents. This study confirms findings by Anagbogu *et al.* (2013) in Nigeria which showed that necessities like computers were lacking in many schools. This finding is an indication that ICT was not effectively deployed in counselling in schools. It could have implications on the storing of data on students. In the same vain, whereas 13(56.5%) of the respondents claimed students' unwillingness to discuss their problems was a serious challenge, 5(21.7%) perceived it as a minor challenge. A study by Mushaandja, *et al.* (2013) in Namibia found that learners were unwilling to share their problems as they did not trust their counsellors. Ruttouh (2015) identified lack of confidentiality, bad attitude towards students and shyness as reasons for why students were unwillingness to access guidance and counselling services. Data in Table 2 indicates that 15(65.2%) of the respondents were of the view that lack of guidance and counselling office was a minor challenge. This finding differs from findings made by Ofori (2018) and Yirenkyi, *et al.* (2019) that inadequate facilities including offices are serious problems responsible for the inefficient running of guidance programmes in schools. The disparity in the present study with that of Ofori (2018) and Yirenkyi, *et al.* (2019) is that whiles Ofori (2018) conducted his study in a rural district of Fanteakwam North and South, Yirenkyi, *et al.* (2019) on their hand conducted their study in the Kumasi Metropolis but in basic schools.

Research Question Three: In what ways do guidance and counselling influence students in senior high schools in the Kumasi Metropolis?

Table 3: Influences on Counselling Services on Students

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Helped me to be more disciplined	166(49.3%)	129(38.3%)	15(4.5%)	27(8.0%)
Helped me know the effects of alcohol and drug abuse	159(47.2%)	121(35.9%)	25(7.4%)	32(9.5%)

Helped me develop better study skills and habits	122(36.2%)	136(40.4%)	43(12.8%)	36(10.7%)
Helped me to approach exams without fear	49(14.5%)	38(11.3%)	119(35.3%)	131(38.9%)
Helped me use my time efficiently	34(10.1%)	34(10.1%)	153(45.4%)	116(34.4%)
Helped to develop self-confidence	16(4.7%)	34(10.1%)	178(52.8%)	109(32.3%)
Helped to improve my class behaviour	16(4.7%)	24(7.1%)	199(59.1%)	98(29.1%)

Table 3 presents data on the influence of guidance and counselling services on students, From Table 3, 295(87.5%) of the respondents agreed that they were influenced to be more disciplined. while 42(12.5%) disagreed. This finding is similar to Asamari (2015) and Owusu, *et al.* (2018) who found in a study that guidance and counselling services help improve students' behaviour and have enabled them to be well-disciplined and obedient in school and society. Similarly, 280(83.1%) of the respondents agreed that guidance and counselling has helped them to know the effects of alcohol and drug abuse. However, 57(16.9%) of the respondents disagreed with the claim. This finding is similar to other findings in the literature. Denga (2001), and Sackey (2007) confirm the finding as they found that guidance and counselling helps students to understand the effects of alcohol and drug abuse so that they can stay away from them. Furthermore, students in senior high schools were influenced by guidance and counselling to develop better study skills and habits as pointed out by 258(76.6%) of the respondents. Owusu, *et al.* (2018) confirms this finding in a study when they found that guidance and counselling help improve students' study habits. This result implies that guidance and counselling services provided in the schools could significantly affect the academic performance.

Table 3 further demonstrates that 250(74.2%) of the respondents disagreed that guidance and counselling has helped them to approach exams without fear. Only 87(25.8%) of the respondents agreed it did. This is contrary to the view expressed by Kankam and Onivehu (2000) that guidance and counselling help students to cope with examination anxiety. In their view, the fear of failure and the crave for the highest grades are major sources of pressure among students. In a similar vein, 279(82.8%) of the respondents disagreed that guidance and counselling has helped them to develop self-confidence, on the contrary 53(15.7%) of the respondents agreed. Finally, from the results on Table 3, 297(88.1%) of the respondents disagreed that guidance and counselling has helped them to improve their class behaviour, while 40(11.9%) indicated that they agreed with the statement.

5.0 Conclusions

Based on the findings from the study, it could be concluded that most senior high schools lack basic facilities like films, videos and counselling handbooks for effective guidance and counselling. In addition, guidance and counselling in senior high schools is hugely challenged by lack of funding and heavy teaching load for the school counsellor. Further, guidance and counselling is very important in helping students to become more disciplined. Finally, guidance and counselling has failed to either help students to develop self-confidence or approach examinations without fear.

6.0 Recommendations

Based on the findings it is recommended that heads of senior high schools and the Ghana Education Service should do well to provide guidance and counselling offices in schools with films/videos and counselling handbooks. This will make it easier to meet the guidance and counselling needs

of students. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service should prioritize guidance and counselling by providing adequate funding for its programmes. Besides, teaching work load as well as other office duties should be taken off the school counsellors. This will allow counsellors more time to be able to provide quality guidance and counselling services to students. Finally, Guidance and counselling co-ordinators should organise programmes that will be geared towards helping students to develop positive self-image and self-confidence.

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