

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The field of school based guidance and counseling programs have been designed to help students gain career awareness within the educational system. Over the years the field has been confronted with great challenges that make it more difficult to provide students with strong career guidance. Guidance professional in many public schools are often assigned large work loads. The average US students counselor ratio is 479 to 1 and it grows to more than 1000 to 1 in some schools (American school counselor association, 2010). This contrasts greatly with what is necessary to ensure adequate students services. The American school counselor association recommends a student counselor ratio of 250 to 1. In order to implement comprehensive developmental school counseling program designed to meet the needs of all students. (American School Counseling Association, 2010).

Further complicating these high ratios, guidance professionals are at times redirected to assignments that do not match or need their professional counseling skills. Responsibilities may include such diverse activities as conducting testing programs, registering students for courses, filling out college application, handling disciplinary issues and monitoring student's records. Some of these activities such as coordinating and administering cognitive, aptitude and achievement tests have been declared inappropriate by the American School Counselor Association, while others merely stretch the limit of any individual professional, leaving less time to focus on direct student services such as career guidance. A survey of high schools counselor in Florida found that more than 30% reported that "actual career counseling" occupied very little of their time (Osborn, Debra and Baggerly, 2004)

There is also a dichotomy between what counselor need to know about helping students make good educational and career decision and what counselors learn in their counselor preparatory programs. Many counselor preparatory programs focus predominantly on mental health models rather than academic and career development models (Martin 2002). Thus some guidance professionals lack current and accurate knowledge concerning career guidance and emerging career opportunities and may have outdated perceptions about post secondary options that impact the information they share with students (Mitkos, et. al. 2008).

The term "school counseling" broadly refers to the process of meeting the needs of students in several areas of development, such as academic career and personal. Experts agree that professional school counseling program should be "comprehensive in scope, preventive in design and developmental in nature". The term "Guidance" refers to a more specific trajectory within the field of counseling a pathway to helping students choose a vocational or career path "guidance is the processes of helping people make important choices that affect their lives such as choosing a preferred life style." One distinction between guidance and counseling is that while guidance focuses on helping individual choose what they value most, counseling focuses on helping them make changes

Several changes have taken place in the evolution of counseling and guidance program in schools around the world. Counseling and guidance appeared to have moved from a single vocational counselor in schools to an organized program that focuses on;

content (core competencies that all students can acquire)

Organizational framework (structural component and program component) and resources (human and political). Gysbers and Henderson, 2000.

As such Counseling and guidance experts are increasingly emphasizing the need for program planning and evaluation and improving effectiveness of programs and accountability of counselors.

In establishing carefully planned counseling and guidance programs in post primary education, the idea of gender responsiveness is critical.

The term “gender responsiveness” refers to the practice of active and engaged strategies and responses to issues relating to gender in educational planning and policies. Gender responsive programming promotes greater equity by;

Ensuring that the overall need and interest of both boys and girls in post primary schools are met.

Effectively incorporating life skills-based strategies for preparing the next generations to make life career decisions.

Ensuring access to programs for upper level education /college/university readiness.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Lack of preparation to navigate the changing workplace can be tied specifically to a lack of career knowledge and awareness. More than half of high school students say no one in their school has been helpful in advising on career options or option to further their education. (Hurley et.al, 2002). Without structured guidance activities, young people tend to drift through their high school education without gaining knowledge of all the career opportunities available to them or the skills that are required. Some will become discouraged and drop out of high school; others may miss the connections between high school, post-secondary education and the workplace and make career decision based on inaccurate or incomplete information.

In a survey carried out by the state of our nation’s youth, the top career choices among students in an open ended question were doctor or surgeon (10%), teacher of professor (8%), engineer (6%), nurse/medical assistant (6%), arts or entertainment (5%), lawyer or attorney (5%). (Horatio Agler Association of Distinguished American, Inc 2008-2009}. Most of these choices require a number of years of post secondary education. Yet only 70% of students graduate from school on time and only 34% graduate ready for college. (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2000). This disconnects between aspiration and educational performance set students up for personal or financial disappointment as they are faced with the realities of the job market. Many other students enter college without a clear career goal. resulting in indecision and the costly prospect of excessive time spent in post- high school institution as they drift from one program to another or pursue courses of study that do not align with employer need. Students over the age of 25 are now one of the fastest growing populations in community colleges. (Gateway Community College, 2006). They often enroll to get additional skills to be competitive in the workplace. Many of these students have already completed some college or even a 4-year degree, but have found it inadequate or inappropriate for the career opportunities that are available to them. Engaging in post secondary education without a clear purpose does not use public or private resources as effectively as possible and these students would have greatly benefited from stronger career guidance early in their educational experience.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study among other things is to find out;

How students view the role of counselors in secondary schools.

If students sex and age has effect on their perception of the role of counselors in the choice of a career.

The role of counselors towards students' choice of career in secondary schools in esan west local government area of Edo state.

The perception of students on the need for counselors in their choice if career in secondary schools.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION

This research will attempt to answer the following questions:

What are students' perceptions of counselor's role in secondary schools in Esan west local government area of Edo state?

Does the student's age have effect on their perception of the need for counselors in secondary schools?

Does the students' sex have effect on their perception of the need for counselors in secondary schools?

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings of this research will reveal to students, teachers administrators, parents, government and employer of labour the importance of school counselors in secondary schools as regards students choice of career. Students would benefit by understanding how important and indispensable the counselor is in their choice of a career.

It will make parents and teachers understand the essence of early grooming of their children and ward regarding career choices and the role of the counselor towards achieving success and satisfaction for their children/students professionally.

The administrator would be able to provide materials that would facilitate positive counselor/student relationship in order to be more productive.

Government and employer of labour on their part will enjoy a better well prepared and packaged work force with necessary orientation and experience that will help in nation building and greater efficiency.

1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study covered secondary school students that reside in Esan West Local Government Area of Edo State. Five secondary schools were randomly selected with from the 17 secondary schools in the area. This research looked at Students perception of the role of the school counselor in the choice of career and how they can be improved. The effect of counselor's advice on the choice and decisions of students in the area will be taken into account during the course of this research.

1.7 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

A study of this nature would not be complete without discussing some of the problems encountered by the researcher. The various problems that limit the outcome of this research work are therefore discussed below;

This research depends mainly on the responds of the students and teacher/counselors. The time set aside for this study was too short; as a result, the researcher had no opportunity to make all intensive and extensive study on the topic.

Again there was period of long holiday for teachers and students in the local government area used as a case study of this research work.

Finally teachers, students and counselors could not return all the questionnaires distributed to the researcher. And this would only make him to only work with the ones that got to him.

STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF THE ROLE OF SCHOOL COUNCELORS IN THE CHOICE OF A CAREER

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