

The purpose of this study was to determine the role perceptions of headteachers and the teacher counsellors in the guidance and counselling of pupils in public primary schools of Embu District, Kenya as well as determining whether there were any qualitative different ways in which respondents (headteachers and teacher counsellors) viewed and experienced these roles. In addition, the study established whether there were any significant differences between the respondents' role perceptions in guiding and counselling pupils and the selected demographic variables of age, sex, marital status, academic qualification, teaching experience, experience in management, training in guidance and counselling, school category and geographical location of school. The study also established if there existed any significant differences between headteachers' perceptions of teacher counsellor's role and the teacher counsellors' perceptions of their role.

The study used a survey design with a multi-strategy research approach which provided both quantitative and qualitative data through questionnaires, interviews and observations. The data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The inferential statistics employed were t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), which were used to test the hypotheses of the study at significance level of 0.05. The interview data were analysed phenomenographically. Both the headteachers and the teacher counsellors had high levels of perception of their roles in the guidance and counselling of pupils (4.57 and 4.52 respectively out of a maximum of 5.0). The headteachers' level of perception of the teacher counsellors' role was 4.54. The results obtained after testing the hypotheses indicated that there were no significant differences between headteachers' role perceptions and the independent variables of age, gender, marital status, academic qualifications, training in guidance and counselling, administrative experience, teaching experience, school category and geographical location of school. There were also no significant differences between teacher counsellors' role perceptions and the independent variables of age, gender, marital status, academic qualifications, training in guidance and counselling, administrative experience, and school category. In addition, there was no significant difference between the headteachers perception of the teacher counsellors' role and the perception of the teacher counsellors about their role. There was however a significant difference realised between teacher counsellors' role perceptions and the geographical location of school. Over half of the teacher counsellors (55.6%) and the majority of the headteachers (71.4%) had not received any basic training in the guidance and counselling skills. Observations carried out revealed that 90.7% of schools had not time-tabled for guidance and counselling and was only done when need arose. The majority did not have guidance and counselling offices (93.3%), reference materials (79.0%) and training materials (76.5%). Counselling atmosphere in more than half (57.0%) of the counselling sessions was found to be either tense or suspicious. Phenomenographic analysis of data revealed that there were qualitative different ways in which the respondents viewed and experienced their roles in the guidance and counselling of pupils. The pupils who needed guidance and counselling in public schools had socio-cultural, socio-economic, and academic problems or needs. Drug abuse (socio-cultural) was ranked as the most serious with alcohol being most abused. Early pregnancies and marriages were the leading causes of girl school drop outs, while drug abuse and child labour were the leading causes of the boys drop outs.

The majority of the teacher counsellors (89.1%) and the headteachers (94.9%) missed out many functions despite having high role perceptions. Lack of support from the stakeholders; intensive poverty and widespread illiteracy; cultural/traditional practices; and negative media influence, were recorded as interfering with their role performance. Several suggestions to solve these

problems were offered. Although the respondents listed several indicators of poor role performance in the guidance and counselling of their pupils, the majority still perceived their role performances to be either good or fair.

The research findings have justified the need for change in the management of guidance and counselling and several recommendations have been put forward. Some suggestions for further research have also been included.