

Major Challenges and Alternatives in the Provision of Guidance and Counseling Services in Universities: A Comprehensive Literature Reviewed

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Abstract

A number of studies have been carried out on Guidance and counseling services to college and/or University students by focusing on problems. Little literatures have been attempted to indicate challenges of guidance and counseling in association with opportunities there to overcome the challenges. Thus, the objective of this study was to assess and organize literatures on the challenges and alternatives in the provision process of Guidance and counseling services to college and/or Universities students in Ethiopia. Literatures have organized on the provision of Guidance and counseling services from worldwide to specific Ethiopian Universities. The findings from literatures indicated that implementation of guidance and counseling services carry various challenges such as lack of students' awareness even about the availability of the services, lack of counselors in the university, unavailability of material resources including appropriate counseling office in the university, little consideration for the services by university administrations, no budget allocated for these services, and no assessment of the impact of these services in the university. Moreover, concerning the alternatives to overcome these challenges, counselors do have many options to address the needs of students in the university. These alternatives include preparing university students' counseling guidelines and professional ethics, preparing brochures and pamphlets to raise awareness of students, preparing problem assessment formats for guidance and counseling services, preparing performance evaluation formats, delivering well-organized and students' need based counseling services, considering challenges as part of any activity, understanding the positive impacts of guidance and counseling services on students life in the university, having well-trained counselor, availing material resources and budget for the services, initiating counselors to have commitment for these services, raising awareness of students on its importance and accessibility, establishing appropriate office as the services needed, and using different counseling approaches like group and individual counseling based on their necessities are major alternatives identified.

Keywords: provision of guidance and counseling services, challenges, alternatives, students

1. Introduction

Education is a corner stone of nation's development as it is crucial in producing skilled labor force that accelerates the pace of nation's social and economic advancement (UNESCO, 2006b, Jethro, 2000 & Peter, 2007). According to Adebowale, 2012, education is an investment in the future for nation, the future of each individual student, and society at large and in this investment process, there is imparting and acquiring of knowledge through teaching and learning process.

Furthermore, Meulemester, J. & Rochat, D. 1995, stated that most economists would probably agree that education is the human resources of a nation, not its capital or its material resources that ultimately determine the character and pace of its economic and social development. Principally, for developing countries, where growth is essential, if the countries are to climb out of poverty, education is particularly important. With this understanding therefore, most nations including Ethiopia today have been investing much on expanding education to their citizens (Bloom, D., Canning, D. & Chan, K. 2006).

It is in the academic institution that a person's development is stimulated and shaped for the great experiences of his life: learning, living with others and working. However, it is assumed that with the increasing complexities in the society, industrial and technological development the succeeding generation will find it difficult to adjust themselves both to the society, work, family and schools (Wako, 2015).

As Gysbers (2001) noted, social structures and social and personal values continue to change and become more diverse. Emerging social groups are challenging since people are on the move from place to place in search of economic, social and psychological security. This implies students need appropriate personal and social skills to achieve optimum benefits from the educational program. With this regard, no one can undermine the role of guidance and counseling within the educational system. Because, the service is part and parcel of education and aimed at assisting individuals to discover themselves, their worth, aptitudes, capabilities, weakness and know the way to move forward in life to be useful to oneself and his community.

Guidance and counseling is an integral part of education and is centered directly on this function, and it prepares students to assume increasing responsibility for their decisions and grow in their ability to understand and accept the results of their choices (Gibson, 2008; Kauchak, 2011).

According to Rashid et.al (2011) counseling in educational institutions is much complex and pertain challenges as compared to other organizations since there are legal, professional and organizational issues involved in counseling process.

Furthermore, studies on guidance and counseling in Ethiopia have focused to indicate some challenges and difficulties faced and found problems such as the critical shortage of professional counselors, lack of adequate material resources to support Guidance and Counseling and lack of understanding of its purpose and importance both in academic institution and even outside (Yusuf, 1998; Beker, 2002; Yiflashewa, 2011).

According to Martha, 2016, recalcitrant of behavior of students, lazier fair attitudes of modern students, non-observance of rules and regulations of the university by the students, lack of an office to use as a counseling venue for privacy, and lack of skills and knowledge on how to handle and counsel students were found to be considered as some challenges in the provision of counseling services.

Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to indicate major challenges and alternatives in the provision of Guidance and counseling in Ethiopian Universities in the form of reviewed body of literature.

2. Statement of the problem

The school and/or academic institution, as an important social institution, is required to adapt quickly to changing patterns, and help prepare citizens for tomorrow's challenges. To this responsibility, Guidance and Counseling service in the educational system should help students to develop their capacities to the full. These include intellectual, social, physical, emotional, moral and academic capacities.

In its purpose, Guidance and Counselling services at university aimed at assisting and supporting students that experience psycho-social problems especially as they transit into university life. Such problems can potentially disrupt their academic, inter-personal and campus-life adjustments (International Association of Students Affairs and Services Professionals, 2001) as cited by Njeri, Ndungo & Wango, 2010. It also aimed at assisting students in fulfilling their basic physiological needs, understanding one-self and acceptance of others, developing associations with peers, balancing between permissiveness and controls in the educational setting, realizing successful achievement, and providing opportunities to gain independence (Heyden, 2011).

Number of studies have shown that within education system, it is observed that students encounter different personal/psychological, academic and socio-economic problems and/or maladjustment, which directly or indirectly affect the quality of education and such problems need the interventions of counseling which is appropriate for the adjustment of the individual in the teaching- learning process (Tickaher 1965, Cox 1967-1969, Renner 1974, Yusuf 1982).

For effective counseling to take place in academic institution, a counselor should avoid challenges that hinder the services through considering and devising alternatives. However, the challenges of counseling and alternatives to be considered in the universities have not yet well described in the body of prior studies. Therefore, this study was interested in examining the challenges and alternatives in the provision of guidance and counseling services at Universities of Ethiopia.

Chapter 2

2.1. Discussion of Literature Review from worldwide to Ethiopian context

The counselors are expected to provide counseling programs in the academic, career, personal as well as social domains. Their services and programs help students resolve emotional, social or behavioral problems and help them develop a clearer focus or sense of direction. Effective counseling programs are important to the institutional climate and a crucial element in improving student achievement. Therefore, in the following few pages, a collection of historic events, experiences of different countries regarding challenges and options of providing effective counseling services to university students and its contribution to the personal and academic success of students, as well as to the achievement of quality education in the various academic programs was discussed.

2.2. Historical and Philosophical Roots to Guidance and Counseling Services

A number of literatures have been indicated the historical events of guidance and counseling in the university. The university guidance and counseling traces its roots back to the early educational guidance movement of the 1930s. The guidance movement of 1930s and 40s focussed on assisting young people with life changes such as leaving home, succeeding in school, and obtaining employment (Sweeney, 2001).

From different various historical events that are tied to the emergence of guidance and counseling, great depression, World War II, the civil rights and women's movements and cold war are important to note. According to Sweeney, 2001, during this time forinstance, the Great depression in U.S. heightened the need for vocational services for citizens and the first attempt to institutionalize these services was made.

It is in the context of this early guidance movement that soldiers returning home from the Second World War recieved counseling in higher education; and though counseling was originally meant more for vocational

services, the personal and social concerns of the soldiers inevitably needed addressing and thus the role of guidance counselors in the university setting adapted to meet these needs (Hodges, 2001).

As counselors were adapting to the needs of the veterans of World War II, another war was beginning that would help further the field of counseling yet again, namely the Cold War. The National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958 came out of the Congress' desire to identify and prepare the gifted for careers that might be important to the space race and, the DEA provided funds for guidance and counseling institutes, provided funds for fellowships in counseling preparation, and expanded guidance and testing programs in schools (Sweeney, 2001).

The provision for funds came at a crucial time as the population of those attending college became increasingly diverse after the Civil Rights and women's movements. Both movements created a complex social and cultural environment in colleges which led to a need for more counseling professionals with specialized training to keep up with the growing demand for student services and with an emphasis on addressing both personal and vocational needs of students, university counseling began to develop an identity that was separate and distinct from other student affairs units (Hodges, 2001) as cited by **Lafollette, 2009**.

The Philosophical roots of guidance and counseling has also pointed out by scholars. The early educational philosophy addressed the fact that development occurs along multiple dimensions of the individual during the college years: interpersonal, emotional, physical and spiritual; and even before wellness and holistic approaches to helping were popular, university counseling had already begun to emphasize a respect for the student's worldview, as opposed to directing the student from one's own sense of expertise (Hodges, 2001).

2.3. Education and Counseling Services

The purpose of academic institution especially university is to produce a competent and a good citizen through providing a quality education and conducive and supportive environment. However, this does not mean studying at university is free from experiencing different stressors. For instance, according to Atwater, 2003 & Julal, 2013, studying at university is correlated with experiencing significant stressors including stress experienced by new students after transiting from high school to a university life and the factors that trigger to this stress can be linked to increased academic demands, constrained finances, lack of employment and personal relationships. Transition into educational institutions for freshman learners especially expose them to psychological problems that are personal, vocational and social and hence a need for counseling (Nyaga, 2013). In addition, Frank and Karyn (2005) argued that university undergraduate students are young adults in need of counselling services.

That is why scholars argued providing counselling services is important in increasing the likelihood of students to continue and complete their studies (Biswalo, 1996; Commission for University Education, 2015; Wango, 2015). However, despite the availability of counseling services in universities, it has been documented that only a minority of university students who experience psychological distress seek professional counselling (Khan and Williams, 2003; Raunic and Xenos, 2008).

Universities have a responsibility and obligation to offer counselling services to all students if they want students to attend and complete their academic programs successfully though small number of students seek and attend the service. A study by Raunic and Xenos (2008) also found out that only a very small percentage of between 2% to 4% of university students seek counselling services with females being more likely to use them than males.

It is from this point of view that Ethiopian universities are offering social support to students in form of counseling, financial assistance, health and different academic intervention assuming that counselling is an essential service that must be available to students in academic institutions of higher education. However, as Yusuf (1998) described there are challenges in the provision of guidance and counseling and one of the challenge of Ethiopian school counselors is excess number of students which does not comply with the number of counselors. In addition, a study by Wako, 2015, indicated the challenges faced in the provision of the service were lack of commitment and creativity by professionals to promote the profession in the school and lack of proper facility like office, stationery and budget in the process of providing guidance and counseling service effectively. Therefore, this paper focused on understanding of challenges and alternatives in the provision of Guidance and counseling service to University students.

2.4. Experiences of some Countries Regarding Challenges in the Provision of Guidance and Counseling in the Universities

Guidance and counseling services in higher education institutions cover two extremes: at one extreme are the majority, which provide only the minimum services in the form of the Career Orientation; while at the other extreme are a few higher education institutions with more comprehensive and better organized career guidance services offered to senior students before they graduate. Hence, guidance and counseling practices, nature and quality depend greatly on the guidance counselor – his/her training in career guidance, and his/her creativity, resourcefulness, assertiveness and initiative; and moral and financial support provided by the educational

institution administrator (Santamaria & Watts, 2005).

Though Guidance and counseling services provision at the higher education institutions should fit to an increasing size of enrollment, and develop a more meaningful set of objectives informed by the growing body of theoretical and research literature devoted to the interaction of college students and the college environment, however, studies show that the public is not fully aware of the values of guidance and counseling. For instance, Nwagwu (1996), conducted a study on African students and concluded that the area of guidance and counseling has been to a great extent neglected in the university practice and administration throughout the continent. The study further showed that from the five categories (parents, friends, relatives, classmates and teachers) consulted by students on their educational and vocational future; the teachers were the least frequently consulted. The result implies that there was no counselor/s in schools or student did not visit them and/or the result implies that students or the public do not recognize counseling at large including its importance.

According to Seleshi, 2000, the attitudes and behavior of school administrations and teachers don't seem to be uniform. Some seem to have positive attitudes toward counseling and appreciate the activities of the counselor. This group of teachers tends to collaborate with the school counselor. Many teachers, however, don't recognize the importance of counseling at all. It is proposed that unless the counselors performs their activities in cooperation with teachers, they cannot be successful (or effective) in their endeavors.

A study conducted by Mpofu, et al. (1997), the public image of school psychology in 12 east and southern African countries including Ethiopia was found to be low due to the limited services offered by school psychologists, general adherence to traditional beliefs, and professional complacency (that is, low effort on the part of professionals, and the lack of a body of research on which to base practices).

Alutu, 2005, found that out of the ninety-six public institutions in Benin City, only twenty-five have at least one practicing counselor. This study revealed guidance and counseling services are faced with many obstacles which jeopardize effective delivery of the services, thereby resulting in educational wastage. It was found that funds for provision of basic guidance services are lacking. Most of the vital counseling services needed for quality education are the least regularly performed (e.g. use of psychological tests and keeping of a cumulative record folders). Only 14% of the institutions sampled indicated that the objectives of the National Policy on education with respect to guidance and counseling services have been realized to some extent.

Guidance and Counseling services in Ethiopian Universities have been considered as one factor that contributes students' success. Regarding the practice of Guidance and Counseling in Ethiopian Universities, the Higher Education Relevance Quality Agency (HERQA) believes that an institutional audit of the various academic sectors, including the guidance and counseling, will prove helpful to higher education institutions, the Ministry of Education, university communities, parents, students, and employers. This is one contribution to the combined efforts to maintain and enhance the quality of higher education in Ethiopia (Yilfashewa, 2011).

According to Day (2004) in the university academic atmosphere, the guidance and counseling practices is an efficient and effective way of supporting and helping students deal with problems and issues in educational, career and personal/social areas. Substantiating Day's conception, Marin insisted that an essential aspect of the guidance counseling service is assisting students in knowing the personal strengths and weaknesses, providing information on ones option, helping the student in the analysis of this information and aiding them in the college admission counseling process (Marin 2006). However, when one makes a look in to the experience of Haramaya University, one of the oldest university in Ethiopia, it can fearlessly concluded that this support service area (although an important area for sustaining quality in higher education) hasn't been given the necessary attention in terms of appointment of professionals and allocation of material resources and despite the dreadfulness of the challenges and needs for services, the higher education educators in Ethiopia reported that guidance counseling services in the universities are extremely overlooked (Daniel, 2004).

In the study conducted by HERQA, 2008 and cited by Yilfashewa, 2011 on some selected Universities in Ethiopia regarding challenges of the provision of Guidance and Counseling services, challenges were found. In Adama University, for instance, lack of appropriate number of counselors, students were not fully aware of the service's existence, and lack of recognition by the university. On the other hand, in Hawassa University the professional psychologist hired to provide the counseling service had left the university and the turnover is the main challenge; in Haramaya University, students were generally not aware of the existence of any guidance and counseling services and lack of good counseling services was seriously existed; in the University of Gonder there was no well organized student counseling system in the university and there was a mismatch between the university's claim and that of the students. It is observed that the university is lacking a comprehensive plan for giving direction to student services across its campuses; in Mekele University no counselor had been in post for some time and that the professional service was no longer provided; in Bahir Dar University the number of students visiting the services are very low and there was lack of students awareness on the existence of the services; in *Arba Minch University* the challenges found were counselor-students ratio, unavailability of a counselor in the office because of other additional duties in the university.

2.5. Alternatives to be followed in the Provision of Guidance and Counseling in the Universities

Bodies of literatures have been indicated that the provision of guidance and counseling on a college and/or university impacts students' success in their academic, personal, and professional lives by supporting their emotional and developmental growth and mental stability. The "ripple effects" (Nafziger et al., 1999) of this service can be seen in lower academic distress, better grades, and a stronger likelihood of finishing an academic course of study in a timely fashion.

According to Perry & Aaron, 2016, the prevalence of complex mental health issues and distress among undergraduates is on the rise; consequently College counselors are also increasingly being asked to participate in the services to ensure a safe and secure campus; prevent or decrease distress through educational programming; and to intervene and sometimes evaluate students who present as a danger to themselves or others.

A research has made recommendation on alternative Practices to be followed in provision of counseling services to university students through maintaining counseling services in providing adequate financial and administrative support for counseling center, treatment and prevention programs (e.g., suicide prevention), psycho-educational events (e.g., stress reduction), faculty and staff training, and program evaluation (Brunner et al., 2014; Drum & Denmark, 2012). Moreover, establishing a strong outreach function in the counseling services center to educate students, staff, and parents about the availability of relevant campus resources, services and issues regarding client confidentiality and building reliable partnerships and referral systems with off-campus service providers who can attend to students whose treatment needs exceed campus resources are very important (Mowbray et al., 2006) as cited by Perry & Aaron, 2016.

A study explored in Nigeria that the effective organization of guidance and counseling services in Nigeria would be a reality, if the federal and state Ministries of Education are able to provide professionally trained guidance counselors, recognize their services in schools and provide them with necessary incentives and facilities, if there will be cooperation of the counselor and other personnel that could help to reduce poor academic performance, examination malpractice, high rate of drop out, deviant behavior and wrong choice of courses and career among students (Alutu, 2004).

2.6. Conclusion

University students are adolescents and young adults who face tremendous pressure and challenges to adjust to the new learning environment. Students who join Universities face different challenges. Adapting to the social and the physical environment constitutes one of the main challenges. Adjustment to new peer groups, academic atmosphere, loose family contact, and financial problems are some of the specific challenges. These challenges possibly lead students to personal crisis, mainly emotional disturbance, stress, and other social crisis. These mainly lead to academic failure, drug addiction, social isolation, suicidal attempts and so forth.

Along with these problems, the need for student orientation, guidance and counseling services is crucial and very important which Universities have to implement. However, the finding of this paper from literatures indicated that the implementation of guidance and counseling services carries several challenges. These challenges include lack of demand driven and university students oriented and well trained counselors in the university, inavailability of material resources including appropriate counseling office in the university, lack of students awareness even about the availability of the services, little consideration for the services by university administrations, University administrators by themselves do not emphasize on the outcome of guidance and counseling services on students campus life in the area of academic, social, physical environment, personal and other aspects, no budget allocated for these services, and no assessment of the impact of these services in the university.

Regarding the alternatives to overcome these challenges, we do have many options to address the needs of our students in the universities. Since the primary aim of guidance and counseling service in the university is to assist students with social, academic, environmental and personal adjustment problems, it should fulfill these demands through the provision of well-organized services, considering challenges as part of any activity, we need to emphasize options such as understanding that guidance and counseling services have positive impacts on students life in the university, having well-trained counselor, availing material resources and budget for the services, having commitment for these services, initially awaring students on its importance and accessibility, establishing appropriate office for the services, using different counseling approaches like group and individual counseling, preparing university students counseling guidelines and professional ethics, preparing brochures and pamphlets, preparing university students problem assessment formats and preparing university students guidance and counseling services performance evaluation formats are very important.

Therefore, guidance and counseling services to university students in Ethiopia is not an easy task in which it needs tough understanding of its importance to assist students with different adjustment problems through identifying and overcoming the service challenges by presenting and utilizing appropriate alternatives.

Recommendations

- ψ University has to address comprehensive areas of students need by preparing and organizing guidelines necessary to establish university guidance and counseling Center for Orientation, guidance and counseling services and other services in each college, school, and institute.
- ψ Early identification of challenges and understanding of opportunities in guidance and counseling services to university students are very important.
- ψ Developing and using online counseling in addition to face to face guidance and counseling services.
- ψ University students have to emphasize the importance of guidance and counseling and use positive impacts on their social, academic and personal life.
- ψ It is better if University administrators provide adequate financial and administrative support for guidance and counseling services.
- ψ School Counselors have to employ Multiple students' need approach in the provision of guidance and counseling services.

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