

**IMPLICATIONS OF LEVELS OF PROFESSIONAL TRAINING IN
COUNSELING OF THE TEACHER COUNSELOR ON THE
PROMOTION OF HEARING IMPAIRED PUPILS' DEVELOPMENT
IN SELECTED COUNTIES IN KENYA**

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Abstract

An effective guidance and counseling programme is determined by, among other factors, the level of professional training in counseling of the teacher counselor. Proper training will enable the teacher counselor to address issues that affect hearing-impaired pupils at home, school, and later in life thus enabling them to enjoy life like the hearing people. This study explored the implications of levels of professional training in counseling of the teacher counselor on the promotion of hearing impaired pupils' development in primary schools in the counties of Nakuru, Nairobi, Kiambu, and Machakos. These counties have nine primary schools with a population of 776 hearing impaired pupils, 90 teachers and 9 head teachers of the schools. The study was a descriptive survey that adopted an *ex-post facto* research design. Purposive sampling, proportionate stratified sampling and simple random sampling techniques were used to select the participants who comprised 152 pupils in class six to eight, 12 teacher counselors and four head teachers. Data collection instruments were questionnaires and interviews. A pilot study preceded the main study to ascertain the reliability of the questionnaire items. Descriptive statistics and chi-square test were used to analyze the data using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The study established that some teacher counselors did not have any training related to counseling, mode of training was either as part of teacher training programme, seminar/workshops or inservice training. Not all teachers covered sufficient guidance and counseling courses. However, most teachers had training in Special Needs Education. There was a significant relationship between teacher training and hearing-impaired

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pupils' development. The study recommended that stakeholders and policy makers in education ensure adequate training of teacher counselors to enable them deal effectively with critical issues that affect learners with hearing impairment.

Key terms: Implications, Teacher Counselor Training, Hearing Impaired Pupils

Introduction

Guidance and counseling programmes in educational systems play a very significant role in an individual's life. Availability of formal school guidance and counseling programmes for learners with disabilities will enable them to gain self-acceptance, enhance their self-esteem and appreciative abilities, and ultimately find joy in life (Wamocho, Karugu, & Nwoye 2008). The ministry of education MOEST (2009) recognized the need to provide guidance and counseling services to students in special institutions. Despite the commitment of MoE in ensuring that guidance and counseling is offered in all Kenyan schools, several studies have indicated challenges such as lack of training for teacher counselors, inadequate facilities and resources, heavy workload and lack of support by head teachers as factors that affect the effectiveness of guidance and counseling programmes (Auni, Ongunya, Sangok & Nabwire; MOEST, 2004; Ondima, Nyamwange & Nyakan, 2012; Owino & Odera, 2014). Kipnusu (2002) in a study on proposal for training secondary school guidance and counseling teachers in Uasin Gishu District argues that all people involved in guidance and counseling of pupils must receive necessary training to be able to do the job properly and more effectively. In addition, counseling requires more intensive training or else more harm than good will be done to pupils. This justified the aim of this study to examine the implications of levels of professional training in counseling of the teacher counselor on the promotion of hearing impaired pupils' development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher Counselor Training

Gibson and Mitchell (2008) state that special training provides the school counselor with special expertise as a counselor. It sets the counselor apart from other professionals in the school setting and establishes the unique qualifications needed to interact with or on behalf of students in meeting their routine development, adjustment, planning, and decision-making needs. UNESCO

(2001) concur that guidance and counseling teachers need to be equipped with professional skills required to design comprehensive guidance and counseling programmes, provide services and use evaluation procedures that create a positive future for the learners. Ching (2013) in a study done in Hongkong schools on the need for guidance and counseling training for teachers indicated that training was very necessary for a teacher counselor and should include knowledge and skills related to guidance and counseling and life skills. The ASCA (2003) recommends that professional school counselors should be educators certified with license with a minimum of Master's Degree in School Counseling making them uniquely qualified to address all students' academics, personal, social, and career needs by designing, implementing, evaluating and enhancing a comprehensive school-counseling programme that promotes students' growth. Mutie and Ndambuki (1999) suggest that it is important for the teacher counselor to acquire knowledge of theories of personality and psychotherapy and diagnostic and behavioral intervention techniques as well as dynamics of human behavior.

Concerning students with disabilities, Hall (2016) argues that counselor education programmes must recognize the importance of the school counselor in the lives of students with disabilities and adequate training should become a priority. Studer and Quigney (2005) in a study done in America recommended that the school counselors in special institutions should have training regarding special education issues and students with special needs. Reis and Colbert (2004) in another study done in America argue that without appropriate knowledge and understanding of the needs and characteristics of specific groups of students with disabilities, guidance counselors may not know how to contribute to their academic, career, personal and social development. Wamocho, Karugu and Nwoye (2008) in a study on development of a guidance programme for students with special educational needs in Kenya suggest that for effective counseling for persons with disabilities, the personnel needs to have the spirit of dedication and professional knowledge so as to be able to counsel persons with disabilities.

In Kenya, several efforts have been made towards the training of teachers on guidance and counseling. In 1976, a report by the National Committee on Educational Objectives and Policies recommended that teachers undergoing training take a compulsory course in guidance and counseling. This was later to be incorporated into the teacher training at both the college and

university levels. In 2001, the Kenyan government established the Kenya Education Staff Institute and one of its mandates was to offer short courses for teachers on guidance and counseling. At the same time, MOEST started a School-based Teacher development (SbTD) programme in guidance and counseling (MOEST, 2001). However, a report by Republic of Kenya (2003) observed that many teacher counselors in primary schools were still lacking in training and cited this as a constraint to proper implementation of FPE policy.

Despite the above efforts by the ministry of education, MOEST (2004) reported that there was inadequate training of guidance and counseling personnel in Kenya. A study done by Njoka (2007) on guidance and counseling in Kenyan primary schools also indicate that this programme lacked the professional touch because the so called trainers and overseers of the programme, the Area Education Officers (AEOs), and Teacher Advisory Center (TAC) tutors were not professionally trained in guidance and counseling. In addition, the study also showed that the majority of head teachers and teacher counselors had not received any training in guidance and counseling skills and that most of those who had been trained had just attended in-service courses or seminars, which lasted barely two weeks. Adoyo (2007) points out that teachers of the deaf are either holders of Diploma in Special Needs Education from Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE) or degree holders in Special Needs Education. In addition, there is another category of teachers who although trained in general education, have not received special education training and are “helping” in the institutions.

Statement of the Problem

The Ministry of Education recommended that specialized guidance and counseling programmes be established in all special schools in Kenya to cater for the varied needs of learners with special needs. The programme was meant to promote overall pupils’ development and success. This can be categorized as personal, social, educational, and career development. For this to be realized there was need for a well-coordinated and effectively implemented guidance and counseling programme. Despite the above efforts, studies on implementation of guidance and counseling programmes in Kenyan schools have indicated several challenges in provision of these services and specifically lack of training or poor training of teacher counselors. This has been observed as negatively affecting the nature of services provided by the teacher counselors

and overall development of the hearing-impaired pupils. This study therefore sought to find out the implications of levels of professional training in counseling of the teacher counselor on the promotion of hearing impaired pupils' development.

Objectives of the Study

- (i) To examine the teacher counselors' levels of professional training in counseling.
- (ii) To establish teacher counselors' training in special needs education.
- (iii) To establish the significance of teacher counselors' level of professional training in counseling and hearing impaired pupils' development.

METHODOLOGY

This study was a descriptive survey that adopted an *ex- post facto* research design. The target population for this study was the hearing-impaired pupils in primary schools for the hearing impaired in the counties of Nakuru, Nairobi, Kiambu, and Machakos with a total population of 776 pupils. Pupils in class six to eight who comprised 243 of the total number were selected for the study thus constituting the accessible population. In addition four teacher counselors, 86 teachers, and nine head teachers of the schools participated in the study.

Purposive sampling, proportionate stratified sampling, and simple random sampling were used to select the participants who included 152 pupils, 12 teacher counselors and four head teachers of the schools under study. Three instruments were used to obtain data from the respondents; the data collection tools included pupils' questionnaire (Appendix A), Teacher counselors' questionnaire (Appendix B), and head teachers' interview guide (Appendix C). The researcher also used the assistance of class teachers who had the knowledge of Kenyan Sign Language to assist the pupils in interpreting the questionnaire items where necessary. A pilot study preceded the main study to ascertain the reliability of the questionnaire items. Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha method was used to measure the internal consistency of items. The results yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.77, 0.70, and 0.71 for the pupils' questionnaire, teacher counselors' questionnaire and head teachers' questionnaire respectively.

Data Analysis Procedures

Frequencies and percentages were used to describe the quantitative data. Chi-square test was used to show the existence or none existence of relationships between the independent and dependent variables. Content analysis was used to analyze data from the open-ended questionnaire items. Qualitative data generated after the analysis of information obtained was used to describe the various aspects of the study and drawing conclusions and recommendations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study were organized and presented based on study objectives.

Teacher Counselor Professional Training on Counseling

In order to assess the professional qualifications of the teacher counselors. The teacher counselors were asked to indicate if they had received any form of training related to counseling. The findings are presented in Figure 2.



Figure 1: Teacher Counselors who had Received Training in Counseling

As shown in Figure 2, 75% of teacher counselors indicated they had received some form of training in counseling while 25% indicated they had not. These results reveal that not all teachers offering this vital service have some training in counseling. These findings agree with MOEST (2004) that there was inadequate training of guidance and counseling personnel in Kenya and that it was offered by people without counseling skills. In addition, Njoka (2007) observes that the majority of head teachers and teacher counselors had not received any training in guidance and counseling skills. In this study, the teacher counselors indicated that they had obtained their training from their own initiative for their personal development.

Teacher counselors' Mode of Training on Counseling

The teacher counselors were also asked to indicate the mode of training they had undergone for their training in counseling. The findings are presented in Figure 3.

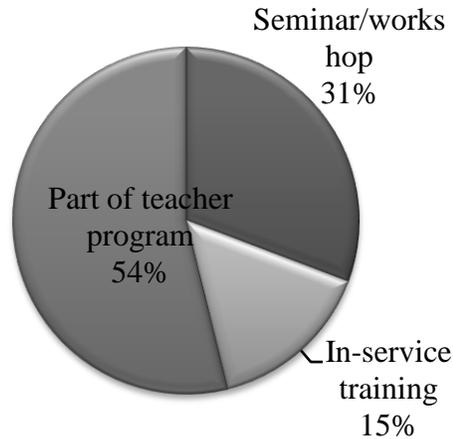


Figure 3: Teacher Counselors' Mode of Counseling Training.

Data presented in Figure 3 indicates that 54% of the respondents were trained in their counseling skills as part of the teacher education program compared to 31% who indicated they attended seminars/workshops and 15% who underwent in-service training for their counseling skills. These results show that although the teachers had some form of training in guidance and counseling, the mode of training was through either seminars or workshops or part of teacher training. These findings agree with Njoka (2007) observation that most of the teachers and head teachers who had been trained in guidance and counseling had just attended in-service courses or seminars, which lasted barely two weeks. This means that the training was short and might not have been adequate to give the teachers all the skills required for effective delivery of guidance and counseling services. These results concur with similar findings by Ondima et al. (2012) that teacher counselors themselves had indicated that they felt that the training they underwent did not adequately equip them with the necessary guidance and counseling skills.

Teacher Counselors' Level of Training on Counseling

The teacher counselors were also asked to indicate the level of training they had received for counseling skills. The findings are presented in Figure 4.

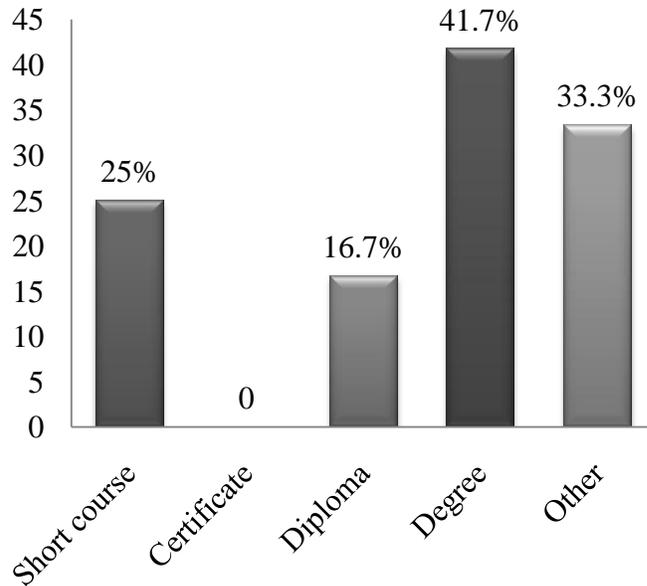


Figure 4: Teacher Counselors Level of Counseling Training.

Figure 4 indicates that 25% of teacher counselor respondents had taken short courses in counseling, compared to 16.7% who received their training as part of Diploma certificate in education. 41.7% had received their training as part of undergraduate Degree certificate in special education and 33.3% who had other levels of training such as higher Diploma in psychological counseling and Master's degree in counseling psychology. These results indicate that the level of training for the majority of the teacher counselors was highest at degree level in special education as part of teacher training. These results imply that most of the teacher counselors had not specialized in counseling as a profession, which would enable them, offer the counseling services effectively.

These findings agree with findings by Njoka (2007) that lack of proper training for teacher counselors has been identified as a major challenge in the delivery of counseling services in Kenyan primary schools. Hall (2016) argues that counselor education programmes must recognize the importance of the school counselor in the lives of students with disabilities and adequate training should become a priority.

Courses Taken by Teacher Counselors

Teacher counselors who had training in counseling skills were asked to indicate the areas of training they had been trained in. The findings are presented in Figure 5.

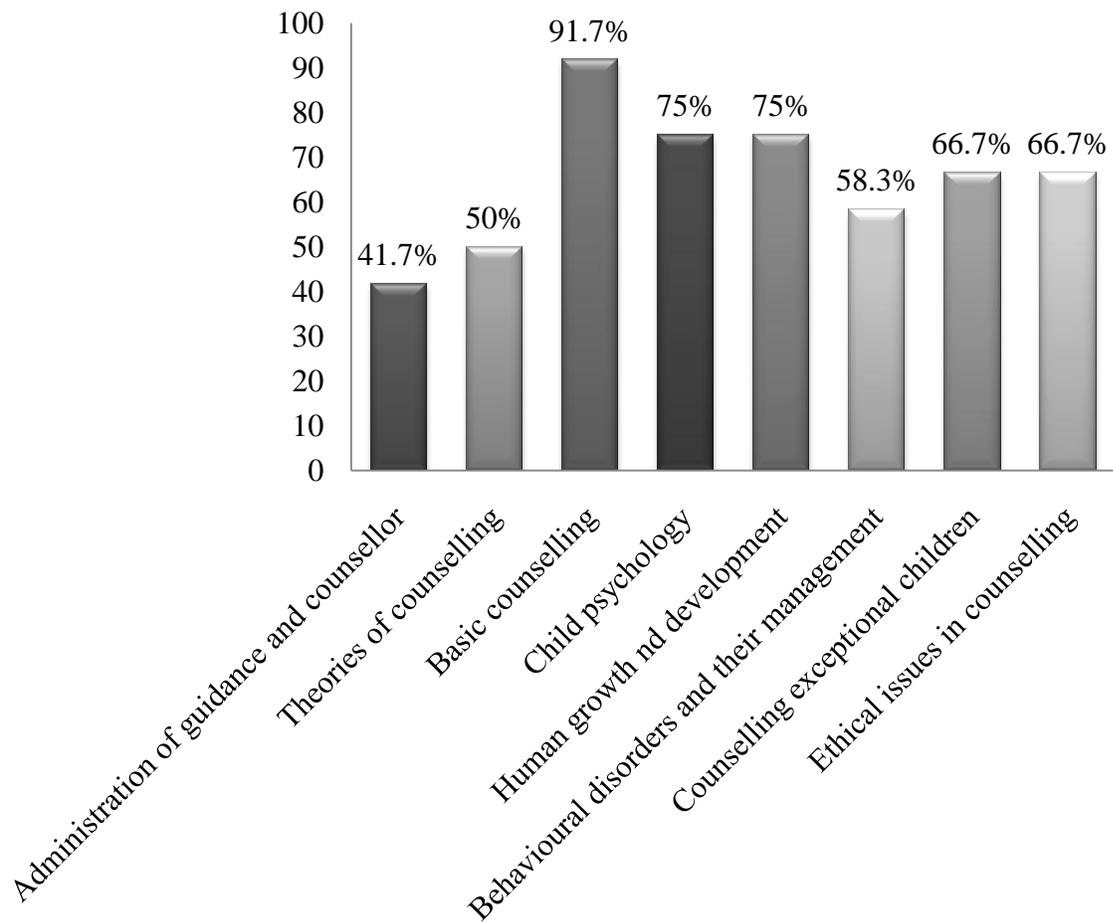


Figure 5: Teacher Counselors' Area of Counseling Training

Figure 5 indicates that 41.7% of the teacher counselors had been trained in administration of guidance and counseling while 50% were trained on theories of counseling. In addition, 91.7% of the teacher counselor respondents indicated they were trained on basic counseling skills compared to 75% who had been trained in child psychology and 75% who were trained on human growth and development. It was also observed that respondents trained in behavioral disorders and their management accounted for 58.3% compared to 66.7% who had been trained in counseling exceptional children and 66.7% who were trained in ethical issues in counseling. These results indicate that not all the teacher counselors covered sufficient guidance and counseling courses that would enable them to effectively offer their services in guidance and counseling. The highest percentage of the teacher counselors had been trained on basic counseling skills. These findings agree with Ngumi (2003) observation that even the trained

teacher counselors do not cover sufficient courses in guidance and counseling to enable them effectively render the guidance and counseling services.

Teacher Counselors' Self-Reported Level of Counseling Skills

Teacher counselors were asked to indicate how they rated their skills of counseling in terms of performance. The findings are presented in Figure 6.



Figure 6: Teacher Counselors Self-Reported Skills Competency

Figure 6 indicates that 75% of the respondents indicated that they felt they were adequately skilled in counseling skills while 17% indicated they lacked professional skills and 8% felt they were very skilled. These results indicate that most of the teacher counselors felt that they had appropriate skills in guidance and counseling. However, although some teachers were offering guidance and counseling to the pupils, they felt that they lacked professional skills. These results agree with a report by Republic of Kenya (2001) that many teacher counselors in primary schools were still lacking in training and cited this as a constraint to proper implementation of FPE policy. Kipnusu (2002) insists that all people involved in guidance and counseling of pupils must receive necessary training to be able to do the job properly and more effectively. Lack of proper training could cause more harm to the pupils, due to malpractice.

Teacher Counselor Training on Special Education

Since this research was on hearing impaired pupils, it is imperative that the teacher counselors have training on special needs education so that they can be able to handle this category of

pupils. The teacher counselors were therefore asked to indicate if they had received any form of training in special needs education in areas of deafness and deaf culture. The findings are presented in Figure 7.

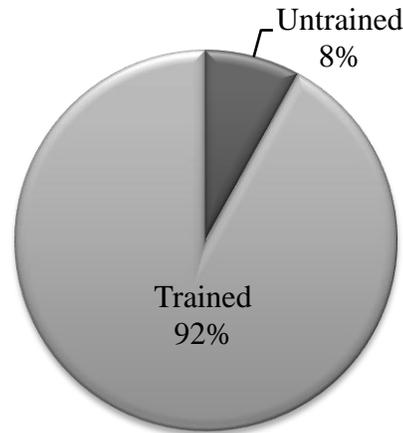


Figure 7. Teacher Counselors who had Received Training in Special Needs Education

Figure 7 indicates that 92% of teacher counselor respondents had received training in special needs education compared to 8% who had not. These findings imply that the majority of teacher counselors in schools for the hearing impaired have been trained on special needs education giving the teacher counselors the required knowledge on how to deal with issues affecting children with hearing impairment. These results also confirm the efforts that the ministry of education has put in place in building the capacity of SNE service providers through teacher training teacher in servicing and research (MOEST, 2009). Hall(2016) in a study done in America concur that counselor education programmes must recognize the importance of the school counselor in the lives of students with disabilities and adequate training in the area of special needs education should become a priority. Similarly, Onu (2008) agrees that the teacher counselor dealing with students with hearing impairment should be thoroughly armed with information about the disability of the child as well as the available services, so that he/she can advise wisely.

Teacher Counselors' Level of Special Educational Training

The teacher counselors were also asked to indicate the level of special needs educational training they had received. The findings are presented in Figure 8.

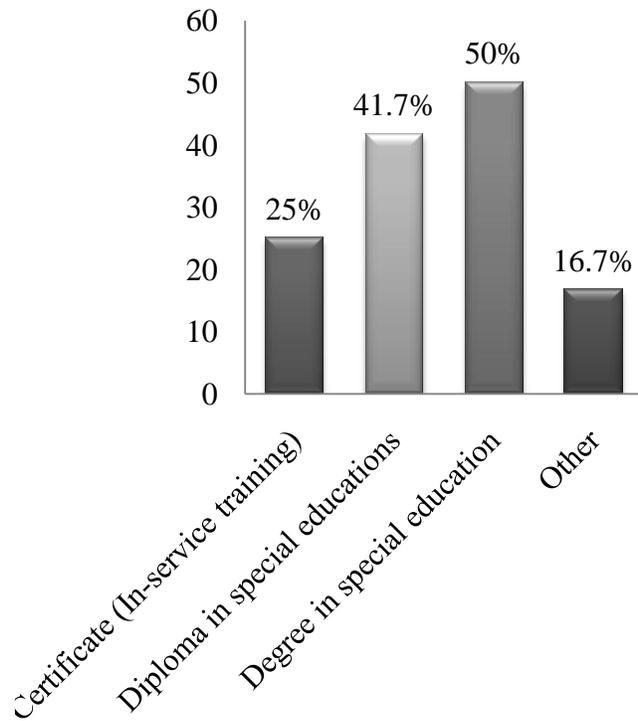


Figure 8. Teacher Counselors Level of Special Education Training.

According to Figure 8, teacher counselors who had certificate in special education accounted for 25% of the study sample, while 41.7% indicated they had diploma in special education. It was also observed that 50% of the teacher counselor respondents had degree level of training in special needs education compared to 16.7% who indicated they had other levels of training. These results indicate that all the teacher counselors had some training in special needs education with the highest percentage having a degree in special education and Diploma in special education. This is in line with Adoyo (2007) who points out that teachers of the deaf in Kenya are either holders of Diploma in Special Needs Education from Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE) or degree holders in Special Needs Education.

Teacher Counselor Self-Reported Level of Communication with the Deaf

Teacher counselors were asked to indicate how they communicated with their deaf clients and how they rated their communication skills. The findings are presented in Figure 9.

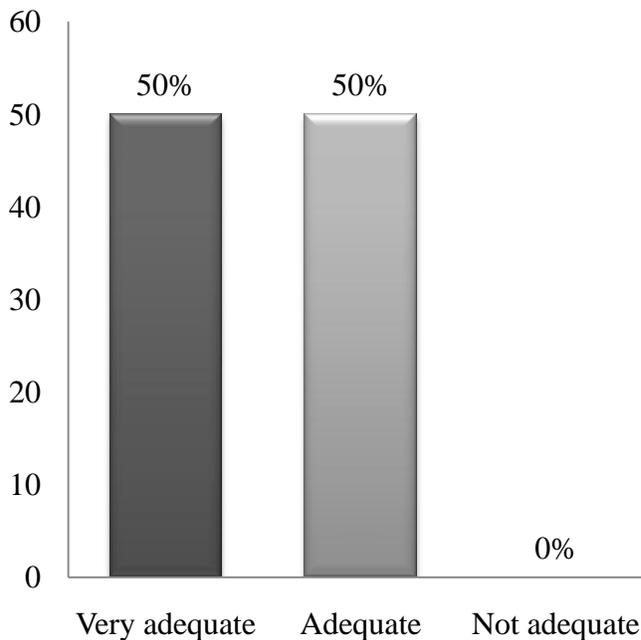


Figure 9: Teacher Counselors Self-Reported Skills on Communication Competency

As indicated in Figure 9, 50% of the respondents rated themselves very adequately competent with 50% indicating they felt they were adequate in communicating with the deaf. These results indicate that for effective delivery of services to the hearing-impaired learners, it is necessary for the teacher counselors to have good communication skills with the hearing impaired since the normal communication of the hearing population is a challenge for them. These findings are in agreement with Vygotsky (1962) who argues that children solve their practical tasks with the help of their speech, as well as with their eyes and hands. This unity of perception, speech and action, ultimately produces internalization of the visual fields. Hlatywayo and Muranda (2014) add that many researchers agree that learning for hearing impaired learners occurs primarily within social contexts and that some degree of learning occurs naturally for these students as a result of trying to connect and communicate with others. It is therefore imperative that all people dealing with children with hearing impairment be able to communicate with them in an effective way if these students are to be assisted in their overall development.

Significance of Teacher Counselors' Level of Professional Training in Counseling and Hearing Impaired Pupils' Development

This study also sought to establish whether level of professional training in counseling of the teacher counselors significantly influence the hearing-impaired pupils' development. The null hypothesis H_01 which stated that there is no statistically significant relationship between teacher counselor's level of professional training in counseling and promotion of hearing impaired pupils' development was tested. Development was defined as a composite variable derived from a contingency table of non-missing responses on 18 items measuring the three domains from the pupils' questionnaire. These were educational, personal/social and career development, which were operationalized as low, moderate and high. Level of training was defined as a composite variable derived from non-missing responses on five items from the teacher counselors' questionnaire. Chi-square test was applied to test the significance of the relationship between the domains of development and levels of teacher counselor training in counseling. Findings are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Chi-square Test Statistics for Relationship between Teacher Training Levels and Pupils' Development

	Educational Development	Personal/social Development	Career Development
Chi-Square(a)	56.697	49.197	6.329
Df	2	2	2
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.000	.042

a 0 cells (0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 50.7.

The chi-square results in Table 7, indicate that the p -value of the areas of pupils' development were as follows; educational development (.000), personal/social development (.000) and career development (.042). Since all the p values are less than 0.05, the study rejects the null hypothesis and accepts the alternative hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between the levels of professional training in counseling of the personnel involved in offering guidance and counseling services and promotion of hearing impaired pupils' development. It was concluded that the level of training in counseling of the teacher counselor played a significant role in promotion of hearing impaired pupils' development.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- (i) Concerning the levels of professional training of the teacher counselors in counseling, it was established that the majority of teacher counselors had some form of training in guidance and counseling. The mode of training was as part of the teacher education program, seminars/workshops, and in-service training. The level of counseling training was through short courses in counseling, Diploma in education and Degree certificate in special education. Some of the core courses that the teacher counselors had undertaken include; administration of guidance, theories of counseling, basic counseling skills, child psychology human growth and development, behavioral disorders and their management, counseling exceptional children and ethical issues in counseling. The majority of the teacher counselors felt that they were adequately skilled in counseling skills though others felt they did not have any professional skills.
- (ii) To establish teacher counselors' training in special needs education. It was established that all the teacher counselors had some training in special needs as follows, 25% certificate in special needs education 41.7% indicated they had diploma in special education, 50% had degree level of training in special needs education and 16.7% had other levels of training. All the teacher counselors indicated that they were competent in communicating with the deaf. 50% of the respondents rated themselves very adequately competent with 50% indicating they felt they were adequate.
- (iii) It was also established that teacher counselors' level of professional training in counseling significantly influences the hearing-impaired pupils' development.

Recommendations

- (i) There should be a deliberate effort by the stakeholders in education sector to train more teacher counselors to address the critical needs that hearing impaired children have.
- (ii) Head teachers should plan adequate facilitation for the teacher counselors both adequate facilitation for the teacher counselors both adequate facilitation for the teacher counselors in training and practice for overall pupil development.
- (iii) Head teachers should ensure that only adequately trained teachers are appointed as teacher counselors for effective delivery of counseling services.

Further Research

- (i) Empowering teachers dealing with children with hearing impairment
- (ii) Determining teacher counselors' adequacy of training in counseling

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