

The Role of Guidance and Counselling in Curbing Students' Strikes in Secondary Schools in Nairobi County, Kenya

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Abstract

The youth constitute the highest number of Kenya's population and due to their enormous number the society expects them to play a vital role in its future development. However, this expectation may not be tenable due to their deviant behaviour such as marked increase in the number of secondary school unrests and strikes in the Schools. This study sought to find out the role of guidance and counselling in curbing students' strikes in secondary schools in Nairobi County, Kenya. It adopted descriptive research design. The target population in this study consisted of all principals and deputy principals in all public secondary schools in Nairobi County. Stratified random sampling method was used in selecting the sample schools, principals and deputy principals. Data was collected using questionnaires and interview guides. The quantitative data collected was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. The findings of the study established that guidance and counselling units in learning institutions were not effective. Most of the guidance and counselling teachers provided guidance and counselling services irregularly or at crisis times since they devoted most of their time to completing the syllabus and therefore did not have time to detect the students' problems early enough. Unless these units were strengthened, they served little purpose in curbing student strikes. The study recommends that frequency of offering guidance and counselling services in schools should be increased and guidance and counselling departments in schools should be strengthened. The study also recommends that guidance and counselling programmes should be extended to the parents. This means that parents should be educated in order to take a more active role in the guidance and counselling of their children so that these services are provided both at home and in school.

Keywords: Role, Guidance and Counselling, Student Strikes

1. Introduction

Every human society makes a distinction between behaviour that conforms to the prevailing conventions of social life and behaviour that deviates in one way or another from those conventions (Kombo, 1998). Kombo defines deviance as "conduct that the people of a society generally defined as aberrant, disturbing, improper or immoral and for which specific social control efforts are likely to be found". In 2015 the wave of unrest in secondary schools in Kenya reached alarming levels that reduced several schools to ashes out of unexplained rage forcing the government to initiate a consultative meeting to try to address a problem that threatened the public education system. Property worth millions of shillings was destroyed in many institutions and facilities that took years to build reduced to shells in a matter of minutes (Kiplagat, 2015). Student strikes in Kenya are common features of defiant behaviour whose consequences include incidences of rape, violence, disobedience to school authority, drug addiction and damage to school property (Mumbi, 2002).

In 2008 (January to July) about 254 cases of secondary school unrests were reported to the Ministry of Education with the following cases per province; Nairobi had 19 schools, Nyanza 27, Coast 24, Eastern 53, Rift valley 55, Western 8, Central 68 and North Eastern none (Ngare, 2008). According to M.O.E.S.T (2008) the figure comprises of the known and recorded cases, but perhaps the number of schools that had experienced strikes could be higher as some cases are never reported. Mbiti (2007) asserted that in addition to great loss of human life and property, increase in mass indiscipline in several secondary schools in Kenya has also resulted to loss of time for learning and teaching due to unwarranted disruption especially when it is in form of violence. With the increase of mass indiscipline, human life was lost in Upper Hill Secondary School in Nairobi (Ngare, 2008). In view of the above evidence, deviance is seen to have permeated the Kenyan societal web. In order to reduce deviance, concerted efforts should be made in the country's institutions to inculcate moral values in the secondary school students. Religious organizations, legal institutions and non-governmental organizations should also play a vital role in social control.

2. Literature Review

2.1 School Administration and Discipline

Corporal punishment in Kenyan schools was banned in 2001 as an educational reform that sought to change from the traditional bureaucratic system to democratic system in the schools. However, the period after the ban saw an increased search for solutions to students' indiscipline (Vundi, Majanga, & Odollo, 2014). Governments'

guidelines on school management stipulates that every school must have a set of rules that must have a purpose that is clear, possible to enforce and beneficial to the school's community. The students and staff must know the school rules which should be properly displayed in each classroom and in the staffroom. These school rules should be read by the school principal to the full school assembly every beginning of term and those who commit some offences, minor or major should be punished. However, when students engage in criminal acts, the school administration has very little power and has to resolve to seek expert help from law enforcers such as police (Ajowi & Simatwa, 2010).

It has always been puzzling that when the question of indiscipline in schools comes up, everyone looks for an excuse to hold responsible for the misdeeds that students do. Everyone is out to prescribe measures which should be taken on the principals, on teachers, on parents and indeed on the students themselves (Wanjohi, 2016). One school of thought has it that principals who run their businesses instead of running the schools should be disciplined while others argue that teachers who fail to keep the students in their place should be disciplined while others argue that students should be caned and punished real hard. Someone also blame the Ministry of Education for indiscipline in schools by saying that, in the current education structure in Kenyan secondary schools, students have more rights than the teachers. This argument contends that the principals and the teachers have been denied the powers to cane students and expel them and the students being aware of this take advantage of the situation and therefore engage in acts of indiscipline. In the midst of this confusion of who is to blame for indiscipline in schools, the students suffer (Kadama, 2016).

It is very important that educators and the general public at large realize that what happens in our schools today manifest what the Kenyan society is like. This implies that, when we resolve to caning students, expelling them from school, fining them or even imprisoning them, we are not dealing with the root of the problem which lies deep in our society. For example, according to Mbanya (1997), it is obvious that the general political violence frenzy that has been around recently has also affected school programmes. In one secondary school in Nairobi Province for example, students had aped the pro-reformist with placards saying "No mid-term, no mocks". In some schools, politicians have been wooing students as voters or agents to the students' great excitement, sometimes with rioting. Such recruitment has involved the use of alcohol and other drugs (Shivogo, 2002). Secondly, educators and society have to realize that the students are not miniature adults. They are either in their late childhood or in their adolescence years and in the process of growth and development. They will emulate the adult behaviour that they see which leads them into acts like smoking, drug abuse and sex abuse. This implies that correction of indiscipline in schools has to begin with the larger society. This is why the problem of indiscipline in schools is a chronic problem. This further explains why the school administration with the guiding prescription from the Ministry of Education has failed to curb indiscipline in schools (Kadama, 2016).

2.2 Causes of Student Strikes in Secondary School

According to Siringi (2000) in an article entitled "Unrest blamed on poor managers", , principals who engage in private businesses have little time to address student grievances and their schools are more likely to experience unrest. Some of them are promoted because they are well connected to the appointing authorities. Such principals lack the skills to run schools and cannot contain violent situations. The ability of the principal to listen to the students' grievances and points of view, and at the same time, his willingness to communicate his views and the reasons for the decisions taken by the school can go a long way in solving most students' grievances. Unfortunately, these qualities are lacking among many principals. The consequences are low morale and poor discipline among staff as well as students.

Mwangi and Birgen (2008) noted that talks on school violence that rocked schools in Kenya and Uganda during the first half of the year 2008 were caused by peer influence, bad parenting, laxity in teaching service, sloppiness in the Ministry of Education and rivalry among private schools owners. Accordingly, media, the mobile phones, excessive pocket money and drug abuse are also reported to cause violence in schools. Investigations conducted in Uganda revealed that students as young as 12 years old have admitted torching their own schools, sometimes for what seemed as petty reasons. Other causes of arson in schools have been retaliation by students over suspension. On July 22 year 2008, The Minister of Education closed schools in the Central Region of Uganda because they were running unregistered boarding facilities (Njenga, 2008). Poor quality resources have therefore been the cause of chaos in some schools. Anderson (as cited by Kabiru, 2007) observed that in Uganda, it is in boarding schools where most school strikes take place and he argued that it is because of shortage of facilities in these schools.

3 The Role of Guidance and Counselling in Curbing Students' Strikes in Secondary Schools in Nairobi County, Kenya

To reduce student strikes in schools, various approaches have been put in place. One of them is provision of guidance and counselling services. In educational setting, counselling is regarded as the purposeful understanding and assistance given to the student so that he/she is better able to handle his own problems (Salgong, Ngumi, & Chege, 2016). Counseling should therefore directly touch the lives of students more than any other helping profession. Guidance is the provision of experiences that will help students to understand themselves.

It is necessary to give guidance and counseling services to students in secondary schools today. Students at this level of learning fall under the category of adolescents. Adolescence is a period of great storm and stress. This age ranges between thirteen and eighteen years. Certain populations of students at this stage behave irrationally, and therefore they need some guidance in order to be able to control their behaviour (Kaur & Malhotra, 2008). The breakdown of traditional moral control and child upbringing practices in Africa has left many children and parents in a predicament (Nyaga, 2009). Customary approaches which placed the responsibility of guiding and counselling by grandparents, parents and other elders in the village has rapidly lost ground in the face of the majority of social and economic changes that have been taking place in Africa (Mkhize, 2006). It is usually no longer possible for children to have ultimate contact with their grandparents as a means of facilitating the introduction to sound conduct and positive moral values. This responsibility has gradually shifted to parents due to changes in the modes of social organization and settlements. Parents being the first members of the larger society that the child comes into contact with are responsible for instilling acceptable norms and attitudes to the child. Thus, it is important for them to spend time with their children in guiding and counselling them so as to grow up into responsible adults through the use of their power of reason (Monica, Sarah, & Flavio, 2009).

However, though the parents are aware of what should be done, the majority of them lack the courage and/or knowledge necessary for the moral guidance of their children (UNICEF, 1994). There is clear generation gap between the parents and the children today (Christopher, 2005). That is why parents find it fairly difficult to enter into discussion with their children on matters concerning their physical development and the moral problems that beset them at a later stage. Children are therefore left on their own to learn and adopt behaviour from their peer groups, the school community, the market and the towns. Parents may not be near to help their children grow with a clear distinction between what is moral and immoral.

Lack of proper guidance and counseling of children is reflected in the unacceptable and unethical conduct among some youth. Such conduct includes drug and alcohol addiction, prostitution and stealing among others. These problems are some of the contributing factors to social distress and school disruption (Ashraf, Hasan, & Solokian, 2016). Traditional African societies had mechanisms of controlling adolescent behaviour. Some of these mechanisms included counselling by the grandparents and intricate systems of taboos among others. With the advent of colonialism, christianity and western education, these traditional mechanisms were weakened. As a result, the society became socially restructured.

The mass media does and is contributing a great deal /to the moral decay in the society today (Schultze, 2005). This is because as already mentioned most parents do not have time for their children and as such do not vet or control what they should view on television, films, video and so on (Mkhize, 2006). The televised violence can negatively change a child's behaviour where the youth lack guidance in terms of what not to view. Therefore, efforts to attune the moral values and behaviour of the children should be considered as a matter of urgency, since the future of any society intrinsically depends on whether or not children are brought up as integral persons (Monica, Sarah, & Flavio, 2009).

It is unfortunate to note that guidance and counseling in schools has been produced mainly in form of books for secondary school students (Salgong, Ngumi, & Chege, 2016). The most striking aspect about the service is that it is mostly confined to Form IV students especially with regard to career choices. In such cases, the students are provided with information for further education, training and employment. Teachers in such circumstances assume that students in lower forms do not require guidance and counselling services unless a problem arises. Furthermore, the programme of guidance and counselling for self-understanding and ability to make decisions have not changed very much in delivering services to the students since independence. They simply show the students the requirements needed for various career choices but do not seriously address the problem of indiscipline in schools (Ajowi & Simatwa, 2010). The school counselors therefore concentrate more on academic matters than on students who have behavioral problems who are hardly counseled. Failure to counsel students on proper behaviour gives leeway to students' deviance. Guidance and counselling services in schools

are therefore not effective since they leave out the aspect of discipline (Schultze, 2005).

4. Research Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive research method. A study of this nature is concerned with finding out what factors associated with certain conditions or certain behaviour. In carrying out a descriptive research the researcher does not manipulate the variables in the study. Descriptive research involves events that have already taken place and may be related to a present condition. Studies investigate the possible cause and end effect relationship by observing an existing condition of state of affairs and searching back in time for plausible causal factors. The sample in this study consisted of thirty five principals and thirty five deputy principals in public secondary schools in Nairobi County sampled from the twelve (12) Boarding schools in Nairobi County, thirty five (35) day schools and one (1) boarding/day school. Stratified random sampling method was used in selecting the schools guided by the table for determining a sample from a given population by Krejcie and Morgan table as quoted in Mulusa (1988, p.36).

Primary data was collected through questionnaires and an interview guide. Secondary data was collected from the library through literature review. There were two sets of questionnaires, one set for the principals and the other for the deputy principals. To enhance validity, a pilot study was carried out. The total number of respondents in the pilot study was twenty (20). This was expected to help the researcher in identification of items in the study -instruments that might have been ambiguous in eliciting the relevant information. The pilot test was also used to test reliability. The reliability of the instruments coefficient of internal consistency was calculated by splitting the instrument items in to two and by placing all odd numbered items in one sub-test and all even numbered items in another sub-test. This was to divide the scores of each individual respondent into two sub-test scores. The scores for odd-numbered sub-test were computed separately and correlated with the then computed even-numbered sub-test

5. Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that the most frequent indiscipline problems experienced by principals were truancy and drug abuse/smoking (88.6%) followed by lateness and absenteeism (62.8%). There were many other indiscipline problems which were not as frequent. The least frequent indiscipline problems were students teaming up against prefects (5.7%) and boy/girl relationships/sexual immorality (5.7%). Drug related problems were the most frequent indiscipline problems that principals found difficult to handle (75.0%) followed by indiscipline due domestic problems (68.8%). The latter was mainly experienced in mixed schools. Guidance and counselling services are mainly given to students in schools on a daily basis (57.1%). This means that counselling is given at all times as teachers interact with students in the course of teaching or even outside the classroom where teachers counsel them depending on the circumstances. Other head teachers said that guidance and counselling services were given to students as need arose (37.1%). This refers to individualized counselling given to needy students. For example, the study revealed that in most cases guidance and counselling services in schools target the Form IV students especially with regard to career choices. Students in such cases are only provided with information for further education, training and employment. A sizeable number of principals said that they had programmed counselling sessions which were carried out once a week for every class. These were timetabled along with the other teaching subjects (22.9%). Furthermore, 17.1% of principals thought counselling students against drugs are the best way of handling the problem of drug abuse. A small number of principals said that they gave counselling services to their students during assembly times/days -most of which are twice a week in the morning before the timetabled teaching. An even smaller number of principals said that they invited some guest speakers to come and address their students as a way of guiding and counselling them. All the principals agreed that guidance and counselling services were given to students in one way or the other in their schools. The study therefore revealed that counselling is given at all times as teachers interact with students in the course of teaching or even outside the classroom where teachers counsel them depending on the circumstances.

6. Conclusion

Guidance, counselling and dialogue are the best processes of enhancing student discipline. However, in practice, it is sad to note that guidance and counselling services in schools are confined to Form IV students especially with regard to career choices. Students in such cases are only provided with information for further education, training and employment. The assumption by teachers is that students in the lower forms do not require these services unless a problem arises. The school counsellors therefore, concentrate more on academic matters than on students who have behavioural problems who are hardly counselled. Failure to counsel students on proper behaviour gives way to student deviance. Guidance and counselling services in schools are therefore, not effective since they leave out the aspect of discipline.

7. Recommendations

- i. Secondary School administrators should increase the frequency of offering guidance and counselling services in schools while strengthening the guidance and counselling departments.
- ii. Schools administrators should extend guidance and counselling programmes to the parents.
- iii. Schools administrators should educate parents in order to take a more active role in the guidance and counselling of their children and thereby ensuring that counselling is provided both at home and in school.

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