Students Career Readiness: Issues and Evidence from Mawuko Girls Senior High School in Ho Municipality

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to examine the issues and evidence of the career readiness of students in Mawako Girls in the Ho Municipality. Utilizing an explanatory sequential mixed method research design, a sample of one hundred and thirty students of Mawuko Girls Senior High School and ten teachers, from a population of 484, (comprising of 412 students and 72 teachers) was used for the study. A self-developed questionnaire (α 0.85) was used for students' data collection, and an interview guide for teachers. The study was guided by four research questions. Percentages and weighted means were used to analyse the quantitative data, while thematic analysis was utilized to analyse the quantitative data.

The findings of the study revealed the following: That student in Mawako Girls have good level of career awareness. Additionally, students acquire information on career from the school. electronic media, newspapers, magazines, teachers, and friends. Finally, students are faced with four major challenges as they make their career choices namely: lack of funds to pursue required courses for the job they want to do in future, lack of the required information for career choice-making; acceeding to the career choice preferred by parents and guardians; and finally lack teachers to teach required subjects for students' preferred careers.

The study recommends that: The headmaster of the school should insist that students receive career guidance once they are admitted into the school. The school's library should be furnished with adequate magazines and newspapers since students read them for various information including that of their career choices. The school should be connected to the World Wide Web, to create a good source for educating pupils with career information. Finally, the school's computer laboratory must be adequately resourced with internet connection and computers to allow students to independently search for information on careers.

Keywords- Students, Career readiness, Career choices, Evidence, Mawuko Girls SHS.

I. INTRODUCTION

A career should be chosen with utmost care, contemplation, and scheduling. Individuals have dissimilar innate capacities and abilities and hence aptitudes for different kind of occupation. The purpose of Career Guidance is to match the individuals and their preferred occupation optimally, for communal benefits. It also promotes equity. Recent evidence suggests that social mobility relies on wider acquisition not just of knowledge and skills, but also understanding how to use them. In this framework, the mission of career guidance is very vast, to become part of all-time learning.

In general, Guidance means helping people to make out wise choice and solve their educational, personal, and vocational problems. It is a process, through individuals are assisted in making adequate adjustments to life's situations.

Career counsellors offer a wide range of career related programmes to students which are aimed at assisting students to plan their career, make informed decision, and choose a career which will land him or her into the right vocation to make students enjoy their work (Zunker, 2002; Collins, 2007). In view of this, students receive comprehensive career counselling programmes (interventions) that require career and life plans through

all level of schools and beyond, as well as school-to-work programmes which focus on preparing students for work through experienced internship activities in communities and organizations (Zunker, 2002).Thus, it is important to provide career intervention activities in school with the aim to support students with information and guidance with regards to personal, academic and career option (Rosenbaum & Person, 2003).

According to Zafar (2019), career planning is characterized as the procedure through which students come to settle on profession-related choices. In the adolescence and early adulthood ages, career planning becomes significant in choosing career for their lives. This is because high school students enter a period in their lives when looking for career information and becoming aware of the vocational interests, become increasingly paramount.

Schneider & Stevenson (1999). argue that career choices and development are typically influenced by factors that determine the selection of careers. These choices are vital - for today's youth, who are more than ever motivated but seemingly directionless. The youth around the world over have dreams of becoming highly educated and having professional careers. But it seems many young students have no action plan that enables the choice of a preferred career articulate with their capabilities, values, and opportunities available for attaining these goals.

Frank Parson provided an abstract skeleton for helping an individual to choose out a career. This skeleton is employed by vocational and/or career counsellors in helping students to straighten out on their careers.

Bedu-Addo (2019), as well as Bukuand Taylor (2006), assert that, industrial revolution in Europe and the technological breakthrough in Russia in 1957 that led to the launch of sputnik 1 which forced several Western countries, to require a brand-new look at vocational guidance in schools.

The Ghanaian educational reforms for Senior High School (SHS) requires students to select the academic programme they hope to offer in SHS once they are in the final year of Junior High School (JHS). The career most students choose usually begins from the programme of study they pursue upon entry into the SHS. These programmes at the SHS level often determine to a large extent the courses students continue to pursue at the University or alternative higher tertiary institutions of learning as well as their future career prospects.

Choosing a career path is a huge part of a young man or woman's life. The career path students choose will affect how they will live the rest of their life. A lot of students go through college without knowing what career path they want. Before students can pick a career path, they need to experience the different dimensions of that particular career.

While guidance and counselling are not part of the senior high school curriculum, they are an essential element of education (Kankam & Onivehu, 2000). Its

services not only inform but also inspire students to achieve academic goals. Preparing students for careers entails guiding them through education and work. Senior high school is a suitable period for career counselling because students must choose subjects and courses. They are expected to decisions that represent their strengths and interests, without closing off future options. In this regard Guidance and therapy are required to assist such students. Consequently, this research investigates level of career awareness among students in Mawuko Girls and challenges facing students in their career choices

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Career choices assistance to students

Students may have to wait long periods of time for a job in their chosen field, sometimes settling for jobs that are low-paying and out of their field of interest. Students who have outstanding student loans are forced into other fields to earn money to pay off loans. Nationwide, in the USA, companies are offering 17% less entry level positions to graduates than in previous years (Lee, 2008). Career development remains a priority today and one that must be addressed successfully in order to meet the career development needs of students. According to Herr and Cramer (1996), "career development occurs whether or not career advice or professional education exists—smoothly, jaggedly, positively, or adversely" (p.32). To prepare kids for success in the twenty-first century, the twenty-first century requires Ghanaian students to be prepared for a career as seniors who graduate from high schools. In the United States of America, for example, and career preparedness for every student. Between 2004 and 2014, approximately two-thirds of new jobs generated nationally in the US were filled by individuals with some post-secondary education, as will nearly 90% of employment with higher-than-average growth and incomes created during the same period (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007). Ghana seem to have a similar case (Bedu-Addo, 2019).

Careers are always evolving, and the professions that will presumably exist in the next decade or so are likely to be for the current crop of senior high school students.

In many circumstances, post-secondary alternatives include not only four-year universities, but also community colleges, certification programmes, military service, apprenticeships, and formal work training. Meanwhile, people with a lower level of education are more likely to be unemployed or underemployed. Additionally, Australia and other industrialised nations have a vocational education and training system.

In schools, a vocational education and training (VET) programme enables students to mix vocational courses with their other subjects as they work toward completing Year 12. In this manner, students can continue

with full-time or part-time vocational training or pursue postsecondary degrees. However, such chances do not appear to exist in Ghana, yet pupils are prepared in certain ways for such jobs in life. As a result, career education must now be integrated into Ghanaian school curricula.

For instance, research indicates that many people learn more effectively when topics are taught in context (Gandara, 2007; Richmond, 2009). Additionally, it has been demonstrated that applied project-and portfolio-based education improves outcomes for English language learners; these techniques scaffold instruction for students who have not yet learned English (Gandara, 2007). Richmond (2009) asserts that when teachers collaborate to integrate material across disciplines, strong and favourable student outcomes can occur.

All students need basic academic knowledge, especially in math and English language arts. In today's economy, all high school students need the academic skills they need to go to college without having to take remedial classes, which many people call "college readiness."

To be career-ready, students must also be able to apply academic knowledge in a context, and certain academic talents require further attention and development. Employers frequently point to weaknesses in English and written communications, such as memos, letters, and sophisticated technical reports. This demonstrates that most written material students will encounter during their employment is informational in nature, such as technical manuals and research articles. Consequently, they must be intellectually prepared to study and utilise these resources. These abilities are sometimes overlooked in typical academic classrooms. Math problems in the workplace are also often found, with more emphasis on skills like data analysis and statistics, reasoning, and problem solving.

Students must also be able to apply academic knowledge to scenarios involving intentional authentic education that they may encounter in their employment. Such a skill requires experience and may need to be adapted to a student's specific professional aspirations. Students who want to be nurses for example, must be able to calculate and apply ratios, proportions, rates, and percentages to figure out how much medicine to give each patient. Additionally, students aspiring to be construction workers must be able to design and build buildings using geometrical concepts.

There are numerous strategies for motivating kids of all ages to pursue career goals. Along with a wealth of general professional information and data, a quick web search will reveal a plethora of sites that offer self-discovery exams, self-assessment tools, and personal interest inventories. Students may benefit from assistance in identifying their strengths and limitations. Most importantly, Majewski, & Koonert, (2010) indicate that if our school system implements a job-based learning programme, we may immerse our children in the actual work situations in which they envision themselves spending their adult lives.

2.2 Challenges facing students in their career choices

At times, choosing a career might be tough. While some students enter their first year with clear career goals and a game plan, others are uncertain. Students frequently alter their plans when they discover they are no longer interested or are unable to successfully complete the course requirements at the appropriate level. Students frequently choose what they are familiar with.

Majewski, & Koonert, (2010), suggests that imaginative teachers can leverage the huge array of internet resources available today to do a personal inventory analysis (or two, or three variations thereof), to assist students in identifying their strengths, aptitudes, and areas of interest. Some of the most useful resources will estimate the likelihood of obtaining work in each professional field, even breaking it down geographically. Some include films of people in various work environments, while others feature audio interviews with people discussing what it's like to work in a certain field. While the inventive teacher may still require a full report, she may also require students to make a brief PowerPoint presentation summarising their findings for the class. One of the best general-purpose websites for this type of activity is (Majewski, 2010).

According to Gandara's (2007), many students' professional paths are influenced by their gender and their parents' economic situation. In Africa, certain jobs are reserved exclusively for boys, while others are reserved exclusively for girls. According to Gandara, these are some of the difficulties that confront students when deciding on their future vocations.

2.3 Experiences necessary for students' professional choices

There are numerous experiences that can lead to satisfying professions. According to research, those who have completed Year 12 or an equivalent occupational certification are far more likely to find work (Gray and Herr, 1996). However, some young people believe that continuing their education is unnecessary. Indeed, all students require fundamental academic knowledge, particularly in math and English language arts, and, in today's economic environment, all senior high school students require the academic skills necessary to pursue postsecondary education without requiring remediation-a criterion commonly referred to as "career readiness" (Hamilton & Hamilton, 2000).

To be career-ready, students must also be able to apply academic knowledge in a context, and certain academic talents require further attention and development. Employers frequently point to weaknesses in English and written communications, such as memos, letters, and sophisticated technical reports. This corroborates the notion that the majority of written content students will encounter in their jobs will be instructional in nature, such as technical manuals and research articles, and they must be intellectually prepared to understand and utilise these resources Krumboltz, & Jacob (2006). However, these abilities are frequently

overlooked in typical academic classes. Workplace efficiencies in math are also frequently mentioned, with a greater emphasis on areas like data analysis and statistics, reasoning, and problem solving.

Students must also be able to apply academic information to authentic work scenarios, a skill that requires experience and intentional training that may need to be tailored to a student's specific professional aspirations. For example, Tbeffler (1995) said that students who want to be nurses must be able to calculate and apply ratios, proportions, rates, and percentages to figure out how much medicine to give to patients. Construction students must be able to make and follow building plans using geometrical concepts.

Employability skills have frequently been identified by employers as the most critical skills for workplace success in the twenty-first century economy. These skills include (but are not limited to) critical thinking, adaptability, problem solving, oral and written communication, collaboration and teamwork, creativity, responsibility, professionalism, ethics, and technology use (Tbeffler and Tbeffler 1995).

Students must be given the opportunity to develop these abilities and to practise using them in real-world life and job circumstances. Numerous employability skills are also required for "college preparedness," resulting in some overlap between the two domains. To be considered ready to begin a career, an individual must also have some level of job-specific knowledge and abilities (Rifkin, 2005). While it is common knowledge that students wishing to become carpenters should be trained in the manner of a carpenter, students wishing to become engineers must be trained in the know-how of an engineer.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study adapted an explanatory sequential mixed method research design for this study. According to Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, (2002, pp.82–4), In a sequential explanatory design quantitative data are collected first, followed by qualitative data to explain the quantitative data. It is critical for the researcher to determine which components of the quantitative data require explanation and how those components might be explained (and with which sample(s)). Their exploratory sequential design reverses the explanatory sequential design's sequence of data collection; qualitative data are often collected first (normally with a small sample size), followed by quantitative data from a larger sample size to generalize the findings.

The population for the study was 412 students and 72 teachers in Mawuko Girls SHS.

The study employed simple random sampling and purposive techniques to sample 130 students and 10 teachers respectively.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 What is the level of career awareness among students in Mawuko Girls?

This research question sought to solicit data on the level of career awareness of students based on the assistance that is being given to student in their career decision making. Students' questionnaire items 3-9 and teachers' interview guide item 1 was used to answer research question 1.

Table 4.1: Students' responses on their level of career awareness

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Weighted Mean
	Frequency				
I will choose career based on what my parents want	16	29	38	37	2.2
I will choose a career based on my aptitude for it	41	33	18	28	2.7
I will choose a career based on what my teacher wants	23	12	45	40	2.1
I will choose a career based on my interest	55	28	22	15	3.0
I will choose a career based on my academic ability	23	51	30	16	2.6
I will choose a career based on my ability	11	23	59	27	2.1
I will choose a career based on my personality and temperament	20	49	33	18	2.5

Data in Table 4.1 shows students' responses on their level of career awareness. They indicated their degree of agreement and disagreement on the variables that would influence their career choices. The high mean scores of 3.0, 2.6, 2.7 and 2.5 indicates that most important factors in students' career choice–making was their interest, aptitude for it, academic ability and personality and temperament. However, with the low

mean scores of 2.1 and 2.2, the least important driver in their career decision-making was their teachers and parents' Influence.

The teachers spoke under different themes concerning research question one. The major theme that emerged from their interviewees was choice of programme at school and academic abilities.

Choice of programme at school

Some of the teachers interviewed also expressed their views. The following sample statements depict what some of the interviewees said:

Some of the students show a lot of promise in their various choice of programmes here in the school. This gives me the impression that they really want to pursue the programme at a high level and possible have their career in such programmes (Teacher interviewee 1).

*As part of the first-year orientation, we have people talking to our students about the prospects of the various programmes we have here. There have been several instances where students have come to me expressing their desire to change their programmes after such orientation programmes (*Teacher interviewee 3).

Academic abilities

A couple of the teachers also responded by indicating that students' career choice had to reflect on their ability to pass all their examinations at the West African Secondary School Certificate Examinations (WASSCE).

The following sample statements show their views:

*I keep telling the students about the need to pass their exams before they could pursue their career aspirations. Consequently, my students have become fully aware about the fact that they had to pass their exams. Some of them enrol on vacation classes and extra classes at school (*Teacher interviewee 2).

My students are aware of the fact that their future careers depend on how well they do at school. The serious once are always seen learning (Teacher interviewee 5).

It could be deduced form the findings in research question one that students in Mawoko Girls have a good level of career awareness. Evidently, the findings indicated that they will mainly make their career choices based on their interest, academic abilities and aptitude. These findings corroborate Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, (2001) who opined that each individual undertaking the process of career choice is influenced by many factors, including the context in which they live, their personal aptitudes, and educational attainment. This also lends credence to the finding that students were concerned about the choice of programme they choose at the Senior High School level and their ability to do well.

It was found that students would not make their career choices based on what their teachers or parents want.

4.2 What are the sources of career choice information available to students?

Research question two sought to find out how the students get information to make their career choices. Questionnaire items 13 – 18l and teachers' interview guide item 3 were used to answer research question two.

Table 4.2: Students' responses on their source of career information

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Weighted Mean
	Frequency				
My parents	11	27	63	19	2.2
The electronic media (eg. Tv. Radio)	22	70	16	12	2.8
My teachers	20	65	22	13	2.7
My friends	16	41	60	3	2.5
Magazines	9	61	32	18	2.5
Newspapers	30	75	12	3	3.1

Data in Table 4.2 shows students' responses on the sources of their career information, the high mean scores of 3.1, 2.8, 2.7 and 2.5 indicates that the students agree to fall on newspapers, magazines, their teachers, their friends, and the electronic media for information on career choices. Interestingly, the low mean score of 2.2 indicates that their parents were the leastsource of their career information.

From the point of view of the teachers, the electronic media and school became the major themes that emerged from their views.

Electronic media

The following sample statements show a few of their views:

*Of late, the children fall on the electronic media more than any other thing. They surf the net, listen to radio and watch television and some of these things come up (*Teacher interviewee 5).

The internet has become a powerful tool for communication, so we have introduced it to our students, and we encourage them to use it for such purposes. I believe my students use that very often (Teacher interviewee 6).

The school

Further interrogations with the teachers revealed that many of the students acquire such information only from the school.

The school has dedicated time to treat such thematic issues during the guidance and counselling programme. We do invite experts to come and talk to pupils about the prospects in the academic options they have chosen (Teacher interviewee 8).

Our students benefit from the guidance and counselling programme in the school. Every student can talk to the school counsellor on any issue. Over the years, the school counsellor has given guidance to students on their career choices (Teacher interviewee 8).

It could be deduced from the findings in research question two that students have varied sources of information on their career. It was revealed that students acquire information on career from the school, electronic media, newspapers, magazines, their teachers, and their friends. These findings are consistent with that of Craven, Parente & Marder (2004) whose study in Australia revealed that students do not only rely on the school for information on their career. Their study revealed teachers, the electronic media, friends, and magazines as good sources of information on career for students.

4.3 What major problems do students in Mawuko Girls encounter in making career decisions?

Research question three sought ascertain the major problems facing students in their career decision making quests. Questionnaire items 13 – 16 and interview guide item 4 were used to answer research question three.

Table 4.3: Students' responses on the challenges they face in making career decisions

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Weighted Mean
	Frequency				
I don't have enough information on certain job requirements	30	43	38	9	2.7
My parents/guardian wants me to do specific jobs in future	23	51	30	16	2.6
Lack of teachers to teach the subjects required for what I want to do	29	42	42	7	2.8
Lack of funds to pursue required courses for the job I want to do in future	35	74	11	0	3.2

Data in Table 4.3 shows students views on the challenges they face in their career decision making processes. The high mean scores of 3.2, 2.8, 2.7 and 2.6 shows that the students agreed that they had problems such as lack of funds to pursue required courses for the job they want to do in future, lack of teachers to teach the subjects required for what they want to do, they don't have enough information on certain job requirements and their parents/guardian wants me to do specific jobs in future.

The teachers who were interviewed also shared similar concerns. Their views have been organized according to the following themes:

Lack of funds

Many of the science students wanted to pursue medicine and architecture, but looking at their background, there is no one to push them through. You know, these programmes at the university are comparatively expensive (Teacher interviewee 8).

You know, many students, turn out to do programmes by convenience. It is not what they want but what their guardians could afford to pay (Teacher interviewee 10).

Parental influence

It is very common to have students complaining about their programmes here. Many of them do not like what they do here but their parents want it for them (Teacher interviewee 2).

I know of a girl in the science class who does well in drawing. She confessed to me sometime that she wanted to do visual art, but her parents would not allow her (Teacher interviewee 7).

It could be inferred from research question three those students are faced with four major challenges as they make their career choices. According to the findings, these four challenges are lack of funds to pursue required courses for the job they want to do in future. This finding agrees with Marks (2006) whose study revealed that many students are not able to enter the university because of lack of scholarship opportunities. Further, it was revealed that many of the students lack information on some career choices.

This is also consistent with Beavis (2006) who surveyed 450 a section of students in Sydney and found that about 70% of them did not have enough information about the career they intended to choose. Also, it was found that parental influences and lack of teachers to teach in some desired career choices of students were some of their challenges.

V.   CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it was established that career guidance needs to be intensified in Mawoko Girls Senior High School. The study established that students showed concerns about their job opportunities in future. As a result, they sought for information from several sources including the electronic and the print media. Students are faced with several challenges that require professional guidance and counselling to intervene. Many students are not able to pursue the paths that could lead them to their dream careers based on the kind of challenges they face along the way.

RECOMMENDATION

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

1. The headmaster of the school should insist that students receive career guidance once they are admitted into the school.

2. The Ghana Education Service should insist that every school is provided with a professional guidance and counselling coordinator

3. The school's library should be furnished with adequate magazines and newspapers since students read them for various information including that of their career choices

4. The school should be connected to the World Wide Web. This is a good source for educating pupils with career information. This requires that the school's computer laboratory be adequately furnished

5. Parents should be educated to handle issues concerning the career paths their children choose in a more productive manner rather than imposing their preferences and choice on their children.

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