

PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS OF ACADEMIC GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING SERVICES IN ENHANCING ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE AMONG STUDENTS IN BOYS' SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN EMBU WEST SUB – COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Guidance and counselling programmes have been introduced in secondary schools in Kenya in accordance with the Ministry of Education directive. This study investigated the perceived effectiveness of academic guidance and counselling services in enhancing academic achievement in English language among students in boys' secondary schools, in Embu West Sub – County, Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. 300 secondary school boys were sampled randomly while eight teachers of English and four heads of guidance and counselling departments were purposively selected. Data was collected using two sets of questionnaires administered to students and teachers of English and an interview schedule for heads of guidance and counselling departments. Validity was enhanced using expert opinions. Reliability was estimated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient and a reliability coefficient of 0.78 and 0.77 realized for students' and teachers' instruments respectively. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Qualitative data was analysed qualitatively using content analysis. The findings of this study provide information to education stakeholders on the need for continued provision of academic guidance and counselling services for enhanced academic achievement in English language. The study further suggests ways of improving the provision of these services for improvement in English language.

Key Words: Perceived, Academic guidance and Counselling, Enhancing, Achievement.

Introduction

Guidance and counselling is a process of helping people, by assisting them in managing decision and changing behaviour. The government of Kenya recognizes the important role played by guidance and counselling in all educational settings. According to the Ministry of Education in Kenya, guidance and counselling is an integral part of the education process and plays the role of supplementing and complementing all educational programmes in the school setting. In particular, academic guidance and counselling aims at assisting learners make appropriate decisions and choices, and increases their knowledge of educational and career opportunities. It involves a

counsellor discussing with students about the students' academic difficulties, and together exploring on learning strategies that can help the students achieve more academically.

The importance of English language cannot be underestimated as it is a medium of instruction in schools, colleges and universities in Kenya and many other nations of the world. It is also the preferable language of international communication. In Kenya, the language is a compulsory and central subject in schools as it is the language of instruction in most other subjects. Proficiency in the language therefore makes the learning of the other subjects easier, and all students are expected to have a sufficient command of the language. Despite the value attached to English language, there has been a persistent underachievement in the subject at the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (K.C.S.E) level, especially among students in boys' secondary schools.

Research shows that one of the greatest factors related to achievement in a language is the attitude of the learners towards the language. Although attitude is not the only factor that accounts for the learning process, it directs and influences the learning and achievement most considerably. Girls have been found to have a more favourable attitude towards English language than boys, hence the higher achievement in the subject than boys. Other factors that influence the achievement in a language are study habits, test taking skills and correction of the students' spoken and written language. Academic guidance and counselling services are therefore necessary in assisting the boys develop a favourable attitude towards English language, improve their study skills in English and acquire appropriate test taking skills, in order to enhance their achievement in the subject. The correction of the boys' spoken and written English language which is part of guidance services is also paramount in the attainment of the same.

However, despite the emphasis given to guidance and counselling in schools, there were indicators that underachievement in English language remained a challenge among students in boys' secondary schools. This then cast doubts on the role played by academic guidance and counselling in helping students in boys' secondary schools achieve in English language. There was therefore need to determine the perceived effectiveness of academic guidance and counselling services in enhancing achievement in English language among students in boys' secondary schools in Embu West Sub - County, Kenya.

Statement of the Problem

High achievement in English language is necessary in order to be admitted into various professional courses in institutions of higher learning in Kenya. This is because language is crucial in education as it is used to communicate during teaching and learning. Students who underachieve in English language may therefore miss out on these professional courses which may undermine the Kenya vision 2030. The vision's overall goal is to provide a globally competitive and adapting human resource base to meet the requirements of a rapid industrialized economy through life – long education and training. Though guidance and counselling programmes have been introduced in Kenyan secondary schools and the services adopted as a support system to help students achieve their goals, boys continue to underachieve in English language. The current study therefore sought to determine the perceived effectiveness of academic guidance and counselling services in enhancing achievement in English language among students in boys' secondary schools, in Embu West Sub - County, Kenya.

Objective of the Study

The objective of this study was to determine the perceived effectiveness of academic guidance and counselling services in enhancing academic achievement in English language among students in boys' secondary schools.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design as it involved studying variables in their natural setting. According to Kothari (2011), descriptive survey research studies are concerned with describing the characteristics of a particular individual or group. Lockesh (1984) postulates that descriptive research studies are designed to obtain pertinent and precise information concerning status of the phenomena and wherever possible to draw valid conclusions. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) point out that a descriptive research design determines and reports things the way they are. The study therefore sought to establish the perceived effectiveness of academic guidance and counselling in enhancing achievement in English language among students in boys secondary schools, without manipulating any of the study variables.

The study made use of purposive and simple random sampling techniques. Purposive sampling technique was used to select four public boys' secondary schools, form three classes, eight teachers of English and four heads of guidance and counselling departments. Simple random sampling was then used to select 300 students giving sample size of 312 respondents.

The study utilized two set of questionnaires and an interview schedule. Questionnaires were used to collect data from students and teachers of English and were used because they offered considerable advantage in administration and stimulus to the respondents. According to Gay (1992), questionnaires give respondents freedom to express their views and make suggestions. Both questionnaires contained closed and open ended questions. The interview schedule was used to obtain information from the heads of guidance and counselling departments from the four schools under study and contained only open ended questions. During the interview, clarifications were sought on issues under discussion.

The data collected was cleaned by being checked for logical consistency and then coded for analysis. Qualitative data was analysed qualitatively by establishing common themes and was presented thematically. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0 for windows. Descriptive statistics involved the use of frequency counts and percentages. Data analysis results were presented using frequency distribution tables and percentages. The results were then used to draw explanations, conclusions and recommendations.

Results of the Study

The study sought to determine the perceived effectiveness of academic guidance and counselling services in enhancing academic achievement in English language among students in boys' secondary schools. The study sought the opinion of the student respondents and that of teachers of English on this. Focus was laid on the areas that required the utilization of academic guidance and counselling services in enhancing academic achievement in English language. The responses from students on these areas is shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Students' Opinion on the Effectiveness of Academic Guidance and Counselling Services in Enhancing Academic Achievement in English Language

Statement	HE		E		UD		IE		HIE	
	f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Helping me to like English	150	50	63	21	36	12	30	10	21	7
Helping me to enjoy English lessons	162	54	69	23	18	6	33	11	18	6
Motivating me to work hard	195	65	45	15	30	10	21	7	9	3
Correction of my spoken English	192	64	66	22	0	0	24	8	18	6
Revision with teachers	180	60	45	15	30	10	24	8	21	7
Marking of compositions	174	58	99	33	15	5	12	4	0	0
Consultation of teachers	171	57	78	26	12	4	27	9	12	4
Test anxiety management	156	52	36	12	39	13	39	13	30	10
Utilization of test time	165	55	42	14	6	2	45	15	42	14
Interpretation of test terminologies	153	51	45	15	51	17	30	10	21	7

HE = Highly Effective, E = Effective, UD = Undecided, IE = Ineffective, HIE = Highly Ineffective

As shown in Table 1, majority of the student respondents were of the opinion that academic guidance and counselling services are effective in enhancing achievement in English language among students in boys' secondary schools. Information in Table 1 indicates that 71% of the student respondents felt that academic guidance and counselling services are effective in helping the students to like the subject. 77% indicated that the services help students enjoy English lessons while 80% felt the services help in motivation of students to work hard in the subject. Similarly, guidance by teachers of English is effective since 86% of the student respondents felt that correction of spoken English language is helpful, 75% indicated that revising with teachers was important, 91% were in support of teachers' marking of student compositions and 83% indicated that students' consultation of teachers was necessary. Student respondents further indicated that guidance on management of test anxiety, utilization of test time and help on interpretation of terminologies used in English tests were also effective.

Similarly, the responses from teachers of English on these areas is shown on Table 2.

Table 2

English teachers' Opinion on the Effectiveness of Academic Guidance and Counselling in Enhancing Academic Achievement in English language

Statement	HE		E		UD		IE		HIE	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	F	%
Helping students to like English	4	50.0	2	25.0	0	0.0	1	12.5	1	12.5
Helping students to enjoy English lessons	3	37.5	3	37.5	1	12.5	1	12.5	0	0.0
Motivating students to work hard	5	62.5	2	25.0	0	0.0	1	12.5	0	0.0
Correction of students' spoken English	3	37.5	3	37.5	0	0.0	1	12.5	1	12.5
Revision with teachers	5	62.5	2	25.0	0	0.0	1	12.5	0	0.0
Marking students' compositions	5	62.5	1	12.5	1	12.5	1	12.5	0	0.0
Consultation of teachers	3	37.5	3	37.5	1	12.5	1	12.5	0	0.0
Management of students' test anxiety	2	25.0	3	37.5	1	12.5	1	12.5	1	12.5
Management of students' test time	3	37.5	2	25.0	1	12.5	1	12.5	1	12.5
Helping students interpret test terminologies	4	50.0	1	12.5	1	12.5	2	25.0	0	0.0

HE = Highly Effective, E = Effective, UD = Undecided, IE = Ineffective, HIE = Highly Ineffective

The information in Table 2 shows that majority of the English teacher respondents had the opinion that academic guidance and counselling services are effective in enhancing achievement in English language. 75% indicated that the services were effective in helping students to like English and helping students enjoy English lessons while 87.5% felt that the services were of help in motivating students to work hard in English. 75% also indicated that guidance by English teachers through correction of students' spoken English language and revising with students was effective. It was also important to mark students' compositions (87.5%), answer students' questions (62.5%)' guide and counsel students on management of test anxiety (62.5%) guide students on utilization of test time (62.5%) and guide them on interpretation of terminologies used in English tests (62.5%).

The teacher counsellors reported that most of the students had developed poor self-concept by not believing in their capability to do well in English language. They thought of themselves as failures and believed negatively about their teacher's evaluation. This had affected their academic achievement in English language. 75% of the counsellor teachers indicated that during the attitude change, the students are helped to develop a positive self-concept/image of themselves. The counsellor teachers indicated that developing a positive self - concept helps a student to understand himself and regulate his behaviour. They also noted that developing a positive self - image by the

students is work which should not only be done by the teachers alone, but also by the parents, peers, personal motivation and the community in general.

The guidance and counselling teachers emphasized the importance of revision in writing compositions. According to the teachers, students need to learn techniques for editing papers so that what they finally submit is better than the first draft. During revision in composition writing, the teachers guide the students on the accepted formats, organizing the main points, writing the paper, and finally, evaluating and marking. Counsellor teachers felt that revision is critical in improving writing as teachers need to help students evaluate and revise their own work as objectively as possible. Students can evaluate and critique their own writing by underlining sentences of their composition; asking students to write in class so teachers can help them in the process; and giving a list of questions to guide the students when they are editing.

The guidance and counselling teachers noted that the responsibility of the teachers in guiding revision for examinations is to ensure that before the students start revising, they make sure that they have everything they need and are guided in appropriate revision techniques. Although there are a variety of revision techniques and each student has his preferences about which works best for him, the teachers' role is to identify the techniques which enable the students to personally grasp, consolidate, and retain the knowledge required for their programmes. Most respondents indicated that use of past papers, guided group discussions and consultation of subject teachers as revision techniques were useful in enhancing achievement in English language just like in other subjects.

Discussion

The study established that majority of student respondents were of the opinion that utilization of academic guidance and counselling services is effective in enhancing achievement in English language among students in boys' secondary schools. Similarly, the teachers of English and heads of guidance and counselling departments felt that academic guidance and counselling services are effective in enhancing achievement in English language. The responses from students in Table 1 and those of teachers of English in table 2 indicate this. This is agreement with the responses from heads of guidance and counselling departments as discussed above.

The findings agree with those of a Mungai and Wango (2007) who point out that academic guidance and counselling services are important in helping students develop positive attitude towards different subjects, fostering good study habits, and appropriate test taking skills. According to Dougherty (2012), frequent guidance and counselling interventions have a positive impact on English language scores. Ogbodo (2010) postulates that the formation of effective study habits is an outcome of a good guidance and counselling programme while Sikolia and Lutomia (2002) observe that students who are well guided on good study habits and examination handling techniques will always perform well. McGregor (2002) emphasizes the importance of correcting students' mistakes in their use of English language while Oya, Manalo and Greenwood (2009) also note that frequent use and correction of English language helps students learn grammar and vocabulary and improves their reading, writing and comprehension skills.

Conclusion

From the study findings, academic guidance and counselling services are effective in enhancing academic achievement in English language among students in boys' secondary schools. There is

therefore need for school counsellors and teachers of English to continue providing the services to secondary school boys for continued enhancement of academic achievement in English language.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- i. Comprehensive academic guidance and counselling services need to be offered to students in boys' secondary schools, in order to enhance their achievement in English language and other subjects.
- ii. The offering of academic guidance and counselling services need to be subject based. This way, students will be assisted on how to develop positive attitude towards English language, utilize appropriate study habits and make use of appropriate test taking skills, in order to enhance their achievement in the subject.
- iii. For adequate offering of academic guidance and counselling services to students, counsellor teachers need to have little or no teaching loads. This will enable them have adequate time to attend to students' academic counselling needs. Time need to be allocated in the school time table during which the services will be offered to students. School administrators need to see to it that teachers of English do not have unmanageable workloads, so that they have enough time to correct students' written language for enhanced student achievement in English language examinations.

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