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Orientation Service Needs of Newly Admitted Students of College of Agriculture Education in Mampong Ashanti of Ghana

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Abstract:
The study was a descriptive survey undertaken to find out the orientation service needs of newly admitted students of College of Agriculture Education, Mampong Ashanti. Four hundred (400) newly admitted students in the 2013/ 2014 academic year were sampled for the study through the use of purposive and proportional stratified random sampling techniques. A self-made questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents and analyzed through the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The students expressed the need for general information like date of establishment, mission, vision, rules of conduct in the institution and academic information like programmes offered, courses offered, course lecturers, examination rules, grading system and calculation of cumulative grade point average. They also indicated need for information on students' support services like sports and games, library services, hall facilities, counselling services, clubs and societies and vacation attachments. Career information like job prospects after school and available job vacancies were also needs expressed by them. Their most preferred modes of presentation of orientation service programmes were lectures and campus tours. It was recommended that orientation service programmes should address these expressed needs of students.

Keywords: orientation service, guidance services, needs, newly admitted students, orientation programmes

1. Introduction

Decision making is essential element of everyday life. It is one of the essential principles of guidance (Shertzer and Stone, 1976). In man's attempt to understand himself and his world so as to make intelligent choices in his environment, he needs guidance. This is because the ability to make effective and efficient decisions is not innate. Guidance according to Shertzer and Stone (1976) is "helping an individual to understand himself and his world" p 38.

In the school environment, for students to understand themselves and their environment in order to make intelligent choices, a number of services are provided for them. These services are known as guidance services. Guidance services are professional aid to individuals and small groups in dealing with common educational, vocational and personal-social needs (Shertzer and Stone, 1976). Guidance services include orientation service, appraisal service, placement service, information service and counseling service. The rest are follow-up service, consultation service and evaluation service. All these are offered in a typical school guidance programme to achieve a helping relationship.

Orientation service is one of the guidance services offered in the school setting and hence one of the roles of school counsellor (Amenyedzi, 2010). It is a service provided for newly admitted students to enable them familiarize themselves with their environment (school) and help them adjust (Amadi, 1991). To Blanchard (1974), orientation service is aprocess through which the fears of the person's involved are reduced drastically or eliminated. Thus, counsellor's orientation service role involves welcoming new students, telling them the history, philosophy, status, programmes, achievements, problems, rules and regulations, clubs and aspirations of the school. The broad goals of school orientation service include acquainting students with administrative rules, activities, services, expected behaviours and the faculty (Pascarella, Terenzini and Wolfe, 1986).

The importance of school orientation service cannot be overemphasized. According to Kachhar (1984), orientation service is important for the following reasons:

- Provide for continuity from one level of education to the other
- Provide fresh students with every information about the school
- Help new students to become established in school
- Help students in academic success
- Help in social adjustment and citizenship education of newly admitted students
- Orientation service is conducted through campus tours, lectures, school assembly, guidance clubs, posters and in-service training (Amadi, 1991).

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Orientation service is important in the life of newly admitted students. Thus many colleges and universities conduct two or three day orientation for their students (Pascarella et al, 1986). In a study by Esere, Omotosho and Ewiniyi (2010) of counselors' perceived important and most rendered service, orientation service was ranked as the third most important service and the third most provided service in the school guidance programme. Despite this finding however, no known study has been done in Ghana to assess the orientation service needs of students. Perigo and Upcraft (1989) found that orientation service programmes are poorly organized. It is based upon this that this study was conducted to find out the orientation service needs of newly admitted students of College of Agriculture Education, Mampong Ashanti so as to reform and package orientation service programmes to meet the needs of students. Needs assessment according to Bell (1974) is the process of identifying and analyzing needs and placing priorities among them for the purpose of decision making. The standard of education is raised through needs assessment (Ebie and Mckeachie, 1985).

1.2. Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:
- What are the orientation service needs of newly admitted students of College of Agriculture Education, Mampong?
- What are the students preferred modes of presentation of orientation service?

1.3. Significance of the Study

The study is significant for a number of reasons. First, the findings will help schools, colleges and universities who admit new students year in and year out to be aware of orientation needs of their students and hence plan effective orientation service programmes for them. This will help them in the planning and procurement of needed resources for the programme. Second, the study will help College of Agriculture Education, Mampong and similar ones to review their orientation service programmes to meet the needs of newly admitted students. Third, the findings will provoke research into orientation services conducted in schools, colleges and universities as to their effectiveness in meeting the needs of students. Fourth, the preferred modes of presentation of orientation service would be known in deciding which of them to adopt in organization of orientation service. Last but not the least, the findings will contribute to knowledge of orientation service as one of the school guidance services.

1.4. Limitation of the Study

A study like this should have been carried out in more than one institution. However, time constraints prevented other similar institutions from been captured.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Design

The research design adopted for the study was descriptive survey. Polit and Hungler (1999) posit that descriptive survey set to seek out accurate information and adequate descriptions of activities, objects, processes and persons. Bickman and Rog (1998) also allude that descriptive survey is necessary for answering the question "what is"and "what was" the nature of the situation as it existed at the time study. This design was adopted because the researcher wanted to find out what were the orientation needs of newly admitted students of College of Agriculture Education, Mampong and report on it.

2.2. Population

The population of the study was all first year students of College of Agriculture Education, Mampong in 2013/2014 academic year. They were 610 in total pursuing a programme for the award of either Bachelor of Science in Agriculture Education or Integrated Science Education. The rest were into Environmental Health and Sanitation Education or Biological Sciences Education.

2.3. Sample and Sampling Procedure

The sample selected for the study was 400 students made up of 100 females and 250 males. The 100 females were purposively selected for the study while 250 males were selected through the use of proportional stratified random sampling procedure. The sample consisted of 200 Bachelor of Agriculture Science Education students, 80 Bachelor of Integrated Science Education students, 100 Bachelor of Environmental Health and Sanitation Education students and 20 Bachelor of Biological Sciences Education students.

2.4. Instrument for Data Collection

Questionnaire was the instrument used to gather data for the study. It was a self-made questionnaire consisting of two (2) parts. Part one (1) consisted ofeighteen (18) items. The items were grouped under four (4) broad areas of information provided during orientation service programmes namely:general information on institution, academic information, information on students' support services and information on job prospects after school.Each of the items in part 1 of the questionnaire was followed by 5 point likert scale, Strongly Agree= 5, Agree= 4, Indifferent= 3, Disagree= 2 and Strongly Disagree= 1 of which respondents were expected to tick their choice.
Part 2 consisted of a table containing modes of presentation of orientation service programmes of which respondents were supposed to indicate their most preferred mode of presentation of orientation service.

Validity and reliability of Instrument
The content validity of the instrument was achieved by the researcher allowing two counselors to peruse through the questionnaire. Their suggestions were factored into the questionnaire. Test retest method was used to establish the reliability of the instrument. The cronbach alpha was 0.92.

2.5. Data Collection Procedure
The data were collected by the researcher with assistance of two research assistants. They were collected a day to the orientation day of fresh students of 2013/2014 academic year. The researcher and his assistants administered the question on the respondents and collected them on the same day. All the administered copies of the questionnaire were retrieved. Each questionnaire was numbered and coded for analysis.

2.6. Method of Data Analysis
Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to analyze the data. Means were calculated on all the eighteen (18) items in part 1. The means were used to answer research question 1. A mean of 4.0-5.0 indicated that the item was an orientation service need of the respondents. A mean of 3.0-3.9 indicated that respondents were indifferent to that need while that of 1.0-2.9 indicated the item was not a significant orientation service need on the part of the respondents.

3. Results

Item	Mean	Remarks
Date of establishment of the institution	3.7	Agree
Mission of the institution	4.1	Agree
Vision of the institution	4.3	Agree
Rules of conduct	4.7	Agree

Table 1: General information needs of respondents

The results in table 1 above indicate that all the four (4) general information on an institution were significant orientation service needs of the newly admitted students.

Item	Mean	Remarks
Programmes offered	4.4	Agree
Courses offered	4.6	Agree
Course lecturers	4.8	Agree
Examination rules	4.4	Agree
Grading system	4.7	Agree
Calculation of cumulative Grade Point Average	4.6	Agree

Table 2: Academic information needs of respondents

Respondents agreed to all the academic issues in table 2 above as a significant orientation service needs on their part.

Item	Mean	Remarks
Sports and games	4.6	Agree
Library services	4.3	Agree
Hall facilities	3.6	Indifferent
Counselling services	4.6	Agree
Clubs and societies	3.5	Indifferent
Vacation attachments	4.7	Agree

Table 3: Information needs on students' support services

The results from table 3 above indicate that the respondents were indifferent in the need for information on hall facilities and clubs and societies as orientation service needs. However, they expressed the need for the rest of the information in the table namely sports and games, library services, counselling services and vacation attachments.

Item	Mean	Remarks
Job prospects after school	4.6	Agree
Available job vacancies	4.5	Agree

Table 4: Career information needs

The respondents agreed to the fact that job prospects and available job vacancies after school are both significant orientation service needs on their part.

Modes	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lectures	220	55
Campus Tours	120	30
School Assembly	12	3
Posters	20	5
Guidance Clubs	20	5
Parent Teacher Meetings	8	2
Total	400	100%

Table 5: Respondents' preferred modes of presentation of orientation service

Information in table 5 above indicates that the respondents most preferred modes of presentation of orientation service are lectures 220 (55) and campus tours120 (30) while their least preferred modes are school assembly 12 (3) and parent teacher meetings 8 (2).

4. Discussions
The findings indicate that students need information on the date of establishment of an institution, mission, vision and rules of conduct in the school in the schools orientation service programme. This is in agreement with Miller and Naddler (1994) that the rationale of orientation programme is to help students understand the mission of the institution. Each institution is guided by a mission and vision. These mission and vision drive such institutions in their course. Students should be made aware of them in an orientation service programme.
Secondly, the results in table 2 and 3 above indicate that students need information on a number of academic and students support services during orientation service programmes. This affirms the findings of Moore et al (1981) that academic needs are of primary importance to students during orientation service programme. It also agrees with the Sangaria et al (1990) findings that freshmen consider academic topics as important.
The assertion by Amadi (1991) that orientation service programme is carried out through campus tours, lectures, school assembly, guidance clubs, posters and in-service training was affirmed by the findings in table 5 above. However, the students indicated lectures and campus tours as their most preferred modes of presentation of orientation service programmes.

5. Conclusion
Students have need for information on date, mission, vision and rules of conduct in an institution during orientation service programme. They also have need for academic information like programmes and courses offered, lecturers and examination rules. The rest are grading system and cumulative grade point average calculation. The most significant students' support services needs were information on games and sports, library services, counselling services and vacation attachment. They also expressed need for information relating to job prospects after school and available job vacancies. Their most preferred modes of presentation of orientation service were lectures and campus tours. The least preferred modes were parent teacher meetings and school assembly.

6. Recommendations
Based on the findings of the research, the following recommendations are made:
- School orientation service programmes for students must address general information on the institution like date of establishment of school, vision and mission of the school and rules of conduct.
- Academic information like programmes offered, courses offered, course lecturers, examination rules, grading system and calculation of cumulative grade point average are significant information needed by students during orientation service programmes.
- Information on students' support services should be provided. They should include information on sports and games, library services, hall facilities, counselling services, clubs and societies and vacation attachments.
- Orientation service programmes must provide students with career information on job prospects after school and available job vacancies
- Orientation service must be provided using lectures and campus tours.

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