

FOUNDATIONS AND STEPS OF DEVELOPING A THEORETICAL AND PROCEDURAL GUIDANCE PROGRAM FOR SUPPORTING ELEMENTARY STAGE STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES (READING AS A MODEL)

Zoulikha Khetib¹, Hasnia Lesgaa²

^{1,2} University of Oran2, Algeria

Email:khetib.zoulikha@univ-oran2.dz, lesgaa.hasnia@univ-oran2.dz

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Abstract :

The current study aims to identify the foundations of preparing the guiding program in accompanying students with learning difficulties - dyslexia as a model - from the theoretical foundations to the methodological procedural foundations by mentioning the techniques of preparing the program and identifying the means and tools necessary for diagnosis and adopted in this study, which is a diagnostic test Dyslexia (L'alouette), the version translated into Arabic and adapted to the Algerian environment, and the projective test is a drawing of the man.

The indicative program was proposed to accompany and improve the reading ability of pupils with learning difficulties to read according to the theoretical model as well as the methods of selecting the study sample from the primary stage procedurally and religion suffering from learning difficulties dyslexia as a model and the procedural steps for the indicative income. This study concluded with a set of results, the most important of which is the effectiveness of building and implementing the extension program to rid students of reading difficulties. In light of the results obtained, the study recommended the need for those in charge of the educational process to pay attention to the importance of training students, teachers and workers in the field of education to design and implement extension programs as a solution to avoid pupils' dropout. Schoolyard .

Keywords: counseling program, theoretical and Operational foundations, primary school students, learning difficulties

Introduction:

The guidance program is considered a collection of activities, exercises, and experiences practiced by the school and educational institutions, planned to assist in achieving their educational and social goals. It is unimaginable to have a group without including a program that plans, implements, monitors, and evaluates its outcomes. This highlights its role as an educational and social interactive apparatus. It is a planned and organized program based on scientific foundations for providing counseling services, whether individually or collectively, to all those included in the school, with the aim of helping them achieve holistic growth and making conscious choices to achieve psychological harmony within and outside the school. The program is planned and evaluated by a committee and a team of officials. Based on the aforementioned, we can deduce that the guidance program is a step within an organized framework that provides psychological and educational

counseling services in order to teach individuals how to solve their problems and train them to acquire and achieve their desired goals. In order to achieve integrated preparation and proper planning of the guidance program, which keeps up with scientific and educational developments, the planning phase must be based on general, philosophical, psychological, educational, social, neural, and physiological foundations. Based on the above, the following main issues have been identified:

What are the theoretical and procedural foundations and steps for preparing the proposed guidance program to support students with learning difficulties in elementary school?

1. Significance of the Study:

- Identifying the key theoretical and procedural stages for building a guidance program.
- Introducing an advanced and innovative program to address reading skill weaknesses in elementary school students.
- Guiding students and academics on the importance of incorporating diverse activities, tools, and methods in designing a guidance program.
- This study is crucial for various groups, including students, teachers, principals, inspectors, and education administrators, as well as parents.

2. Procedural definitions:

3. Guidance Program: The proposed procedural definition in this study is an integrated educational program that encompasses a set of objectives, educational activities, planned assessment tools, and diverse evaluation methods. It is designed to address reading skill weaknesses in a group of elementary school students.

4. Elementary School Students: They are individuals in the early stages of primary education, typically ranging from 8 to 10 years old.

5. Reading Difficulties: It refers to difficulties in language acquisition manifested by an inability to decode language symbols, process information, and comprehend sounds. These difficulties are not related to age, intellectual abilities, academic achievement, or sensory impairment. They are assessed based on the results obtained from a diagnostic test for reading difficulties.

First, Theoretical Framework: (Foundations and Steps for Developing a Theoretical Guidance Program)

The guidance program is an essential component of the counseling process, which consists of several stages in evaluating counseling services. These stages include establishing the counseling relationship, diagnosis, planning and implementing the guidance program. The guidance program is a series of organized, interconnected, and sequential steps, where each step is influenced by the preceding step and has an impact on the subsequent step.

1. Definition of the Guidance Program: The program encompasses all activities, practices, games, situations, visits, and trips through which individuals gradually transition from self-awareness to the external world. Hence, these experiences should begin with the individual's awareness of their own capacities (Taha, 2004, p.15). It is a collection of specific objectives that are achieved through the construction of targeted counseling strategies, appropriate research design, guidance program content, organizational procedures, program implementation and evaluation, and coordination among all the aforementioned components (Saafan, 2005, p.200).

Cattle and Downie (1986) define counseling as the process through which the counselor assists the client in training them to confront, understand, and accept information about themselves and interact with others, enabling them to make effective decisions in various aspects of life (Habib & Mitchell, 2003). Based on the provided definitions, we can conclude that the guidance program is a structured and organized scientific plan based on the foundations, techniques, and principles of psychological counseling. It aims to provide a range of counseling services to clients within a specific timeframe, with the goal of assisting them in achieving psychological and educational harmony and overcoming life challenges.

2. Objectives of the Guidance Program: According to Dubour and Al-Safi (Dubour & Al-Safi, 2007, pp. 34-35), the program aims to achieve the following objectives:

- Development of a positive self-concept in students and equipping them with the ability to change for the better and adapt to unexpected variables calmly and with balance.
- Providing students with confidence so they can confront and solve their problems.
- Empowering students to shape their own vision of life and achieve their future goals.
- Developing students' ability to engage in dialogue, consultation, and expressing their opinions freely.
- Providing opportunities for students to collaborate and work collectively with others in meaningful projects that enhance the educational process and actively involve students in the learning process.

3. Foundations of the Guidance Program:

Guidance programs are based on a set of foundations that are necessary for the proposed program to be acceptable in the environment in which it is designed. According to Kamel (1999), these foundations include:

- **General Foundations:** It emphasizes the urgent need to modify some inappropriate practices, as human behavior is characterized by flexibility and adaptability. It also highlights an individual's right to receive counseling assistance and determine their own destiny, while emphasizing the principles of accepting the client and continuing to guide them regardless of their behavior.
- **Psychological Foundations:** These foundations involve recognizing individual differences in the school environment and beyond. It emphasizes the existence of a group of students who require counseling services more than others, which helps in understanding the standards of appropriate behavior within and outside the school environment. It also helps in forming healthy attitudes based on proper interaction among students and between students and other members of the educational system.
- **Educational Foundations:** They are the elements that focus on the student, considering them as an important member of the school community. They clarify the role assigned to them within the educational institution and determine the type of work expected from them with the educational and administrative staff in the school. This is done to improve the overall school environment, emphasizing the need for alignment between the goals of the mentioned counseling program and the general goals of the educational process. These goals primarily emphasize creating psychological and physical conditions for the well-being of students and teachers, highlighting the importance of comprehensive student personality development.
- **Social Foundations:** These refer to the principles that emphasize the diverse roles of individuals within a community and the importance of caring for them as members of society. It recognizes the

influence of an individual's behavior by the group they belong to, while also considering the impact of the individual on others within the community. Thus, individuals should be viewed both as influential and influenced.

- **Ethical Foundations:** It is essential for the counseling program not to neglect the general ethical rules and foundations of every social environment. This consideration takes into account the specific characteristics of the community on one hand, and on the other hand, the nature of the studied problem and the selected sample of individuals for the study. Therefore, designers of counseling programs strive to adhere to a set of ethical rules and foundations when interacting with the studied individuals. Prominent among these principles are ensuring confidentiality of information, respecting the opinions and ideas of each other, and establishing trust and respect.

- **Religious Foundations:** It is incumbent upon the counseling program not to include any behaviors or ideas that contradict the fundamental principles of the counselor's and counsees' religion. This helps the counsees accept the program's content and enables the counselor to implement their sessions with confidence. When individuals fulfill their religious duties, they experience a sense of psychological security, tranquility, and peace of mind. Therefore, the religious beliefs of both the counselor and the counsees are significant in the counseling process.

4. The Content of the Guidance Program:

The content of the guidance program is the core of program design. The success of the guidance program and its impact on the counselee depend on the technicalities and skills included in this program. The content varies from one guidance program to another based on the specific problem being addressed and the desired objectives to be achieved through the program. During the process of developing the content of the guidance program and selecting its elements, various and diverse sources are utilized. In general, guidance programs include three main types of content as mentioned by Saafan (2005, p. 55): cognitive processes, knowledge, and skills.

5. Planning the Guidance Program and its Construction Steps:

The planning process for designing the guidance program involves a series of necessary steps. Organized planning of guidance programs is a fundamental factor in their success and the achievement of their objectives. The steps involved in constructing the programs are as follows:

A. Identifying the Program Objectives:

Guidance programs are prepared as a whole with the purpose of achieving a set of objectives. They encompass both general counseling objectives that are present in all guidance programs and specific objectives based on the uniqueness of each program, its purpose, and the characteristics and nature of the individuals to whom the program is applied (counselors or cases). Additionally, the implementation time and location of the guidance program may vary. In general, the guidance program should consist of a number of sessions with limited and clear content. These sessions should provide a specific service to individuals.

B. Determining the Counsees' Needs:

This refers to identifying the needs of the target group under study to determine their necessary counseling assistance and arranging them according to their priorities. This is accomplished through the use of various data collection tools such as questionnaires, interviews, and observations. Afterward, the objectives of the guidance program are determined in light of the educational

objectives aimed at satisfying the psychological needs within the available material, human, and social resources that can be provided to the counselees (Dabour& Al-Safi, 2007, p. 209).

C- Determining the means of program implementation: This involves identifying the resources and tools that serve the program, considering the available capabilities.

D- Identifying the available resources in the local environment: This includes determining the necessary budget for program implementation based on the available and required resources, as well as identifying funding sources to cover program expenses.

H- Structuring and scheduling program implementation: This entails defining the roles and responsibilities of individuals involved in implementing, evaluating, and monitoring the program. This includes the counseling team, administrative and educational teams of the institution, and external participants. A timeline is established to set the timing for each stage of implementation. During the design of the counseling program, specific measures, regulations, and tasks are outlined, assigned to the aforementioned individuals. It may require the involvement of multiple individuals to execute these tasks, either simultaneously or at different times. Hence, it is crucial to clearly define the roles of each participant to successfully carry out the required tasks in program sessions.

J- Program evaluation: The program can be evaluated based on the obtained results, as defined by Bruce Shertzer and Sherry Stone (1976), who identified several criteria for evaluating a counseling program in schools, focusing on program outcomes (Zahran, 2005, p. 510). The process of evaluating a counseling program is highly important and falls within the concept of cumulative knowledge, where past knowledge serves as a starting point for current knowledge. Therefore, designers of counseling programs often include a set of questions at the end of the program, addressing various aspects related to the content and implementation of the counseling program. Among the common questions are: To what extent was the program planning successful? Was the required financial budget available for program implementation? Did sufficient time and suitable locations exist for program implementation? Were all counseling services provided efficiently and effectively? What are the encountered problems, and to what extent have they been overcome? (Zahran, 2005, p. 509).

After identifying the adopted evaluation criteria and determining the evaluation methods and tools, the program's status is assessed against those criteria by answering the predetermined evaluation questions. The results of the evaluation process are then analyzed and interpreted. Based on this, practical steps are proposed to address any deficiencies observed in different aspects of the program. Thus, the development of the counseling program is carried out in light of the evaluation results.

Secondly, the procedural steps for developing the counseling program (Improving reading skills among sample students) are as follows:

1. Problem Identification and Diagnosis:

Stages and steps for diagnosing reading difficulties: Harris and Sipay (1995, p. 37) suggest that diagnosing dyslexia involves the following steps:

- a. Conducting a test to determine the child's reading level: Identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the student.
- b. Identifying the factors and reasons that hinder the child's learning at this stage.
- c. Minimizing these factors, if possible, by adjusting and correcting them before or during the treatment.

- d. Selecting successful methods with a strong impact for teaching the necessary skills and strategies.
- e. Teaching the required skills until ensuring that the child improves their usage and that they are suitable for them.

2. Procedures and Tools Used for Diagnosing Reading Difficulties: According to Sharfouh Al-Bashir (2006), this is one of the most important diagnostic stages on which the treatment relies. This leads us to the proper use of diagnostic tools to collect the necessary data to determine the presence of reading difficulties. Some of these methods include:

a. Case history: Understanding the student's personality and the difficulties they face. Through this, specialists can conduct general examinations related to physical and mental health, including hearing and visual senses, to identify the problems that hinder their academic achievement.

b. Observation: The teacher observes the student during their reading, being aware of learning difficulties, especially motor, head, and eye difficulties, as well as the body posture during reading. The teacher notes the behaviors exhibited by the struggling student, including the types of errors made, as this allows for close monitoring and recording of necessary information at the time of occurrence.

3. Comprehensive Educational Assessment Procedures: According to Sharfouh Al-Bashir (2006), assessment allows for identifying the strengths and weaknesses of struggling students, pinpointing the exact areas of deficiency. This is achieved through a set of in-depth tests, including:

- a. Cognitive ability tests.
- b. Achievement tests.
- c. Cognitive (psychological) processes tests related to learning.
- d. Judgments and evaluations by teachers: Real-time monitoring of behavioral characteristics using scales that cover behavioral and academic features associated with reading difficulties.

4. Reading Difficulties Treatment Programs: Numerous programs exist globally, including, for example:

a. Ribos Program: This method relies on using word images instead of written forms (letters). The method consists of four books, each containing 384 shapes. To progress to other shapes, the student must provide the correct answer (Taqi Al-Din Merbah, 2015, p. 66).

b. Multisensory Reading Method: The multisensory method, known as VAKT (Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic, Tactile), as mentioned by Al-Juhani (2017, p. 43), utilizes multiple senses in reading instruction. The letter "V" represents visual perception, "A" represents auditory perception, "K" refers to kinesthetic perception, and "T" represents tactile perception. This method combines two approaches:

- 1. Fernald Program:** Children choose words that interest them in stories, making them more positive and active. This approach follows three stages, as outlined by Nabil Hafez (2000, p. 101).
- 2. Orton-Gillingham Program:** This approach focuses on phonics and proper pronunciation of words. It allows students to identify consonants using perforated cards and vowels using colored cards. This method follows three techniques, as mentioned by Al-Khattab (2011, p. 128).

5. Key Components of the Training Program:

The first component is the practical axis, which involves training to enhance reading skills through practical training methods.

The second component measures reading ability, specifically accuracy and speed, through pre-tests, post-tests, and result comparisons.

6. Tools and Materials Used in the Program:

The educational materials in the program include:

- A learner's workbook titled "Read and Have Fun," containing instructional and therapeutic cards. Each therapeutic card focuses on a specific skill and includes progressive exercises ranging from easy to difficult.
- Illustrated pictures and cards.
- Alphabet cards.
- Chalkboard and chalk.
- White papers, pencils, and colored pens.
- Pictures of animals and objects.

7. The technical and educational methods used in the program:

Two methods will be used to train struggling readers: the Orton-Gillingham method and the previously explained Fernald method.

Foundations and steps for developing a guidance program:

8. The methodological procedures of the program:

The experimental program will involve a single experimental group, and pre-tests and post-tests will be conducted using research tools. The design of the single group usually consists of three steps:

- a. Conducting a pre-test to measure the dependent variable.
- b. Implementing the experimental treatment on individuals.
- c. Conducting a post-test to measure the dependent variable again.

Then, the differences attributed to the experimental treatment are evaluated by comparing the scores of the pre-test and post-test.

9. Methodological procedures for selecting the study sample:

To select the sample, and as part of the diagnostic procedures, the following are relied upon in the data collection process: the student's academic file and health record.

10. Methodological procedures for implementing the program: The field application is carried out according to the following steps:

- Conduct interviews with teachers of second, third, and fourth grade to identify students who struggle with reading skills.
- After selecting a group of students who struggle with reading skills, assess their academic level.
- Implement a trial application of the program specifically designed for struggling readers. During its development, consideration was given to the reading abilities of these students, simplifying the program content to suit their cognitive abilities. The goal is to ensure clarity of the program, educational session content, and the suitability of teaching materials for their training.

11. Tools used to implement the program: Observing students while they engage in reading activities in the classroom without actively participating, listening, and monitoring a specific social situation without active involvement (Buhoushe, 1999, p. 25). The main objective is to observe their reading level during reading activities. The diagnostic interview is conducted to select students with reading difficulties. An informative reading test is implemented during a dedicated reading session to collect necessary data about the sample individuals with teachers and students. This

includes the application of the "man drawing" test for intelligence or Salah Amira's word reading test, aiming to assess the reading performance level of students with reading difficulties. Based on the results, the study sample for subsequent experimental application is selected. The "man drawing" test is used as a means to measure children's intelligence level based on their developmental and mental growth as reflected in their drawings.

The Reading Diagnosis Test, L'Alouette, is a text-based reading test designed by researcher "Lefavrais" in 1967. It was translated, adapted, and applied to the Algerian environment by researcher Ben Saadoun Fatima in 2016. This test was designed for multiple purposes, including diagnosing reading difficulties through reading analysis and reading speed. The test was translated into Arabic using translation and back-translation methods, focusing on the original test instructions and indicators. The resulting version was named "The Grave and the Elephant." Psychometric properties of the Arabic version have shown good validity and reliability.

a) Components:

- Examiner's Guide
- Reading Text
- Examiner's Error Collection Sheet (includes a text for recording the errors made by the examinee)
- Examinee Information Collection Sheet
- Stopwatch

b) Scoring Administration: The individual information collection card contains quantitative indicators, including:

Quantitative Indicators:

- **1. Time spent on reading (T.L) in seconds:** Reading "The Grave and the Elephant" should not exceed 199 seconds, which is three minutes and 19 seconds.
- **2. Number of words read (M):** The number of words read correctly, including both good and poor readings, as well as words that the reader couldn't read. The total word count is 178 words.
- **3. Number of errors (E):** Reading a word incorrectly, correcting a word by the reader (substitutions), or skipping a word and moving to the next one. Speech disorders are not counted as errors. Errors are counted within the total time taken for the text.
- **4 Number of words read correctly (C):** This measures the number of words read accurately and efficiently within the required time.
- **5 Speed Index (C.T.L):** This index is used to assess reading proficiency in children while reading the text "The Elephant and the Grave" based on the required time. It is calculated as follows:

	T.L		Number of correct words read	Speed indicator
C.T.L =	X199	199X	—————	
	T.L		Time spent reading	

Accuracy Index CM

			Number of correctly read words	Accuracy Index
C.M =	X100	100X	—————	
			Number of words read	

Indicators of Reading Proficiency:

A. Unfamiliar Words (B): Words that are unfamiliar to the child reader, containing two or three unfamiliar vowels that form uncommon or foreign words. In this case, the child may be unaware of the error being made.

B. Sound Substitution (C.G.P): Errors resulting from a weak grasp of linguistic rules, where each sound is incorrectly assigned to produce a word with an auditory and visual mix-up. It may also result from a cognitive deficiency in complex and difficult letter rules, such as mixing up sounds like "s" and "z".

C. Phonological Interference (P.V): The reader recalls a word that visually resembles the target word in the text, and substitutes the target word with another word from the same root family. For example, replacing "ظلمتني" (you oppressed me) with "ظلمني" (you wronged me).

D. Semantic Interference (P.S): Here, the reader recalls a word that is semantically similar to the word in the text or attempts to provide an approximation that aligns with the text structure correctly. They may use a word from their own linguistic repertoire instead of the written word in the text, such as "أن" (that) instead of "بأن" (that), "لا" (no) instead of "ليس" (not), or "على" (on) instead of "فوق" (above).

12. Adopted Teaching Methods for Student Learning:

Teaching methods refer to the procedures and activities performed by the teacher during their interaction with the elements of the educational situation, including the students, to identify a problem, ask questions, or plan a specific project. Therefore, the teacher's effectiveness depends on their ability to determine the appropriate teaching method for their students' learning. The following methods were adopted for implementing the program: A. Presenting the instructional material, B. Providing illustrative examples, and C. Discussion and dialogue. Additionally, the Gillingham method, an auditory or phonetic approach, was also utilized.

13. Adopted Assessment Methods:

Three types of assessment methods were adopted within this program for evaluating the students:

A. Pre-assessment: By asking questions at the beginning of the session to discover the students' prior knowledge, prepare them, and stimulate their motivation to learn.

B. Formative assessment: This occurs during the teaching of reading skills by asking questions to assess the extent to which the objectives are achieved in each session. In addition, it involves activating students, ensuring their participation, integrating them into the educational situation, and continuously capturing their attention.

C. Summative assessment: Conducted at the end of each session (skill) to ensure the achievement of the educational objectives set for each skill. This is done through the mastery box on the bottom corner of the learner's notebook page, followed by recording the results on an assessment card.

Conclusion:

The process of developing the content of the guidance program and selecting its components is a highly complex procedure that is intertwined with several disciplines in psychology, including developmental psychology and curriculum and program development, as well as counseling psychology, educational sciences, and assessment. It is only achievable through in-depth exploration of diverse and multiple sources, their analysis, and utilization. The information, techniques, and measures encompassed by these studies are integral to the planning process of

designing the guidance program, involving a series of necessary steps, starting from theory to implementation and culminating in the evaluation process. Based on this study, we recommend:

1. Providing students with a solid and comprehensive theoretical foundation in this field.
2. Training students, educators, and professionals in the field of education on the procedural techniques of program development.
3. Training students, educators, and professionals in the field of education on establishing and implementing programs in practical settings.
4. Training students, educators, and professionals in the field of education on evaluating the methods of program development, implementation, and modification.

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