

Need and Extent of Religion as a Catalyst for Management of Guidance and Counseling to students in Kenyan Schools

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Abstract

This research project was a compilation of an evaluation of the role of religion as a catalyst to guidance and counseling in schools in Kenya. Identification of the problem experienced in most schools as a result of drug abuse, early pregnancies, early marriages, stealing, truancy, lying, cheating in examinations and gender based violence has been done. Research questions, objectives of the study and the hypotheses have been derived. The study contains a detailed background to the problem, significance, scope, methodology in addition to literature review. The literature based on the needs and tasks of human beings but with particular emphasis on adolescents have been reviewed. Issues on morals and their impact on individual life have been tackled. The role of parents and church in establishing basic moral foundation has been given attention. The study established that the school's major role is to foster the right atmosphere for the child's growth and development. Among the factors that foster instruction and by extension help to harmonize the material component of the school is, but not limited to religion, which plays a catalytic role.

Keywords: Education, moral, ethical and development needs, responsive services.

1. Introduction

All over the world, youth unrest is experienced both at home, in school, at place of work and on the streets. The youth exhibit general misconduct, violence, killings and just being against authority. This is all depicted in the electronic and print media. In Africa and Kenya in particular, the major youth problem is drop out from schools due to early pregnancies, drug and substance abuse.

In recent times, Kenya has experienced rising incidences of school strikes, rapes, destruction and burning of property. These ghastly incidences have been witnessed in various schools across the country in the last few decades. For most part of 2008 and through to 2014, schools and colleges went on the rampage to burn and destroy property. In all these incidences, drugs and substance abuse has been cited as major the cause. Students sneak out of school at odd times, have little concentration in school work and are generally unruly. School violence, strikes and burning of property has become so common that today one can predict when it is likely to occur.

In Kenya the most common student problem is dropping out of school due to pregnancies, drug abuse and general misconduct. Most students sneak out of school in search of entertainment, recreation and drugs. With this knowledge, there are several problems, challenges and changes that an individual encounters in the process of growing up and more so in high school stage. This calls for guidance and counseling programmes tailored in ways that can arrest such behavior which can result into inter-personal conflicts. Religion was found to be an essential ingredient that can supplement coping skills among the teachers and other care givers.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

After banning the use of corporal punishment in schools in the year 2001, the Ministry of Education directed all secondary schools to set up guidance and counseling departments to help curb indiscipline and instill personal growth. However, in spite of the implementation and institutionalization of guidance and counseling services in secondary schools, cases of unrest, stealing, truancy, lying, drug abuse, and cheating in examinations has not subsided but even taken more complex dimensions. This raises the question whether guidance and counseling is effective in managing discipline. This study, therefore, sought to assess the effectiveness of guidance and counseling programmes and the role of religion in the management of secondary schools in Kenya.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

This study investigated whether there is any guidance and counseling carried out in schools in order to help students understand themselves. In doing so, the study evaluated to what extent guidance and counseling is done and whether appropriate facilities and trained personnel are in

place. Specifically the role of the church as a catalyst for moral teaching and foundation of good behavior was investigated.

2. Literature Review

There is a great deal of writings on the subject of adolescents, their needs and challenges in growth. However, for the purposes of this study, a few books were reviewed, that lay emphasis on the adolescents needs. None has been found that tells to the extent to which religion contributes to guidance and counseling in secondary schools. Thoresen (1966), Lazarus (1971) and Wolpe (1969) define behavior as a function of interaction of heredity and environment. According to these behaviorists, a person's behavior either good or bad is learned through interactions with other people and the environment. Behavior thus can be modified by manipulating and creating learning conditions. Consequently counseling process becomes an arrangement of learning or re-learning experiences that help individuals change their behavior in order to solve problems and challenges that they face in life.

A number of writers have addressed the fundamental issue concerning human growth and development, even as it pertains to young people who are in the adolescent stage. Okwara(1997) and Mulusa (1988) agree that adolescents possess the same fundamental physical needs as do children and adults, and that their personality needs are of the same nature as those of other individuals. However, their strength and significance for their behavior may be different at this stage of development.

Castillio (2004) arrives at a more or less the same point concerning the adolescent needs, that they do have a series of development problems or tasks which they face in their transition from childhood to adulthood. The tasks are not entirely unique to the adolescent period, but they are the one upon which the adolescent must be helped to work through if he is expected to eventually achieve a responsible adult role. They include biological, cognitive and social developmental tasks. The adolescents are concerned and anxious regarding problems of courtship, sex marriage, religion, family relationships, school progress educational, vocational and personality developments.

Tara (2007) has also commented on adolescent and delinquency. He argues that the basic cause of delinquency is frustration due to conditions as poverty, low intelligence, conflict in family, humiliation, lack of success in schools, and inferiority feelings arising from real or imagined physical conditions. All these writers agree that an adolescent is an ambiguous state (neither a child nor an adult) and frequent finds themselves involved in emotional conflicts with parents, teachers and the community. Blair and Simpson (1996) agree that schools could do a lot in alleviating these seemingly overwhelming problems.

Several other writers have supported the idea that strong and positive moral foundation is prerequisite to social adjustment. They agree that morals deal with the question of what is right and good and what is wrong or evil in human conduct. Mbata (2006) argues that human conduct has two dimensions namely personal conduct which has to do specifically with the life of the individual and social conduct which is the conduct of the individual within the group or community.

For every individual, the establishment of good morals must begin at a very early age, which means parents have the first task of training that child in the ways they should go. Kisuka (1986) contends that training children in good morals is a biblical command to parents (Proverbs 12:12).

Many churches make vows during children baptism that they will care and nurture the children in the fear of God. According to Okullu (1986), many churches have failed in this noble task. In most case churches (Christians) start from the point of “thou shall be holy as I am holy”. They strive to recreate their own images in the children, which invariably result in killing the spirit of the child and bringing up a snob instead of a Christian.

Churches have a very big role in instilling good moral to children. Guidance and counseling and chaplaincy programmes in schools require careful and consistent development so as to respond to the unique needs of the students. The programmes should address the intellectual, emotional, social and psychological needs of students.

3. Summary of the Study

The task of this study was to investigate the need and extent of religion as a catalyst of guidance and counseling services to students in secondary schools in Kenya. Guidance and counseling in secondary schools was singled out because of the constant complaints among many Kenyan and the practical evidence that student are not behaving as expected. Some specific vices in which students are engaged in include rape, wanton destruction of school property, and disobedience to schools authority, pre marital sex and drug abuse. Such practices prompted the need to examine the extent to which religion is relevant in guidance and counseling and how it could keep curb the vices.

The study established that churches can model and teach basic morals in a dialogical manner. The youth normally analyze what adults do and copy. Establishment of basic morals to student was found to be prerequisite to social adjustment. Churches therefore can carry this role. The study revealed that if churches adopted appropriate guidance and counseling services to students in schools anti social incidence can be avoided. Students have needs and tasks that must be negotiated successfully.

Churches and parents have the role of establishing basic morals that can be picked up by children. Consequently further study needs to be focused on the need and role of religion in guidance and counseling to students. The family, schools and church can work co-operatively to control undesirable behavior among students. Since chaplaincy is an indicator of religious instruction, its role in facilitating guidance and counseling should be a further area of study.

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