

Guidelines, Frameworks and Practices of School Guidance and Counselling: A Comparison between Uganda and Germany

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Abstract: This study sought to review the school guidance and counselling program in Uganda as an underdeveloped country in comparison with that of Germany as a developed one. The study was prompted by the unending unemployment and the rising poverty levels, especially in the underdeveloped world. These are some of the most challenging bottlenecks to economic development in the third world and can only be solved by a well aligned and strategically designed education system as per Goal 4.7 of the United Nation's Strategic Development Goals. The study applied a qualitative thematic approach to collect data from existing frameworks, guidelines and studies on school guidance and counselling of the two countries. The study established that the easy access of guidance and counselling program information from various sources in Germany helps students to make informed decisions for their future career, which boosts the country's attainment of intended educational, manpower goals and objectives. Unlike Germany, Uganda misses a lot of information, for instance, on opportunities that would help international students and immigrants to make informed decisions toward their future careers. The study recommends that the Uganda Ministry of Education and Sports considers overhauling its School guidance and counselling program since there are numerous gaps as compared with that of Germany. Germany can also consider developing school guidance and counselling curriculum to standardize that practice across the country.

Keywords: School; guidance and counselling; Germany; Uganda; education.

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Introduction

While Uganda is among top ranking countries with the most youthful populations (World Bank, 2017), it is still one of underdeveloped nations. On the contrary, Germany is among the most highly developed nations with a very high Human Development Index (HDI) and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Knowles, 2013; OECD Publishing,

2016). This study sought to compare Guidelines, Frameworks and Practices of School Guidance and Counselling between Uganda and Germany. The study was prompted by the fact that one of the most challenging issues in today's high school students is the transition to higher education, which involves making informed decisions about career in the vast world of professions (Rosenbaum, 2001;

McDonough, 1997; Reay, Davies, David & Ball, 2001). The contemporary world of education is staggering with limited answers about appropriate careers that are compatible with the need in the job market (Reay et al, 2001; Austin, 2002). This is compounded by the influx of players especially in the field of higher education with multitudes of academic disciplines, some of which are duplications. This results into the emergence of more complex challenges like job-skill mismatch among higher education graduates.

Many of the developing and underdeveloped parts of the world are facing unemployment crises that seem far from being resolved with situations getting worse year after year. The outbreak of the Corona virus, which culminated into the Covid 19 Pandemic with millions of deaths and lockdowns around the world has opened a Pandora's Box of insightful thinking. With many professions declared non-essential, the most important question would be whether the choice of career professions is well guided.

Secondary school education is one of the most important stages of education where students make choices of their future careers as they join different categories of higher education. If labour markets and education systems are to meet their desired goals, then career guidance and counselling is a key player and should be strategically included in school systems. Social mobility is no longer about just acquiring knowledge and skills but is also a wider acquisition of knowledge and skills and most importantly how to use them (OECD, 2016). It is important to note that grooming a career alone without the appropriate personal development and enrichment is meaningless.

The world today has metamorphosed socially, economically, technologically, scientifically and politically as there are major human transformations almost in every five years. Furthermore, there are numerous emerging issues like the dynamic changes in science and technology, the recent Corona Virus pandemic where all of sudden, online learning has been normalized at all levels irrespective of academic discipline. These ought to be addressed continuously by education systems (Boitt, 2016). Therefore guidance and counselling services, much as it may be emphasized for purposes of informed career choices, it is also key in empowering young souls to counter problems of academic performance, drug abuse, alcoholism and unrest in schools, among others. This therefore

calls for well-structured, streamline and sustainable school guidance and counselling programs (Waydon & Yagoma, 2016).

The other disturbing question would be whether emphasis should be put on immediate career decision or other required skills. OECD (2016) emphasises that there is a dire need to provide career management skills which would include personal development instead of just empowering people to make immediate career decisions. If career management programs will have an impact on societies or organisations, they should include personal development skills which trim and modify the personality of an individual.

There is an influx of literature into the academic world on educational policies to enrol more kids in school than emphasis on career choice. In fact, it is possible to find no policy framework on career guidance in some countries around the world. In Papua New Guinea, Waydon and Yagoma (2016) recommended the promulgation of a comprehensive policy on career guidance and counselling with a compulsory directive on its implementation after realising that it did not exist.

It is rationally agreeable that uninformed education and career choices could be disastrous to economic development of any country, culminating into high levels of unemployment and underemployment. It is therefore no surprise that many counties around the world are cognizant of this issue and are considering implementing flexible systems of education that have inbuilt systems of career guidance and counselling (Ibid). This, they hope, can improve the school systems and guarantee a better future for children. Therefore, guidance and counselling should be continuously reviewed and upgraded to meet contemporary job market and economic production demands around the world (Waydon & Yagoma, 2016; David ,Truța, Cazan, Albisser & Keller-Schneider, 2020).

Through effective career guidance and counselling, students are able to cope with the social, economic and work environment requirements. As a result, career management skills have been emphasized by education systems around the world in a bid to empower students if they are to make well informed decisions. Career management skills could contextually have differing but related meanings. It is all about those competencies which provide individuals with structured ways of collecting and using information pertaining the self, educational

and occupational opportunities plus being able to make and implement career decisions (David et al., (2020).

There is no doubt that career guidance and counselling programs are effective in empowering students in career related decisions. Through effective guidance and counselling, students will easily develop career related skills and knowledge, hence making informed choices that are compatible with current job markets (David et al, 2020); Boitt, 2016).

Global Education Strategy

The justification for the need of well-structured, organized, implemented and enforced school guidance and counselling programs is for countries to achieve goal 4.7 of Sustainable Development which is to ensure that by 2030, every learner in the world acquires the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, the education for sustainable development, sustainable lifestyles, human rights, the equality of gender, the promotion of peaceful culture and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity (UNESCO, 2016).

To achieve this goal requires a well aligned strategy in the education system, yet in a diversified approach. UN provides an opportunity to ensure that international and national programs are linked to the understanding of the world in which people live, comprehending the rich and poor divide and therefore a need for people to work in a more just and equitable manner (Bourn, 2005). Sustainability of an educational system for development is determined by a proper system of guidance and counselling in educational institutions.

Careers are emphasized and documented according to national needs. Career guidance and counselling processes should be highly indigenized to fit in the traditional circles amidst globalized requirements. Educational guidance and counselling, which is related to career guidance and counselling, was initially perceived as giving students information about themselves in line with the educational and labor markets. This would help them make appropriate and informed decisions about their future careers. However, contemporary findings indicate that this is not sufficient and hence a need to incorporate personal, social, educational and vocational development of students (Conger, 1994).

The handling of global challenges is still limited and there seems to be no progress especially in the underdeveloped world. There is poverty, famine and unemployment with signs of no hope, given the limited global capacity to address some of these issues (Nordén and Avery, 2021). There is no doubt career guidance and counselling is a key factor in addressing some of these global challenges. The concern, however, is how it should be designed, developed and implemented in the education system of each country, taking into consideration the contextual connotations. Solving these global challenges must take new strategies that create an interconnection of regions in the world. Therefore, experts must encourage global interconnectedness and create platforms through which people are given the required knowledge and skills that will enable them engage in society for local and international changes (Bourn, 2005).

Historical Excerpt

According to Strasser (2013), institutionalized counselling in Germany is traced back to the end of the 19th century when the country progressed and flourished economically and scientifically. Developments like the creation of youth welfare and special needs education, progress in medical and psychological research coupled with the development of psychodynamic approaches contributed to the institutionalization of counselling. The first child guidance and counselling institution was established in 1883 in Leipzig and it was designed to support mothers of illegitimate children. Many more counselling centers were established thereafter around the country but all of them were run by voluntary psychologists and physicians.

According to Senyonyi and Ochieng (2013) and Nsubuga and Kronholz (2017), moral behaviors and practices in Uganda are passed on from one lineage to another and this is a traditional culture that was upheld for generations. Supporting family members emotionally, medically, socially and psychologically was part of this like in times of sickness, marriage and death. Parents and other members of the community had well defined roles and responsibilities to play in order to maintain the well-being of community member. With colonialism, this system was gradually eroded, given the breakdown of communities and families in the name of modernization and urbanization.

Justification for the Study

Some of the most challenging bottlenecks to economic development in the third world shall be answered by well aligned and strategically designed education systems. For education system to work effectively, there is need for properly developed guidance and counselling processes. Career counselling in the developed world has evolved rapidly over time, given the well-structured systems of administration and leadership that are probably unmatched with the underdeveloped or third world contexts.

This study sought to compare career guidance and counselling practices in a highly developed world, Germany, with an underdeveloped world country, Uganda. Being one of the best performing economies in Europe (Fura, Wojnar, Kasprzyk, 2017), German was chosen because it is preceded by a history of instability, division and economic loss but has managed to succeed. Comparing the two countries in terms of Human Development Index (HDI), Germany lies at 0.939 while Uganda lies at 0.544. Well-developed school guidance and counselling system in the country will determine an effective system whereby secondary school students are able to make informed career decisions. This will lay a foundation for a valid and reliable human capital development.

According to Sagar and Najam (1998), Human Development Index comprises indicators of life expectancy and per capita income which are used to rank countries into four tiers of human development. Low and disoriented labour training and development can result into under exploitation of resources and this is a path to unemployment. Training and development is highly associated with the nature of the education system which must be designed in a way that students are guided in making right career and vocational choices that are aligned to economic labor needs.

In terms of natural resources, Germany has a landmass of 357,021 km² compared to Uganda's 241,037 km.² Given the population of the two countries, Uganda has more land compared to Germany. Whereas Germany imports most of its raw materials to feed its industrial sector and exports most of its finished goods, Uganda imports most of finished goods and exports most of its raw materials. Germany lacks a variant natural conducive climate and vegetation cover which Uganda has, and therefore, Uganda is naturally

endowed compared to Germany. While the problem in Uganda would be due to lack of guidance to people who finish their secondary, undergraduate and graduate studies, this study sought to compare the guidance and counselling frameworks and guidelines of the two countries. The guiding research question was: what are the unique features in the school guidance and counselling program of Germany and Uganda?

Research Methodology

The study used qualitative approach to collect data from existing policy frameworks, guidelines and studies on school guidance and counselling systems of the two countries using internet, the Ministry of education websites for the two countries and online journals as sources of data. Of these, 10 documents were analysed, taking at least 3 documents from each source. Data was collected according to thematic benchmarks developed by Harris (2013) on the international standards of school guidance and counselling, Esbroeck and Athanasou (2008) on the international handbook of career guidance and Fezler and Brown (2011) on the international model for school counselling programs.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the results and gives the discussion. The section was guided by one research question:

Research Question: What are unique features in the school guidance and counselling program of Germany and Uganda?

Results summarize the implementation and practice of school guidance and counselling programs and activities in the two countries, according to published themes by Harris (2013; Esbroeck & Athanasou, 2008; Fezler & Brown, 2011).

In terms of internationalization and multiculturalism, Germany offered career orientation programs for immigrants and principles of school guidance and counselling were in line with those of the European guidelines. On the other hand, Uganda did not have a well-established guidance and counselling program for immigrants. Looking into the availability of school guidance and counselling materials like published works, internet sources, ministry of education websites of the two countries, Germany did better compared to Uganda which implies that those in need of the service in Germany can easily access it due to availability of

materials which make the work of guidance and counsellors more effective.

In terms of availability of hired professionals to do the guidance and counselling in schools, Germany had over 15,000 guidance and counselling teachers who worked along with over 1,400 school psychologists for students and teachers. On the contrary, the situation in Uganda was different since there was a very limited number of hired professionals that is the commissioner and assistant commissioner at the Department of Guidance and Counselling in the ministry of Education and Sports, to monitor the guidance and counselling job in schools. According to Senyonyi and Ochieng (2013), schools that are interested in providing the service in schools have to appoint one of teachers to do it as an added responsibility. Germany, despite having hired counselling teachers and school psychologist, they did not have a well-established guidance and counselling curriculum which Uganda had.

Unlike Uganda, Germany emphasized on research in guidance and counselling through funding by the Ministry of Education. This promoted dynamism in the sector of guidance and counselling through upgrading and improving the processes and procedures of the service provided based on research findings.

Germany had a well-established monitoring and evaluation system through its National Guidance Forum for Career which was actively involved in tracking guidance and counselling services in schools. On the contrary, Uganda, despite having the Department of Guidance and Counselling under the Ministry of Education and Sports, its activeness was wanting, given unavailability of documents on the ministry website and lack of enforcement.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

The easy access of guidance and counselling programs and materials in Germany enhances students' abilities to make informed decisions. This keeps the country on track in achieving its educational and manpower training goals. Unlike Germany, Uganda missed opportunities that would help international students and immigrants to make informed decisions toward their future careers. The poorly established internationalisation and multiculturalism in Uganda disadvantages immigrants, international students and refugees. The guidance and counselling programs in Uganda

were found wanting. Particularly, Uganda did not hire or employ trained school guidance and counselling professionals. This implies that the country may continue flooding educational institutions with unfocused or inadequately career informed candidates. If a country achieves a high and viable Human Development Index, then that foundation is laid by the pre guidance and counselling processes at secondary school and this is one of the key drivers of economic development.

Recommendations

It is plausible that the Uganda Ministry of Education and Sports considers an overhaul of its School guidance and counselling program since there are numerous gaps as compared with that of Germany and some published international guidelines. Nonetheless, Germany can also consider developing a school guidance and counselling curriculum to standardize that practice across the country. Additionally, there is need for further research on the impact of school guidance and counselling services in Uganda on university students. This will provide a better understanding and comprehension of the guidance and counselling services in the country and whether the comparative discrepancies raised in this paper are of great concern to the service.

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