An Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Guidance and Counselling Services in Public Universities in Kenya

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Abstract
Concerns have been raised over the increase of problems like drug abuse, alcoholism premarital sex, cheating in examinations and teenage pregnancies in Kenyan Public Universities. The study sought to evaluate the effectiveness of guidance and counselling services at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology. The study is anchored on The Goal Setting Theory by Locke and Latham. The purpose of the study is to establish the effectiveness of the guidance and counselling services in higher institutions of learning with a view of improving on service delivery. The Study adopted a descriptive survey design. The sample size comprised of 204 university students. It was found out that guidance and counselling services at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology were effective among students who sought the services. The study, however recommended that the guidance and counselling department should focus more on social, health and financial issues affecting students in the campus as well as exploring the influence of university enrolment and home oriented factors that may affect students and the stakeholders were encouraged to be involved in the process of guiding and counselling students.

Keywords: effectiveness, evaluation, counselling, guidance, services, students

INTRODUCTION
The bases of guidance and counselling evaluation is to serve as a source for information on personal counselling, educational counselling, career development and placement to further education and work, in transitional stages of education (Whiston, 2003). According to Mutie & Ndambuki (2003), a student faces many difficult situations in life today. He/she has to make wise choices in curricular and other activities, acquire basic study skills for optimum achievement, and adjust to his/her peers, teachers and parents. He/she also has to live and share facilities in the institutions, hostels, dormitories, with individuals from different economic and social backgrounds.

The personal and social development of young university students’ has become the responsibility of learning institutions to the extent that today such institutions require a more formal structure and explicit definition of responsibilities (Owino, 2005). Consequently, there is increasing concern for a more comprehensive and formally structured pastoral care and counselling programmes in the educational institutions. As an individual goes through the university, he/she encounters, at times, situations which required him/her to take correct and appropriate educational, vocational and social decisions. Given that learners spend more time in learning institution than at their homes, it is vital that schools and universities have well established and maintained guidance and counselling department (Owino, 2005).

Ssekemwa (1970) & Mbiti (1981) assert that no human society has ever existed without its own system of education. Even the most primitive societies of the world today have a form of education system recognized by the society as a social institution through which knowledge, skills and attitudes are imparted to the youth. Hardoy (1993) on the other hand proposes that education should help an individual develop moral while Eshiwani (1993) argues that education has an additional function; formation of social personalities. In view of these contentions possible educational programmes that learners are exposed to in schools and the universities, guidance and counselling programmes are crucial and must be designed to meet these needs which include transmitting skills, knowledge norms and values (Owino 2005). This is supported by a body of evidence that demonstrate increasing levels of mental health disturbance and emotional distress among students which can be addressed through compressive and well-structured guidance and counselling services (Rao, 2003). Similarly, the committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals also recognized this when they published their guidelines on student mental health policies and procedures for Higher Education (CVCP, 2000).

In response, to these pressures, all Kenyan universities counseling services have developed a variety of integrated approaches to meet institutional needs, apart from establishing working links with other local service providers such as ‘I Choose Life (ICL)’ group in Moi University. When one hears or
is informed about university students in Kenya, what
rings in one’s mind is the numerous strikes sit-ins,
boycotts and damages attributed to prior nasty
experiences that Kenyans have witnessed among
university students to the extent that some people
have been made to believe that nothing good can
come out of the university students. It is evident
that the daily challenges that face university students in
Kenya are, indeed numerous and diverse, some of
them emanate from home, others from campus life,
while others are as a result of the emotional
turbulence characterized by this developmental
stages. Despite all these, university students are
expected to excel in their academic work in order to
live a meaningful life in future. This study therefore
sought to assess the effectiveness of guidance and
counselling in the socio-emotional development of
youth in Kenyan public universities.

A recent survey by the Association of University and
College Counsellor (AUCC 2002) has revealed that
all the public universities in Kenya have campus –
based counselling services which provide a wide
range of services from brief drop – in sessions
to longer – term therapeutic support. It is
recognized that there are complex inter-relationships
that require an effective guidance and counseling
programmes. On the other hand, Amukoa (1984) &
Khaemba (1986) posit that there has been little
systematic attempt to establish guidance and
counselling departments in Kenyan universities.
These could deal adequately with the problems facing
the university students. Due to lack of functional
guidance and counselling units there has been an
increase in indiscipline, rebellion and maladjustment
among the youth in Kenyan public universities.
Thus, concerns have been raised over the increase in
problems like drug abuse, immoral behaviour,
cheating in examination and unwanted pregnancies
among others. Therefore, this study sought to
evaluate how well established and functional are the
guidance and counselling unit is in public universities.

The study was grounded on the Goal Setting Theory
proposed by Locke & Latham (1990). It contends that
goal setting is an effective way of increasing
motivation and performance. The basic postulate of
the theory is that the intention to achieve a goal is a
promising force for behaviour. Goal’s direct both
mental and physical actions of individuals. Secondly,
goals increase peoples’ effort towards certain
activities while ignoring others. There are many
programmes that are offered by guidance and
counselling services in universities, but all of them
may not be offered to learners because other
academic and co-curricular activities must also be
considered. Thirdly goals increase persistence
because there is less temptation to quit once a goal
has been established. If the goal of guidance and
counselling is to solve relationship problems amongst
learners, for example, they are likely to remain
persistent as long as the problems remain (Owino
2005).

According to Locke & Latham (1990), feedback is
important in making goal setting an effective
motivating force. To be motivated there is need for a
strong sense of the discrepancy between where one is
and the desired state. Feedback helps to evaluate the
progress of a programme so that if it has fallen short,
then more effort or another strategy may be applied.
Likewise, when feedback highlights accomplishment,
confidence and analytic thinking performance is
likely to improve. Goal setting theory is important in
explaining how guidance and counseling unit can be
established in a way that it effectively achieves it’s
set goals. The basic assumption of rationality theory
is that, when decision – maker is confronted with
several alternatives of a solution to a problem he has
to weigh all the available alternatives on the basis of
costs and benefits of each alternative before making
decision.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
The study adopted a descriptive survey research
design. The design was used to investigate the
students rating of guidance and counseling, the type
of guidance and counselling services offered at
Masinde Muliro University of Science and
Technology. This design was found suitable because
it gives an in-depth description of the phenomena in
their existing setting and economical in collecting
data from a large sample with high data turn over
(Kothari, 2004). The study was conducted in Masinde
Muliro University of Science and Technology. A
public University situated in Kakamega Town of
Western Province, Kenya. The University is located
approximately at longitude 34 degrees and 46
minutes East and Latitude 0 degrees and 16 minutes
North along Kakamega-Webuye road.

The target population consisted of 1000 respondents
(third and fourth year) students as per university
registration at the time of the study. Simple random
sampling and stratified sampling techniques were
used. Simple random sampling was employed so that
each member of the population had an equal chance
of being picked and to have fair representation of all
population characteristics in this study. To achieve a
fair representation across the faculties, the study
employed stratified sampling technique where by the
participants were categorized according to faculties,
gender and year of study. Thus, a total of 204 (102
male and 102 female) third and fourth year students
were finally selected from all the faculties to
participate in the study. Data collection was by means
of questionnaires. The questionnaire was semi-
structured to elicit both qualitative and quantitative
data. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the
data. Quantitative responses based on Likert type scale were coded in the computer using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 11.5. Quantitative data analysis was done to generate frequencies and percentages. The data collected through open ended questions was first classified on the basis of common attributes then tallied to obtain statistical frequencies, tabulated and finally analyzed using descriptive statistics. According to Kothari (2004), this helps to collapse large volume of qualitative data in numerical form for ease of statistical interpretation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results of the findings are discussed in the subsequent subheadings.

Quality of the counseling services

Table 1: Student rating on the quality of counseling services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>V. Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>V. Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>41(40.2%)</td>
<td>33(32.4%)</td>
<td>13(12.8%)</td>
<td>8(7.8%)</td>
<td>7(6.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>39(38.2%)</td>
<td>35(34.3%)</td>
<td>17(16.7%)</td>
<td>6(5.9%)</td>
<td>5(4.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average %</td>
<td>39.2</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Data (2010)

Table 1 represents results of Student rating on the quality of counselling services. The results indicate that 148 (72.6%) respondents of the total sample rated the quality of counselling services as being satisfactory, 14.7% as average while only 27.4% as unsatisfactory. This implies that almost two third of the sampled students were happy with the counselling services. From this result it is suggestive that the university is offering high quality guidance and counselling services to the students. The study affirmed further that a similar number of males (74) and females (74) were of the view that counselling services offered to students are of high quality. This suggested that majority of the students in university appreciate the kind of counselling services provided by the guidance and counselling department. This also meant that the university guidance and counselling department embark on vigorous efforts to provide an effective and functional guidance and counselling services to students by employing trained counsellors and adopting flexible support services to the clientele. The results concur with AUCC (2002) observation that most universities in Kenya have campus – based counselling services in place where they provide a wide range of services ranging from brief drop – in sessions to longer – term therapeutic support.

Table 2: Student rating on the quality of motivational talks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>V. Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>V. Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>31(30.4%)</td>
<td>27(26.5%)</td>
<td>21(20.6%)</td>
<td>14(13.7%)</td>
<td>9(8.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>34(33.4%)</td>
<td>35(34.3%)</td>
<td>23(22.5%)</td>
<td>6(5.9%)</td>
<td>4(3.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average %</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Data (2010)

Table 2 represents students rating on the quality of motivational talks planned by the university guidance and counselling department. From the Table, most of the respondents at 62.3% rated motivational talks on social issues as satisfactory (very good and good), 21.6% as average and 16.1% as unsatisfactory (poor and very poor). Higher number of female participants at 67.7% compared to their male (56.9%) counterparts found motivational talks organized by university guidance and counselling department to be favourable. This meant that the motivational talks help to promote awareness and address emerging issues that challenge students’ academic plight. Besides, it facilitates a wider knowledge on job market requirements and job hunting skills. The study corroborates the assertion made by Owino (2005) that guidance and counselling help to solve relationship problems amongst learners which may be persistent as long as the problem remains.

Table 3: Student rating on the quality of career counseling services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>V. Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>V. Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>26(25.5%)</td>
<td>33(32.4%)</td>
<td>27(26.5%)</td>
<td>11(10.7%)</td>
<td>5(4.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20(19.7%)</td>
<td>35(34.3%)</td>
<td>35(34.3%)</td>
<td>9(8.8%)</td>
<td>3(2.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average %</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Data (2010)

The results as shown in Table 3 reveal that 56% of the respondents rated career counselling services as being favourable, 30.4% as average and 14.6% rated unfavourable. The positive view of students towards career counselling services offered in university
suggest that they benefit from the services particularly through annually organized career week open forum in MMUST. Nevertheless, a small proportion of students who showed negative approval of the career counselling services were probably influenced by the fact that they knew what career path to pursue and thus found it needless to seek the services. It could have been precipitated by lack of knowledge on the existence of career counselling services in the university. The finding further concur with Locke & Latham (1990), who were of the view that programmes offered by guidance and counselling departments assist students to overcome academic and career challenges.

CONCLUSIONS
Services offered at guidance and counselling department at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology are effective and satisfactory to the students who had sought them. Similarly, majority of students are positive towards motivational talks and career counselling services offered by the guidance and counselling department in the university. On average, the number of male and female students who seek counselling services on career issues is almost equal. A small fraction of respondents who participated in the study disapproved of the quality of counseling services being offered by the university guidance and counselling staff probably due to inadequate knowledge on the availability of such services in the university. However, this notwithstanding both male and female students had positive rating for counselling services offered in the university.

This study recommends the need for the shift of guidance and counselling department towards a holistic approach in assisting students with problems such as social, family, health and financial. The department should also broaden its functions in order to effectively render quality services to ever increasing student population and the complex issues. This could be done through enhanced training of peer educators and equipping the counselling center with necessary electronic facilities to aid counselling.

The guidance and counselling department should come up with strategies, through consultation with students and other stakeholders, on how best to improve such services as motivational talks and seminars on social and educational issues. This may in the long run help address divergent issues affecting students. The guidance and counselling department should network with relevant professions with a viewing of improving on the guidance and counselling services.

REFERENCES


