



IMPACT OF EFFECTIVE GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING ON STUDENTS OF CAPE COAST POLYTECHNIC, GHANA.

Ansah, J.K.

Department of Marketing Studies, Cape Coast Polytechnic, Cape Coast, Ghana

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to explore the impact of guidance and counselling on students' performance and the marketability of educational institutions with reference to Cape Coast Polytechnic. Its objectives are: to survey the present status of guidance and counselling at the polytechnic; to assess how the present status of the programme affects students' performance and the marketability of the Polytechnic; to determine students' desire for formal counselling; and to determine strategies to improve counselling at the polytechnic. The researcher developed questionnaires for lecturers and students for data collection. Respondents were Marketing students and lecturers of the polytechnic. Frequencies and percentages were used to analyse data. A small-scale trial counselling session was organised for all Marketing students to see how counselling would benefit them. The studies revealed that: even though some guidance services were run at the Polytechnic, counselling is not effectively run; factors which accounted for the ineffective counselling services included, among others, lack of monetary reward for counselling, non-existence of official counselling office, and lack of separate offices for individual lecturers; formal counselling can lead to improvement in student's academic performance; and majority of the students desired formal counseling. Recommendations: Based on the results, some useful recommendations were made. Prominent among them are: individual lecturers must be provided with separate offices; financial reward must be given to lecturers for counselling students; a counselling centre must be provided; and professional counsellors must be employed to man the counselling centre.

Keywords: Counseling, Guidance, Marketing, Service, Polytechnic

INTRODUCTION

British Association of Counselling (1999) defines counselling as "an interaction in which the counsellor offers another person the time, attention, and respect necessary to explore, discover and clarify ways of living more resourcefully, and to his or her greater well being" Additionally, counselling has been defined by the European Association of Counselling (2013) as "an integrated client beneficial relationship set up to approach a client's issues. These issues can be social, cultural and or emotional and the Counsellor will approach them in a holistic way. A client can be a person, or a family group or even an institution". Guidance is an umbrella term that includes such a constellation of services aimed at personal and career development and school adjustment; while guidance focuses on helping individuals choose what they value most; counselling focuses on helping them make changes (ZeePedia.com. 2015).



¹ revjamesansah@yahoo.co.uk

Ansah, J.K. (2015) Impact of Effective Guidance and Counselling on Students of Cape Coast Polytechnic, Ghana. In: Mojekwu, J.N., Ogunsumi, L.O., Ojigi, L.M., Atepor, L., Thwala, D.W., Sackey, S. Awere E., and Bamfo-Agyei, E. (Eds) African Journal of Applied Research .(AJAR) Journal, Vol.1, No.1 ISSN 2408-7920 January 2015, Cape Coast, Ghana. 328-343

Guidance and Counseling started in the period between 1900-1909 in the United States of America where Frank Parson, called the “father of guidance” founded the Boston’s Bureau in 1908 (ZeePedia.com (2015)). Around the same period Clifford Beers, whose mental illness made him to be hospitalized several times in his life, started the Mental Health Movement. In his work “A Mind That Found Itself (1908), Beers advocated better mental health facilities and reforms in the treatment of the mentally ill. The work of Frank Parson, Clifford Beers, Jesse Davis, Eli Weaver, and a host of other pioneers created momentum for the development of a school counseling profession (ZeePedia.com (2015)).

Even though counselling is a 20th century invention, it is relatively new in Ghana. According to Essuman (2001), serious work in establishing guidance and counseling in schools began in the late 1960s when the CRDU (Curriculum Research Development Unit) was instituted to cater for programmes in school welfare services, education for the handicapped, and guidance and counselling. In 1975, the Ghana Education Service (GES) organized its first guidance and counselling course in 1975 for 37 secondary school tutors and officers from regional directorates of the GES at the University of Cape Coast. Between 1976 and 1986, the Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (IEPA) of the University of Cape Coast, Ghana, in conjunction with the GES, trained 296 Guidance and Counselling co-ordinators. In August 1979 and March 1984, the GES organized national conferences for guidance co-ordinators leading to the formation of the Ghana Association of Guidance Co-ordinators (GAGCO).

Many issues constitute worry for students – depression; anxiety, nervousness, worrying; schoolwork and grade; relationship with romantic partner; self-esteem, self-confidence; procrastination, getting motivated, managing loss; relationship with family and parents; decision about major career; concentration; irritability (Michigan State University, 2015). Healy and Reily (in ERIC Digest, 2002) indicated that students of all ages need career exploration assistance. Students of higher education institutions need counseling for such problems as: (a) searching for job opportunities; (b) matching what students learn with labour needs of industry (Obeng, 2014); (c) family issues impeding the educational achievement of many female adult students (Solomon, as cited in Walther et al, 2002); and (d) role demands vis-à-vis career demands hindering educational advancement of many female adult students (Money and Andrew in ERIC Digest, 2002).

Students’ worries can be minimized through a strong counselling base. Chendo (1991) stated, for instance, that some students use drugs because they have not been counselled on the consequences of drug abuse. Speaking at the 8th congregation of the Prebyterian University College (PUC) on 12th December 2014 at Abetifi in the Kwahu East District, Professor E. Adow Obeng, President of the University, emphasised the importance of guidance and counselling in ensuring graduates choose the right programmes and exhibit excellence particularly good communication skills and critical thinking to become relevant for the job market. According to Citifmonline, Dec 26, 2014, Professor Adow Obeng observed that effective career guidance programmes in secondary and tertiary schools could help reduce graduate unemployment. He added:



Ansah, J.K. (2015) Impact of Effective Guidance and Counselling on Students of Cape Coast Polytechnic, Ghana. In: Mojekwu, J.N., Ogunsumi, L.O., Ojigi, L.M., Atepor, L., Thwala, D.W., Sackey, S. Awere E., and Bamfo-Agyei, E. (Eds) African Journal of Applied Research .(AJAR) Journal, Vol.1, No.1 ISSN 2408-7920 January 2015, Cape Coast, Ghana. 328-343

“Lack of effective guidance and counseling programmes to provide the needed information about the job market and direction to graduates has contributed to the high rate of graduate unemployment. There was a mismatch between the output of universities and the labour needs of industry because most of private universities are offering similar programmes leading to over production of graduates in some of the programmes.”

It is important to state that effective guidance and counselling at an educational institution will promote client-based relationships which are likely to sell the institution. The success of many services depends on creating and maintaining client-based relationships or interaction with customers that result in satisfied customers who repeatedly use a service over time (Braddy, 1990). The process of creating and maintaining client-based relationships is called *relationship marketing* (Pride & Ferrell, 2006). The goal of relationship marketing is to satisfy customers so well that they become very loyal to the provider and unlikely to switch to a competitor. By taking steps to completely satisfy customer needs, a service organization, like an educational institution, will make itself marketable and will successfully keep a customer for life.

Pride & Ferrell (2006) have stated:

“Service providers ... are successful only to the degree that they can maintain a group of clients who use their services on an ongoing basis. For example, a doctor may serve a family in his or her area for decades. If the family likes the quality of the services delivered by the doctor, they are likely to recommend him or her to other families. Once this positive word-of-mouth is repeated for several different families, it does not take long for the doctor to have a long list of satisfied clients. This process is the very essence of creating and maintaining client-based relationships. ”

Thus if tertiary students are satisfied with their school’s effort to handle their social and personal problems through effective guidance and counseling, besides effective teaching, effective client-based relationships can be created and maintained and the students and their relations are likely to recommend the school to other people. Once this positive word-of-mouth is repeated for several different families, it will not take long for the school to have a long list of satisfied students.

THE PROBLEM

The Cape Coast Polytechnic, as an educational institution, is marketing a service – both tertiary and non-tertiary educational programmes. Pride W. M & Ferrell O. C. (2006), have defined marketing as “the process of creating, distributing, promoting, and pricing goods, services, and ideas to facilitate satisfying exchange relationships in a dynamic environment.” Berry and Parasuraman cited in Pride and Ferrell (2006), defined a service as an intangible product involving a deed, a performance, or an effort that cannot be physically possessed. Pride W. M & Ferrell O. C. (2006), mentioned education as an example of service.



¹ revjamesansah@yahoo.co.uk

Ansah, J.K. (2015) Impact of Effective Guidance and Counselling on Students of Cape Coast Polytechnic, Ghana. In: Mojekwu, J.N., Ogunsumi, L.O., Ojigi, L.M., Atepor, L., Thwala, D.W., Sackey, S. Awere E., and Bamfo-Agyei, E. (Eds) African Journal of Applied Research .(AJAR) Journal, Vol.1, No.1 ISSN 2408-7920 January 2015, Cape Coast, Ghana. 328-343

The Cape Coast Polytechnic, like other tertiary institutions, is made up of students from different cultural, economic and social backgrounds who exhibit different needs and behaviors that affect their studies and development. The need to help identify these groups so as to aid their total development makes guidance and counseling programmes necessary in the polytechnics. Again, students must be guided and helped to make useful decisions regarding finances, sex and marriage, use of drugs and other important personal, social and economic matters. Some polytechnic students, it has been noted, do not put much effort into developing academic skills and this makes their studies burdensome (Polytechnic Education Special Service, 2002). This also emphasizes the importance of guidance programmes in the polytechnic. However, some educational institutions in Ghana do not have well established guidance offices. Cape Coast Polytechnic is not an exception. In such institutions, therefore, students' problems tend to be compounded because teachers and other officials fail to understand the unique problems of the students to provide them the needed assistance. While some of the students are crying out silently for help to resolve their real worries, school authorities may be providing answers to questions which nobody or perhaps only a few are asking for. It is to solve the problem of non-existence of effective counseling programmes at Cape Coast Polytechnic that this study was carried out.

This topic is essential to examine because it will lead to defining the present status of guidance and counseling at the Cape Coast polytechnic and will alert the polytechnic administration on the consequences of the present status of guidance and counseling as perceived by lecturers and students. It will also suggest what services, resources and facilities must be put in place to improve the situation at the polytechnic. Specifically this paper aims:

1. To examine the present status of guidance and counselling at Cape Coast Polytechnic;
2. To identify the effects of the present status of guidance and counselling services;
3. To ascertain the desire or otherwise of the students for formal counsellor assistance
4. To identify the effects of an effective counselling programme on the students' performance

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For this study a combination of survey and ex-post facto research design were used to identify the present status of Guidance and Counseling at Cape Coast Polytechnic. The target population for the study consisted of all the students and lecturers of the Cape Coast Polytechnic. The total number of students stood at 2,020 as at the time of the study, and that of the lecturers stood at 36. The target population for the study consisted of all the students and lecturers of the Cape Coast Polytechnic. The total number of students stood at 2,020 as at the time of the study, and that of the lecturers stood at 36. In all 300 Marketing students were used for the study – 100 first year students, 100 second year students, and 100 third year students. Also twenty (20) lecturers were randomly selected representing 55.6% of the total number of lecturers. In order to collect data two sets of questionnaire were used; one to collect data from lecturers, and the other to collect data from lecturers. Students' examination results were used to acquire necessary information. Marketing lecturers were also interviewed to collect data.



Pre-Intervention Stage

Questionnaire forms were distributed to all students in the Department of Marketing Studies of the Polytechnic at the beginning of first semester. They submitted the completed forms after a week. Lecturers' questionnaires were submitted at the same time. Four weeks after, the same instruments were administered to three hundred marketing students randomly selected from those who responded to and returned the questionnaires. The same lecturers' questionnaires were administered to the same twenty lecturers at the same time. The scores of the initial test and retest were collected and compared using mean and standard deviation. The aim here was to determine the degree of reliability of the instrument.

Intervention Strategies

From the beginning of the second semester to the end of September the researcher conducted a small-scale counselling session for all students of the department where he has most access. The purpose was to see how counselling would benefit students. First semester examination results of the 300 students under study were compiled. Lecturers of the Marketing department were interviewed and they supplied the researcher with information on what had been the students' general attitude towards attendance to lectures, writing of class exercises and assignments and contributions during lectures for the first semester. Besides individual counselling, the students were counselled in groups on specific days on common problems such as how to study, how to prepare notes, how to prepare for examination, how to do research at the library, and how to reduce examination anxiety and stress. The students were closely observed from the beginning to the end of the second semester taking into consideration such factors as their attitude towards the writing of class exercises and assignments, attitude towards attendance to lectures, and students' contribution during lectures.

Post-testing

After the intervention, questionnaire forms were distributed to the same 300 Marketing students to complete just before the second semester examination began to assess how the trial counselling had benefited them. The students' semester examinations results were studied in conjunction with the lecturers' personal observations on students' behavior to determine the impact of the trial counselling on the students.

RESULTS

Present Status of Guidance and Counselling at Cape Coast Polytechnic

Of the 300 students who responded to the questionnaire, 228 (76%) said there exist guidance and counselling programmes at the Cape Coast Polytechnic, 56 (18.7%) responded in the negative, and only 16 (5.3%) remained indifferent. Seventeen lecturers (85%) out of 20 said guidance and counselling programmes exist at the Cape Coast Polytechnic; 3 (15%) answered in the negative, and none remained indifferent. Thus 76.6% of the total number of respondents responded in the positive. This means that the programmes exist in the polytechnic.



¹ revjamesansah@yahoo.co.uk

Ansah, J.K. (2015) Impact of Effective Guidance and Counselling on Students of Cape Coast Polytechnic, Ghana. In: Mojekwu, J.N., Ogunsumi, L.O., Ojigi, L.M., Atepor, L., Thwala, D.W., Sackey, S. Awere E., and Bamfo-Agyei, E. (Eds) African Journal of Applied Research .(AJAR) Journal, Vol.1, No.1 ISSN 2408-7920 January 2015, Cape Coast, Ghana. 328-343

Forms and effectiveness of guidance and counselling services

All the respondents (100%) indicated that orientation is run in the polytechnic, 209 (65%) indicated that information service is run, and 191 (60%) indicated that placement service is run. Counseling, consultation and appraisal services are least run among those that are run. Evaluation and follow-up were not ticked at all. On the whole guidance and counseling exist at the polytechnic. Concerning the effectiveness of the guidance and counseling services, each of the services run accounts for less than 50% of the respondents. The services most effectively run are orientation and information. The least effectively run service is counselling.

Reasons for the ineffective guidance and counseling – Lecturers’ perspective

On the part of the lecturers, 13 (65%) of them attributed the ineffective guidance and counselling to lack of interest for guidance and counseling, (95%) to lack of financial reward, 2 (10%) to lack of guidance and counselling skills, 18 (90%) to lack of adequate official guidance and counselling offices, and 13 (65%) to lack of offices for the individual lecturers. The data obtained further indicates that 12 (60%) of the lecturers attributed the ineffective guidance and counselling to students’ negative attitude and insufficient time at their disposal for guidance and counselling, 15 (75%) to lack of official time allocated for guidance and counselling, and finally, 16 (80%) to the fact that no student has officially been assigned to any lecturer for guidance and counselling purposes. On the whole, lack of financial reward, lack of official guidance and counselling offices, and the factor of no students assigned officially to specific lecturers for counselling rank very high.

Reasons for the ineffective guidance and counselling – Students perspective

From the students’ point of view, lack of official guidance and counselling offices, and lack of counselors assigned to them are the main reasons for the ineffective guidance and counselling at the Polytechnic. These factors scored 100% each. Two hundred and forty (80%) of the respondents attributed the ineffective guidance counselling services to the lecturers being too busy to attend to them, 221 (74%) to absence of official time allocated on the time table, 195 (65%) to lack of information on the part for students about guidance and counselling services, and finally, 258 (86%) to the fact that lecturers do not pay enough attention to them any time they approach them with their problems.

The consequences of ineffective guidance and counselling services – Students perspective

Of the 300 respondents, 224 (75%) indicated that the absence of effective guidance and counselling services at the Cape Coast Polytechnic leaves them in crises because with their problems not solved and remaining with them, they feel rejected, hopeless and uncared-for. Again 75 (25%) respondents said they resort to drinking, smoking and other vices. Moreover ninety-three (31%) of the respondents said the effects on them are absenteeism, and poor performance during class test, exercises and examinations. Further, 164 (55%) respondents attributed their lack of interest in working hard at their assignments to the ineffective guidance and counseling. To 182 (61%) respondents, the effect is lack of joy on their part in being at



Ansah, J.K. (2015) Impact of Effective Guidance and Counselling on Students of Cape Coast Polytechnic, Ghana. In: Mojekwu, J.N., Ogunsumi, L.O., Ojigi, L.M., Atepor, L., Thwala, D.W., Sackey, S. Awere E., and Bamfo-Agyei, E. (Eds) African Journal of Applied Research .(AJAR) Journal, Vol.1, No.1 ISSN 2408-7920 January 2015, Cape Coast, Ghana. 328-343

school. To 86 (29%) respondents, they are always ill-prepared for examinations and thus resort to various forms of examination malpractices.

The consequences of ineffective guidance and counselling service – lecturers’ perspective

From the point of view of lecturers, the ineffective guidance and counselling programmes affect students in four ways – 14 (70%) respondents said students show poor attitude to work, 13 (65%) said students resort to examination malpractices because of their poor preparation for examination since they are always thinking about their problems; 12 (60%) said students made poor contributions during lectures; and finally 11 (55%) said students involved themselves in rampant absenteeism.

The Effects of an Effective Counselling Programme on Students

(a) Pre-intervention

The pre-intervention interviews held with the Marketing lecturers revealed the following.

- i. Most of the Marketing students exhibited negative attitudes towards academic work. These were evidenced by such factors as follows:
 - Generally the students attended lectures when and as they liked. Some of them at times left the lecture halls before the lecturers ended, even without permission.
 - Classes were always not full. On the average class attendance was 65%.
- ii. Some did not write assignments, and written assignments were not satisfactory as many were mere copy work.
- iii. Class contributions of students were not satisfactory.

(b) Post-intervention

Post-intervention data collected revealed an improvement both in the students’ attitude towards academic work and in their examination performance. Questionnaires completed by students just before the second semester examination began revealed students’ positive attitude towards the examination. Interviews with the Marketing lecturers after the intervention just before the second semester examination revealed that the situation had improved as regards students’ attendance to lectures, writing of assignments and class contributions.

(c) Summary of examination results of the 300 marketing students studied

Of the 300 selected students who sat for the first semester examination, 189 (63%) got a grade point average (GPA) of 2.0 or below. In other words only 111 (37%) got a GPA of 3.0 or above. In the second semester examination, 104 (34.7%) of the 300 students got a GPA of 2.9 or below. In other words 196 (65.3%) got a GPA of 3.0 and above. Second semester examination results show improvement because a greater number of students got a GPA of 3.0 and above. The number of students who got a GPA of 2.9 or below dropped from 189 (63%) in the first semester examination to 104 (34.7%) in the second semester examination.



Desire of Students for Formal Counsellor Service

As to the question of the desire or otherwise of students for a formal counselor service, of the total of 100 first year students, 92 (92%) responded 'Yes' to the Question, 5 (5%) responded 'No' and 3 (3%) did not respond at all. Of the total of 100 second year students, 90 (90%) responded 'Yes' to the question, 6 (6%) responded 'No' and 4 (4%) were undecided. Of the total of 100 third year students 85 (85%) responded 'Yes' to the question, 7 (7%) respond in the negative and 8 (8%) were indifferent. Finally, of the total of 300 respondents, 267 (89%) responded 'Yes' to the question, 18 (6%) responded 'No' and 15 (5%) remained indifferent. Thus the majority of the respondents desire the assistance of a formal counsellor in dealing with their problems.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The Existence and Effectiveness of Guidance and Counselling

This study found that guidance and counseling is partly run at the Cape Coast Polytechnic. As to the kind of guidance and counseling services run most at the polytechnic, the study revealed that orientation, information and placement are the services mostly run. Again the study revealed that consultation, appraisal and counseling services are least run in the polytechnic, while evaluation and follow-up services are not run at all.

The study revealed that guidance and counseling on the whole, is not effectively run at the Cape Coast Polytechnic. This stems from several factors. There is no official guidance and counseling centre in the polytechnic where students can visit with their problems to receive counseling. No counselors have been assigned to students and no specific times have been set for counseling. Therefore students, in most cases do not know clearly where to go or who to contact when they have problems. Students also complain that lecturers are too busy to listen to them; they seem to have something more important to attend to and show no interest in helping them to get over their worries. Again students do not know whether lecturers are also there to solve their personal problems; all they know is that lecturers are there to teach and examine them. This is due to lack of official time allocated for counseling.

From the point of view of lecturers there is lack of interest on the part of lecturers. This is due to lack of financial reward to motivate them to offer part of their working hours or non-working hours for counseling students. Also there is no official counseling office set aside for counseling students. Again lecturers do not have separate offices to enjoy privacy where they can feel comfortable to counsel students. Another reason for the ineffective guidance and counseling at the Cape Coast Polytechnic is the fact that lecturers do not have adequate extra time for counseling. The official teaching takes all their time, and a lecturer may teach many courses, and class sizes are large which means lecturers are always busy lecturing, and assessing students. Again, students have negative attitude towards seeking counseling when they have problems.



Ansah, J.K. (2015) Impact of Effective Guidance and Counselling on Students of Cape Coast Polytechnic, Ghana. In: Mojekwu, J.N., Ogunsumi, L.O., Ojigi, L.M., Atepor, L., Thwala, D.W., Sackey, S. Awere E., and Bamfo-Agyei, E. (Eds) African Journal of Applied Research .(AJAR) Journal, Vol.1, No.1 ISSN 2408-7920 January 2015, Cape Coast, Ghana. 328-343

Other researchers and authors gave some of these reasons for ineffective guidance and counseling programmes. According to Duro-Jaiye (1972), even though guidance and counseling is basically good for all kinds of people throughout the life span, its impact has not been felt in schools. The counselors themselves constitute a major impediment. Some of them are not fully committed to the profession. They often think they have major needs to cater for first and foremost and thus schedule little or no time for counseling. There is also lack of clarity about their roles. Adjetei (1984), Affum-Gyan (1992) and Ocansey (1992) in their evaluative studies of guidance and counseling programmes in selected second cycle schools in the Greater Accra Region; Birim South District and Cape Coast respectively mentioned that Guidance and Counselling as practiced in their areas of study have not been fully effective. They attributed the situation to factors such as inadequate training; lack of personal office and facilities and lack of qualified Guidance Co-ordinations. Lack of interest of teachers to attend a guidance co-ordination course has led to absence of organized guidance and counseling programmes in some selected schools. Anyimah (1983) stated this fact when he studied Guidance and Counselling Programmes in Sefwi District.

Consequences of The Present Status of Guidance and Counselling

The ineffective counseling services at the Cape Coast Polytechnic have very serious consequences on the students. The study has revealed that because counseling services are not provided at the polytechnic students always feel left to their devices. They are in crises when they have problems and they feel hopeless and uncared-for because it is difficult for them to obtain help from the lecturers who always seem to have something more important to attend to. Therefore, while students are crying out silently over their personal and social problems, the polytechnic officials seem to be providing answers to issues which few people are asking. Some students, hard-pressed by their problems, resort to drinking, smoking, drug abuse, sexual immorality and other social vices. This has often led to students' absenteeism, poor performance, lack of interest in working hard to write their class assignments, and ill-preparation for examinations leading to various forms of examination malpractices. Other results of the absence of counseling service according to the study include students' poor attitude to work (as regards class attendance, writing of assignment), and poor performance in examinations. This has affected the competitiveness of most of the Polytechnic's graduate who are competing with graduates from universities and other polytechnics in the same job market.

The above-mentioned problems arising from ineffective guidance and counseling at the Cape Coast Polytechnic have affected negatively the marketability of the Polytechnic. Because most of the students feel hopeless and uncared-for when they have problems and find it difficult to obtain help from the lecturers who seem to have something more important to attend to, most of them and their acquaintances are not willing to recommend the Polytechnic to their friends and other prospective students. Because of negative word-of-mouth repeated over several years, Cape Coast Polytechnic's student enrollment has been dwindling consistently as compared with that of the University of Cape Coast, the nearest university, and that of the Takoradi and Accra Polytechnics, the two nearest polytechnics to Cape Coast Polytechnic. Cape Coast is noted as



¹ revjamesansah@yahoo.co.uk

Ansah, J.K. (2015) Impact of Effective Guidance and Counselling on Students of Cape Coast Polytechnic, Ghana. In: Mojekwu, J.N., Ogunsumi, L.O., Ojigi, L.M., Atepor, L., Thwala, D.W., Sackey, S. Awere E., and Bamfo-Agyei, E. (Eds) African Journal of Applied Research .(AJAR) Journal, Vol.1, No.1 ISSN 2408-7920 January 2015, Cape Coast, Ghana. 328-343

the most popular centre of learning in Ghana and its only University and all its second cycle schools are flooded with a high student enrollment. The study, however, revealed that even though Cape Coast Polytechnic is the only polytechnic in the Central Region of Ghana and is noted for its pool of qualified academics, it is suffering from deep hunger for students and if the situation does not improve in the nearest future, the polytechnic is likely to close down. If the Polytechnic's students' problems are reduced through effective counseling, the Polytechnic's marketability is likely to be enhanced and a positive student enrollment is likely to be the result.

Effects of The Intervention

Interviews held by the researcher with the Marketing lecturers before and after the intervention revealed that the intervention had led to improvement in the students' attitude towards their academic work as regards their attendance to lectures, writing of class. Before the intervention, most of the Marketing students exhibited negative attitudes towards academic work. For example, always classes were not full; some students did not write assignments; and most of them scarcely asked questions and few of them answered questions or made contributions during lectures. The study also revealed that the intervention led to improvement in the academic performance of the Marketing students. The first semester examination results before the intervention showed that of 300 selected students who sat for the first semester examination, 189 got a grade point average (GPA) of 2.0 or below. This number constituted 63%. In other words only 37 (37%) got a GPA of 3.0 or above. The second semester examination conducted after the intervention provided an improved situation. It showed that of the same 300 students studied, 104 (34.7%) got a GPA of 2.9 or below. In other words 196 (66.3%) got a GPA of 3.0 and above. The number of students who got a GPA of 2.9 or below dropped from 189 (63%) to 104 (34.7%).

Even though improvements in the students' academic performance could be attributed to several factors which may not be related to the intervention, it would be difficult for one to neglect the contribution offered by the trail counselling session which sought to address students' academic problems by offering a forum for the students to be counselled on how to study, how to prepare notes and do research at the library, how to prepare for examination, and how to get along with other people all of which could lead to reduction of examination stress and anxiety. The resultant good mental health of the students reflected in their examination results. The counselling session mainly concentrated on addressing students' problems concerning academic work (including how study, prepare notes and prepare for examination). Doubtless, examination anxiety and stress have serious toll on students' performance because some of them get sick, while others experience fear, tension, and mental distortions. These abnormal experiences can be minimized through effective counselling.



The Desire of Students for Counselling

The study indicated that most of the students desire the establishment of effective guidance and counselling programmes to help them solve their personal and moral problems. This is supported by Forde (2000) who indicated in her studies on the worries of Ghanaian adolescents that over 80% of the respondents would appreciate counsellor services to resolve their problems. According to The Guardian (2015), demand for counseling services on campuses in UK has risen by a third since 2008, and in the University of Glasgow, for instance, the number of students seeking counseling has doubled.

Implications of The Results

It is realized from the study that formal counselling is not effective at the Cape Coast Polytechnic. Thus for all this time most students have had no counselling and their problems are still with them. The idea of leaving students to themselves, without the help of any counselors that can enable them to develop such virtues as self reliance, self understanding, self direction and problem solving skills, has not yielded and will never yield fruitful results. There is the implication that the problem of ineffective counselling at Cape Coast Polytechnic must be considered seriously. It is necessary that the Cape Coast Polytechnic authorities wake up to their responsibilities to establish and ensure effective guidance and counselling programmes before it is too late.

The results pertaining to desire for counselor services indicated that the majority of the students would appreciate this service. Forde (2000) stressed, however, that:

“While the majority of students may be in varying degrees of need for counsellor service, only a few may have the courage to take the initiative and disclose their problems to school helpers. The implication then is that counsellors must make every effort to be approachable to those they seek to help. Frequent random invitations to students and greater effort by counsellors to provide a congenial environment in the counselling process may help these young people to lose some of their reserve and take advantage of counsellor services where they are available”.

The finding from the intervention that counsellor services can reduce examination stress and anxiety, and improve students’ mental health, interpersonal relationships, and students’ performance at examinations and hence improve the marketability of the Polytechnic, implies that the existence of a formal counsellor service at Cape Coast Polytechnic will be of great benefit to the polytechnic community. It behooves the polytechnic administration, therefore, to endeavour to establish a counselling centre as a matter of urgency. The University of Oxford (2015) states that the Counselling Service helps students to gain understanding and insight into any difficulties they may be experiencing, to develop emotional resilience and put into effect real changes, enabling them to fulfill their academic and personal potential. The following



comments from students who benefited from the Warwick University's Counselling Service confirm the usefulness of the service (Warwick Counselling Service, 2015):

“I identified the origin of my problem and developed ways of tackling the issue”

“Counselling helped me to understand that what I was feeling wasn't so strange and that talking about it can really help”

“Counselling helped me understand why I was feeling particular emotions and helped me get to the bottom of certain areas I was finding difficult to explore”

“I feel like I understand myself and my thoughts better. I understand the impact of my negative thoughts and am now developing strategies to overcome them”

CONCLUSION

Through the study the present status of guidance and counselling at the Cape Coast Polytechnic has been examined. After the examination of the present guidance and counselling situation, some conclusions about the implications have been reached based on the findings. These would alert the polytechnic authorities of the consequences of an effective guidance and counselling services on the students, and what services, resources and facilities must be put in place to improve the situation at the polytechnic.

Recommendations

Suggestions to remedy the problem of ineffective counseling service at Cape Coast Polytechnic are made in the form of the following recommendations.

1. The polytechnic authorities must provide a counseling centre where students can visit and receive counselling.
2. Guidance and counselling services must be organized along such lines as those provided by some of the top universities in Ghana and elsewhere as outlined below.

Essuman (as cited in Boham, 2005) outlines, as follows, the various guidance programmes offered by counseling centres of the three top universities in Ghana which are worthy of consideration:

- (a) University of Ghana – counselling of students; occupational orientation and placement services; administration of vocational training schemes for Sciences, Geography and Administration studies; orientation programmes for secondary schools on university courses; preventive counselling programmes for students
- (b) Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology – orientation courses for freshmen; awareness campaign for students; counselling seminars; career conventions for second cycle schools



Ansah, J.K. (2015) Impact of Effective Guidance and Counselling on Students of Cape Coast Polytechnic, Ghana. In: Mojekwu, J.N., Ogunsumi, L.O., Ojigi, L.M., Atepor, L., Thwala, D.W., Sackey, S. Awere E., and Bamfo-Agyei, E. (Eds) African Journal of Applied Research .(AJAR) Journal, Vol.1, No.1 ISSN 2408-7920 January 2015, Cape Coast, Ghana. 328-343

- (c) University of Cape Coast – counselling services to staff, students and to institutions outside the university; seminars, workshops, conferences and orientation courses to the university community and beyond; collection and dissemination of educational, vocational and personal-social information to students and staff.

The University of Warwick provides the following:

- (a) Email counselling – helpful to be able to write down issues and see your own words so you can reflect on them, and useful if you want to take advantage of when you choose to allocate time to your issues;
- (b) Face-to-face individual counselling – beneficial if you want to talk through your issues in person, at a pre-scheduled appointment time;
- (c) Group therapy – valuable if you want to consider how you function in relation to others and if you are keen to invest in long term personal development;
- (d) Self-help resources – helpful if you want to find out more about your issues and seek strategies to help yourself; accessible 24/7 and with links to a range of resources; and
- (e) Specific issue workshop – suitable if you want to learn about specific issues in a supportive learning environment with a small group of others who are interested in developing strategies to help manage similar concerns
(The Warwick Counselling Service, 2015)

Oxford Students (2015) outlines the following counselling services provided by the University of Oxford:

- (a) Individual counselling – working individually with a counsellor in a meaningfully focused and brief way.
 - (b) Workshops – a range of workshops are available to help you build skills to respond to the demands of university
 - (c) Group counselling – explore how you relate to others and benefit from their support and experience
 - (d) Supportive resources – access resources which are used to support students at Oxford
 - (e) Advice for staff – for those with concerns about the mental welfare of a student to ensure support is provided early
 - (f) Advice for parents – advice on supporting your child and the support available at the University.
3. The polytechnic administration must provide lecturers with separate offices to enable them conduct individual counselling effectively.
 4. There must be official time set aside for the counseling of students at the counselling centre.
 5. More lecturers must be employed to reduce the workload of each lecturer. The reason is that counselling requires ample time. If lecturers are to add counselling to their official duties, then the teaching load must be reduced. The researcher suggests a maximum of eight hours a week per lecturer.



6. Professional counsellors must be employed by the polytechnic to man the counselling centre. The Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (2013) has stated that counselling is a professional activity that utilizes an interpersonal relationship to enable people to develop self-understanding and to make changes in their lives. Like the minister or physician or any other educated professional, the counsellor must learn specialized procedures and be responsible for their application in the light of a broad knowledge of his/her field. Thus, besides personal qualities, the counsellor should be very knowledgeable in a wide range of disciplines, some of which are psychology, appraisal methods, counselling theory, and vocational development theory. Parson (cited in ZeePedia.com, 2015) believes that the vocational counsellor should have the following traits: (a) a practical working knowledge of psychology; (b) an experience involving human contact; (c) an ability to deal with young people; (d) a knowledge of requirements and conditions of success; (e) information about courses and means of preparation; (d) scientific method analysis.
7. The lecturers, the rectors, the liaison officer and the polytechnic nurse are all crucial for the achievement of guidance goals. The professional counsellor must not be made to play every role in the polytechnic guidance programme. The development of a team approach to guidance programme is strongly advocated by the researcher.
8. The counselling programmes should be comprehensive, collaborative and developmental (Paisley, 2001). They should be able to (a) serve all pupils and their caregivers, (b) encourage the attainment of the prescribed student competencies, (c) offer an assortment of services, and (d) provide a remediation and prevention (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000, 2001). Continued collaboration should be facilitated by the administrative staff (Sink, 2003). There is the need for ongoing evaluation to ensure that the programme is fostering relevant outcomes (Lapan, 2001). For students to do well at school, comprehensive counselling programmes must support collaboration and partnership among school personnel and leading stakeholders (e.g., parents, community agency representatives (Littrell & Peterson, 2001). The school counsellor should design, implement and further refine the comprehensive programme so as to serve all children adequately (Sink, 2003).
9. More lecturers should be trained in counseling techniques, skills and attitudes. They should be encouraged and sponsored to attend formal counselling conferences to update their knowledge.
10. Counsellors should conduct need assessment survey, at least once a year to determine students' current problems. The findings will help them to determine objectives of the guidance and counselling programmes for the year. Also the result can be used to redirect the programme for the better.
11. Financial reward is one of the motivating factors for all kinds of employees. The finding that the lack of financial reward for lecturers is one of the factors militating against the effective running of guidance and counseling programme at the polytechnic means that



¹revjamesansah@yahoo.co.uk

Ansah, J.K. (2015) Impact of Effective Guidance and Counselling on Students of Cape Coast Polytechnic, Ghana. In: Mojekwu, J.N., Ogunsumi, L.O., Ojigi, L.M., Atepor, L., Thwala, D.W., Sackey, S. Awere E., and Bamfo-Agyei, E. (Eds) African Journal of Applied Research .(AJAR) Journal, Vol.1, No.1 ISSN 2408-7920 January 2015, Cape Coast, Ghana. 328-343

guidance and counselling must not be carried out without adequate financial reward if the programme is to succeed.

12. To ensure successful establishment of an effective guidance and counselling programme at the polytechnic, there is the need for a preliminary introduction of the nature and scope of the programme to the polytechnic community. The staff and students must be taught to understand the nature of the programme and the role the various members of the polytechnic are to play to ensure the success of the programme.

REFERENCES

- Adjetey, S. (1984). An Evaluative Study of Guidance and Counselling in some selected Second Cycle Institutions in Greater Accra Region. *Unpublished BED Thesis*, Cape Coast University of Cape Coast, Ghana
- Affum-Gyan, K. (1992). An Evaluative Study of Guidance and Counselling Programmes in selected Second Cycle Schools in the Birim District. *Unpublished BED Thesis*, Cape Coast University of Cape Coast, Ghana
- Anyimah, S. (1984). An Evaluative Study of Guidance and Counselling Programmes in Sefwi Wiaso District. *Unpublished BED Thesis*, Cape Coast University of Cape Coast, Ghana
- Boham, E. A. (2005). Guidance needs of polytechnic students in Ghana. *Unpublished M.Phil Thesis*, Department of Education Foundation, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast.
- Braddy, F. N. (1990). *Ethical Managing: Rules and Results*. New York: Macmillan.
- British Association of Counselling (1999). *Theory and Practice of Counselling*. <http://www.zeepedia.com/read.pho?historical-background-1900-1909-frank-parson-psychophathic-hospitals-theory-and-practice-of-counselling=97&c=3> Retrieved December 5, 2014
- Chendo, L. U. (1991). Prevalence of drug use among secondary school students in Abakali Urban of Enugu State: Implications for Counselling. *Unpublished Thesis*
- Duro-Jaiye, M. O. (1972). *Psychological Guidance of the School Child*. London: Evans Brothers Ltd
- ERIC Digest (2002). Adult women in community colleges. [http://www.ed.gov/data bases/ERIC Digest/ed4511860.html](http://www.ed.gov/data_bases/ERIC_Digest/ed4511860.html). Retrieved December 5, 2014
- Essuman, J. K. (2001). A Review of Educational Studies (1983-1997) in Guidance and Counselling in Schools in Ghana. *Ghana Journal of Psychology*, 1(1), 2-88.
- European Association of Counselling (2013). *Definition of counseling*. <http://eac.eu.com/standards-ethics/definition-counselling/> Retrieved December 5, 2014
- Forde, L.D. (2000). Self-perceived personal and social worries of Ghanaian adolescents. *Journal of Ghana Psychological Association*, 1(1), 25-38.
- Gysbers, N. C., and Henderson, P. (2000). *Developing and managing your school guidance programmes* (3rd ed.), Alexandria, VA: American Counselling Association.
- Lapan, R. T. (2001). Results-based comprehensive guidance and counseling programmes: A framework for planning and evaluation. *Professional School Counselling*, 4, 289-299.



¹ revjamesansah@yahoo.co.uk

Ansah, J.K. (2015) Impact of Effective Guidance and Counselling on Students of Cape Coast Polytechnic, Ghana. In: Mojekwu, J.N., Ogunsumi, L.O., Ojigi, L.M., Atepor, L., Thwala, D.W., Sackey, S. Awere E., and Bamfo-Agyei, E. (Eds) African Journal of Applied Research .(AJAR) Journal, Vol.1, No.1 ISSN 2408-7920 January 2015, Cape Coast, Ghana. 328-343

Littrell, J. M., and Peterson, J. S. (2001). Transforming the school culture: A model based on an exemplary counselor. *Professional School Counselling*, 4, 313-319.

Michigan State University (2014), *Ten most frequently presented problems for which MSU students seek service at the Counselling Centre*. <http://www.counselling.msu.edu/parents/commonproblems>. Retrieved January 3, 2015

Obeng, E. A. (2014). Career guidance will reduce unemployment. *Citifmonline*, Dec 26, 2014 <http://www.citifmonline.com/2014/12/26/career-guidance-will-reduce-unemployment-porf-adow-obeng/#sthash.nh3hptOv.dpuf>. Retrieved January 3, 2015

Ocansey, M. S. (1980). Guidance and Counselling as Practised in Selected Secondary Schools in the Cape Coast Municipality. *Unpublished BED Thesis*, Cape Coast, University of Cape Coast.

Paisley, P. O., and Hayes, R. L. (2003). School counseling: An evolving specialty. *Journal of Counselling & Development*, 74, 150-153.

Parson, F. (1909). *Theory and Practice of Counselling*. <http://www.zeeopedia.com/read.pho?historical-background-1900-1909-frank-parson-psychopathic-hospitals-theory-and-practice-of-counselling=97&c=3> Retrieved December 5, 2014

Polytechnic Education Special Services (2002). *Counselling – Academic Issues*. <http://www.poly.edu/specialservices/academicis.html>. Retrieved December 5, 2014

Pride, W. M & Ferrell O. C. (2006), *Marketing – Concept and Strategies*. Houghton: Mifflin Company.

Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (2013). *Counselling & psychotherapy definition*. Retrieved from <http://pacfa-org-au.cloud.hosting-toolkt.net/all-events/> Retrieved December 5, 2014

Sink, C. A. (2002). In search of the profession's finest hour: A critique of four views of 21st century school counseling. *Professional School Counselling*, 5, 156-163.

Swan Expressive Therapies (2007), *Counselling*. Prize WebWorks Inc. <http://www.swanexpressivetherapies.com/counseling.htm> Retrieved December 5, 2014

The Guardian (2015). Number of university students seeking counseling rises 33%. *Guardian News and Media Limited*. <http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2013/Oct/10/university-students-seeking-counselling-mental-health-uk> Retrieved December 5, 2014

University of Oxford (2014). *Counselling*. <http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare/counselling>

Walter, E.S., and Ritchie, W.F. (2002). *Counselling the adult college student*. <http://www.shpm.com.ppc/viewpoint/adultst> Retrieved December 5, 2014

Warwick Counselling Services (2015). *Student counselling and information*. <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/tutors/counselling/student/> Retrieved December 5, 2014

ZeePedia.com (2014). *Theory and Practice of Counselling*. <http://www.zeeopedia.com/read.pho?historical-background-1900-1909-frank-parson-psychopathic-hospitals-theory-and-practice-of-counselling=97&c=3> Retrieved December 5, 2014