

Qualifications and Competencies of SLSU Guidance Counselors

HELENE D. DAYA

helene_daya@yahoo.com

Southern Luzon State University

Abstract - The study was intended to assess the qualifications and competencies of Southern Luzon State University counselors of Lucban, Quezon. The study use descriptive survey and correlation research design. As for the statistical measures and tools, tabulation, frequency and percentage distribution were used in presenting the profile of the counselors. The weighted mean was used in identifying which area of competencies has a great extent or limited extent. Likewise, the F-test was used to determine the significant difference between and among the respondents as to the extent of competencies as perceived by the administrators, the faculty and the guidance counselors themselves. The findings reveal that majority of the guidance counselors, as perceived by the administrators have a moderate extent of competency, the same as perceived by the faculty. Moreover, there is a significant difference between and among the respondents as to the extent of competencies of guidance counselors. It can be concluded that most of the guidance counselors are not qualified and competent to be counselors. Guidance counselors rated themselves the highest among the three evaluators as to the competencies of a counselor.

Keywords - guidance counselor, job competence, qualifications

INTRODUCTION

In today's twenty-first century the vast majority of this nation's young are in school. Today's children and adolescents come to school with needs for assistance in maintaining healthy personal, social, career, and educational development and in overcoming barriers to their success. In order to facilitate their personal/social development, school counselors must be aware that there are many differences among them. Students are of different cultures, socioeconomic classes, family configurations and backgrounds, genders, abilities and disabilities, sexual orientation and preferences, and so on. The families or communities they live in may be impoverished, violent, separated, uneducated or underemployed. Hence, the challenges to students and their school counsellors are endless.

School counselors are educational professionals who play a key role in preparing students to become productive and contributing members of our society. School counselors help all learners to reach their full educational, social and vocational potential by providing counseling prevention and intervention activities. Working cooperatively with teachers, parents, and administrators, school counselors strive to provide the contextual learning environments that enable children to achieve their full developmental capabilities. To help each child experience a sense of belonging, the ability to cope with life stresses, to enjoy meaningful relationships, to be sensitive to the feelings of others, to practice self-control, to develop good habits of physical and mental health, and to be motivated for continued growth.

The school counselor competencies are necessary to better ensure that our future school counselors' workforce will be able to continue to make a positive difference in the lives of children and young adults. As counselors they should make an effort to help students focus on academic, personal/social and career development to enable them to achieve success in school and to be prepared to lead fulfilling lives as responsible members of society.

With these, the researcher selected Southern Luzon State University (SLSU) to be the social milieu of her study to help the school community particularly guidance counselors in assessing their qualifications and competencies so they will have a better performance in the field of

work and deliver effective guidance services to the students and to the entire school community. Furthermore, the results of this study would likewise help the counselors to continuously update their competence through participation in various professional educational opportunities, reading the professional literature and attending professional seminars and workshops to improve their competence in meeting and exceeding standards in performing their job.

FRAMEWORK

Professional school counselors accept the responsibility to help all students through a systematically delivered developmental guidance and counseling program. At the same time, they respect each student, strive to understand each student's background and the factors which are influencing his/her present circumstances, and maintain optimism about each student's future.

Professional school counselors were teachers first. Thus, they have demonstrated competence as instructors and understand the dynamics of the classroom and the school setting (Alexandria, 2005). With the decline of counselors having backgrounds as teachers, as Olson & Allen, 1993 suggested, school counselors must develop their skills as educators if they are to fulfill their roles within comprehensive, standards-based programs.

Thus, Gysbers, 2006 claimed that through coursework leading them to school counselor certification and, the master's degree, professional educators learn and apply the knowledge and skills regarding the guidance program, pupils served, and counseling and development services.

According to R.A. No. 9258 (2007), Definition of Terms in Sec. 3, Guidance and Counseling is a profession that involves the use of an integrated approach to the development of a well-functioning individual primarily by helping him/her to utilize his/her potentials to the fullest and plan his/her present and future in accordance with his/her abilities, interests, and needs. It includes functions such as counseling, psychological testing, (i.e. personality, career, interest, aptitude, mental ability, achievement), learning and study, orientation, research, placement, referral and group process. It includes the teaching

of guidance and counseling subjects, particularly those covered in the Licensure Examinations and necessary in other human development services.

Competency theory is one of the leading theories employed in human resource management. According to Fontes (2002), education, experiences, knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and motivation are essential for individual performance on a given situation. The assessment process results in an objective behavior of person's strengths and weaknesses, the alternatives of improving his/her performance to more efficient one and it also gives indication of the person's development needs.

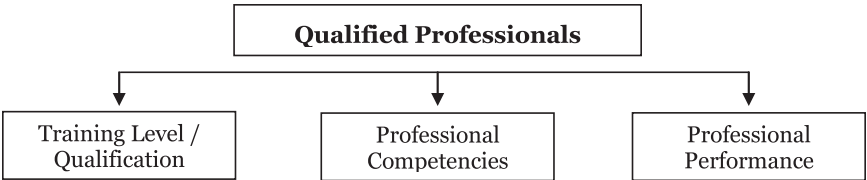


Figure 1. Framework of a qualified professional

The ultimate goal of developing a framework of competencies such as this as seen in Figure 1 is to increase the quality of services available to the client. Being clear about the competencies needed to provide quality services helps practitioners perform their jobs more effectively (Company & Echeverria, 1997). A competency framework is also beneficial in developing initial training programs as well as in-service training, thereby developing a balance between level of training, required competencies, and professional performance.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study intended to assess the qualifications and competencies of SLSU Guidance Counselors in the locality of Lucban, province of Quezon. Specifically, this research was undertaken for the following purposes:

1. to determine the different qualifications of guidance counselors in terms of educational attainment, years of experience, age, civil status, sex, and trainings, seminars/workshops attended
2. to determine the extent of competence of SLSU school counselors as perceived by the administrators, faculty members, and guidance counsellors themselves
3. to determine the significant difference between and among the respondents as to the extent of competence of SLSU guidance counselors as perceived by the administrators, faculty members, and guidance counsellors themselves

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted at Southern Luzon State University (SLSU) located in the municipality of Lucban, province of Quezon and involved fifty (50) administrators, sixty (60) faculty members, and ten (10) guidance counselors as research participants.

The research made use of the descriptive survey and correlation research design. It is a descriptive survey because it aimed to present an assessment of the qualifications and competencies of guidance counsellors and it is likewise correlational because it traced the relationship and significant difference between and among the administrators, the faculty and the guidance counselors as to the extent of competencies.

In order to get more precise information regarding the respondents' profile, a personal data sheet was developed to include information such as the respondent's name, age, sex, civil status, number of years in the service, highest educational attainment and in-service trainings/seminars attended. When it comes to the number of years of experience as a guidance counselor the researcher was able to ask the

respondents personally. The competencies consist of 28 items, cover different subjects like: Philosophical, Psychological and Sociological Foundations of Guidance, Counseling Theories, Tools and Techniques, Psychological Testing, Organization and Administration and Supervision of Guidance Services, and Program Development, Group Process and Career Guidance, and involved four (4) competency indicators as knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. This can be answered by classifying the responses in the items using a 4-point Likert Scale: where number 4 means that the item has Great Extent; number 3 means that the item has Moderate Extent; number 2 means that the item has Limited Extent and 1 for Not at All.

As for statistical measures and tools, tabulation, frequency and percentage distribution were used in presenting the profile of the counselors. The F-test was used to determine the significant difference between and among the respondents as to the extent of competencies as perceived by the administrators, the faculty and the guidance counselors themselves.

The assistance of the expert in the field of statistics was sought in processing the data gathered.

The output of the study is the extent of competencies of a guidance counsellor that can be used in hiring competent counsellor.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data shows that most of the guidance counselors or 60% are Master's degree holders. Only two (2) of them have a Master's degree in guidance and counseling. Two (2) have a bachelor's degree and two (2) also have doctoral units which is not also in line with guidance and counseling. Only the Guidance Coordinator had taken Psychology as her major in the undergraduate. Based on the data presented, as far as educational attainment is concerned most of them or 90% are not competent and qualified to be guidance counselors. Majority of the counselors or 60% are working as counselors for three (3) years. Only one (1) is a counselor for almost twenty (20) years and two (2) or 20% are counselors for thirteen (13) years now. It only means that most of the counselors are still neophytes in their job.

Most of the guidance counselors or 40% were in their 50s. This is

probably the reason why most of them do not want to continue their studies anymore, particularly in pursuing a doctoral degree in order to meet the university standard. One of them is in her 60s and 30% or three (3) counselors are in their 40s. Those that are still in early adulthood can continue pursuing a master's degree or doctoral degree in guidance and counseling for them to become competent counselors so that they can effectively perform their duties and responsibilities especially in the delivery of guidance services.

All the guidance counselors are married and are all females. The administrators were the ones who selected from the roster of the faculty a guidance counselor that could fit for the position. The reason why the administrator chooses female counselors as based on the observation is that females are more sympathetic and approachable, and having a maternal instinct, they could easily understand the feelings of others, particularly the students.

The guidance counselors training/ seminars and workshops are not related to guidance and counseling which comprise almost 80%. Only two (2) or 20% have attended seminars related to guidance and counseling such as "Positive Psychology and Counseling for Lifelong Learning", conducted by PACERS, "Code of Ethics Standards and Practice" and "The Professional Counselors" by PGCA. Counselors should be given opportunity to attend seminars related to guidance and counseling so that they will be more competent in dealing with clients.

In the six areas of competency the administrators and the faculty gave the guidance counselor a rating of moderate extent of competency which means that the two raters agree that the counselors consistently meet the expectations for the performance in the six areas. The guidance counselors gave themselves a rating of great extent of competencies which means that they perform an outstanding job in the six areas of competencies. The overall rating of the three raters is moderate extent which means that counselors consistently meet and sometimes exceed expectations for their performance which can still be improved.

The computed F value of 10.098 is significantly different compared to the tabular value of 3.07 at 0.05 level which means that the difference in the ratings of the administrators, faculty and guidance counselors is significant and the ratings vary from one another. The

mean difference of the administrators' rating against that of the faculty is only 0.19 which shows that their ratings are almost similar. As for the faculty rating and the guidance counselors', the mean difference resulted in 0.75 which only shows that their ratings are far from each other. The mean difference between the guidance counselors' rating and the administrators' is 0.94 which displayed the highest difference since the guidance counselors gave each other a high mark and the administrators rated them the least. The average mean difference of the ratings is 0.63. It only shows that guidance counselors perceived themselves as performing an outstanding job in area 1.

The average mean difference of 0.58 resulted from the mean differences of 0.14 between the administrators and faculty, 0.73 between the faculty and guidance counselors and 0.87 between the guidance counselors and administrators. The computed f value of 7.104 as compared to the tabular value of 3.07 is significant. In the data presented above there is a slight mean difference in the rating of the administrators and the faculty. It means that the two gave almost the same perception on the competencies of a guidance counselor. As expected the guidance counselors themselves give each other a high rate probably because they have common sympathy with each other.

The difference in the ratings of the three groups in Area 3 is significant as shown in the computed f value of 9.739 compared to the tabular value of 3.07. The mean difference of 0.65 that resulted from mean differences of 0.11 between the administrators and faculty, 0.86 between the faculty and guidance counselors and 0.97 between the guidance counselors and administrators supports this fact. Again, as far as the administrators and the faculty are concerned, there is a slight difference in their ratings for the guidance counselor. But administrators rate the counselor the lowest among the three raters maybe because administrators have high expectation on their performance. Guidance counselors rate themselves higher feeling sympathy with each other.

The comparison of the three groups of evaluators' ratings resulted in the computed f value of 10.966 which is significant compared to the tabular value of 3.07 at 0.05 level. The mean difference of 0.63 resulted from a high mean difference of 0.95 between the guidance counselors and administrators, 0.88 between the faculty and guidance counselors and a small difference of 0.07 between the administrators and faculty.

Still, the guidance counselors rated each other high to signify an outstanding performance in their job. The administrators and the faculty gave a slight difference in their rating as per competency of a guidance counselor.

The rating of the three groups of evaluators in Area 5 is significant since the computed f value of 7.195 is higher than the tabular value of 3.07. The average mean difference of 0.52 is parallel to the significant difference. The data show that the administrators rated the guidance counselor the lowest probably because of expecting them to perform better in their job. The guidance counselor rated themselves the highest because of the common sympathy with each other.

The computed f value of 9.370 is significantly different from the tabular value of 3.07 at 0.05 level. The mean difference of 0.08 between the administrators and faculty, 0.56 between the faculty and guidance counselors and 0.64 between the guidance counselors and administrators resulted in an average mean difference of 0.43. Based on the above data, there is a slight difference in the ratings of the faculty and the administrators. It means that they have almost the same perception on the competencies of a guidance counselor. As expected, the counselors rated themselves the highest.

In summary, majority of the guidance counselors are not qualified and competent to be counselors. As far as educational attainment is concerned, almost all have degrees not related to guidance and counseling. Even the seminars they attended are not in line with guidance and counseling. The administrator perceived the guidance counselor as having a moderate extent of competency the same as perceived by the faculty. But the guidance counselors themselves rated each other great extent in the different areas of competencies. There is a significant difference between and among the respondents as to the extent of competencies of the guidance counselor. The rating of the administrators has only a slight difference in the rating of the faculty. But the administrator gave the guidance counselor the lowest rating among the three groups. The guidance counselors gave a high rating for themselves.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, the following conclusions are provided:

1. Most of the guidance counselors are not qualified and competent to be counselors.
2. Guidance counselors rated themselves the highest among the three evaluators as to their competencies.
3. There is only a slight difference in the rating of the administrator and the faculty as to the extent of competencies of the guidance counselor.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. All guidance counselors should be required and be given opportunity by the university to attend workshops, in-service trainings, and seminars on guidance and counseling to enhance their qualifications and competencies.
2. Scholarships related to guidance and counseling should be offered by the university to their guidance counselors for educational upliftment.
3. There should be a continuing professional educational program especially in guidance and counseling.
4. The institution should have an orientation program focusing on Republic Act no. 9258: An Act Professionalizing the Practice of Guidance and Counseling.
5. Guidance Counselors and administrators should have field trips and visits, possibly to establish, school tie-ups with the institutions that have a well-founded guidance and counseling program.
6. The school should have a program especially in the School of Advanced Education to provide a curriculum for the graduate students who want to take the Guidance and Counseling course.
7. The institution should help in the development of the different competencies as stipulated in the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of R. A. 9258.

8. An orientation program for the entire university should be required to raise awareness and understanding of the roles and functions of guidance counselors.

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