

Addressing The Economic Recession Through Career Guidance Services Senior Secondary Schools

Shu'aibu Jambo¹, Duchi Abba Kyari², Asabe Adamu Gora³

^{1&2}Curriculum And Instruction Department USCOEGA 08036890970
elzakatuzu15@gmail.com

³Department of PED Umar Suleiman College of Education Gashua, Yobe State

Abstract

This study examines career guidance services provided by school counsellors in secondary schools as a solution to economic recession in Yobe state. The main objective is to assess the career guidance services and ways through which the services help students. The study used 387 students randomly sampled from purposively selected schools. Questionnaire instrument was employed in data collection and the results show that school counsellors are more effective in career guidance services related to helping students to make appropriate career pathway selection, learn about strength, abilities and learning style, set educational and career goals, information search about careers and world of work selection. However, school counsellors under perform in helping students to make future educational planning, college selection and placement. No significant difference was found among gender excepts in educational Planning, college selection and placement with female students having better educational planning, collection selection and placement. The paper concluded that the school counsellors play greatly in the area of career decision making, goal setting and personal awareness. However, it is recommended that school counsellors should improve services involving future educational planning, college selection and placement.

Key words: *counselling, school counselling, counsellors, career counselling, career planning*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Counselling is one of the necessary essential services in school setting for it to discharge the expected functions in the society. Counselling is a helping profession and it is the human characteristics that provide the basis for the profession to contribute its special knowledge and skills. Counselling is a wide selection of services and activities to help people prevent disabling events, focus on their overall development, and remedy existing concerns (Schmidt, 1993).

Within the Counselling paradigm, school counselling is an entity through which counselling needs of students in the school system is addressed. The American School Counsellors Association defined school counselling as a process of helping people by assisting them in making decisions and changing behavior. The rationale of school counselling programme is to provide range of services that facilitates the development of all students. On that bases Meeks (1968) then concluded that 'if the purpose of counselling is to facilitate development, then the counselling process must be a part of educational process from kindergarten through the secondary school'.

Paisley and Borders (1995) stressed that, the major focus of school counselling today is on the acquisition and incorporation into one's system of life adjustment approaches that foster productive rather than self defeating behavior. Therefore, school counselling is proactive and preventive in focus and an integral part of he educational programme as it assists students to obtain

and use life-long skills during the development of academic, career, self-awareness and interpersonal communication skills. Hence, Vanzandt and Hayslip, (2001) asserted that the cardinal objective of comprehensive school counselling programme is to provide all students with life success skills and Schmidt (2008) concluded that the preventive and developmental services have the potential to enhance the lives of students in the school.

School counsellors are integral part of the education programme as important to the school as teachers and administrators; as an essential factor to the main function of the school academic success (Sciarra, 2004). Counsellors employ variety of preventive and intervention techniques aimed at preventing losses, avoiding crises and other calamities that slow down progress in education and life of the students. The school counsellor is essentially a change agent who has the goal of facilitating change, growth, healing, empowerment and development of the students, such that the students will be able to establish hale and hearty relationship with self and others and have success in school and beyond. Studer (2005) asserts that no professional is more vital to the lives of students as the professional school counsellor as he creates opportunity to facilitate growth for students, assist parent / or guardians, coordinate opportunities for education in the school and consult with community professionals purposely for creating a meaningful educational experience for students.

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In the light of the professional roles of school counsellors, the article examines counselling services delivery in Yobe, Nigeria and to determine whether the service delivery differs among counsellors in boys and girls schools. The study is limited to some fundamental career issues that form the base for students' career development particularly in developing countries like Nigeria. These dimensions include selection of career path ways into science, commercial or arts during transition from lower to upper secondary; self-awareness (strength, abilities and learning styles); goal setting, career planning and career information search. The study is timely as it would provide inputs for gradual and continuous improvement with a view to achieving the overall mission of school counselling.

2.0 CAREER COUNSELLING IN SCHOOL

School counsellors carry out their functions in two main directions. School counsellors assist students in career development process in which variety of activities are accomplished and engage in career counselling. The *first* focuses on the development of the workforce and job search that is reinforced by resources (computer technology) and labour market information. The emphasis is on the economic and placement function. The *second* centres on career and development with emphasis on growth and development to whole human person for work and other roles within the society. This approach is the

totality of work and life roles that an individual takes on in life through which the individual expresses himself or herself. Zunker (1997) viewed career development as the interaction of psychological, sociological, economic, and physical as well as chance factor that shape the sequence of jobs, occupations or career that a person may engage in throughout a lifetime.

On the other hand, career counselling is one-to-one process that focuses on what a person can do, what a person like to do and what the person is willing to do (Studer, 2005). However, career counselling facilitates the learning for skills, interests, beliefs, values, work habits and personal qualities that create a satisfying life within a constantly changing work environment (Krumboltz, 1996).

3.0 METHODS

The study employed survey design. The design involves gathering information from respondents on career guidance services being provided in schools as way of addressing the economic recession.

Sample

The participants of the study were 387 (male 186, female 201) students of secondary school across senior secondary 1-3 drawn from the selected 21 secondary schools that were randomly within the 3 education zones in Yobe state. The participants' ages ranged from 14 – 25 years with mean age of 17.73 years (SD = 1.75). However, participants cut across the three career pathways consisting of science, commercial and arts being

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offered at school level. The 387 sample was selected out of 37, 564 through stratified random sampling technique.

Procedure

The respondents were selected from senior classes in each of the secondary schools and comprised of both boys and girls. Purposive sampling was employed in the selection of the school while simple random was used in selecting the respondents in each school.

Data were collected through on spot process and were then analyzed using descriptive statistics involving mean and standard deviation.

Instruments

Researcher developed questionnaire was used in the study and it comprises of 15 items designed in 5 point-Likert scale ranging from '1' as strongly disagree to '5' as strongly agree. The internal consistency (reliability) of the instrument was found to be .75. The instrument covers various dimensions of career counselling related functions of school counsellors but for purpose of this study, items of career guidance dimensions were extracted and analyzed.

4.0 RESULTS

Table 1 Frequency Distribution, Mean and SD for Career Guidance Services

		D	N	A	Mean	SD
1	My School Counsellor helps in selecting appropriate career path	12 (33%)	83 (21%)	178 (46%)	3.18	1.40
2	My School Counsellor helps students to learn about strength, abilities and learning styles	92 (24%)	50 (13%)	245 (63%)	3.57	1.38
3	My School Counsellor helps students think about goals after graduation from high school	141 (36%)	63 (16%)	183 (47%)	3.14	1.43
4	My School Counsellor helps students regarding future educational Planning, college selection and placement (career planning)	200 (52%)	54 (14%)	133 (34%)	2.67	1.39
5	My School Counsellor helps in information search about Careers and the world of work	133 (34%)	58 (15%)	196 (51%)	3.29	1.43

Key: D =Disagree N = Neither agree nor disagree A = Agree

Table 1 presents the results for the specified career guidance tasks performed by the school counselors. The result concerning the task of counsellors in assisting students to selecting appropriate career path ways

shows that majority of the students 178 (46%) believe that school counsellors discharge their function; 126 (32.5%) believe that counsellors do not meet their expectation while 83 (21.4%) remain neutral

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without indicating either agree or disagree. The overall mean 3.18 (SD =1.40) compliment the finding and indicates that school counsellors fulfill the function of assisting students in selecting appropriate career path ways (m=3.18; SD =1.40). This entails that school counselors are playing active role in placement exercise in order to ensure students take appropriate career path ways respectively base on their personality and the implication is that productive students would be realized as matching has been affected between individual personality and that of the environment as put forward by Holland (1992).

Besides that, regarding the counsellor's role in assisting students to get self-awareness about strength, abilities and learning styles, majority 245 (63.3%) of the students agreed that counsellors really help in these aspects; 92 (23.8%) disagree with that while 50 or 12.9% remain at the centre. The overall result reports a mean of 3.57 (SD= 1.38), demonstrating that the school counsellors carry out the task of helping students in identifying strength, abilities and learning styles which are essential ingredients in school life. The result demonstrates that students get substantial level of awareness of their respective potentials and the implication is that they are capable of making informed and rational decision about their educational and future career endeavours.

Similarly, in the area of goal setting, majority of the respondents 187 (47.1%) agreed that school counsellors discharge their role involving goal selection thereby

assisting students identify their career goals that compliments values, interests, and skills; 141 (36.4%) do not agree with that while 63 (16.3%) did not indicate their stand. The overall mean 3.14 (SD =1.34) support the finding that school counsellors discharge the function of assisting students in goal selection that are consistent with interest, skills and values portraying students are being assisted to set goals that are attainable taking into consideration variety of other factors within the limit of the students.

However, in terms of career planning, majority of the respondents 200 (51.7%) do not agree that school counsellors play their role of assisting students for future educational planning, college selection and placement; 133 (34.4%) agree with that while 54 (14%) neither agree nor disagree. The overall mean 2.67 (SD =1.39) support the finding that schools counsellors do not execute their role adequately involving assisting students in career planning that entails tasks of preparing students for the job market and job application process in one's field of interest. The result expresses that school counsellors fail to meet up to expectations in the area of assisting students to prepare for further education and job market which are among the cardinal objectives of secondary education. The implication of the deficiency is that there would be continuous production of students without the requirements and skills necessary for further education and employment.

Finally, as regards to the counsellors' role in assisting students with career information

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search about careers and the world of work, majority of the respondents 196 (50.7%) agreed that counsellors perform this function, 133 (34.4%) do not agree with that while 58 (15%) remain neutral. The overall mean 3.29 (SD =1.43) support the finding that counsellors perform the function of assisting students in career information search about careers and world of work

(providing that school counsellors use career information resources at disposal to help student get information which form the background for any meaningful decision. Therefore, the implication is that students would be acquainted with adequate information as well as existing alternative careers within respective career clusters.

Table 2 Mean, Standard Deviation, t-Values for Counselling services delivery differences among gender

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	p
My School Counsellor has helped me in selecting appropriate career paths	Male	186	3.0591	1.41106	-1.646	.101
	Female	201	3.2935	1.38867		
My School Counsellor has helps students think about goals after graduation from high school.	Male	186	3.0538	1.45836	-1.236	.217
	Female	201	3.2338	1.40714		
My School Counsellor helps students regarding educational Planning, college selection and placement.	Male	186	2.5054	1.33253	2.276	.023
	Female	201	2.8259	1.42987		
My School Counsellor has helps students to learn about strength, abilities and learning styles	Male	186	3.5269	1.48208	-.604	.546
	Female	201	3.6119	1.28789		
My School Counsellor helps in information search about Careers and the world of work.	Male	186	3.2527	1.44657	-.551	.582
	Female	201	3.3333	1.42945		

Table 2 shows an independent t-test for the observed variables between genders. The results depict that a significant difference was found among gender in educational Planning, college selection and placement $t(385) = 2.27, p < .05$ indicating that counsellors in girls schools perform better in assisting female students in educational planning, college selection and placement than counsellors in male schools ($m = 2.82$ and 2.50 ; $SD = 1.42$ and 1.33). However, no significant difference was found among gender in the selection of appropriate career path $t(385) = -1.46, p > .05$, goal setting $t(385) = -1.23, p > .05$, self awareness $t(385) = -.60, p > .05$ and career information search $t(385) = -.55, p > .05$ revealing that school counsellors functions is similar in both girls and boys school.

5.0 DISCUSSIONS

The research exposed the degree to which fundamental career aspects are being provided in schools. This reveals that counsellors' task performance in selection of appropriate career path ways among students account for 46 percent which below the average indicating that the school counsellors' role is not adequate enough for effective placement during the transition from lower to upper basic secondary school. This suggests that school counsellor need to improve the approach being used and employ modern ways of assessing and placing student into appropriate career pathways for greater efficiency and productivity of students.

Similarly, self awareness involving strength, abilities and learning styles

emerged as best function that school counsellors perform. This indicates that the criteria used by the school counsellors is effective and improving the technique will in no doubt improve the outcome which could be for the best of the students, system and society as whole as students will future educational and career prospects will be produced. Thus, collaboration between school counsellor and teachers as well as other stakeholders should be enhanced thereby making these students actualize their career and educational goals.

Meanwhile, goal selection is also satisfactory indicating that students' capability of setting goals that compliment interest, skills and values is adequate. This further reveals that students set goals that are attainable thereby increasing the tendency of success. This justify that schools counsellors perform the career guidance service in helping students set attainable goals towards a specific direction as it is the only way in which students could be utilized optimally for societal growth in particular, national and global advancement in broader perspective.

In the area of career planning, the outcome indicates that school counsellors under perform in this area. Career planning involves strategy for making the students aware of what is contain and required in the career of one's choice that match interest and abilities. The relevance of career planning in school cannot be under estimated as its cardinal objectives is to provide students with necessary

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awareness, knowledge and skills require in the world of work. Herr, Cramer and Niles (2004) asserts that career planning helps students acquire knowledge, skills and awareness necessary for effectively managing their career development, thus, counsellor implement systematic and well-coordinated educational and career planning programme. Therefore, the outcome suggests that career planning in secondary need to be revisited so as to make it functional with a view to achieving high level of awareness, improve knowledge acquisition and skills as ingredient for effective career development.

Finally, the finding involving career information search dimension demonstrates that counsellors perform this function satisfactorily. The finding suggests that counsellors paid attention career guidance service due to its crucial importance so that students would have enough information to informed decision making and during translation of goals into action. Career information search is an integral part in career development process that need to be given attention during the school days so that students can be prepared adequately for development task of exploration.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, the study pointed out the degree to which school counsellors perform career guidance services in schools. The outcome provides the ground for improving the performance of the school counsellors so that school can meet

up to its expectation of preparing students that are well equipped for life in the competitive 21st century. Therefore, base on the state of tasks delivery.

However, it is recommended that stakeholder should review the process of handling school counselling and school counsellors should under professional training so that they could be able to carry out their duties professionally for better results. Similarly, the school counselling should be designed to meet existing need of students, educational system and labour market so linkage could be established. Needs assessment should be carried out as it forms the basis for which the programmes can be established. One important component at initial stage of conducting a need assessment is to determine rationale, goals and interventions (Herr & Crammer, 1996)

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