

Effectiveness of Guidance and Counseling Services on Development of Academic Competence among University Students in Kenya

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Abstract

The challenges of everyday living experienced by students' in the institutions of higher learning leaves many of them devastated, not able to make realistic academic choices and unable to cope with life. Counselling services in the universities are therefore useful in assisting students develop their academic competence. The development of this competency by students enables them make realistic progress in their educational programme. The student is able to solve academic problems, performing task or moving towards set objectives. In addition, development of this competence enables the students to pursue the right type of education in which the required balance is met for accommodating the manpower needs of the economy. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services on the development of University students' academic competence. The study employed ex post facto casual – comparative design. Quantitative and qualitative data was collected by use of a questionnaire that was administered to 369 third and fourth year full-time undergraduate students enrolled in three public and three private universities in Kenya. In addition, qualitative data was collected through an interview conducted among ten (10) student counsellors and a focus group discussion involving thirty six (36) peer counsellors from the universities studied. Statistical techniques that included the one way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and t-test were used to test the significance and determine whether to reject or accept the study hypotheses. All tests were based on the 0.05 level of significance. The findings indicated significant differences in the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services on development of students' academic among the studied universities. However, the findings indicated no significant gender differences in

effectiveness of guidance and counselling services on students' development of academic competence in both public and private universities. The researcher recommends that the university authorities should establish clear policies to improve and strengthen guidance and counselling services to make them effective for students' holistic development of academic competence.

Keywords: Effectiveness, University education, Guidance, Counselling, Academic competence, Students gender

Introduction

Kenya has experienced great development in university education since independence in 1963. At present there are seven public universities which are established through the Institutional Acts of the Parliament and thirteen public university colleges. Out of the twenty four registered private universities, eleven have been awarded charters by the government of Kenya (Commission for Higher Education (CHE), 2010). Statistics from the Central Bureau of Statistics (2004) show that the number of students enrolled for University education has continued to rise. This could be attributed to the introduction of flexible learning programmes in various public and private universities which target public and private sector employees and school leavers who qualify but could not be absorbed through Joint Admissions Board (GOK, 2005).

As indicated in the Kenya Government Sessional Paper No. 1 (2005), the rapid expansion of university education faces challenges such as mismatch between skills acquired by university graduates and the demands in the industry, admission and students' credit transfers. Thus although university education is expanding to cater for the increasing demand of the qualified applicants, there has been no corresponding growth in the country's economy to absorb the graduates. On the other hand, in spite of the massive expansion, gender and regional imbalances have shaped and continue to shape the development of higher education in Kenya as in other African countries (Ngombe, Mwiria, Wawira & Wesonga, 2003). The expansion of higher education moves along with the modern advancement associated with changing life styles and complexities of life. Thus the students in educational institutions are searching, quite ardently for values that would give meaning to life after training. The students become disenchanted when they have difficulty relating their education to the rest of their lives. Guidance and counselling services are, therefore, definitely very crucial in the universities. These services need to be rendered in the best way possible in order to help students cope with modern life complexities and the various challenges that may affect their development of academic competency. It appears that total and enlightened commitment on the part of the university policy and decision makers is necessary for the counselling services to be effective.

The government of Kenya recognizes that effective guidance and counselling services are essential in all educational settings (GOK, 2002). The acquisition of academic competency by learners enhances the goal to attainment of vision 2030 by Kenyan institutions for being able to provide globally competitive quality education and training to her citizens thus contributing to the development of individual well-

being. Academic guidance and counselling is therefore important for assisting students to meet their educational opportunities. This means educating them towards becoming cultivated individuals and at the same time preparing them for participation in life activities that will be socially useful and personally satisfying. The academic guidance and counselling offers opportunities to students to discover their own abilities (Biswalo, 1996). In addition, these services help students to make suitable educational and vocational plans thus preparing them to realise their capabilities and interests. There is need to determine the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services in the universities in order to examine their contribution to the development of students' academic competency thus meeting the basic objectives of these services in higher learning institutions.

Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following specific objectives

- To determine whether there is difference in effectiveness of guidance and counselling services among Kenyan universities on the development of the students' academic competence.
- To determine whether there are any significant gender difference in the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services on development of students' academic competence.

Hypotheses of the study

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

- HO1: There is no statistically significant difference in the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services among Kenyan universities on the development of the students' academic competence.
- HO2: There is no statistically significant gender difference in the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services among Kenyan universities on development of students' academic competence.

Methodology

The study applied *ex post facto* casual-comparative design. In this design, the researcher does not manipulate the variables under study but instead, examines the variables in their existing condition. Therefore the researcher conducted the study within the existing students' guidance and counselling services in the universities and the impact of these services on the development of students' academic competence. For this study, the variables of interest included counselling services as the independent variable and student academic competence as the dependent variables. According to Cohen and Manion (1994) this design allows comparison of groups. The design was therefore found appropriate for the study because it enabled the researcher to make comparisons among study among public and private universities in the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services based on student development of academic competence and by gender.

The study was carried out in three public and three private universities in Kenya. From a population of 19,161 third and fourth year students in the selected universities, a sample of three hundred and sixty nine (369) was selected. The other respondents in the study included ten university student counsellors (six from public universities and four from private universities) who were purposefully selected. The researcher observed that most of the private universities studied had only one student counsellor. In addition, thirty six peer counsellors (six from each university) participated in the study. Thus, the total number of respondents was four hundred and fifteen (415).

The researcher used three instruments which included questionnaire, focus group discussion, and interview schedule to solicit data from third and fourth year undergraduate students, peer counsellors and universities students' counsellors. A pilot study was conducted and Cronbach's coefficient alpha method was used to determine internal consistency of the items. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 and above was considered desirable for consistency levels as noted by Frankel and Wallen (2000). In this study the reliability coefficient of items in the questionnaire on academic competence was 0.9663. Therefore the instrument was considered reliable.

Results and Discussion

Differences in Effectiveness of Guidance and Counselling Services on Students Development of Academic Competence Among Kenyan Universities

To test the hypothesis, one way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was done. the findings are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: One way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of the Students' Academic

| | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Squares | F | Sig. |
|---------------------|----------------|----------------|-----|--------------|--------|------|
| Academic competency | Between groups | 9900.331 | 5 | 1980.066 | 21.803 | 000 |
| | Within Groups | 32602.425 | 359 | 90.815 | | |
| | Total | 42502.756 | 364 | | | |

From the ANOVA results in Table 1, it was evident that there were statistically significant differences in the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services on the development of the students' academic competence among the studied universities. The computed P- value (0.000) was less than the set alpha level ($P < 0.05$). The null hypothesis was rejected.

Further, multiple comparison tests were done in order to reveal where the differences in students' academic competence occurred. The findings are shown in Table 2. According to Kerlinger (1973), the ANOVA simply indicates whether the differences are significant. When the mean differences are significant, then, pos hoc tests can be done to know which differences contribute to the significance (Best & Khan, 2006).

Table 1: Post Hoc Tests (Multiple Comparisons LSD) Table of the Mean Differences of the Students Academic Competence among the Universities

| Dependent Variable | (I) University of reference | (J) Other Universities | Mean Differences (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------|------|
| Academic competency | U1 | U2 | -4.6924(*) | 1.90700 | .014 |
| | | U3 | -3.8591(*) | 1.85673 | .038 |
| | | U4 | 1.7050 | 1.71408 | .321 |
| | | U5 | 10.5558(*) | 1.25523 | .000 |
| | | U6 | 3.0457 | 2.22126 | .171 |
| | U2 | U1 | 4.6924(*) | 1.90700 | .014 |
| | | U3 | .8333 | 2.42180 | .731 |
| | | U4 | 6.3974(*) | 2.31425 | .006 |
| | | U5 | 15.2482(*) | 1.99832 | .000 |
| | | U6 | 7.7381(*) | 2.71139 | .005 |
| | U3 | U1 | 3.8591(*) | 1.85673 | .038 |
| | | U2 | -.8333 | 2.42180 | .731 |
| | | U4 | 5.5641(*) | 2.27300 | .015 |
| | | U5 | 14.4149(*) | 1.95040 | .000 |
| | | U6 | 6.9048(*) | 2.67628 | .010 |
| | U4 | U1 | -1.7050 | 1.71408 | .321 |
| | | U2 | -6.3974(*) | 2.31425 | .006 |
| | | U3 | -5.5641(*) | 2.27300 | .015 |
| | | U5 | 8.8508(*) | 1.81513 | .000 |
| | | U6 | 1.3407 | 2.57936 | .604 |
| | U5 | U1 | -10.5558(*) | 1.25523 | .000 |
| | | U2 | -15.2482(*) | 1.99832 | .000 |
| | | U3 | -14.4149(*) | 1.95040 | .000 |
| | | U4 | -8.8508(*) | 1.81513 | .000 |
| | | U6 | -7.5101(*) | 2.30013 | .001 |
| | U6 | U1 | -3.0457 | 2.22126 | .171 |
| | | U2 | -7.7381(*) | 2.71139 | .005 |
| | | U3 | -6.9048(*) | 2.67628 | .010 |
| | | U4 | -1.3407 | 2.57936 | .604 |
| | | U5 | 7.5101(*) | 2.30013 | .001 |

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

The post hoc results indicated in Table 2 shows where mean differences can be found in effectiveness of guidance and counselling services on students development of the academic competence among the studied universities. For the purposes of confidentiality codes U1, U2, U3, U4, U5 and U6 were used to identify the universities involved in the study. The data in Table 2 shows that the mean difference

between U1 and U2 is -4.6924. This shows that the mean for U2 is higher than the mean for U1. The mean difference between the two universities is also significant. This implies that guidance and counselling services in U2 are better in assisting the students develop their academic competencies than those services offered in U1. In addition the data given in Table 2 shows that there are mean differences between U1 and U4 but the differences are not significant. This implies that guidance and counselling services offered in the two universities could be at the same level in assisting the students develop academic competence. Generally, the results in Table 2 show that the mean differences between most of the universities are significant. This shows that the provision of students' guidance and counselling services in various universities vary. These differences may also determine the level of students' development of academic competence in the universities.

Therefore based on the findings of the ANOVA, it can be concluded that there are significant differences in effectiveness of guidance and counselling services on development of students' academic competence among the universities. Generally, it is expected that counselling services provided in universities assist students develop their academic competence. Mohanty (2003) explains that provision of effective academic guidance and counselling services in educational institutions assists the students in planning a suitable educational programme and progress in it.

The specific concerns in the academic area of counselling include study habits, memory, performance and concentration in academic work. Through this type of counselling the students are able to plan a suitable academic advancement and also adjust to the university set up. In a university where academic counselling services are effective it means that the students are able to pursue the right type of education, make the most of their educational opportunities and can easily participate in life activities. The students are also assisted in coping with examination anxiety which includes the fear of failure and craving for the highest grades. These are the major sources of pressure among students. The students are also assisted to improve their competence in reading, note-taking and making academic achievement. Thus students are able to develop meaningful life experiences and are able to relate their curriculum to occupation. In addition, Biswalo (1996) notes that effective academic guidance and counselling helps the students develop proper study skills, acquire knowledge on examination techniques and understand their career prospects.

Gender Differences in Effectiveness of Guidance and Counselling Services on Development of Students Academic Competence Among Kenyan Universities

A t-test analysis was done to test the significance of any existing gender differences. The results obtained are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Independent Samples t-test for Equality of Means on Development of Students Academic Competence by Gender among Kenyan Universities

| | Gender | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | t | df | Sig. |
|---------------------|--------|-----|---------|----------------|-------|-----|------|
| Academic competence | male | 207 | 30.3237 | 10.50181 | 1.191 | 356 | .235 |
| | female | 151 | 31.6887 | 10.99708 | | | |

The results in Table 3 indicate that some mean differences existed between male (30.324) and female (31.689) in the development of the student academic competence in public and private universities. This shows that the females have a stronger academic competence through guidance and counselling services than the males in both public and private universities. However, further examination of the t- value result revealed statistically insignificant differences. The t-test results indicate that the computed p-value was greater than the critical p-value (0.05). In view of these findings, there were no statistically significant gender differences in the development of students' academic competence in public and private universities. The null hypothesis was accepted. This finding concurs with the explanation given by Turner (1981) that there is no significant difference in academic competence by men and women. According to Mutie and Ndambuki (2004) all students, male and female need to be guided on their educational progress. In addition, Makinde (1984) notes that educational guidance is to be provided not only to students who may be under achievers and potential dropouts but also to the gifted students who are high achievers. For counselling services to be effective in enhancing the academic competence, the students need to be guided on how to make realistic educational choices.

Conclusion

From the findings of the study, it can be concluded that:

- There were significant differences in effectiveness of guidance and counselling services among the universities in Kenya on development of student academic competence. This seems to support past researches as indicated by Biswalo (1996) that the spirit by the universities to plan and utilize guidance and counselling services in effective development of the students various competences is evidently strong. Therefore since effective guidance and counselling services in universities have been known to significantly enhance the development of students' academic competence, it appears that total and enlightened commitment on the part of policy and decision makers is necessary. This would put guidance and counselling services on the right track in Kenyan universities.
- There was insignificant difference in effectiveness of guidance and counselling on development of students academic competence by gender. It can be concluded that being a male or a female does not significantly affect

the acquisition of the academic competence among the university students in Kenya.

Recommendations

It is evident from the findings that effective guidance and counselling services in the universities assist students to develop the academic competence. The findings of the study showed that there are significant differences in the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services on development of students' academic competence among the universities. Therefore the university managers need to strengthen these services for holistic academic development of the students. The Commission for Higher Education and the managers of public and private universities need to organize workshops and conferences in order to exchange ideas on how to strengthen students' guidance and counselling services in the universities. There is also need for the universities to employ both male and female professional counsellors. This would cater for any gender preferences by the clients who receive the counselling services.

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