

Students' Perspectives For The Encountered Problems & Challenges at The Department Of English in The College Of Sciences & Arts In Alqurrayat.

***Mrs. Abeer Hameed Albashtawi**, Lecturer & The Coordinator Of The Department of English, The Sciences & Arts College, Al Jouf University, KSA-Post Code:75911\Email: a.bashtawi@ju.edu.sa

Abstract:

The study aimed at surveying the problems of the students in the Department of English at Al Jouf University, focusing on three important aspects namely psychological, academic and social. From the students' perspective this study tried to address the academic problems, the psychological problems and the social problems and came out with best possible solutions. The study included all the students in the Department Of English, Sciences & Arts College for Girls in Aljouf University, Al Qurrayat. The total number of students in the Department is 900 in the academic year 2013/2014 and out of them 200 students are taken into consideration for the present study.

In order to address the questions of the study, the researcher depended on her regular classroom interactions and individual office meetings throughout the whole semester of the academic year 1434/1435H. The study emphasized on identifying the problems - psychological, academic and social. Also it attempted to elucidate how they are interrelated to each other and in what way the complexity of these problems are escalated by surrounding factors such as family, faculty members or employees. Through the best possible recommendations, the researcher has suggested many effective solutions.

Key words: problems, students, education, Department of English.

Introduction

Education is of greater importance in all societies and has very important role in developing these societies. Knowledge is power that enfranchised people with freedom of expression. Knowledge makes one omnipotent and hence education became pivotal in human life globally. Consequently countries that are well aware of the importance of education, paid more attention towards spreading it and no wonder the ratio of literate persons is remarkably high in these countries.

Education became a necessary feature in all walks of life since a well-educated person has maximum career opportunities in the world of science and technology. The salability of a person is

determined only by skill oriented academics in the present competitive scenario. Education fine tunes ones professional skills and abilities. Also, it enables one to possess dynamic personality and widens the scope and chances of holding a successful and prosperous career. Thus, it is not an exaggeration if we say that the success of any country highly depends on literacy rate of that country.

Education works a lot for grooming up students' personality. Students get high level of confidence and get meaningful job for making their future bright. A student, being a well educated person, will surely exercise decision making power that improve his/her self-confidence which in turn stands as an impetus towards making progressive strides in his/her chosen field of life. Personality development is totally indebted to education but unfortunately, the present day students have reserved this word just as a mere tool for a lucrative job. Instructing the students Gaurav Barr aptly says that "education can obscure lots of hidden skills in your personality and if you uncover these skills, a bright future will be waiting for you."(GauravBarr:2012)

The Study and its Significance:

The word 'problem' is defined as an undesirable state in the society or something puzzles or disturbs an individual; a gnawing dissatisfaction nibbles at one's peace of mind until one can locate precisely the source of the trouble and find some means of solving it(Deobold:1978). This study aimed at shedding the light on the students' problems at the Department of English in particular.

Heading the Department of English, the author took every possible opportunity to touch upon various problems faced by the students and affecting their academic achievement. The problems are interrelated, hidden behind different reasons. The significance of the problem stems from the fact that studying these problems thoroughly is quintessential because these students' would participate in shaping the future of the coming generation.

One more important reason for the significance of the study is that it is considered as an area that needs to be researched more. The researcher tried to focus on the most important problems that affect the students' personality development, academic achievement and employability.

The focus of the Study:

This study tried to answer the following questions:

1. What are the academic problems encountered by the students at the Department of English?
2. What are the psychological problems faced by the students at the Department of English?
3. What are the social problems the students come across at the Department of English?
4. What are the solutions for these problems?

Objectives of the Study:

The study aimed at surveying the problems of the students at the Department Of English, The Sciences &Arts College in Al Jouf University from the students' point of view and finding the solutions to these problems.

Limits of the Study:

1. **Time Limit:** This study has been conducted in the academic year 1434/1435H.
2. **Place Limit:** This study is limited to the students at the Department Of English, The Sciences & Arts College in Al Jouf University.

Review of related Literature:

Lamanauskas & Augiene(2012) stated that the problems of university education though retain a complex character still become more and more pressing issues for a number of reasons. Labour dynamics and a changing society require flexible, innovative and creative possibilities of lifelong learning.

Higher academic institutions are not limited to primary professional training of students. Therefore, it is necessary to search for the new possibilities of improving the skills of specialists and professionals in the direction of doing specializations, developing individual abilities and acquiring high level professional competences. Continuing education at a university plays a fundamental role in choosing strategic priorities identified in the field of European education. Thus, it is necessary to strive for the highest standards of scientific activities, studies and obtained results acknowledged by the international community.

On the other hand, competition between universities became more intense at both national and international level. An insufficient focus on consumer (student) and offered services decrease the quality of education. Solutions provided to any problem require relevant and accurate information. Julal(2013) mentioned in his study that universities provide a range of problem-focused social support services to help students who are experiencing personal difficulties.

The study examined how the effectiveness of students'(N=131)problem-coping style, experience of personal difficulty and psychological distress are associated with actual use of support services in the academic setting. Results indicate that students who experienced a personal difficulty and who had a more reflective problem –coping- style were more likely to use student support services. In addition, students with less effective problem –focused coping styles (more recreative and suppressive, less reflective) reported greater psychological distress.

Abdelatife(2013)conducted a study about coping with university life and its relationship with academic achievement of the students of Menofia University. The research was conducted on a sample of students (144 male and female students) from four different disciplines namely, Specific Education, Engineering, Commerce and Home Economics during the second term.

The results concluded that there are statistically significant difference between the socio-economic factor and academic achievement. Also, statistically significant differences are observed in the aspect of coping with university life and academic achievement.

Laws&Fiedler(2013) stated that studying at university can generate social pressures particularly in youth, which have been associated with the onset of a mental illness or a worsening of an existing condition. Many universities provide health services to support students with health problems. However, many young people do not have effective help-seeking strategies and are in need of well-defined pathways to locate appropriate assessment of, and support for their emotional needs.

Selesho(2012) presented an explanatory study that focused on the problems of academic ability and the psychological challenges that affect first year students as they progress from Grade 12 to first year university studies - a process that is significant for most universities. A cause of transition can be found in the under preparedness of the university support system at first year level. The results from this study showed that there is significant difference with regard to student life, student expectation and psychological status between university first year students and high school learners. Some of the findings of the study emphasizes that induction had an insignificant influence on student academic ability social integration.

Gudjonsson & others (2009) revealed in their study that the students' educational problems were different in various study fields. There were significantly more problems in male and non-native students (who are less supported by the families) compared to female and native ones. Family, financial and health problems, lack of enough knowledge among students and tutors about educational rules are the most important factors leading to the students' educational problems.

Akman(2007) conducted a study aimed at finding the problems of Turkish university students and how their academic problems are related to their family problems and how their age, gender, and identity status impacted the problems. The study group was composed of 291 students from Hacettepe University.

The results of the study showed that there is a direct relation between gender and identity - foreclosure and moratorium, and between age and identity status. Depending on the evaluation of insensitivity and inconsistency within the family, the Identity Achievement scores of the students decrease, however, the scores of moratorium and identity diffusion increase.

Horenstein(1977) described the psychological problems of students who seek counseling services and attempts to determine whether the problems presented by these students differ in any way from the types of emotional problems reported by the general college population studied by previous investigators.

The review of literature indicates that university students encounter many different academic, psychological, social, health and economic problems. The focus of these problems is different according to the areas, environment, economic situations and social background, but

whatever the differences we can still get clues about how to find suitable solutions for the challenges that face students in general.

All the conducted studies are directed in a way to show the pressures a university student has and how do these pressures affect the academic achievement. The ultimate goal is the student, how to help him/her coping with his/her problems and how to pave the way in front of him/her to make use of the available facilities.

Observations of the study:

Monitoring the sample group students in the Department of English in girls college of Al Jouf University the author identified that most of the problems mentioned above are conspicuous in the students. Lack of understanding of learning styles and mismatch between teaching methods and learning styles is an evident factor. Absence of proper counseling and guidance, lack of cooperation and coordination among peer groups, lack of goal oriented learning process, lack of family support for higher educational pursuits are the most serious issues expressed by the students.

Discussion of The Results:

The results show that most of the students in the Department of English do not have confidence in themselves regarding English language. The reason behind is lack of proficiency in English language which is considered as the basic barrier in students' academic adjustment process. Interacting with the professors in the department is a challenge for most of them, since 60% of the faculty members are non-Arabs. Also, the educational system in higher institutions is different from students' expectations about the student-teacher relationship, the classroom behavior, different styles of teaching-learning process, and even cultural differences in oral and written communication. These factors put many challenges before the student.

Students are not mature enough to realize that they should be responsible to study the prescribed textbooks under the guidance of the teachers. Instead, they feel that it is the teachers' responsibility to explain the whole textbook word to word. They are just mugging up the content rather than trying to understand and interpret the text books. Word to word explanation ultimately becomes burdensome in teaching-learning process and students start complaining and it becomes an endless suffering.

In one way or another, the academic difficulties might lead and instigate more complicated problems which might lead to real sickness, severe stress and strain. The above stated observations of various studies and my personal insightful observations and face-to-face interviews in class room meetings and regular office meetings evidently stresses the point that a regular dialogue between the students' families and academic institution is absent in addition to the lack of counselors and advisors in the college in general.

These two factors fostered the problems relating to stress and strain, emotional imbalance, lack of confidence, examination fear, misunderstandings among peers, absence of healthy academic sharing, jealousy and self-centeredness. Most of the students fail to cope up these problems in the absence of sufficient support from the families and counselors.

Akin to the community, family is a social institution and it should be strong enough to sustain difficulties and to progress with greater adaptability. Otherwise it ends in chaos. The results have shown that family problems weaken the student, making him/her retard even in simple issues. Another important point is that lack of cooperation and coordination between faculty and the students in the college, especially when they need consultation and guidance in withdrawing from a course and delaying or adding the semester. This is likely to jeopardize students' academic pursuits and tend to dissuade them.

Conclusion:

The study bolstered the process of analyzing the students' problems and understanding the interrelation between psychological, academic and social problems and the surrounding factors such as family, faculty members or employees.

Recommendations:

Recommendations come as an answer to the fourth question of the research, which is about the suggested solutions that might help students in solving or adapting with these problems to decrease their effect on the academic achievement of the student.

- Orientation meetings must be held for first year students, clarifying and explaining to them the rules and regulations for the institutions of higher education and all other information regarding the system of giving lectures, the students' role in the class, the system of examinations, the way of evaluation, facilities available and resources provided.
- Orientation meetings for the students of different levels to tell them about the differences between various levels and the expected standards and skills the students must acquire at each level. Also, informing the students about the importance of higher educational pursuits and the major domains of work after graduating.
- Activating the office of academic advice, through trained employees as they can deal with students' problems easily, without belittling the students and demeaning their self-respect.

- Activate the office of consultation, and it must be headed by a specialist who can articulate well with the students and treat their problems maintaining confidentiality. The process should be well documented so that the student feels encouraged to approach the counselor regularly.
- Bridge the gap between the family and the institutions of higher education initiating different occasions. This can melt the ice and educate the families about their role in supporting their wards and following them up.
- Submission of a report at the end of each course recording students' expectations on the course structure and pedagogical implications.
- Provision of research facilities in the department such as library, internet access, multimedia English Language laboratory adequate enough to accommodate all the students.
- Focus on the co-curricular activities which are often out of class activities.

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