

Career Guidance. Reflections and Impact of the Guidance and Counselling for Post-Primary Institutions: Teacher's Resource Book in Uganda

*Doreen Barigye**

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This study examined Uganda's Guidance and Counselling Resource Book for post-primary institutions through document analysis and an open-ended questionnaire with 12 education professionals. The resource book covers comprehensive guidance themes, emphasising career counselling to facilitate school-to-work transition. It defines teachers' roles as counsellors and mentors, advocating for student-centred pedagogical strategies that integrate career information with psychosocial support, self-development, and decision-making capabilities. Although education professionals viewed the resource book as valuable, implementation was reported to be inconsistent due to distribution constraints, insufficient training, support, and time. Further findings revealed the current need to engage with the varied realities of today's learners, shaped by cultural factors, socioeconomic inequality, labour-market uncertainty, and diverse learner identities. It emphasises the shift from traditional career advice to comprehensive guidance models that recognise the varied cultural backgrounds, socioeconomic circumstances, and developmental needs of students. This research underscores the importance of contextually relevant guidance that respects local educational realities while preparing students for increasingly globalised employment landscapes. The study concludes that strengthening support systems and enhancing teacher capacity are essential to fully realise the potential of guidance and counselling programs. This study contributes to understanding how educational policies in multicultural contexts can better support students' transition from education to employment, offering insights applicable to similar developing educational systems globally.

Kulcsszavak: guidance and counselling, career guidance, school-to-work transitions, post-primary education, Uganda

Introduction

The implementation of Universal Primary Education (UPE) since 1997 and Universal Secondary Education (USE) since 2007 in Uganda led to a surge in enrolment at post-primary institutions (Byamugisha & Ogawa, 2010; Huylebroeck & Titeca, 2015). Post-primary institutions enrol these young adults, who will soon enter the job market. However, a study by Otwine, Matagi, Kiweewa, & Ainamaani (2022), targeting secondary school students, found that on joining higher education and employment, the transition from education cycle to employment has been rough. In addition to Uganda, a study in South Africa by Ochonogor & Seroto (2023) found that many young people complained about their inability to make appropriate career choices, even at the point of graduation, despite receiving career advice from schools and the government. A study in Uganda

* PhD student, Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences at Hiroshima University, Japan, doreenbarigye@gmail.com, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4289-3014>

by Barigye (2024), supported by Kabunga (2020) and Vitoratos (2025), also found that students are shocked by their changing roles after school. Moreover, this study linked students' lack of self-confidence for work to a lack of career information, counselling, and professional guidance. The same study stresses the need for an overhaul of career guidance services to help students not only provide accurate labour market information but also self-discovery within a dynamic and multicultural context. Therefore, concerted efforts to prepare students through career guidance are paramount, especially streamlining the current practices into a system that includes holistic, contextual, and authentic experiences (Jones & Kahn, 2017). This type of experience is characterised by combining the provision of career information, talent training, id and subject matching with psychosocial needs, self-development, growth, and decision-making abilities that are currently missing (Barigye, 2024; Watts, 2013). This approach is necessary because it extends beyond merely assisting students with their academic and professional paths to encompass support for their emotional, social, and psychological well-being, which is equally necessary in their future.

This pushes career guidance methods towards a more holistic guidance and counselling framework (Otwine et al., 2018). In line with this, the government designed the Guidance and Counselling for Post-primary Institutions; Teacher's Resource Book, to be referred to as 'the book' or 'resource book' hereafter, to be used by teachers in post-primary institutions. Post-primary institutions in Uganda refer to the transitional education subsector between the primary and tertiary subsectors, including secondary schools and Technical Vocational Education and Training institutions (Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Sports [MoESTS], Uganda 2015).

Recognising the importance of career guidance, education systems in different countries strive to provide comprehensive resources to support teachers in delivering it effectively (Parola et al., 2024). Similarly, with a growing emphasis on improving the quality of education in Uganda, the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) developed this resource book on guidance and counselling to stand as a notable endeavour to promote guidance and counselling in Uganda.

Introducing such a resource book involves presenting new ideas in practice (Peterson et al. 2018). Specifically, it introduced inclusive (cultural, emotional, social, and psychological) issues into a system that previously emphasised careers and vocations. Implementing ideas such as those stipulated in the book requires a systematic process to ensure consistency with existing practices and to match the life-long impact as the end goal. This study aims to examine how this is being done by examining the book's content, structure, teachers' roles, pedagogical approaches, implementation effectiveness, and relevance within the Ugandan education framework.

By employing a document analysis method and an open-ended questionnaire, this study evaluated the potential of the book to enhance the life-long impact of guidance and counselling on post-primary learners in Uganda. The research also analysed the book's content to ascertain its primary themes and topics, the roles and responsibilities of teachers in guidance and counselling, pedagogical approaches and strategies for effective guidance and counselling in schools, and implementation effectiveness. This was done to enable the assessment of the book's key features and potential benefits in approaching the challenges of real-world implementation of career guidance and counselling. Additionally, this is the first study to critically examine the suitability of the book's content to address the diverse academic, sociocultural, and emotional needs of post-primary school students in Uganda. This study contributes to the ongoing discourse on the lifelong impact of career guidance and counselling services in Uganda.

Background

The book was published primarily to be used alongside the National Curriculum Guide for post-primary institutions and to help teachers deliver guidance and counsel. Currently, there is increasing recognition of the critical role that comprehensive guidance and counselling play in shaping students' holistic development (Otwine, Oonyu, & Kiweewa, 2018). With the resource book, career guidance consisting of the provision of career information and activities regarding education and vocation/career is broadened to include personal, spiritual, sociocultural, and psychological guidance and counselling services, thus requiring a comprehensive approach to implementation. The book also includes other cross-cutting issues regarding gender, HIV/AIDS, and culture that affect post-primary learners' daily lives. The book's concept is positioned in the broader context of a paradigm shift in career guidance and social transformation in response to the above and other evolving needs of Ugandan post-primary students in the 21st century, including but not limited to the need to prepare learners wholesomely for future work poise, which is extremely timely and crucial for young adults.

Uganda has demonstrated a steadfast commitment to improving the quality of education at all levels. In so doing, the "quality foundations for learning", a major priority reform aimed at transforming Uganda's education system, has stimulated the revision and development of educational policies to align with national development goals, aiming to equip students with not only academic knowledge but also essential life skills (Ministry of Education and Sports [MoES], 2022). For instance, the implementation of the new lower secondary curriculum rolled out in 2020 encouraged the simultaneous implementation of career guidance to promote effective learning and the acquisition of all-round skills (Mubangizi, 2020). In addition, according to Mubangizi (2020), the implementation of career guidance in the curriculum helped reflect an awareness of the multifaceted challenges that Ugandan youth face, which include not only academic pressures but also socioeconomic disparities and personal identity development. Uganda, as a low-income country, faces enormous challenges in structuring and providing guidance services due to limited public funds, a restricted range of choices, and people being preoccupied with survival over development and growth (Watts and Sultana, 2004). Therefore, apart from the selected programs supported by the development partners, the country has curriculum development setbacks, including a lack of funds, which weakens the idea of creating solid frameworks for skills training (UNIDO, 2022). However, developed countries have moved past such challenges to perfect their models of career guidance delivery and extend their influence. For example, Canada has successfully exported *The Real Game*, a career development program involving pedagogical strategies of role-play and simulation, while the German and French models have extended their influence in Eastern Europe and Francophone countries, respectively, by adapting to local conditions (Watts & Sultana, 2004). These countries not only seek to expand access but also require the effectiveness and transformation of career guidance programs by clearly defining educators' roles, methods, and approaches that help individuals develop skills in managing their careers (Watts & Sultana, 2004).

Problem Statement

Delivering career guidance as a hybrid activity in parades, career talks, alumni motivation, peer interaction, key stakeholders from academia and the world of work, assemblies, orientations, seminars, and industrial training has been deemed to lack life-long impact (Barigye, 2024; Nsereko, 2012). The necessity to back up all the above avenues with a resource book that follows through topical areas methodically by skilled personnel is highly justified. This could present an opportunity to build what Barigye (2024) refers to as a functional career guidance sys-

tem. However, because the practice of career guidance and counselling is relatively new in Uganda (Nsereko 2012), the use of published materials could present implementation challenges (Head 2010). Although the resource book is timely and might provide detailed guidelines and best practices, it introduces a potential overhaul to the system, leaving the question of whether it will be smoothly translated into practice. The potential of such a publication to achieve the intended purpose has not yet been documented. This research will assess the book's content, the teacher's roles and responsibilities, pedagogical approaches, practical outcomes, and/or the effectiveness of its implementation. These are particularly important to ensure that government publications not only set ambitious goals but also achieve meaningful and practical improvements in line with the intended purpose of the holistic student development. The research questions (RQ) are as follows:

1. (RQ1) What are the primary topics and their characteristics in the resource book?
2. (RQ2) How are the roles and responsibilities of teachers in guidance and counselling articulated?
3. (RQ3) What pedagogical approaches and strategies are recommended in the book?
4. (RQ4) How effective is the implementation of guidance and counselling using the resource book?

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research approach, using both secondary and primary data. As Creswell & Poth (2018) note, "qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world," enabling the researcher to examine how the guidance resource book is used in real world school contexts and to interpret meaning within its cultural and institutional settings.

Secondary data: Document Analysis

Secondary data were obtained using a documentary analysis method to evaluate Uganda's *Guidance and Counselling for Post-Primary Institutions: Teacher's Resource Book*. This book was selected because of its centrality in guiding school-based guidance practices in Uganda. The documentary analysis method is suitable for analysing textual and digital data in both printed and electronic documents (Bowen, 2009; Morgan, 2022). Similar to other analytical methods used in qualitative research, documentary analysis stresses the examination and interpretation of data to create meaning, understanding, and knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Moreover, rather than conducting an in-depth analysis of the data extracts, documentary analysis was used to provide illustrative examples from the book to support the findings of this study (Morgan, 2022). This method enabled the researcher to extract codes relevant to the research questions through an interpretative lens (Bowen, 2009). The book was read iteratively (Crabtree & Miller, 1999; Lester, Cho, & Lochmiller, 2020), and its themes were coded and categorised based on how they corresponded to the research questions. The development of the codes was guided by an open coding process that started with identifying relevant ideas and keywords from the text that capture meaning according to the research questions (Naeem et al., 2023). In the first round of reading, keywords, topic headings, and sub-headings were extracted (see Figures 1, 2, and 3). In the second round, the emerging codes were grouped into macro-categories (see Figures 1, 2, and 3). The document's structure, headings and pedagogical instructions were treated as intentional design elements and coded accordingly. To avoid potential researcher bias, peer debriefing was conducted with a colleague experienced in qualitative coding to compare interpretations and ensure consistency (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017).

Primary data: Questionnaire

Twelve educational professionals responded to the open-ended questionnaire shared with respondents through purposive sampling. The respondents included head teachers, deputy head teachers, education officers, and teachers from different districts. The questionnaire consisted of seven open-ended questions arranged thematically around the implementation, impact, and challenges of the Resource Book in schools.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their experience, availability, and access to online tools. Although only 12 responses were received, data saturation was achieved through triangulation with the document analysis (Fusch, Fusch, & Ness, 2018), as common patterns and no new themes emerged (Wang & Cheng, 2020). Basic demographic information (50% males and females) was collected, including designation and years of experience (91.7% above five years). However, additional variables, such as school setting (urban/rural), should be explored in future studies for deeper insights.

Data Analysis

Numerous concepts were obtained from the Teacher’s Resource Book through an open coding process (examining data for relevant segments) and then placed into broader thematic groupings.

For research question 1(RQ.1), the book presents five primary topics (see Figure 1). These categories of Educational Guidance, Career/Vocational Guidance, Personal and Social Guidance, Spiritual Guidance and Counselling Services represent the core themes around which the resource book is organised. The Round 2 coding process for macro categories, related open codes obtained in Round 1, into overarching topics of curriculum integration, holistic development and the teacher’s role as a facilitator in all-round development (see Figure 1). For R.Q 2, a network of roles that teachers are expected to play in delivering guidance and counselling emerged through connecting data into meaningful patterns of texts in the book. The coding map shows the teachers’ multifaceted responsibilities (see figure 2) that emerged from the Round 1 and 2 open coding process. For R.Q. 3. Figure 3 summarises these pedagogical strategies, showing links between specific methods (codes from the text, such as “group discussion”, “role play”, “referral”, etc.) and broader strategic codes (with categories like interactive learning, integrated curriculum, and individual support). For RQ 4, primary data were used. A table was used to show how the questionnaire questions were answered, and then the responses were analysed in rounds 1 (micro categories) and 2 (macro categories) (see Table 1).

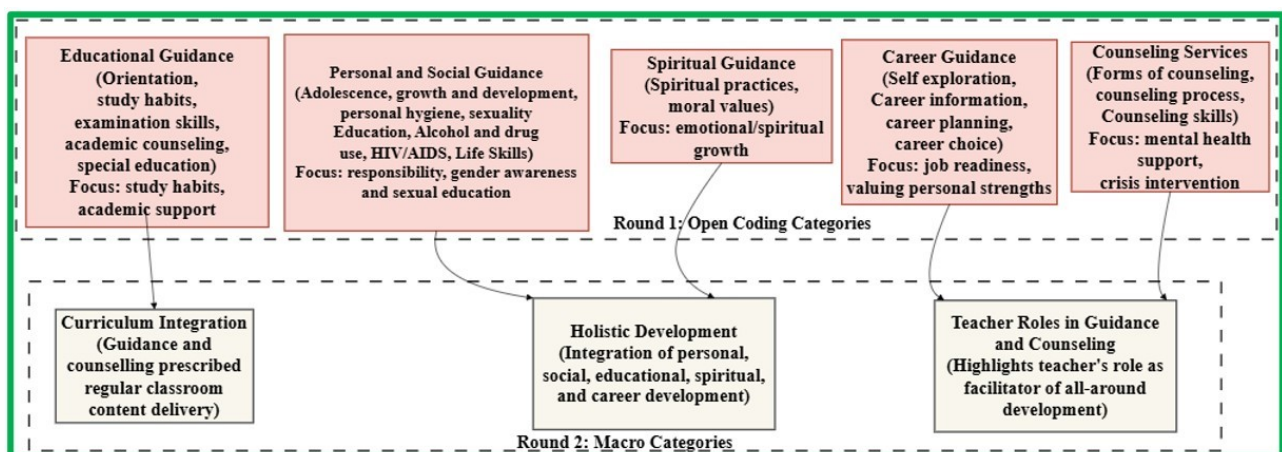


Figure 1: Primary topic in the teacher’s resource book. (generated using Draw.io)

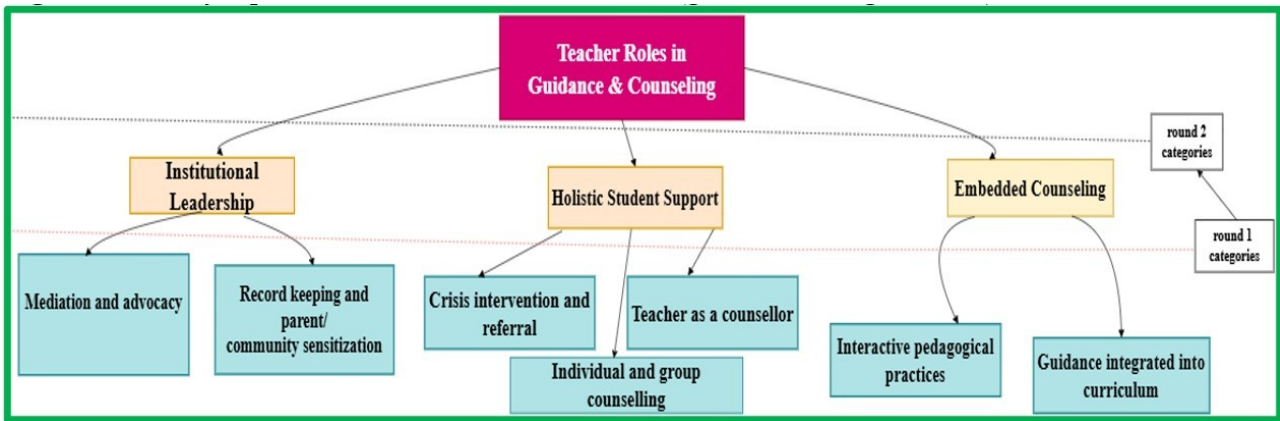


Figure 2: Coding map for teachers' roles in guidance and counselling. (generated using Draw.io)

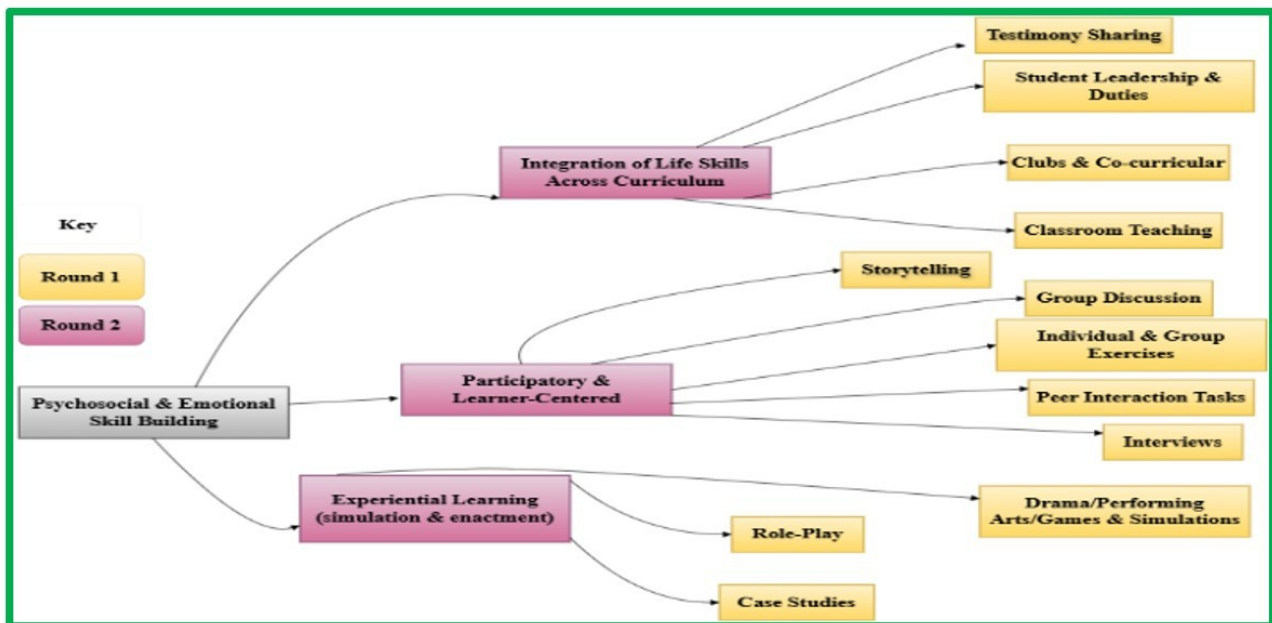


Figure 3: Coding map for pedagogical strategies and approaches. (generated using Draw.io)

Macro Categories (Round 2)	Micro Categories (Round 1)	Summary
<i>Awareness, distribution and training, implementation and use in schools, perceived effectiveness and impact</i>	No books, limited distribution, unequal access, book only used where discovered; lack of training, need refresher courses, absence of professional counsellors; inadequate budgets, tight timetables, weak administrative support, negative teacher attitudes; GC not timetabled, irregular sessions, need weekly structure; improved discipline, fewer strikes, reduced drug use, better focus, no change in non-using schools; student reluctance, low awareness, need sensitisation; lack of follow-up, weak reporting, no evaluation tools; no counselling office, lack of privacy, no functional GC department; limited ICT use, need digital support; limited parental involvement, weak partnerships, minimal peer support.	Implementation is limited mainly by poor distribution, low training, weak institutional support, and lack of regular timetabling. Where used, the Resource Book improves behaviour and learner focus. Strengthening awareness, monitoring, counselling spaces, ICT use, and stakeholder involvement would enhance effectiveness.

Table 1: Primary data

Results

Primary topics and their characteristics

Through qualitative coding, five primary topic domains emerged (see Figure 1), capturing the major content areas covered in the guidance and counselling resource.

Educational Guidance

The Education Guidance category contains content aimed at supporting students' academic development and study skills in dynamic and multicultural environments. The resource book emphasises that teachers are responsible for helping learners improve their studies by setting realistic academic goals, acquiring effective study habits and developing test-taking skills. There are statements in the book such as, "the responsibility of helping these learners to get on well with their studies is in your hands as..." In addition, there is a sub-topic that covers techniques for school orientation, effective study skills, examination strategies, and guiding learners to create personal timetables and manage time purposefully. The text also notes that many learners struggle due to a "lack of effective study skills and habits" and therefore urges the teachers/counsellors to introduce learners to study skills in order to achieve the ultimate goal of schooling. Such study techniques and areas of emphasis include note-taking and working with minority group children, especially those with special learning needs, and ensuring inclusive support within the regular classroom that hosts students of all walks of life, tribe, sex, or religion. These elements characterise the Educational Guidance topic as focused on academic adjustment and success skills for all in the resource book.

Career/Vocational Guidance

This topic involves preparing learners for the world of work and their future careers. The book defines career (vocational) guidance as "helping learners to relate what happens in the world of education to what happens in the world of work", enabling them to identify "who they are, what they are good at and how their identity relates to the world of work". The content helps students explore their interests, abilities, and values. It also provides information on different career options to guide students in making career choices, plans, and envisioning further education or training opportunities. This indicates a strong focus on structured career guidance programming, including providing up-to-date information about careers and helping students connect their education to future paths.

Personal and Social Guidance

This addresses learners' personal development, sociocultural skills, and psychosocial challenges during adolescence. The resource book devotes extensive content to everyday adolescent issues and life-skills training. For example, one comprehensive sub-heading covers topics about adolescence (growth and developmental changes), personal hygiene and adolescent sexuality. Likewise, critical social issues such as alcohol and drug use, HIV/AIDS, Gender sensitivities, and life skills for knowing and living with oneself and with others. The mentioned focus areas reflect an integrated approach to personal and social education. The book also discusses how adolescents face a variety of pressures and risk behaviours, such as experimentation, peer influence, and gender-based violence, and emphasises the need for guidance in coping with these challenges. For instance, teachers are provided information on the characteristics of adolescence that include "a period of

rapid physical, sexual, emotional and mental changes” and common risk behaviours (suicidal tendencies, early pregnancies, substance abuse, etc.) that young people may engage in. By highlighting these issues, the Personal and Social Guidance content equips teachers with knowledge and activities to help learners develop self-awareness, interpersonal skills, healthy habits, and resilience. The expected competency is that teachers will be able to understand the challenges faced by adolescents and effectively conduct personal and social guidance activities in response.

Spiritual Guidance

The resource book also focuses on spiritual and moral development as a key topic. This is contextual and reflects specific values of the Ugandan population at large. Spiritual Guidance content is geared toward helping learners develop ethical values, a sense of purpose, and spiritual well-being in line with their faith or beliefs. Teachers are encouraged to engage students in personal and communal spiritual activities. For example, the book outlines basic practices such as prayer, meditation, scripture reading, worship, fasting, and mindfulness, saying that these “may be done in a group or individually”. It advises that learners should be encouraged to pray regularly according to their faith, spend time in meditation and reflection, participate in worship activities, and even practice caring for others as a form of service. The curriculum also emphasises the inculcation of core values. According to the book, values are “deep-seated beliefs that guide day-to-day decision making”, and it lists virtues to develop in students, such as being God-fearing, loving, peaceful, patient, forgiving, caring, self-accepting, hardworking, respectful, trustworthy, grateful, honest, and appreciative of others’ beliefs. By integrating these principles, the Spiritual Guidance component aims to nurture learners’ moral character and emotional well-being. Teachers are provided with guidance on how to incorporate discussions of values and facilitate spiritual growth activities in a manner appropriate to students’ diverse faith backgrounds.

Counselling Services (Psychological Support)

In addition to the thematic areas above, the resource book dedicates content to counselling techniques and psychosocial support strategies, recognising that some students’ needs require direct counselling interventions. The Counselling Services topic is aimed at “helping learners manage problem situations and realise unused potentialities” through focused counselling interactions. The book defines counselling as a private, supportive dialogue between a counsellor (in this case, a teacher in a counselling role) and a student with the goal of enabling positive behavioural or emotional change. The resource outlines the major forms of counselling in schools, stressing that students may face personal challenges such as stress, depression, grief, or trauma from various sources (family issues, peer conflicts, or developmental changes) and that teachers can assist by providing either individual or group counselling appropriately. The book explains that in group counselling, multiple learners with similar issues are guided together so they can draw support from each other, whereas individual counselling is a one-on-one interaction for more personalised help. The book also presents the basic counselling process (problem identification, goal setting and action planning stages) and essential counselling skills for teachers (such as building rapport, active listening and confidentiality). This content area highlights the more clinical aspects of guidance and counselling, ensuring that teachers understand how to provide empathetic support and when to refer students for additional professional help if needed. It complements preventive and developmental guidance in other topics by preparing teachers to handle sensitive personal issues in a structured manner.

There is an integration of crosscutting issues across all the above thematic areas. The resource book integrates important cross-cutting issues such as gender equity, HIV/AIDS awareness, and cultural context. Rather than treating these as standalone topics, they were woven into multiple units to ensure a holistic approach. For instance, gender considerations appear in discussions of career stereotypes and in personal guidance content on relationships, while HIV/AIDS is addressed both in health guidance and in counselling scenarios (helping students affected or infected by HIV). The book's introduction explicitly states that "cross-cutting issues, especially Gender, HIV/AIDS and culture are integrated within the five key themes" of Educational, Career, Personal/Social, Spiritual and Psychological guidance. Teachers are thus instructed to handle guidance topics in an integrative manner, infusing concepts of inclusivity, equality, and cultural sensitivity into the delivery of each guidance area. This ensures that as teachers address academic, personal, or career guidance, they simultaneously reinforce messages about respecting diversity, practising safe and healthy behaviours, and understanding social issues relevant to Ugandan post-primary learners.

Roles and Responsibilities of Teachers in Guidance and Counselling

The resource book articulates the role of the teacher not just as an instructor of academic content, but as a guidance provider who contributes to the learners' all-round development. The coding map (Figure 2) highlights the key dimensions of this role, such as the expectation that every teacher serves as a counsellor, mediator, and learning coordinator and performs liaison tasks in addition to collaborative efforts within the school community. These themes show how the teacher's role is articulated in the book (R.Q.2).

Holistic student support

Crisis Intervention and Referral: Within the school, teachers are expected to provide direct guidance and support to students in various formats. The resource book specifies that "support services should be provided to learners in need through individual and small group Guidance and Counselling interventions, crisis intervention, parent outreach, consultation and referral". Here, multiple responsibilities are also itemised as teachers must be prepared to intervene in a crisis (such as a personal tragedy or urgent mental health issue), counsel individuals or groups for less urgent matters, and refer students to specialised services when a problem is beyond the teacher's capacity (for example, referring to a professional counsellor, psychologist, or social service for serious cases). There is an example from the book in the context of HIV/AIDS affected learners that "A teacher counsellor can help the learners through counselling or referring them to agencies that deal with traumatised persons". Recognising one's limits and involving external help is framed as part of the teacher's responsibility.

Teacher as counsellor: The resource book stresses embedded counselling and that providing guidance and counselling is an integral responsibility of all teachers, not only specialised counsellors. It also states that "Guidance and Counselling is a service which should be delivered by all teachers" and is "part and parcel of the curriculum and as part of teachers' professional responsibilities to ensure proper growth and development of the learners they teach". This reflects a whole-school approach in which every teacher is expected to contribute to students' personal, social, and academic well-being. The rationale given is tied to the "holistic aim of education, which is to develop a whole person; body, heart, mind and spiritual nurturing". In other words, every teacher, regardless of subject specialisation, plays a role in mentoring and guiding learners. By positioning guidance as a shared duty, the book urges teachers to incorporate counselling perspectives into their daily interactions with students.

Individual and group counselling: Teachers' roles are portrayed as extending beyond academic instruction to include attending to the emotional, moral, and social development of students. The book's content notes that it is the "responsibility of all teachers to guide and counsel" learners towards proper development. Teachers are tasked with helping young people navigate complex challenges (such as adolescence, peer pressure, and life transitions) so that learners develop the necessary life skills and values. Notably, the book asserts that teachers should help students acquire the values and competencies for "harmonious and productive living". This entails fostering qualities such as self-esteem, resilience, and good citizenship, in addition to academic skills. Thus, a teacher in a Ugandan post-primary institution is expected to act as a mentor and moral guide, supporting the whole child (intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual aspects). This holistic responsibility is a cornerstone of the teacher's role in the resource book, as discussed below.

Embedded counselling

Guidance integrated into the curriculum and interactive pedagogical practices: The resource book instructs teachers to integrate guidance and counselling into every aspect of school life and employ interactive pedagogical practices. It "calls for integrating Guidance and Counselling in the teaching-learning process, club activities, games, sports, weekly duty responsibilities, learner leadership responsibilities and other related services". This broad mandate means that teachers should seize teachable moments and use various platforms to counsel and guide their students. Even routine duties (such as supervising student leadership or daily assemblies) are seen as opportunities to provide guidance.

Institutional Leadership

Mediation and advocacy: Teachers should mediate potential issues or crises that may arise and continuously engage in counselling conversations, life-skills education, and mentorship. They should also continuously advocate for students' well-being within the school. The mediation role includes addressing emerging issues, such as bullying among peers, academic stress, or health risks, early before they escalate.

Record keeping and parent/community sensitisation: The resource book specifies that support services for learners in need should include not just school-based counselling, but also "parent outreach, consultation and referral" when necessary. Teachers may need to communicate with parents about their children's guidance needs or involve community professionals (such as health workers, counsellors, or social workers) in cases requiring expert intervention. This articulates the role of the teacher as a mediator and advocate, ensuring that a student's problems are addressed through a team approach that extends beyond the classroom.

1. Pedagogical approaches and strategies recommended

The Resource Book not only outlines what topics to cover in guidance and counselling but also provides substantial guidance on how teachers should deliver these services and learning experiences. The analysis revealed a strong emphasis on interactive, learner-centred strategies and the integration of guidance activities into daily school life. This is also consistent with the roles of teachers as described earlier. Figure 3 summarises these strategies, showing links between specific methods (open codes from the text, such as "group discussion", "role play", "referral", "case, etc.) and broader strategic themes (broader categories like experiential learning, integrated curriculum, psychosocial and emotional support). The following results detail the key pedagogical approaches and techniques advocated by the resource book, with supporting examples from the book.

2. Integration into curriculum and co-curricular activities

A foundational strategy promoted in the book is to embed guidance activities throughout the school's academic and extracurricular programs. As noted previously, teachers are advised to incorporate guidance into regular teaching, clubs, sports, and other routines. Practically, this means that guidance topics need not be confined to standalone counselling sessions; instead, they can be taught and reinforced during regular class lessons or school events. For example, a science teacher might integrate a discussion on career opportunities in science (linking to career guidance), or a literature teacher might address themes of personal growth or decision-making from a story (linking to personal guidance). The resource book's structure encourages this integration by providing activities and discussion prompts that relate to various subject areas and school contexts.

3. Planned guidance sessions and units

Alongside integration, the book also supports dedicated guidance sessions or units led by teachers. Each major topic domain comes with its own set of sub-topics and suggested methods, effectively forming mini curricula for guidance and education. Teachers are expected to plan and deliver these units methodically.

4. Interactive and learner-centred methods

The resource book advocates for participatory teaching methods that actively involve students in the guidance process. For example, instead of solely teaching life skills or careers, teachers are prompted to engage learners through discussions, activities, and practical exercises. For instance, the book cites a scenario in the context of orienting new students to the school environment: teachers "may do this by introducing the learners" to various aspects of school life (staff, rules, layout) and are provided with suggested activities such as an address at assembly, a guided school tour, and classroom activities where key personnel meet the students. These interactive orientation activities help students actively explore their new environment and build relationships with their peers. Similarly, for study skills development, the book suggests hands-on tasks, such as having learners create their own study timetable and practice note-taking in class, which the teacher facilitates step-by-step.

5. Use of life skills training and role-play

Many of the recommended strategies align with life skills pedagogy, which often uses role play, simulations, and problem-solving exercises. In addressing personal and social issues, teachers are encouraged to move beyond didactic teaching and instead use methods that let learners practice decision-making, communication, and other skills in a safe setting. For sensitive issues such as HIV, it helps learners express their inner or hidden feelings and experiences". The book suggests that students find it difficult to talk openly about personal problems, and recommends using creative methods like" drama, play, storytelling, and interactive techniques like dramatisation, storytelling, music, or art (drawing) to provide an outlet for expression and learning.

6. Group guidance and peer support

These strategies emphasise harnessing peer groups for learning and support. The resource material proposes group activities such as class debates, peer counselling clubs, and group counselling sessions for students with similar concerns. The rationale is that students can learn from each other's experiences and offer mutual support under teacher guidance. As the text explains, group counselling allows learners with similar challenges to "draw support from each other" while discussing issues in a moderated setting.

7. Individualised support and confidential counselling

While group methods are encouraged for efficiency and peer learning, the book equally stresses the need for individual attention, where appropriate. Teachers are trained through the resource to learn how to conduct one-on-one counselling sessions, following the stages of the counselling process (as detailed in the Counselling Services unit). The pedagogical approach for individual counselling includes creating a *conducive setting* (privacy and trust) and a strong helping relationship with the student. For instance, the book states that effective counselling requires a setting free from fear and an assurance of confidentiality, as well as a good counsellor-learner relationship characterised by empathy and positive regard. Teachers are advised to use techniques such as active listening (“helping a learner tell his/her story”) and guided reflection (helping the learner identify solutions and actions).

8. Use of stories and real-life examples

Throughout the resource book, there is an emphasis on using narratives and real-life cases as pedagogical tools. In sections dealing with complex issues (such as counselling learners affected by HIV/AIDS or addressing discipline problems), the book includes illustrative stories and case studies. It clearly states that the following stories will help you think about how you could use your counselling skills to help learners. This approach suggests that teachers should use storytelling to share relatable or hypothetical scenarios to prompt discussion and reflection among learners.

9. Collaboration with stakeholders

While most recommended strategies focus on in-class or in-school techniques, the resource book also notes the importance of collaborating with external stakeholders as part of the pedagogical approach to teaching. This includes inviting resource people (such as health workers to talk about HIV or professionals to speak on careers), organising field trips (to workplaces or community services), and working with parents in guidance activities such as parent-teacher sessions on student development.

Effective implementation (RQ 4)

An open-ended questionnaire was used to enquire into the effectiveness of implementing guidance and counselling in institutions following the book’s rollout. Twelve respondents, including head teachers, deputy head teachers, education officers, and teachers, answered the questionnaire, representing different institutions from districts in Kampala, Mukono, Kamuli, and Jinja. Most respondents had more than five years of education experience (11 in 12), except one who had between two and five years of education experience. An equal number of men ($n = 6$) and women ($n = 6$) completed the questionnaire.

Awareness, distribution and training

Although most respondents (9 out of 12) were aware of the resource book, awareness did not necessarily translate into full distribution of the book. Only one respondent reported that the resource book had been fully distributed; the majority (nine) reported that it had not been distributed to their institution, and two respondents were unsure about its status. The respondents who specified a less-than-complete distribution cited “insufficient copies printed”, “inadequate communication between the ministry and schools”, and “budget constraints” as reasons hindering effective implementation. One respondent said that the “resource book was not distributed to all schools and hence its purpose was rendered ineffective.”

Concerning training, one respondent answered that teachers had already received training on how to use the resource book, nine respondents showed that there had been no training, and two respondents reported that only some training had been conducted. Therefore, it was not surprising that when asked to report their

level of satisfaction with the adequacy of the training received, five respondents remained neutral, four were dissatisfied, and two were very dissatisfied. To expand on this close-ended question, the participants were asked about the reasons for their level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The respondents cited the issues that the “majority of the teachers have not been trained due to resource constraints” and “there has been no guidance on how to use the book.” There is a gap in its practical application without directions on how the book should be used.

Implementation and use in Schools

The data revealed that the utilisation of the resource book in daily school practice was minimal. Regarding the reported frequency of guidance and counselling lessons, four respondents indicated that they are conducted weekly, three indicated that they are conducted monthly, three indicated that they are hardly ever conducted, one noted that they are conducted once a term, and one said that none are held. Moreover, while most institutions (seven out of 12) have only partly implemented guidance and counselling in mainstream activities, three institutions reported full implementation, and two indicated that counselling had not been implemented at all. Furthermore, the modes through which guidance and counselling sessions are delivered vary, ranging from instruction to one-on-one sessions, group sessions, and, less often, workshops/seminars, peer counselling, and guest speakers. These results indicate that, although a variety of strategies are used, the overall incorporation of the resource book into daily counselling practice is insufficient.

Perceived effectiveness and impact

Respondents were asked to what extent the resource book helped improve guidance and counselling services, and the responses were mixed. No respondent found the resource book “very effective”, two participants found it “effective”, six considered it “somewhat effective”, and four deemed it “ineffective”, citing insufficient distribution. Others attested that where the book was distributed, it was a “good guide” and assisted teachers in helping learners drop unhealthy habits. However, one respondent said that its uneven spread weakened its overall impact, and another stated that individual differences were not accounted for in the book. Some respondents referred to positive behavioural changes, where students seemed more disciplined, had reduced unhealthy habits, and were more focused, while others said that any observable changes were limited or negligible because the book was used infrequently.

Discussion

This study aimed to evaluate the *Guidance and Counselling for Post-Primary Institutions: Teacher’s Resource Book* in Uganda. This was achieved by analysing its content, teacher roles, pedagogical approaches, and implementation effectiveness. From the research, the book covers a broad range of guidance topics. Apart from practical counselling content, such as individual, peer, and crisis counselling, guidance integration in the curriculum, teacher-as-counsellor, and referral protocols, it also includes values-oriented themes such as spiritual and moral values, multiculturalism, patriotism, and nationalism that reinforce career guidance. The book provides teachers with guidelines for inclusive and multicultural guidance by embedding support for learners with diverse needs and backgrounds and promoting equity and belonging. This aligns with the national inclusive education goals in Uganda, enabling students from different social, cultural, or ability backgrounds to benefit from counselling and career guidance. These topics also align with the national priorities for holistic student devel-

opment (MoES, 2025). However, the research findings suggest that many teachers still see guidance as peripheral to the core curriculum. This is because a respondent noted that, “schools have very tight academic schedules and view career guidance as a waste of time.” Others reported that because few schools have the resource book on hand, its key messages do not reach students.

Teachers play a multifaceted role in guiding school-to-work transitions. They act as counsellors (providing academic, personal and vocational guidance in class or clubs), as advocates and liaisons (recording student progress and communicating with parents/communities about careers) and as leaders who model values and refer students for help when necessary. For example, the book’s content described roles ranging from mediating student conflicts and referrals (“crisis intervention and referral”) to embedding guidance in everyday teaching (e.g. integrating life skills lessons in classroom teaching and co-curricular activities). This is why the MoES encourages all teachers to support psychosocial development alongside academics (MoES, 2025). John (2022) notes that education is in a state of transformation, leading to the birth of counselling and teaching as a new, separate profession. Although Uganda has not defined this role, the regular teacher’s profile still demands cross-cutting skill sets. In practice, however, teachers feel underprepared for these roles. The data and existing studies show that they often lack formal training or materials to fulfil these requirements. For example, Otwine et al. (2022) reported that many Ugandan teachers have “limited skills to provide authentic career counselling due to poor teacher training”. In summary, although teacher-led initiatives and willingness to support students, systemic factors inhibit their effectiveness.

The pedagogical approaches emphasised by the resource book advocate for experiential and participatory methods, such as role-plays, drama, simulations, and case studies, to teach life skills and career concepts. These learner-centred methods are best practices in career education (Sultana 2018). The book also encourages co-curricular integration. For instance, using career clubs, testimony sharing, and student leadership activities to reinforce guidance themes outside formal lessons. These findings echo policy calls for holistic guidance (MoES, 2015) and resonate with empirical research showing that non-traditional teaching methods enhance career readiness. By combining pedagogical strategies (see Figure 3), the resource book encourages a psychosocial skills focus that teachers recognise as critical for transitioning youth to work. In Figure 2, teachers’ roles in guidance and counselling include institutional leadership (advocacy, record-keeping, parental outreach), embedded counselling (guidance-infused pedagogy), and holistic student support (individual/group counselling, teacher-as-counsellor, crisis referral).

The effectiveness of implementation was uneven. Some participants noted positive student outcomes when guidance was delivered, citing “they (students) positively respond to advice” and show “improved discipline” after counselling sessions. However, many participants reported that the guidance program has been poorly implemented. Contributing factors include a lack of resources and administrative support. Some responses pointed out that time and staffing constraints make guidance difficult, that is, “limited time with learners... lack of trained and skilled counsellors”. Other participants said that guidance is not examined or enforced, so teachers feel it is “a waste of teaching time.” In the same vein, Otwine et al. (2022) found that, although nearly all students were aware of school counselling services, implementation suffered from “functional and structural challenges” that degraded service quality. In practice, only a minority of Ugandan schools even have a formal career guidance counsellor or club (Barigye, 2024). A recent report noted that roughly two-thirds of schools lack any dedicated guidance program. Similarly, Barigye (2024) emphasises that effective career guidance across Uganda is hindered by a lack of funding, trained personnel, and coherent policy frame-

works. Some participants commented that the resource book was never fully rolled out in their school or never reached them (“we have no resource book to implement”).

Some Ugandan national policies acknowledge these gaps. For example, Uganda’s Education and Sports Sector Strategic Plan 2017–2020 clearly prioritised expanding career guidance in schools, and that’s why the MoES has developed guidance-training materials. However, this research’s findings and the literature highlight a persistent gap between policy and practice. The resource book itself has the potential to bridge this gap by clarifying teacher roles and pedagogies, but only if its recommendations are enacted. In short, while the content of the resource book aligns well with Uganda’s career guidance goals, its use remains constrained by systemic issues of teacher training, material distribution and institutional support.

Conclusion

The research revealed that Uganda’s *Guidance and Counselling Teacher’s Resource Book* contains a comprehensive coverage of both thematic content and teaching strategies for career guidance and counselling. It lists the topics from forms of counselling to character and career values, and it recommends interactive pedagogies such as role-play, discussion and clubs to engage students, to mention but a few. More so, the teachers themselves are to recognise these approaches and take up their active roles as counsellors, mentors and life-skills facilitators, consistent with the book’s vision. However, there happens to be a distinct disconnect between the book’s emphasis and the on-the-ground practice. For example, some systemic challenges, including insufficient teacher training, a lack of professional counsellors and scarce materials, severely limit the book’s impact. As a result, guidance and counselling services in schools remain fragmented. These findings are supported by earlier studies, which show that Uganda’s policy emphasis on career guidance is undermined by resource and capacity gaps (Barigye, 2024; Otwine *et al.*, 2022).

Nevertheless, the results suggested a level of optimism reported by some participants who said that where the resource book and its methods were applied, there were positive student responses in terms of better discipline and clearer decision-making. Moreover, participants’ recommendations such as more training for staff, widespread distribution of the book and institutionalising counsellor positions are geared towards promoting the book’s effectiveness. Considering national goals for youth employment and the country’s high youth unemployment rates, improving school-based guidance is urgent (International Labour Organisation [ILO], 2021). The resource book can serve as a useful vehicle for this if implementation barriers are addressed.

Recommendations

To enhance career guidance, I recommend expanding teacher training to ensure regular workshops and refresher courses in guidance and counselling for all teachers, not just career advisors. The training should cover the resource book’s content (e.g., guidance skills, career information) and its pedagogical methods. One respondent emphasised the need for capacity building through training, including practical guidance on using the resource book.

It is also critical to ensure the resource book’s availability. It should be distributed to all post-primary institutions or made freely available in school libraries. The data revealed that the unavailability of the book is a major obstacle.

Formalise guidance roles and staffing. Teachers suggested creating official guidance counsellor positions or hiring qualified counsellors to professionalise the service. Also, clarify teachers’ guidance responsibilities in

policy guidelines, so schools don't "view career guidance as a waste of time." Providing a modest budget for guidance activities like career fairs can signal administrative support.

Additionally, integrating guidance into the curriculum and timetable, monitoring implementation, and using simple accountability measures to track activities would help. This could include annual reporting on guidance sessions and student participation, or periodic supervision visits. Engaging external stakeholders, such as local businesses and NGOs, in career days or mentoring can strengthen programs. Respondents also recommended awareness campaigns to build support among students and parents. Finally, feedback from teachers and students should guide updates to the resource book and educator training.

Limitations

This study has limitations. It relies on qualitative data from a small sample of educators, which may not capture all perspectives. Student and employer views were not included, potentially overlooking certain factors. Additionally, the study context may differ from urban or higher-performing schools, limiting generalizability. Future research could use mixed methods, such as classroom observation, student surveys, and policy analysis, to validate and expand on these findings.

Conflict of interest statement

On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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Az ugandai középfokú intézmények tanárainak szánt pályaeorientációs és tanácsadó kézikönyv vizsgálata

Kutatásunkban dokumentumelemzés és egy 12 oktatási szakember bevonásával készült, nyitott kérdéseket tartalmazó kérdőív segítségével vizsgáltuk az ugandai középfokú oktatási intézmények számára készült pályaeorientációs és tanácsadási kézikönyvet. A kézikönyv átfogó pályaeorientációs témákat ölel fel, kiemelten kezelve a pályaválasztási tanácsadást az iskolából a munka világába való átmenet megkönnyítése érdekében. A tanárok szerepét tanácsadóként és mentorként határozza meg, és olyan tanulóközpontú pedagógiai stratégiákat támogat, amelyek a pályaválasztási információkat a pszichoszociális támogatással, az önfejlesztéssel és a döntéshozatali képességekkel ötvözik. Bár az oktatási szakemberek értékesnek tartották a kézikönyvet, a jelentések szerint a megvalósítás nem volt következetes a terjesztési korlátok, a nem megfelelő képzés, támogatás és a ráfordított idő miatt. További eredmények rámutattak arra, hogy jelenleg szükség van a mai tanulók változatos valóságának figyelembevételére, amelyet kulturális tényezők, társadalmi-gazdasági egyenlőtlenségek, a munkaerőpiac bizonytalansága és a tanulók sokszínű identitása alakít. A tanulmány hangsúlyozza a hagyományos pályaeorientációs tanácsadástól az átfogó pályaeorientációs modellek felé történő elmozdulást, amelyek mindezt figyelembe veszik. Tanulmányunk aláhúzza a kontextusban releváns tanácsadás fontosságát, amely tiszteltben tartja a helyi oktatási valóságot, miközben felkészíti a diákokat az egyre inkább globalizált munkaerő-piaci környezetre. Kutatásunk során arra a következtetésre jutottunk, hogy a támogatási rendszerek megerősítése és a tanári kapacitás fejlesztése elengedhetetlen a tanácsadási és pályaeorientációs programok potenciáljának teljes kiaknázásához. Írásunk hozzájárul ahhoz, hogy megértsük, hogyan tudják a multikulturális kontextusban az oktatási politikák jobban támogatni a diákok átmenetét az oktatásból a munkaerőpiacra, és olyan betekintést nyújt, amely globálisan alkalmazható a hasonló, fejlődő oktatási rendszerekben.

Kulcsszavak: tanácsadás és iránymutatás, pályaeorientáció, az iskolából a munka világába való átmenet, középfokú oktatás, Uganda