

# Incorporating Comprehensive Counselling and Guidance Models into School Curricula in Sub-Saharan Africa

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**Abstract** There is an increasing body of evidence demonstrating the psychological and social challenges that afflict school-age children in sub-Saharan Africa. In spite of widespread calls to provide counselling and guidance services in schools, efforts at expanding these services remain fragmented and under-resourced. Grounded in both empirical and theoretical literature, this article calls for integration of counselling and guidance through a whole-school approach. Utilizing critical aspects of child and adolescent developmental theory, we summarize the current state of counselling and guidance in the region, evaluate attempts at integration, and propose adoption of a comprehensive guidance and counselling model into school curricula.

**Keywords** Comprehensive guidance and counselling programs · Learner-centred education · Teacher training · Trauma-informed practice · Whole-school approach

## Introduction

Guidance and counselling services in schools - consisting of professional support for students in educational, vocational and personal/social domains - have long been recognized as effective means for improving student functioning and long-term outcomes in a variety of areas (Gysbers and Henderson 2012). Comprehensive school counselling programs, however, have traditionally been limited to developed nations due to limitations in educational resources in developing

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countries (Goodrich et al. 2014). In a presentation to the 4th International Conference on Education in Nairobi, Kenya, Kiweewa (2015) outlined the historical paths of nations in sub-Saharan Africa in attempting to establish counselling and guidance programs in schools throughout the subcontinent. Despite calls to action and policies declaring support for such programs, progress has been slow in most African nations due to broader economic, social, and practical challenges (Goodrich et al. 2014; Goss and Adebawale 2014; Kiweewa 2015). Scholars must be careful not to promote stereotypes by “treating the continent as if it were one place” (Goss and Adebawale 2014, p. 354); however, we believe that history has shown common experiences and challenges across many African nations attempting to improve school-based counselling and guidance services, and that highlighting these commonalities may set the tone for more context-specific studies and solutions moving forward (Alao 2004).

Successful counselling and guidance programs are frequently derived and adapted from frameworks from the United States or other non-African nations (e.g., ASCA 2012; Gysbers and Henderson 2012; Iowa Department of Education (IDE) 2011, 2015), which emphasize the value of advancing student competencies and providing emotionally-focused support (IDE 2011). Research in sub-Saharan Africa has found success with culturally-adapted versions of these comprehensive models (Goodrich et al. 2014; Guth and Asner-Self 2017; Luke et al. 2016) and expanded the concept that counselling and guidance programs should not be isolated to a single office, but should become fully integrated into the school’s operations (Aluede and Egbochuku 2009). This may include class-based interventions, direct services to students and families (i.e., counselling), support for special needs, crisis intervention, support in student transitions, and community outreach (ASCA 2012).

Kiweewa and Luke (2011) effectively argued that in order for educators to enable children’s optimal development and to facilitate their learning, pedagogical processes must also be informed by foundational knowledge about human development. Within this ecological framework, the developing child is viewed as part of a complex system that influences and is influenced by physiological, psychological, and social processes (Kiweewa and Luke 2011; Lee 2010). To advance the wellbeing of a child, we must attend to each of these aspects of development. Educators, because of the trust afforded to them and their importance in the lives of children, are uniquely positioned to provide counselling and guidance interventions. Building on these and other observations, this manuscript (1) reviews past efforts to advance counselling and guidance services in sub-Saharan Africa, (2) calls for integration of counselling and guidance into teacher training curricula in sub-Saharan Africa, and (3) introduces effective frameworks for scaling up such services, with a specific emphasis on resource-poor settings in this region.

## Historical Background of Counselling and Guidance in Sub-Saharan Africa

Historically, many African governments have acknowledged the need for education systems to integrate counselling and guidance services into teacher training curricula (UNESCO 2002; UNESCO 2016). Such recognition was informed by international efforts to address shortcomings within existing national policies and practices that impinge on the overall development of sections of the population. For example, at the 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, the key message was “Education for All” by 2015, which led to increased awareness of regional disparities in school programs (UNESCO 2000). The resulting calls to action emphasized the need for policymakers to prioritize equal access to education and care within the larger context

of human development. A key area of consensus from international development priorities in the twenty-first century was that counselling and guidance ought to be integrated within all child education and, thus, in teacher training curricula (UNESCO 2002).

In response to policy pressures, counselling and guidance to students has received increasing attention in many national education policies. Through its National Youth Policy, for instance, the Kenyan Ministry of Youth Affairs (2006) called for the prioritization of counselling and guidance in all school institutions. Similarly, the government of Uganda (2005), through its Government White Paper of 1992, endorsed an earlier Education Policy Review Commission to place two guidance counsellors in each school. The policy directive also required the education ministry to train teachers and peer educators in basic counselling skills to carry on the important role of guidance in the school system. A decade earlier, the Nigerian government pointed to the ubiquitous nature of personality maladjustment and ignorance about career prospects among many young people as key influences in their promotion of school counselling (Alao 2009). Similar sentiments were echoed in the establishment of counselling and guidance policies in Zimbabwe (Richards et al. 2012), Malawi (Maluwa-Banda 1998), and Zambia (Ministry of Education 2001).

A repeated theme across many countries, however, is the paucity of professionally trained personnel to carry out the role of counselling and guidance, even in countries where governments mandate their existence. Okocha and Alika (2012), for instance, estimated the student-to-counsellor ratio to be 1000:1 in many Nigerian secondary schools where professional counsellors existed at that time. The dearth or absence of professional counsellors in schools is a constant theme through many surveys and studies across Africa. Owino and Odera (2014), Songok et al. (2013), and Okech and Kimemia (2012) all lamented the scarcity of counselling services in Kenyan schools; while similar situations have been noted in Malawi (Maluwa-Banda 1998), Zimbabwe (Nkala 2014), Tanzania (Biswalo 1996), Botswana (Stockton et al. 2010), Nigeria (Nweze and Okolie 2014), and Namibia (Mushaandja et al. 2013).

In response to these myriad of challenges in the implementation of school counselling policy, UNESCO led the establishment of a Board of Governors in 1997 to create a more unified mission among African Ministers of Education (UNESCO 2016). The Board was tasked with advancing policies and procedures to guide the development of counselling and guidance programs in African schools. As a result, with help from several regional and international agencies, the Guidance, Counselling and Youth Development Centre for Africa (GCYDCA) was established in Lilongwe, Malawi in 1997. Since its founding, the Centre has made efforts to develop and disseminate a ten-module training manual for counselling and guidance, developed in collaboration with various regional governments (UNESCO 2016). The Centre also points to its partnership with the U.S.-based National Board of Certified Counselors International (NBCC-I) and their Mental Health Facilitator (MHF) program, a curriculum for training non-specialist providers developed in the U.S. and culturally adapted for use in other nations (Luke et al. 2016; Van Leeuwen et al. 2016). As of 2016, the MHF program had been implemented in 26 nations, offering training for an estimated 2750 people (NBCC-I 2017).

Although it has been over a decade since the founding of the GCYDCA—with the purpose of building capacity through training of individuals to address issues affecting children and youth in Africa—counselling and guidance efforts in the region remain largely fragmented (Kiweewa 2015). Many member states continue to struggle to develop their own national centres, while others are still working on integrating counselling and guidance policies within their existing education policies. This slow progress, however, must be viewed within the

larger context of well-documented challenges facing the development of professional counselling across the continent, including the lack of adequate training, poor oversight of school systems, and a lack of resources dedicated to education as whole (Okech and Kimemia 2012; Okocha and Alika 2012; Richards et al. 2012; Senyonyi et al. 2012). Throughout much of Africa, counselling services receive lukewarm financial and logistical support from governments (Okocha and Alika 2012; Senyonyi et al. 2012), as well as limited interest in regulating the provision of such services (Richards et al. 2012). Another critical challenge relates to a lack of legal or/and professional organizations to create uniform standards for training, professional development, supervision, credentialing of training programs, and licensure requirements for practice (Okech and Kimemia 2012; Okocha and Alika 2012).

## The Current Landscape of Counselling and Guidance in Sub-Saharan Africa

In spite of noted challenges, counselling and guidance is becoming part and parcel of many national education policies. While policy change alone is not sufficient, there is precedence that policy can be a precursor to positive change many years down the road. For example, the need for counselling and guidance services in schools was recognized in the 1970s in Kenya, but only recently have efforts been instituted to address the need (Okech and Kimemia 2012; Owino and Odera 2014). In the case of Uganda, the Ministry of Education and Sports updated its earlier 1968 counselling and guidance policy in 2004, and later established the department of counselling and guidance as an autonomous entity within the ministry in 2008 (Senyonyi et al. 2012). With this increased attention, non-governmental organizations, universities, and other stakeholders have begun to implement small programs to improve the counselling capacity of schools in these nations (Goodrich et al. 2014; Van Leeuwen et al. 2016). Similar efforts have also been noted in Botswana (Stockton et al. 2010), Nigeria (Okocha and Alika 2012), Zimbabwe (Richards et al. 2012), and Malawi (Maluwa-Banda 1998).

Recent efforts to scale up counselling and guidance services in African schools have benefited from a growing recognition of relationships between emotional wellbeing and academic and behavioral outcomes (Barry et al. 2013). Drawing on broad evidence from cross-cultural research, we can also point to effective teaching and counselling as key drivers to both maintaining and improving the emotional wellbeing of young people (Barry et al. 2013; Durlak et al. 2011). Indeed, developmental researchers have long posited a strong positive association between effective social-emotional competency, academic performance, and overall wellbeing. Difficulties in social-emotional wellbeing, on the other hand, have been linked with negative outcomes such as poor academic performance, behavioral problems, inattention, poor peer relationships, and poor overall adaptive skills (Dimmitt 2003; Mghweno et al. 2014). Others have highlighted some of the effects negative environmental conditions and social stressors may have on cognitive, behavioral, and emotional functioning. These include poor academic performance (Ager et al. 2011; Barry et al. 2013; Chireshe 2011), truancy, absenteeism, and inattention (Peled et al. 1995). The evidence, therefore, points to the need to build capacity to systemically and thoroughly address students' social and emotional needs.

On the basis of strong existing evidence, there have been increasing efforts to develop counselling and guidance programs in schools in African nations. Published reports of such programs, where they exist, show strong positive outcomes for student participants (Nabunya et al. 2015; Rivet-Duval et al. 2011; Smith et al. 2008). A review of the

HealthWise Program, a school-based substance use and sexual risk prevention program in Cape Town, South Africa, revealed a moderately positive effect on the substance use and reduction in risky behaviors of high school students (Smith et al. 2008). A similar initiative, the Resourceful Adolescent Program (RAP-A), for secondary school students in Mauritius yielded significant improvement in participants' depressive symptoms, sense of hopelessness, self-esteem, and coping skills (Rivet-Duval et al. 2011). In Uganda, school-based interventions in the SUUBI programme for AIDS-orphaned children have produced similar positive results across a variety of positive emotional and behavioral outcomes. The program is designed to implement career guidance and promote economic empowerment through brief counselling and mentorship meetings (Nabunya et al. 2015; Ssewamala et al. 2009). A systematic review of the program revealed increased self-esteem, improved academic performance, self-rated physical health, reduction in sexual risk-taking intentions, and decrease in depressive symptoms (Ssewamala et al. 2009).

It is noteworthy that all of the projects described above have been implemented by, or in collaboration with, teachers in sub-Saharan nations. While certainly not a comprehensive list of counselling and guidance applications across the subcontinent, these examples point to growing appreciation and utilization of locally supported, school-based intervention models in the region. Such programs are also increasingly receiving support from international funders, including the U.S. National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). This attention to sustainability may be a reaction to broader trends to integrate implementation of science frameworks within research (Bauer et al. 2015). In recent years, development programs across disciplines and international settings have been criticized for taking a transient, short-sighted approach to program development and implementation (Bauer et al. 2015; Dearing and Kee 2012) contributing to an estimated 17-year lag between the development of evidence-based interventions and their adoption into routine practice (Morris et al. 2011). In response to such critiques, the NIMH has taken a lead in bridging the gap between behavioral science and health outcomes in many African nations through research partnerships, capacity building efforts, and the establishment of a regional research centre tasked with scaling up mental health services for children and adolescents (NIH 2017).

## Re-Envisioning School Systems

Raising awareness of gaps in treatment and improving counselling and guidance service capacity are vital processes for addressing children's needs in sub-Saharan Africa. However, we believe that such efforts must also be informed by a cohesive and comprehensive theoretical framework that promotes supportive interpersonal relationships between students and educators. For example, in many low- and middle-income countries, and certainly in sub-Saharan Africa, teaching is often lecture-based and prioritizes the knowledge of content over the development of understanding and skills (Brown 2013; Serbessa 2006; Taylor 1995). In this context, the educator typically assumes a stern and authoritarian style that promotes discipline but prevents interpersonal connection between teachers and students (Harber 2012). Such trends tend to be driven by high stakes standardized testing focused on specific, nationally-standardized content areas (Chakwera et al. 2004; Harber 2012; Howie 2012). We believe that this "knowledge focus" and authoritarian stance degrade the vision of school as a training ground for the child's intellectual *skills*, which can be applied to improve functioning across a variety of contexts (including health and wellbeing) in the years ahead.

In response to critiques of stern, knowledge-focused instruction, many developed countries have encouraged a paradigm shift toward cooperative and learner-centred models of education (Brown 2013; Henson 2003), and child-friendly education for all (UNICEF 2010). These models, notwithstanding some differences, envision school systems where each child's needs (physical, emotional, social, physiological, and cognitive) take centre stage. To realize these changes, buy-in must occur at the classroom, administrative, parent engagement, and policy levels. With the adoption of cooperative educational models, teachers continue to be masters of instructional content, while also adding aspects that encompass children's overall development (Baker 2006; Horowitz et al. 2007). A learner-centred model encompasses the manner in which teachers interact with children, how they design learning experiences, their sensitivity and responsiveness, the feedback they give to students, the level of parent involvement, and the overall culture of the classroom (Weimer 2013). Therefore, scholars and practitioners increasingly view the teacher-student relationship as a key variable in the context of a child's overall development (Baker 2006).

## The Role of Teachers in Counselling and Guidance

In the absence of trained professionals in counselling and guidance, and given the pervasive lack of follow-through on national policy requirements, teachers have become central to the provision of counselling and guidance services in their respective countries (Goodrich et al. 2014; Mushaandja et al. 2013; Nyamwaka et al. 2013). In many countries, teachers are called upon to act as counsellors for their students, along with their teaching role, although there is limited guidance in policy documents about how to action these roles in tandem. This is the case in Zimbabwe where, as Nkala (2014) noted, teachers are assigned counselling and guidance roles, in spite of minimal training in the provision of such services. Goodrich et al. (2014) and Kamau et al. (2014) separately reported that in Kenya, the responsibility of appointing teacher-counsellors is left to school principals who rely on their own discretion in making such appointments. Once appointed, they are responsible for teaching, counselling and guidance, and student discipline, which leads to frequent role conflict that hinders effectiveness (Goodrich et al. 2014). A similar practice exists in both Tanzania and Uganda, where head teachers in primary and secondary schools appoint senior staff to the roles of counsellor and guidance teachers, in addition to their usual teaching responsibilities, often without any additional compensation (Biswalo 1996; Senyonyi et al. 2012).

Several surveys from various countries have reported major challenges that teachers face as counselling and guidance providers, including limited or no training in the requisite skills and the lack of materials or resources to support their services (Goodrich et al. 2014). For instance, the majority of teacher participants in Nyamwaka et al. (2013) study reported receiving either inadequate training or no training at all to implement the counselling and guidance program as required by the government. In their study evaluating challenges counselling and guidance services faced in Namibian schools, Mushaandja et al. (2013) found lack of suitable space, time, and acknowledgement of the teacher-counsellor role as some of the major challenges of teacher-counsellors in the country. Other notable challenges identified in the study included a lack of understanding of scope of practice and ethical issues related to their dual roles. Nkala (2014) reported a lack of both qualified teachers and material resources as key challenges in some secondary schools in Zimbabwe. Of the 30 teachers who participated in the study, 67% reported no training in counselling and guidance. Similar training and resource constraints

have been reported in Uganda (Uganda Ministry of Education 2005), Botswana (Stockton et al. 2010), Kenya (Goodrich et al. 2014), and Malawi (Maluwa-Banda 1998).

## Towards a ‘Whole-School’ Approach to Counselling and Guidance

Because of the many challenges that plague current efforts to provide counselling and guidance in schools, several scholars have questioned the efficacy of prevailing approaches and practices, and consequently called for reorientation of such efforts (Kamau et al. 2014; Nyamwaka et al. 2013; Mushaandja et al. 2013). Some have suggested improved clarification (and appreciation) of teacher-counsellor’s roles and responsibilities; appointment of full-time counsellors; integrating counselling and guidance into the larger mission of each school system; and providing mandatory pre-service and in-service teacher training in counselling and guidance (Nyamwaka et al. 2013; Songok et al. 2013).

One model that may achieve several or all of these desired aims has been termed the ‘whole-school approach’ to counselling and guidance (Aluede et al. 2007; Hui 2002; McGuinness 1989; Watkins 1994). Aluede et al. (2007) described the approach as a systems oriented, collaborative endeavor among guidance counsellors, teachers, school management, and other members of the community, with identified counsellors overseeing the planning and delivery of services in multiple formats. More importantly, the model has found support within contemporary developmental and ecological frameworks emphasizing the importance of cultural and environmental influences on the resilience, health, growth, and well-being of children from birth through adolescence (Bronfenbrenner 2005).

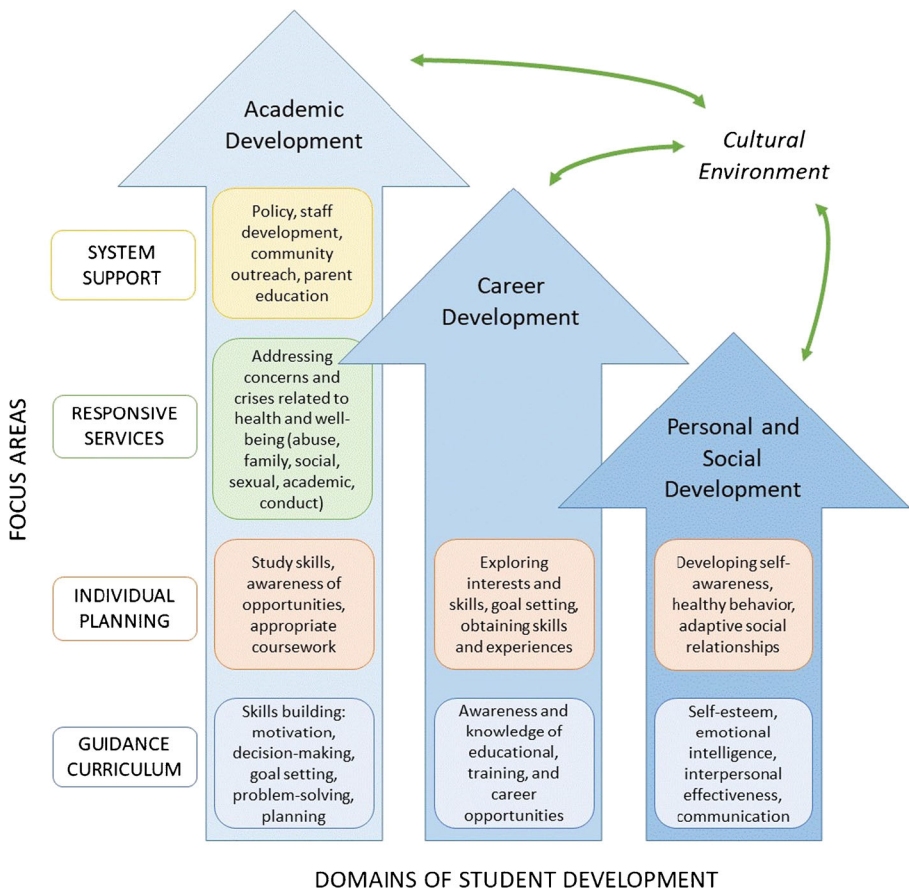
Underling the comprehensive counselling and guidance approach is a set of philosophical assumptions, best articulated by Green and Keys (2001), that include: (a) developmental counselling must be suffused through the entire educational process and aligned with a school’s mission and philosophy; (b) all students are in need of developmental counselling and guidance; (c) teachers are vital contributors to the program delivery system; (d) program success requires effective integration of and focus on student cognitive and affective development; (e) programs should include both individual and group counselling, program evaluation, and ongoing consultation; and (f) there should be a distinct, system wide focus on student assets. Watkins (1994) opined that such an approach encompasses the process *and* content of teaching, addressing the inherent interface between counselling and other aspects of education, as well as the relationships between teachers and students. Within this model, teaching must include “a planned and systematic progression of learner-centred experiences to enable learners to acquire knowledge, skills, and competencies related to making personal, educational, and career decisions and transitions” (Watkins 1994, p. 144).

On the basis of “whole-school” principles, Gysbers and Henderson (2012) proposed a Comprehensive Guidance and Counselling Program (CGCP), also referred to as the Missouri Model, which consists of four focus areas and three domains of student development (see Table 1). The focus areas are (1) delivering a *guidance curriculum*, (2) assisting students with *individual planning*, (3) *responsive services* in times of challenge or crisis, and (4) *system support* for teachers, community members, and school staff. While emphasizing that a CGCP must be responsive to *local contexts*, recognizing that counselling frameworks both impact and are impacted by the cultural environment, Gysbers and Henderson (2012) identified three domains of student development: academic, career, and personal/social (see Fig. 1).

**Table 1** Focus areas of the counselling and guidance model (Gysbers and Henderson 2012)

	School guidance curriculum	Individual planning	Responsive services	System support
Definition	Provides guidance content in a systematic way to all students.	Assists students in planning, monitoring, and managing their personal and career planning.	Addresses the immediate concerns of students.	Includes program, staff, and school support activities and services.
Purpose	Student awareness, skill development, and application of skills needed in everyday life.	Student educational and occupational planning, decision making, and goal setting.	Prevention and intervention.	Program delivery and support.

In the United States, the CGCP approach synthesizes the developmental model of school counselling endorsed by Myrick (1997) and the comprehensive framework put forth by Gysbers and Henderson (2012). The CGCP approach has received widespread acceptance, and variations of the model have been adopted in various forms to direct educational policy in



**Fig. 1** Developmental domains and skills emphasized within the CGCP framework



the U.S. (ASCA 2012; IDE 2015; Sink and MacDonald 1998). The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) endorsed the approach, most notably through the ASCA National Model (ASCA 2012), which has been further embraced through state-level adaptation. Although implemented with wide variation (Gysbers et al. 1999; MacDonald and Sink 1999), research has supported the CGCP approach as the most widely utilized framework within school counselling (Green and Keys 2001; Gysbers and Henderson 2001; Wilkerson et al. 2013). Although CGCPs have been shown to benefit all students, research has noted particular academic benefits for elementary and primary school students (Sink and Stroh 2003; Ward 2009). Further, CGCPs are purported to provide a particular advantage in addressing educational inequalities by addressing the needs of marginalized or struggling students (Sink and Yillik-Downer 2001), many of whom have not been adequately served through traditional school counselling approaches (Griffin and Steen 2011).

With demonstrated success in high-income western nations, the CGCP whole-school model of counselling and guidance is increasingly receiving global attention (Aluede et al. 2007; Gysbers and Henderson 2012; Hui 2002). Within Africa, this approach influenced the development of a training package for personnel at the GCYDCA in Malawi (UNESCO 2016). Notwithstanding the reported benefits, some have raised challenges related to the priorities and comprehensiveness of the CGCP model, noting that it may distract from academic content (including content covered in standardized tests) and needs to be redefined to incorporate more programs that address impediments to learning (Adelman and Taylor 2001; Burkard et al. 2012). While acknowledging that the implementation of a comprehensive program requires considerable effort and resources, corresponding studies have shown that increasing attention to other aspects of wellbeing actually improves academic performance and test performance (Carey and Harrington 2010; Lapan et al. 2001; Sink and Stroh 2003), a demonstration that attention to the whole child is not a zero-sum game.

Despite its benefits, it is important to caution against wholesale adoption of the CGCP model without careful analysis of its cultural adaptability to existing realities within targeted countries or communities. Such caution acknowledges challenges of adopting models in cultural settings or contexts other than those initially intended (Bernes et al. 2007; Resnicow et al. 2000). As Bernes et al. (2007) cogently argued, an essential measure of the utility of any counselling and guidance model is how meaningfully it relates to the culture in which it is delivered. Similarly, Resnicow and colleagues (2000) observed that appropriate cultural adaptations must pay attention not only to superficial, ‘surface structure’ elements, but also to ‘deep structures’ (i.e., cultural, social, historical, geographical, psychological, and other forces) that shape the dominant perceptions and beliefs of a given cultural group.

## **Incorporating Counselling and Guidance into School Curricula**

A key feature of the CGCP approach is that it requires the collaboration and participation of an entire school community and is implemented throughout the school curriculum (Aluede et al. 2007; Hui 2002). It calls for proactive, preventive, and developmental strategies as opposed to the remedial and reactive attitudes that characterize traditional approaches (Hui 2002). Within the CGCP, teachers are viewed as integral in that their perceptions of guidance and their role in it may have significant implications for access, implementation, and success (Hui 2002). Thus, the emphasis on a guidance curriculum within the CGCP model suggests that teachers need to be familiar with any proposed curriculum materials that they will be called upon to implement. Such

familiarity should begin during pre-service teacher training and continue throughout a teacher's tenure in the form of in-service training workshops. The proposed CGCP model does not aim to supplant, but rather to supplement, current teacher training curricula practices, as well as teacher roles and functions. As Aluede et al. (2007) noted, because of their daily interactions with students, teachers are well-placed to identify students in need of counselling and guidance services and to offer appropriate interventions and/or referrals. The Uganda Ministry of Education (2005) noted in its 'Tutors Guide for Counselling and Guidance for Primary Teacher Colleges',

When every teacher has been updated with knowledge, skills and positive attitudes towards counselling and guidance, every child will have chance to be listened to and given the most appropriate help necessary for self-development through enhancement of academic, social, and mental development and discipline. (p. i)

Within a comprehensive framework, particularly in low-resource settings, the teacher takes on multiple roles in supporting the wellbeing of the child.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

It has been noted that many students, regardless of academic ability, may encounter some emotional, behavioral, and developmental challenges from time to time (UNESCO 2000). In many schools in sub-Saharan Africa, these normal challenges are exacerbated by broader health, development, and social challenges. Ideally, students would be supported through these challenges by specialists with the requisite professional training and skills. However, given the well-documented challenges facing the development of professional counselling throughout much of Africa, teachers are often at the frontline of identifying and supporting at-risk students. In other words, teachers are essential to identifying "critical incidents" to students' personal, social, career, and academic experiences (Goodrich et al. 2014).

If schools are to train students for life (UNESCO 2000), then counselling and guidance content and academic content must be viewed as two complementary components, which should be well supported in school policy and teacher training. Appropriate emphasis on student wellbeing may enable teacher trainees to link academic content with counselling and guidance standards. Blending counseling and guidance oriented lessons into academic content begins with improving school personnel's familiarity with national counselling and guidance policies. While the establishment of the GCYDCA and subsequent training package (UNESCO 2016) represent steps in the right direction, appropriate resources must be invested to effectively integrate counselling and guidance principles within teacher training and school curricula throughout the region.

It is also important to underscore the need for empirical research to identify the relevance of existing or proposed interventions and models to the local cultures. We are not aware of any outcome research on the effectiveness of the training curriculum at the GCYDCA or its applicability within the various member countries. Research agendas related to the MHF program in Africa are in the early stages (Luke et al. 2016; Van Leeuwen et al. 2016) and research on other interventions has focused on small-scale, formative studies to date (Goodrich et al. 2014; Kutcher et al. 2016). Strong frameworks exist for informing the development or adaptation of interventions cross-culturally. Western researchers should consider implementing guidelines put forth by Ægisdóttir et al. (2008) for methodological considerations, Goodrich and Luke (2017) and Guth and Asner-Self (2017) for intervention development, and Nilsen (2015) for implementation theory.

Finally, the resurgence of interest in trauma-informed interventions for children and youth (Arvindson et al. 2011; Layne et al. 2011; Murray et al. 2013), as well as numerous studies that point to the impact of traumatic experiences on child development (Felitti et al. 1998; Wessells 2016), suggest that models of counselling and guidance must be informed by trauma considerations (Miller and Rasmussen 2010). Across Africa, many children and youth are nested in contexts and social ecologies that present daily risks to their survival, let alone optimal functioning. As evidence from psychological and neurobiological research continues to show, exposure to trauma has a negative influence on a child's behaviors, cognitions, and affect, all of which impinge on a child's ability to learn (Arvindson et al. 2011). Therefore, attempts at the cultural adaptation of educational, vocational, and counselling models will not be complete without attending to these ecological contexts and the cultural complexities of nations in the region.

### Compliance with Ethical Standards

**Conflict of Interest** The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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