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Students' well-being also needs looking after

Tertiary institutions should make provision for students' well-being

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YOUNG people today face many challenges and stressful situations that ultimately have a negative impact on their social and interpersonal lives.

These obstacles also have an adverse effect on their academic performance and experiences. The high drop-out rate in tertiary institutions has been attributed to a lack of finance and a lack of information among other factors.

Often these reasons for students dropping out stem from social aspects like sexual health, HIV/Aids, substance abuse and physical or psychological abuse.

As a lecturer, there have been instances where I have had students battling with issues that no student should have to deal with.

Now more than ever, the role that tertiary institutions should play in providing support for students is crucial to academic performance and fulfilment.

For instance, we at Rosebank College emphasise the importance of having a satisfying social life by promoting a wide range of social, cultural and sporting activities that students can get involved in.

There should be a support system in place for tertiary students as they face many challenges and stressful situations.

The social aspect of student life is a critical part of the campus experience when it is directed towards positive entrenchment in their education.

Sexual permissiveness often leads to unplanned pregnancies and HIV/Aids which interferes with academic progress. Students have to leave college to look after the child and seek employment.

In turn, substance abuse continues to become a coping mechanism for dealing with unemployment, neglect and violence.

Student support services in educational institutions should have developmental approaches that are student-centred, with direct input from students to develop approaches that work.

Awareness programmes, counselling and support, aimed at the youth must to play a role in helping students to develop their intellectual, interpersonal and personal skills as they move from the education sector to the workforce.

We have a student support team in place that consists of qualified social workers to counsel students.

Awareness programmes are organised through the support team and they are available to help all students with any type of issue. Student Relationship Managers (SRMs), who are qualified social workers, are on campus to monitor and focus on students' all round development.

The institution assists students in planning their year making sure it is filled with opportunities for personal development. This type of support structure helps students develop life skills like teamwork, planning and organisation.

Students are grown-up members of society and cannot be treated as children. Higher education providers must realise that students should be motivated and encouraged to excel through the organisation's support and understanding.

At Rosebank College, students who like to get involved are given the chance to run for the Student Liaison Body. Not only do students get to meet new people, it also provides them with the chance to sharpen their leadership skills.

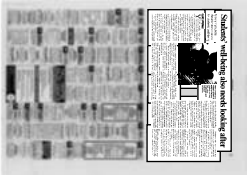
Students who have committed themselves to an organising body or group are less likely to get involved in risky situations.

A position on an organising committee instills feelings of responsibility and accountability while students gain valuable workplace experience like planning, budget management and setting up meetings.

When these components work together, institutions can achieve a higher level of academic performance linked to the positive well-being of their students.

A student's well-being should consist of necessary conditions that assure student contribution to society as well as the highest possible amount of individual freedom, responsibility and contentment.

However, it is the student's decision. Support services can only help and inspire students back into their studies.

As Dr Seuss said: "You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself in any direction you choose. And you know what you know. You are the guy who'll decide where to go."

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