

Students' Perception of Career Guidance Services for Making Vocational Choice in Secondary Schools in Onitsha North Local Government Area, Anambra State

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Abstract

This study investigated the students' perception of career guidance services for making vocational choice. Two research questions guided the study. Descriptive survey research design was employed for the study. The population of the study comprised 2,938 senior secondary school III students. The sample size for this study consisted of 569 SSIH students drawn using multistage sampling procedure. The instrument used for data collection was Students' Perception of Career Guidance Services for Vocational Choice Questionnaire (SPCGSVCQ) developed by the researchers. The instrument was validated by three experts. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using Cronbach Alpha which yielded an overall reliability of 0.80 for the instrument with coefficients for clusters A and B being 0.78 and 0.81 respectively. Mean and standard deviation was used in answering the research questions. The findings of the study revealed that career information services are rendered to students for making vocational choice in secondary schools in Onitsha North Local Government Area of Anambra State. Based on the findings, it was recommended that Ministry of Education should organize public awareness campaign to sensitize school management and counsellors on the need for career guidance services.

Keywords: Students, Career, Guidance, Services, Choice

Introduction

Education is the driving force behind the economic, social and political development of any nation. It also provides opportunity for students to acquire crucial life skills that enable them to live meaningfully in a rapidly changing world. Nnebedum, Nwanga and Odoh (2020) asserted that education is an instrument for transmission of requisite skills and knowledge to individuals which help them function effectively and contribute to the development of the society. Continuing, Nnebedum et al pointed out that it encourages national integration, inculcation of literacy and numeracy which is relevant to the social, economic and political development of any country. Education is delivered in formal setting in educational institutions which include secondary school.

Secondary school education is the engine room for building up individuals' strengths and talents to become useful members of the society. Secondary school is the right institution of learning that assists students to develop skills, abilities and interest for a prospective career. To buttress this, Eremie and Bethel-Eke (2020) noted that secondary education is the time when students are made to understand or learn about other subjects that determine the course of study which one would want to engage in higher education. When considering the educational stage at which choice is to be made, secondary school is the best option because the tertiary level of education is the level of education at which students limit themselves to a specific area of proficiency based on the foundation level established at the secondary school level (Eremie & Bethel-Eke, 2020). To ensure that secondary school students make the right choice, they are supposed to be exposed to various information and opportunities through career guidance services.

Career guidance services are all programmes initiated by school management to help students make the right choice in choosing a vocation. Amie-Ogan, Epelle and Douglas (2020) defined career guidance as the process of planning, implementing and monitoring career activities provided by institutions in order to assist students develop interest in a vocation based on their skills and abilities. Career guidance is a programme designed to create career awareness on wide range of jobs to make rational and realistic choice of school subjects and vocational path. Ogbuoji and Obioha (2015) defined career guidance as assistance given to an individual to make career choice based on the knowledge of his potentials. Career guidance services assist students to make adjustments and solve problem they encounter in making vocational decisions. According to Claudia, Anișoara and Oana (2015), career guidance is an educational construct where the individual is supported in knowing his or her vocational profile and potential and then use this information to become useful and effective inside the society to which one belongs. Operationally, career guidance is any programme or

approach of educating students on the wide range of jobs in relation to their interest, abilities and aptitude.

Career guidance services are needed by students who are continuing with education and those transitioning to the labour market. Ali (2014) stressed that guidance services are needed to help students to make appropriate career choice that matches their talents, know the relevant entry requirements for each job, know the hazards of different jobs and understand conditions of services for different jobs. Career guidance provides opportunity for students to discover professions that suit their abilities, skills and interests. The three main elements of career guidance services include career education, career information and career counselling (Gacohi, Sindabi & Chepchieng, 2017; Loan & Van, 2015). The study is interested in career education and career information.

Career information services is designed to assist students explore various vocational opportunities. Career information services involve provision of accurate and usable facts concerning careers that state the entry and training requirements, employment opportunities, nature and conditions of work, advancement opportunities, salary and benefits, trends and outlook (Zunker cited in Gacohi, Sindabi & Chepchieng, 2017). Career information services stimulate students' interest in given professions based on their abilities and personality. Availability of adequate and appropriate career information enables students to develop their own career aspirations and goals and thus make informed career decisions (Patton & McMahan, 2014). Kumazhege (2017) stressed that the career counsellor provides the students with career information that may be related to their subjects and interest, so that they can make appropriate choice based on their capabilities to cope with the nature and demand of the vocation. In another perspective, research by the Oats & Rukewe (2020) pointed out that schools play minimal role in providing information to learners in career planning and development.

Career education is a planned learning programme designed to assist students plan their career paths. The term career education is used to include those educational experiences and service provided at the elementary, secondary, post-secondary and adult levels, which help people to make more intelligent occupational choice, and to advance in their chosen field (Ezeani, 2013). Ezeani added that the objectives of career education in secondary school include to: stimulate occupational interest, provide exploratory prevocational experiences that involve specifics and occupational clusters, provide advanced specific occupational training for specific occupations or occupational clusters to meet the specific needs of the individual. Career education includes career awareness, career exploration, career orientation and career preparation.

Vocational choice is decision which relates to the kind of profession that students intend to study in higher institutions. According to Okojide, Adekeye and Bakare (2018), vocational choice is the act of identifying and selecting a type of occupation or vocation that will enable him/her achieve a life goal. It also involves an individual utilizing information and knowledge about self, world of work and opportunities in his or her environment to make career decisions. According to Kumazhege (2017), vocational choice is the decision on an intended profession or occupation leading to employment through which one earns a living, especially one for which the person has a period of training in an institution or through apprenticeship. In the context of this study, vocational choice is the decision to choose a particular career path based on one's interest, skills and personality.

Vocational choice is one of the crucial decisions that secondary school students are to make in life. As students try to make career choice while in secondary school, they face problems of attaching their vocational choice with their abilities and school performance in the selected subjects (Abdullahi & Atsua, 2014). Vocational choice focuses on issues related to occupation or career. Awoyemi and Odeniyi (2014) noted that the wrong vocational choice may affect the physical well-being of an individual and equally mar individual's happiness for life as a result of vocational maladjustment. Awoyemi and Odeniyi (2014) also noted that it is obvious that students need career knowledge in order to understand the different types of jobs that are available in the society, subject combinations leading to the jobs, training requirements and personal qualities needed for such jobs, earning profile and career prospects.

Many secondary schools in Nigeria allow their students to choose subjects to offer without careful consideration of their ability, aptitude and interest; the future university courses and the possible careers to which the subjects could lead (Ibanga & Eremie, 2017). Some secondary school students find it difficult to make vocational choice based on their intellectual abilities, interest, skills, personal aptitude. Ogwokhademhe, Ajibola, Kayode and Sheu (2014) stressed that vocational choice decision-making is not an easy task, yet at one time or the other, individuals are faced with the task of making a choice of career, preparing for it and start making progress in it. The vocational choice has been a serious problem among the secondary school students in Onitsha North Local Government Area of Anambra State. Awoyemi and Odeniyi (2014) noted that career guidance programme has been introduced into secondary schools in order to equip students with career knowledge, valid and usable vocational and occupation information but many students still choose wrong subjects combination, many do not know course to study, where to study it, and the required subjects combination. Egbo (2018) observed that career guidance and counselling programme has not been given the proper attention it deserves; and majority of secondary school students in Nigeria have continue to have difficulty in career decision

making. To buttress this, Eremie and Bethel-Eke (2020) averred that most of these students ended up choosing jobs without relating them to their interests, satisfaction and capacity to cope with the nature of the job. This prompted this study to investigate students' perception of career guidance services for making vocational choice in secondary schools in Onitsha North Local Government Area, Anambra State.

Statement of the Problem

The difficulty experienced by secondary school students in making appropriate vocational choice has led to introduction of career guidance services to help tackle this problem. However, these career guidance services seem to be insufficient as some students rarely access these services in secondary schools in Onitsha North Local Government Area of Anambra State. Some secondary school students in Onitsha North LGA who never had the opportunity of career guidance services are likely to choose professions without the knowledge of what they entail. Some secondary school students choose subjects to offer without taking into account their ability, aptitude and interest; the courses to study in higher institution and the possible careers to which the subjects could lead in future. Due to insufficient guidance on career decision making by a professional guidance counsellor, students make wrong choice which results to vocational maladjustment and also undermine their contribution to national development. Based on this unsatisfactory state of affairs, the study investigated the students' perception of career guidance services for making vocational choice in secondary schools in Onitsha North Local Government Area of Anambra State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to determine the students' perception of career guidance services for making vocational choice in secondary schools in Onitsha North Local Government Area of Anambra State. Specifically, the study sought to find out:

1. Students' perception of career education services for making vocational choice in secondary schools in Onitsha North Local Government Area, Anambra State.
2. Students' perception of career information services for making vocational choice in secondary schools in Onitsha North Local Government Area, Anambra State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the students' perception of career education services for making vocational choice in secondary schools in Onitsha North Local Government Area, Anambra State?
2. What is the students' perception of career information services for making vocational choice in secondary schools in Onitsha North Local Government Area, Anambra State?

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. According to Nworgu (2015), descriptive survey is the design which aims at collecting data and describing in a systematic manner the characteristics, features or facts about a given population. This design is deemed appropriate, since the researchers collected data from a given population to ascertain the students' perception of career guidance services for making vocational choice in secondary schools in Onitsha North Local Government Area, Anambra State. The population of the study comprised 2,938 senior secondary school III students in 16 public secondary schools in Onitsha North LGA, Anambra State. The sample size for this study comprised 569 SS 3 students drawn using multistage sampling procedure. Simple random sampling technique involving balloting without replacement was used to select eight schools from 16 public secondary schools in Onitsha North LGA. Proportionate random sampling technique was used to draw 30% of students in each of the eight schools. As a result of this procedure, 569 SS 3 students were drawn as the sample size.

The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled Students' Perception of Career Guidance Services for Vocational Choice Questionnaire (SPCGSVCQ) which was developed by the researchers. The instrument has two clusters namely: A and B. Cluster A has six items on career education services and cluster B has eight items on information services. The instrument therefore contains a total of 21 items all of which are structured on a four point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) weighted 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively.

Face validation of the instrument was determined by presenting three copies of the questionnaire together with title, purpose of the study and research questions to three experts who are lecturers, two in the Department of Educational Psychology/Guidance and Counselling, and one specialist in Measurement and Evaluation in Nwafor Orizu College of Education Nsugbe, Anambra State. The internal consistency reliability was determined using Cronbach alpha which yielded coefficient values of 0.78 and 0.81 of Cluster A and B respectively with overall coefficient of the entire instrument being 0.80.

The researchers together with two research assistants who are secondary school teachers in Awka South LGA collected data for this study. Direct approach was employed in data collection in order to ensure that copies of the questionnaire administered were properly filled and successfully retrieved. A total of 569 copies of the questionnaire were distributed, and 552 copies of the questionnaire were successfully retrieved, indicating 97 percent return. The data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. In taking decisions, mean score of 2.50 or above was

taken as agreement and any mean rating below 2.50 was taken to indicate disagreement.

Presentation of results

Research Question 1: What is the students' perception of career education services for making vocational choice in secondary schools in Onitsha North Local Government Area, Anambra State?

Table 1: Mean ratings and standard deviation scores of students' perception of career education services for making vocational Choice

S/N	Items	Students (N = 552)		
		Mean	SD	Remark
1	Organize career week to give students the confidence to decide what they want to do in future without fear or doubt	2.89	1.11	Agree
2	Organize career forum to help students' vocational choice that is in line with their interests, aptitude and abilities	2.65	1.06	Agree
3	Invite experts to speak on their various disciplines and subject combinations	2.46	1.10	Disagree
4	Educate students to make them realize and explore other occupational fields apart from popularly known ones based on their intellectual capacities	2.66	1.05	Agree
5	Provide more linkages between the school subjects and career choice through vocational education	2.71	1.12	Agree
6	Organize career talks on subjects needed for different areas of specialization	2.58	1.10	Agree
Overall mean		2.66	1.09	Agree

The result presented on Table 1 revealed that the mean scores of respondents for all with exception of 3 are above the cut off mean of 2.50, indicating agreement with the items. The overall standard deviation score of 1.09 indicated that there is homogeneity amongst their mean scores. The cluster mean of 2.69 which is above the cut off mean of 2.50 indicated agreement with items suggested as the students' perception of career education services for making vocational choice in secondary schools in Onitsha North Local Government Area, Anambra State.

Research Question 2: What is the students' perception of career information services for making vocational choice in secondary schools in Onitsha North Local Government Area, Anambra State?

Table 2: Mean ratings and standard deviation scores of students' perception of career information services for making vocational choice

S/N	Items	Students (N = 552)		
		Mean	SD	Remark
7	Creates occupational information that is relevant to the career choice of students	2.68	1.08	Agree
8	Use occupational pamphlets to enlighten on various career and subject combination that suit the profession	2.60	1.13	Agree
9	Provides information that equips parents and teachers with necessary knowledge to guide students to make choice of the job they can do	2.45	1.00	Disagree
10	Use newsletter to identify work roles which suits students' interest	2.57	1.00	Agree
11	Disseminate information that gives the proper sense of direction as regards the suitable job for students to choose	2.64	1.14	Agree
12	Create career information centre for students to get the current information in happenings in the world of education and work	2.40	1.08	Disagree
13	Make online career information available to students to strengthen their vocational choice	2.43	1.11	Disagree
14	Display of vital information about career opportunities on school boards	2.67	1.09	Agree
	Overall mean	2.56	1.08	Agree

The results presented on Table 2 shows that the mean scores of respondents for items 7, 8, 10, 11 and 14 are above the cut off mean of 2.50, indicating agreement with the items. On the other hand, the mean scores of respondents for items 9, 12 and 13 are below the cut off mean of 2.50, indicating disagreement with the items.

The overall standard deviation score of 1.08 indicated that there is homogeneity amongst their mean scores. The cluster mean of 2.56 which is above the cut off mean of 2.50 indicated agreement with the items as the students' perception of career information services for making vocational choice in secondary schools in Onitsha North Local Government Area, Anambra State.

Discussion of the findings

The finding of the study revealed that students perceived that career education services are rendered for making vocational choice in secondary schools in Onitsha North Local Government Area, Anambra State. This is in line with the finding of Egbo (2018) which indicated that career education guidance services, to a great extent, influence career choice of secondary school students. The possible reason for the agreement between the findings could be due to the fact that the two studies were conducted in Nigeria where guidance services are similar at secondary school level. This finding is also in line with the finding of Claudia, Anișoara and Oana (2015) which indicated that students are poorly educated and informed about job opportunities, their expectations for the future are not connected with their own knowledge and abilities, they do not have a coherent career plan and encounter major barriers in the career decision process. The career education services rendered to students for making vocational choice in secondary schools in Onitsha North Local Government Area, Anambra State include organizing career week to give students the confidence to decide what they want to do in future without fear or doubt, organizing career forum to help students' vocational choice that is in line with their interests, aptitude and abilities, educating students to make them realize and explore other occupational fields apart from popularly known ones based on their intellectual capacities, providing more linkages between the school subjects and career choice through vocational education and organizing career talks on subjects needed for different areas of specialization.

The result of this study indicated that students perceived that career information services are rendered for making vocational choice in secondary schools in Onitsha North Local Government Area, Anambra State. This contradicted the finding of Oats and Rukewe (2020) which indicated that the majority of the students did not have enough career information services to make their vocational choice. The disagreement in findings could be due to the fact that the two studies utilized different participants. The career information services rendered to students for making vocational choice in secondary schools in Onitsha North Local Government Area, Anambra State include creating occupational information that is relevant to the career choice of students, using occupational pamphlets to enlighten on various career and subject combination that suit the profession, using newsletter to identify work roles which suit students' interest, disseminating information that gives the proper sense of direction as regards

the suitable job for students to choose, and display of vital information about career opportunities on school boards.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it is concluded that students perceived that career guidance services are rendered to them for making vocational choice in secondary schools in Onitsha North Local Government Area, Anambra State. These career guidance services are career education, information and counselling services. The career guidance broadens students' knowledge on various career opportunities in relation to their intellectual capacity, skills and personality. This helps students to make realistic vocational choices.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that:

1. Ministry of Education should organize public awareness campaign to sensitize school management and counsellors on the need for career education services.
2. School management should take students out on occupational visits to stimulate their interest in occupations and consequently the subjects that lead to them before making choice of subjects.
3. Career week should be organized in every term to help students gather reliable occupational information on different work types from different professionals.

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