The purpose of the study is new high school dropout in New Mexico and provide some policy implications. Causes, consequences, gainers and losers related to this social problem are discussed. Existing policies, programs and strategies are presented. Then, the paper of the national intervention to address the problem. The main idea of the program is to replace the last two years of high school by specific training in the field of students’ interests oriented to the future job. Implementing this strategy, the students’ self-determination, the proposed program could address students’ school disenagement and promote school completion.

The social problem

The national dropout rate in public schools in both 2010-11 and 2011-12 school years were the same at 33.3% (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). For the purposes of this discussion, we will analyze the situation in one of the lowest performing states - New Mexico with the rate of dropout in 6.6% (U.S. Department of Education, 2014), nearly twice the national average.

Analysis of the social problem

Considering Chambers and Wedel (2009) guideline in social problem analysis, causes, consequences, values and gainers-losers regarding the social problem were evaluated. Some reasons for dropout are intrapsychic such as substance abuse, school misbehavior, low level of motivation and delinquency (Theunissen, Verté, & Bosma, 2014). Some causes are related to family and peers e.g. family environment, maternal education (Capuzzi & Gross, 2014; Theunissen et al., 2012), and peer social networks (Mahoney, 2014). Further, some causes are not related to family, but are tied to individual socialization (Fortin et al., 2013). Likewise, some factors impacting dropout are at the macro level such as low socioeconomic status (Theunissen et al., 2012).

Some strong disengaging consequences emerging from the social problem of dropping out, the most obvious one is limited access to employment opportunities and economic well-being (Rumberger, 2002). The U.S. Department of Labor indicates that dropouts get average annual income of $19,225 compared to $26,309 for people with high school diploma (Weinstein, 2013). Engaging in antisocial behavior, negative self-perception and poor interpersonal skills are other consequences (Rumberger, 2002).

Losing employment and economic opportunities, the main losers are dropouts themselves. Another important loser may be taxpayers. Increasing the rate of crime -one of the consequences of the problem- leads to insecurity, and therefore, it has to be supported more to ensure security and fix the situation. On the other hand, existing the problem of dropouts, some people might gain, for example employers can hire people with lower incomes.

We believe that the program has capabilities which are the foundation of society, and we should provide education opportunity for all people regardless differences. According to Human Rights (1948), everybody must have access to education. These ethical considerations present the importance of examining the social problem of dropout.

EVALUATION OF EXISTING POLICIES/INTERVENTIONS

In this section, a brief review and evaluation on policies, strategies and programs already designed to address dropout are being presented.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

Aiming at improvement of school retention, NCLB act was passed in 2001 by the congress. The key concepts of the act are accountability for states, and school districts, more choice for parents and students, more flexibility in spreading funding, and enhanced focus on reading for young students (US Department of Education, 2002). Despite beneficial aspects of NCLB act, there are many criticisms such as lack of opportunity for talented students, unfair situations for low income schools and limited choices for parents. To 2013, most states requested or obtained NCLB waiver, and they were allowed to set other than NCLB and take into an account the standards for college and employment besides helping low-performance schools instead of sanctioning (Hardy, 2012; House, 2013; Lloyd, 2014).

Looking at dropout as a public health priority

Highlighting the positive effects of high school education achievement and mutually, positive effects of education on health, Freudenberg and Ruglis (2007) developed suggestions to school achievement including creating dropout prevention programs for interventions related to employment, poverty reduction, engaging young people in the school for example through health programs, educating health education teachers, bringing scientific evidence to the programs and improve the training benefits of health on education to encourage public participation, and adding reduce dropout rates in public health agenda as a priority (Freudenberg & Ruglis, 2007).

Other interventions

There are four main categories of dropout intervention programs (Johnson, 2008). First, school and community interventions highlighting the role of community support, relationships between students and teachers, students’ attitudes toward school and school-related emotional dropouts (Fiscella, 2008; Johnson, 2008); Second, early interventions assuming that addressing dropout program in early years is more effective (Fiscella; Johnson, 2008); Third, basic core strategies focusing on student-centered strategies (Johnson, 2008; Smink & Reimer, 2005); Finally, making the most of instructional interventions emphasizing what works on in classrooms (Johnson, 2008; Smink & Reimer, 2005).

Statewide interventions in New Mexico

We believe that the program has capabilities which are the foundation of society, and we should provide education opportunity for all people regardless differences. According to Human Rights (1948), everybody must have access to education. These ethical considerations present the importance of examining the social problem of dropout.

PROGRAM DESIGN

Applying eight steps of Rapp & Poertner (1992), an intervention was developed. After providing a brief review on the proposed program, the eight steps of program design are discussed. In designing a new program, the considered dropout cause is disenrollment; the program will be designed to shape the students’ self-determination, the proposed program could address students’ school disenagement and promote school completion.

Students and work place have to provide a monthly report in order to make the student evaluation possible. After finalizing two years, students will attain a specific diploma in their field.

Step five: key persons in the program are school social workers, education consultants and work place supervisors. Their work is to help students find their interests, enter the desired work place and to follow up the students’ work place. The first year of budget has to be allocated to these key persons as income, and also their training to implement the steps of the program. Step six is to discuss the employment of programs. This procedure will be implemented in this program, school and approved work places by Education Department of New Mexico will be the implementation environments.

Necessary relationships to implement the program are discussed in step seven. Student-social worker/education consultant relationships are the most important ones in this intervention. The relationships have to be collaborative, flexible and friendly. Step eight considers emotional reactions. It is predictable that at the first stages of the program, students and parents feel confused in identifying their interests. By supportive social workers and educational consultants, the students could adopt with the program. Existing an opportunity for switching the area of interests is fundamental to alleviate stressful circumstances.

CONCLUSION

Lessons learnt from the policy and strategies could help to improve more powerful and effective programs. By considering the risk factor of school disenagement, an intervention program was designed. The proposed program is an innovation to address the dropout social problem by underlying self-determination and strengths of the students. It is necessary to conduct study to evaluate the effectiveness. Also, acceptance of the program in public needs support of leaders.

MAIN REFERENCES


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