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Development of a Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program (CGCP) for the Junior High School Units in Iloilo City

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ABSTRACT

This descriptive-correlational study analyzed the guidance and counseling (GC) needs of the Junior High School (JHS) students in Iloilo City in order to develop a comprehensive program that would contextually address their needs. The study used a standardized Students Counseling Needs Questionnaire. It has 81 items divided into four domains: Academic, Personal/Social, Career, and Social Responsibility. 267 students participated in the survey representing 10 purposively-selected JHSs in the city. Statistical tools used for analysis are Mann-Whitney U Test, Kruskal-Wallis Test, and Spearman's Rho at 5% confidence level for non-parametric inferential computations; while mean and standard deviation were used for descriptive analysis. Results revealed the following: Public Schools have Higher Perceived Needs for Guidance Counseling (HPNGC) than Private Schools; the higher the age of the students, the higher the Higher Perceived Need for Guidance Counseling; there is no significant difference in terms of parents' educational status and occupation; there is a high significant difference between Public Schools and Private School in terms of Higher Perceived Needs for Guidance Counseling in Personal/Social Needs. The results showed that the needs of Junior High school students in Iloilo City are ranked as follows: Career, Social /Personal, Academic and Social Responsibility. With this, a 100-page expert-validated Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program (CGCP) was contextually designed for Iloilo City JHS students following a 4-pronged framework with focus on themes: Career, Personal/Social, Academic, and Social Responsibility. Further studies must be done in terms of the specific areas of concern affecting JHS students of Iloilo City and other similar areas where a program can be built upon making the offerings more purposive and contextual.

INTRODUCTION

Guidance, as defined by Gysbers (2004), brings about the fullest development of an individual. The guidance and counseling program is an essential part of the students' school life that helps them as they journey through life. Expectations and developmental needs as well as changes in the educational arena such as the K-12 program are some of the challenges that our students face today.

To be globally competitive, students must gear up to meet the standards of international competition and marketplace. This means academic success which includes being physically, emotionally and socially equipped. Schools are given the daunting task of meeting all these demands. Add to the mix is the reality that the country currently lacks registered Guidance Counselors (RGCs). The shortage is scandalous as we only have about 3,700 RGCs but we need 47,000 RGCs nationwide as of 2017, according to Vera Files authored by investigative journalist Denise Valdez.

With the shifting and emerging needs of individual students—considering the exponential demands in “journeying with the young” in the areas of mental health, identity crisis, digital responsibility, technological transmutation, moral confusion, spiritual regression, factual revisionism, and disciplinary issues—the need for a comprehensive guidance and counseling program that can be used by both RGCs and GC facilitators

becomes greater. Professional Guidance Counselors and Facilitators are expected to spearhead activities and programs to this end.

As mentioned by then President Benigno Aquino III during the 49th Annual Convention of Philippine Guidance and Counseling Association Inc. in 2013, “Guidance counselors play a crucial role in weaving the moral fabric of society, especially in this time of revitalization when empowering our countrymen with knowledge, skills, and values is our top agenda.” Indeed, Guidance Counselors serve as a source of ethical and spiritual confidence for teachers, parents, and students to brave the challenges and pursue their goals in life. With such big responsibilities and important roles, the main quest is where and how to begin.

Henceforth, a well-organized guidance program is more than necessary to meet the personal, social, psychological and career development needs of students. Guidance counselors and school administrators should give high premium to the guidance function to help the students resolve their problems, improve their academic performance, succeed in their careers, and become responsible and productive members of the society.

Following the psychosocial stages of Erikson (1982), one most vital developmental age that needs the services of a GC program is the Junior High School (JHS) as it is already in the identity and role confusion dilemma.

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Erikson believes that at the JHS ages of 12-18, students are already having “intense exploration of their personal values, beliefs, and goals.” This is a major stage of development where the child has to learn the roles he will occupy as an adult. It is during this stage that the adolescent will re-examine his or her identity and try to find out exactly who he or she is. Proper guidance, for obvious reasons, is therefore a requisite that schools must offer for everyone concerned.

Thus, the researchers thought of conducting a survey as to the needs of the JHS students in Iloilo City. They hoped to get the contextualized demand so as to eventually design the most novel and appropriate Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program (CGCP)—useful for both local RGCs and non RGCs or the so-called GC facilitators/assistants. This program hoped to be a preventive tool rather than a curative one as it focused on the cognitive, intrapersonal, interpersonal, and career aspects of junior high schools in the Ilonggo setting.

METHODOLOGY

The process of developing the Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program (CGCP) for Junior High School students in Iloilo City started with brainstorming. The group collaborated to come up with an achievable plan within a given time frame. The components of the project were identified and each member has an assigned task to accomplish.

The next step was to conduct a needs assessment. The researchers adopted the standardized Students Counseling Needs Scale where the researchers got expressed permission from its author, psychologist Nyutu (2007). The questionnaire was content-validated to affirm that all items are relevant to Philippine context. Pilot testing was performed in Iloilo City National High School and Ateneo de Iloilo-Santa Maria Catholic School with 74 respondents to establish feasibility and validity of the questionnaires.

Ten (10) public and private junior high schools in Iloilo City were purposively identified to participate in the survey. They are, namely: ADI-SMCS, Central Philippine University (CPU), Iloilo Doctors’ College (IDC), Iloilo National High School (INHS), Iloilo Science and Technology University (ISAT-U), Jaro National High School (JNHS), Lapaz National High School (LNHS), St. Mary’s Academy (SMA), St. Therese-MTC Colleges (ST-MTCC), and West Visayas State University (WVSU). Stratified random sampling was used to identify the distribution of the 267 respondents per school and per grade level. Respondents were then asked to complete the Students Counseling Needs Scale following the protocol on ethical standards in conducting socio-psychological surveys. Since the findings only reflected the perceived need of the students, interviews with the teachers and guidance counselors have been made to validate the students’ responses. Questionnaires for Guidance Counselors by Rottschäfer (1972) and Counselor Activity Self-Efficacy Scales by Lent, *et al.* (2003) were also used to triangulate the

guidance and counseling needs in the respective schools. The initial data was presented per school for a thorough critiquing before two (2) registered Guidance Counselors from University of the Philippines Visayas. Further analysis was conducted and points from the critiquing were then taken into consideration.

The quantitative analysis used the following statistical tools; Frequency, Mean, and Standard Deviation for descriptive analysis, and Kruskal-Wallis H Test, Mann-Whitney U Test, Scheffe, and Spearman’s Rho for inferential analysis. Thematic analysis and focus-group discussions were used to analyze qualitative data.

Based on the results of the triangulated needs analysis, the researchers designed a Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program (CGCP) following the framework prescribed by the 4-pronged Ethical Standards for School Counselors championed by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA). It was eventually presented to, defended from, and validated by three (3) RGCs in University of the Philippines-Visayas. The final document was submitted to the chairperson of the Education Committee of the Iloilo City Council headed by Hon. Julie Grace L. Baronda in a form of a proposal.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results of the Students Counseling Needs Questionnaire showed that the students strongly agree (mean=5.264, sd=0.548) that they need guidance and counseling in the four domains. Specifically, Career (mean=5.348, sd=0.619) was identified as the most perceived need, followed by Personal/Social (5.295, 0.574), Academic (5.250, 0.583), and the last, Social Responsibility (5.052, 0.619). It was also revealed that there is a significant difference ($p=0.015$) between the males and the females in terms of their Higher Perceived Needs for Guidance Counseling (PNGC). Likewise, there is significant difference in terms of perceived need for guidance and counseling between Personal/Social ($p=0.034$) and Academic ($p=0.006$), but not in Career ($p=0.051$) and Social Responsibility (0.078).

In all domains and if taken as a whole, the females have higher perceived need for guidance and counseling. Although there is no significant difference between the public and private schools as a whole ($p=0.083$) and in the Academic (0.076), Career ($p=0.145$), and Social Responsibility ($p=0.940$), there is a significant difference found in the Personal/Social ($p=0.031$), with public school students having higher Perceived Need for Guidance and Counseling than private school students.

Meanwhile, there is no significant difference in the Higher Perceived Needs for Guidance Counseling of students and their grade level when classified as a whole or by domains. It was also found that there are no significant differences in the perceived needs for guidance and counseling when classified according to occupation and educational attainment of the students’ fathers and mothers. Lastly, there is a slightly positive correlation ($p=0.00$, $r=0.309$) between the age and the Higher

Perceived Needs for Guidance Counseling of students. The 15 highest and 15 lowest mean items were considered for thematic analysis. From the analysis, the researchers generated four themes:

1. Career,
2. Self-Development,
3. Human Relationship, and
4. Social Responsibility.

These results were the basis in formulating the goals and objectives of the CGC Program (CGCP). The strategies, techniques, and evaluation were then organized and developed. The different activities of each program were carefully created to meet the needs and issues of the students. More importantly, these activities stem from the principles, strategies and techniques of guidance and counseling. The program also focused on providing knowledge, life-long skills, and incorporating attitude for the students to learn meaningfully, effectively and efficiently.

Below is the framework of the proposed CGCP. It is worthy to note that the details of the 100-page manual and module of the program—which includes the assumptions/guiding principles, program goals and objectives, program content, strategies and techniques, activities, timeframe, budget and resources, summative and formative evaluation tools—are in Appendix A (attached in pdf form).

Title

Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program (CGCP) for the Junior High Schools in Iloilo City

Guiding Principles

1. *Principle of Individualization.* It is the freedom of each individual to shape his/her personality and he/she should be guided whenever need arises.
2. *Principle of Self-direction.* Guidance aims to develop the individual so that he/she can overcome difficulties and reach personal advancement.
3. *Principle of Cooperation.* There should be mutual cooperation of individuals.
4. *Principle of Universality.* Guidance counseling should be provided to everyone who needs it.
5. *Principle of Organized Activity.* Guidance and Counseling is a fundamental part of the education and personal development of students thus, programs should be integrated with the school's curriculum in an orderly and purposeful manner.
6. *Individual Differences.* This principle states that no two individuals are alike. Individual differences among students is concerned with uniqueness of needs, problems and developmental characteristics of individuals
7. *Flexible.* Guidance and counseling program should be flexible, suited to the needs of individuals and the community.

Goals

To establish a comprehensive guidance and counseling program for the Junior High Schools in Iloilo that will

promote career, academic, and personal/social development of students in a learning environment conducive to their growth as socially responsible individuals

Outcomes

The students are able to:

1. assess their strengths and weaknesses and discover their abilities, talents and interests
2. develop the essential knowledge, skills and mindset needed to achieve academic success
3. enhance abilities to manage the emotional demands of their lives
4. embrace positive actions and attitude required to achieve their educational and future professional goals
5. validate decisions and actions to act responsibly in a manner that is beneficial to society

Program Components

Ipinagbubunyi Ang Sarili

The program component is designed for the students to develop the capacity for introspection and to recognize oneself as unique. This will lead to self-empowerment.

Mabuti Pa Ang Wifi, Maraming Connections

The program component is designed to assist and facilitate in defining, building and promoting acceptance of positive and productive relationships among the students and their families, friends, and significant others.

Kakareerin Ko 'To

The program component is designed to provide the students with knowledge, skills and values to make important decisions about career choices and life in general.

Barangay 143

The program component is designed to create awareness that each individual has an obligation to act for the benefit of society at large.

Strategies and Techniques

Strategies

To achieve the goal and realize the outcomes of the program, the following strategies will be used:

Guidance Curriculum

The program will be integrated in the curriculum. This will allow a systematic approach in facilitating the students' academic, personal, social and career development.

Guidance Modules

Guidance modules will be prepared for various topics identified in coordination with guidance counselors and teachers.

Homeroom Guidance

Homeroom is a venue that can be effective and efficient in providing focused group activities/discussions

Collaboration

The success of the implementation of this program is a collaborative effort among the counselor and other stakeholders like the parents, teachers, and members of the community.

Routine Counseling

Counselors can utilize routine counseling to know the students' concerns and to build bridges to connect with the students.

Techniques

In the field of guidance, the best practice resources remain anchored on the guidance services. These services will be utilized to fit with the program components and outcomes.

Individual and Group Counseling

Either individually or by group, the guidance counselor can help students improve themselves and be full-functioning individuals.

Psychological Testing

Standardized tests can assess the individual in the areas of aptitudes, personality, interests, and skills. The results can bring self-awareness, growth, and can help in making decisions.

Information Services

Information services can make available to the students valuable information for personal, social, emotional, and spiritual development and adjustment. The service can guide the students in making intelligent choices.

Off-campus Exposure/ Collaboration with other Sectors in the Community

Collaboration and exposure will provide the students with hands-on opportunities in a wide variety of experiences – to learn, to be exposed to a new environment, and to try new things.

Budget and Resources

A. Personnel Requirements

- Guidance Coordinator
- Guidance Counselor/s
- Psychometrician
- Staff

B. Facilities

- Guidance Office
- Office Equipment

C. Professional Growth

- Formal Education
- Attendance to Seminars
- Linkages with other institutions

Evaluation

The following evaluation approaches are recommended:

1. Formative evaluation done during the process

2. Summative evaluation done at the end of the program
3. Process evaluation that focus on how the program was implemented

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The researchers strongly believed that the designed Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program should likely address the four domains of Career, Personal-Social, Academic and Social Responsibility to impact changes to JHS students in Iloilo City. While the study was done in the Iloilo metropolis, the researchers believe that the program content drawn from the data gathered also be referred to and be contextualized in similar highly urbanized cities in the country.

It is therefore highly recommended to pilot test this program to both public and private schools and make necessary comparisons and analyses to improve its efficiency. Further research can focus on effective strategies in the program delivery. A regular orientation among administrators, faculty members, and GC practitioners will likewise ensure the success of the program.

As a pilot project close monitoring and evaluation must be done on a regular basis to assess how the goals and outcomes are achieved and to propose interventions as needed.

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