

Assessment of Academic and Career Needs of Senior High School Students in the Nadowli-Kaleo District, Upper West Region of Ghana

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to assess the academic and career needs of students in senior high schools in the Nadowli-Kaleo District in the Upper West Region of Ghana. The descriptive survey design was used for the study. The instrument to gather the data was adapted and modified. The population for the study was 2,724 out of which 280 sample size was used. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. The result of the study indicated that students' academic needs include developing effective learning skills, improving test taking skills and learning to manage time. Again the result of the study showed that students' career needs include using the internet for career information, knowing educational requirement for careers and relating interest with career. The study also showed that there was a statistically positive significant relationship between academic and career needs of students. Finally, the result of the study revealed that there was a statistically significant career needs difference between the Form 3 and Form 1 students. It was recommended that schools should include academic and career needs of students in their guidance programmes. Again, career guidance should be organized more frequently for the Form 3 students to help them prepare adequately for their future careers.

Keywords: Assessment, Academic needs, Career needs.

1. Introduction

In every country education is the bed rock of its political and socio-economic development. In this regard it becomes mandatory for schools to assist students to realize their academic and career goals for both personal and national development. Over the years governments of Ghana, considering education as a very important priority allocate a greater part of its annual budget for educational development with the hope that school children would have the opportunity to acquire quality education for national development. In giving quality education to pupils Lawson (2003) states that the school curriculum and guidance services must be well implemented in the education system. Stephenson (2013) agrees to this consideration when he states that guidance and counselling programmes in schools are designed with the students at the center to help address their academic and career needs among others. He indicated that it is when the school adequately and strategically provides the needs of students that they grow to become responsible adults ready to contribute refined knowledge and skills for national development.

If that is the situation then, it is an obvious fact that for an effective survival, we need to assess the needs of students. Assessment is the systematic process for obtaining information about students for decision making purposes (Effrim, 2018). This study, therefore, was conducted taking into consideration the academic and career needs of students because academic and career development go "hand in hand" (Stephenson, 2013). It is again found in literature that there is a statistically significant relationship between academic and career needs (Oduro & Antwiwaa, 2015). This finding supports Addae (2014) who found that 73% of students in the University of Development Studies (Wa Campus) agreed that the careers they were pursuing were determined by the careers they want to choose in future.

Academic needs are concerned with opportunities for students to achieve their academic goals (Anderson, 2001). Literature indicates that students have different academic needs to achieve their academic goals. Akore and Mintah's (2013) study in senior high schools in the Dwabeso-Bia District found that 64% of students agreed that they did not use effective ways of learning to enhance their academic work, 72% agreed that they did not always read test instructions before they start work, and 56% agreed they did not read through their examination scripts before handing them over to invigilators. In their study Oduro and Antwiwaa (2015) state that students in senior high schools in the Asankragwa District have academic needs which includes time management and reading through examination scripts to do corrections. When students are bereft of academic needs, their academic achievement leaves much to be desired. In light of this the importance of academic guidance to address students' academic needs cannot be overemphasized (Stephenson, 2013).

Apart from senior high schools assisting students to achieve their academic goals, they are also mandated to assist students to achieve their career aspirations. This becomes possible if students' career need are satisfied by the school. Career needs are concerned with opportunities for students to explore and understand themselves in relation to their job aspirations (Anderson, 2001).to realize this goal, there should be resources in schools and

communities for students to explore, identify and develop their career potentials (Stephenson, 2013).

In Ghana, educational reforms and innovations over the years did not leave out the career needs of the citizenry because it is necessary for them to acquire professional careers throughout their life (Afful, Tweneboah & Kosi, 2001). It could be of this reason that Anamuah Mensah's (2007) committee's report on Educational Reform in Ghana cited in Ziita and Ammanu (2014) recommended that governments should make provision for skills training in schools, as a way of exposing students to more career opportunities. Kelley and Martinson (2004) indicates that career is a profession for which one trains and undertaken as a permanent calling. They further opined that career being the combination of all jobs and occupations engaged in by the individual in his or her lifetime is a lifelong activity and must be well planned taking into consideration the career needs of individuals.

Literature indicates that the ultimate aim of education is self-development for gainful employment and that entering better jobs after schooling remains the dream of students (Gyan, Aboagye & Oti, 2000). To make this dream a reality for students, Guidance and Counselling Units in senior high schools are specially mandated by governments to provide students with the necessary career needs they require for their future career choices (Stephenson, 2013). The importance of career issues in Ghana has attracted some empirical studies in some SHSs. In exploring students' career needs Akore and Mintah (2013) found out that 68% of students agreed that they have difficulty in identifying their interest in relation to careers. In another study to identify the career needs of students in SHSs in the Asankragwa District in the Western Region, Oduro and Antwiwaa (2015) found that students did not know the essence of educational requirements for career choice; and using the internet to access career information.

It has been indicated in literature that there are demographic differences in career and academic needs (Mamossa & Gerhack, 2000; Oduro & Antwiwaa, 2015). For example, a study conducted by Mamossa and Gerhack (2000) indicates that there was a statistically significant difference among students in the various levels in SHSs with regard to career needs. They again found that there was a statistically significant difference among students in the various academic levels in SHSs, with regard to academic needs. They explained that Form 3 students were at the verge of writing their final examinations so needed academic assistance that would help them graduate with good grades for further education.

2. Statement of the Problem

Guidance and Counselling has evolved, overtime, as a profession designed to deliver services to students in order to support them in academic and career contexts of their lives (Stephenson, 2013). This means that the importance of the provision of academic and career guidance, among other services, in schools cannot be overemphasized because of the important roles they play in preparing students sufficiently for responsible adult life (Onumah, 2000). However, studies indicate that students were dissatisfied with the provision of academic and career guidance in senior high schools (Oduro & Antwiwaa 2015; Mamossa & Agerhack, 2004). This suggests that some students in second cycle institutions are left unguided when pursuing their academic and career goals which may adversely affect their future life. It therefore becomes imperative for schools to find out the guidance needs of students and address them since unmet academic and career needs of the individual leave them not adequately prepared for their future adult responsibilities. The researcher is from the Nadowli-Kaleo District, and his interaction with some students from the SHSs in the district revealed that they did not benefit from the guidance programmes organized in their schools. Besides, to the best of the knowledge of the researcher no research work has been conducted on academic and career needs of senior high schools in the district. In light of that, this study sought to assess the academic and career needs of students in the Nadowli-Kaleo District of the Upper West Region in Ghana.

3. Research Questions

- 1) What are the academic needs of senior high school students in the Nadowli-Kaleo District?
- 2) What are the career needs of senior high school students in the Nadowli-Kaleo District?
- 3) What is the relationship between academic and career needs of senior high school students in the Nadowli-Kaleo District?

4. Research Hypotheses

H01: There is no statistically significant difference in career needs among the different academic levels in senior high schools in the Nadowli-Kaleo District.

H02: There is no statistically significant difference in academic needs among the different academic levels in senior high schools in the Nadowli-Kaleo District.

5. Methodology

This study employed the descriptive survey design. The descriptive survey provide a meaningful picture of

respondents' opinions thereby making it possible to identify the academic and career needs of students for guidance purpose. The population of this study was 2,724 students from the Queen of Peace Senior High School in Nadowli and the Secondary/Technical Senior High School in Kaleo. Census sampling method was used to select the schools because they were the only senior high schools in the district. Stratified sampling method was used to select representative samples from each school. Thereafter, the convenience sampling which is also referred to as opportunity sampling (Obafemi, Adeyemo & Seremyu, 2011) was used to select the sample size of 280 students for the study. From the sample size Form 1 students were 115 (41.07%), 76 (27.14%) were Form 2 students and 89 (31.79%) were Form 3 students.

An instrument tagged Students' Needs Assessment Questionnaire (SNAQ) modified from Students Needs Assessment Survey by Nkrumah and Tetteh (2005) was used to gather data for the study. The questionnaire was pretested using 20 students from Winneba Senior High School. The pre-test helped the researcher to do some modifications in the questionnaire to suit the study. The Cronbach alpha reliability of the instrument was 0.73 which meant that the instrument was useful (White, Morrison and Jane, 2011). Students were asked to complete the questionnaires consisting of two domains of guidance needs: academic and career needs. The instrument had four point likert scale with the following ranges: No need (NN) = 1.00 – 1.75; Little need (LN) = 1.76 – 2.50; Average need (AN) = 2.51 – 3.25; Great need (GN) = 3.26 – 4.00. Data were analyzed using means, Pearson Correlation and One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

6. Results and Discussions

Research Question 1: What are the academic needs of senior high school students in the Nadowli-Kaleo District?

This question was posed to find out the specific academic needs of senior high school students. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Academic Needs of Students

Item	NN	LN	AN	GN	Mean	Std.
Developing effective learning skills	43	50	71	116	3.46	0.75
Improving test taking skills	-	16	121	143	3.83	0.38
Reading through examination scripts	35	142	66	37	1.78	0.44
Learning to manage time	37	62	75	106	3.28	0.73

Note: NN = 1.00 – 1.75; LN = 1.76 – 2.50; AN = 2.51 – 3.25; GN = 3.26 – 4.00

The data in Table 1 show that students had great need for developing effective learning skills, improving test taking skills and learning to manage time with the mean scores of 3.46 (SD = 0.75), 3.83 (SD = 0.38), and 3.28 (SD = 0.73) respectively. The result that students have great need in developing effective learning skills corroborates the finding by Akore and Mintah (2013) which indicates that students did not write good notes nor ask questions in class. Akore and Mintah again found out that students needed good test taking skills because they did not read examination instructions and did not also read through their scripts before submitting them. Again, the result showed that students had great need for time management. This finding is in agreement with Oduro and Antwiwaa's (2015) finding that students' attitude for time management was poor. It could be said that students having these academic needs are likely to have difficulties with their academic performance because as indicated in Stephenson (2013) one of the objectives of the guidance and counselling programmes in schools is to assist students to develop effective learning skills and a good sense of time management to improve academic work.

Research Question 2: What are the career needs of senior high school students in the Nadowli-Kaleo District?

To answer this question, students were asked to rate themselves on their career needs. The purpose was to identify the specific career needs of students. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Career Needs of Students

Item	NN	LN	AN	GN	Mean	Std.
Using community resource for career development	115	73	42	50	1.62	0.73
Knowing education requirements for careers	32	65	69	114	3.29	0.82
Relating interest with careers	40	58	64	118	3.37	0.63
Using internet for career information	35	59	70	116	3.32	0.71

Note: NN = 1.00 – 1.75; LN = 1.76 – 2.50; AN = 2.51 – 3.25; GN = 3.26 – 4.00

Information on Table 2 indicate that students had great need in relating interest with careers (M = 3.37, SD = 0.63), using the internet for career information (M = 3.32, SD = 0.71), and knowing educational requirements for careers (3.29, DS = 0.82). The Table shows that students have great need in identifying interest with career supports. This supports Akore and Mintah's (2013) finding that students have difficulty in identifying their career interest. This is a big challenge to students because one's interest enables one to select one's careers that best suit them (Stephenson, 2013). The current finding indicates that students have great need in knowing

academic qualifications for careers. This is in agreement with the study by Oduro and Antwiwaa (2015) which indicates that students did not know that jobs have academic qualifications as requirement. Perhaps, this supports some Ghanaians' assertion that the most important thing is for the child to complete school and obtain a certificate to acquire a job; in-service training enables employees to develop their careers until retirement (Nkrumah & Tetteh, 2005) The current finding which reveals that students had great need in using the internet to assess career information supports the study by Oduro and Antwiwaa (2015) which indicates that because students were not connected to internet they were not able to use the internet to search for career information. The study area is in a similar situation because it has been found by Ziita (2014) that about 66% of senior high schools in the Upper West Region of Ghana had no internet connectivity (Ziita, & Ammanu, 2014). Perhaps, that accounted for the finding.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between academic and career needs of senior high school students in the Nadowli-Kaleo District?

This question sought to indicate the relationship between career and academic needs. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Pearson Moment Correlation Matrix of Academic and Career Needs of Students

Variable		Career	Academic
Career	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	280	
Academic	Pearson Correlation	.167**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	
	N	280	280

Note: * $p < 0.01$

Table 3 shows the relationship between academic and career needs of students. It is revealed that Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.167 with a probability value (p-value) of 0.005 is significant at 0.01 level. The finding shows that there is a statistically positive significant relationship between academic and career needs of students. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. The positive Pearson correlation figure shows that there is a positive relationship between the two variables. Thus, as one variable increases, the other variable also increases. It can therefore be inferred that as the academic needs of students increase, the career needs of students increase and vice versa. This statement is well expressed in the words of Stephenson (2013) that academic and career development of student should go 'hand in hand'. Similarly, the research by Anapla and Sakdim (2001) indicates that highly paid jobs require high academic qualifications and for that reason individuals sacrifice their time, money and energy for high educational qualification with the hope of securing good careers.

Hypothesis 1: There is no statistically significant difference in career needs among the different academic levels in senior high schools in the Nadowli-Kaleo District.

The hypothesis was tested to find whether there was a statistically significant difference among Form 1, Form 2 and Form 3 students with regard to career needs. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: One Way ANOVA of career needs among the different levels

Sources of variance	Sum of squares	Df	Mean	F-Cal	P
Between Groups	1.084	2	.542	5.213	.006
Within Groups	28.812	277	.104		
Total	29.896	279			

Note: * $p < 0.05$

ANOVA shows that the p value of .006 is less than the significant level of 0.05 implying that there was a statistically significant difference in the ways students in the various levels have career needs [$F(2,277) = 5.213$, $p < .05$]. In this respect the null hypothesis was rejected. A post-hoc test of multiple comparisons using Tukey Honesty Significant Difference (HSD) test was therefore, employed to assess the group means to determine the academic level that accounts for the significance in difference. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Post Hoc Result of career needs among the different levels

Level	Mean	SD	Sig
From 1	3.04	.279	.150
Versus			
Form 2	3.14	.336	.533
Form 2	3.14	.336	
Versus			.004*
Form 3	3.19	.353	
Form 3	3.19	.353	
Versus			
Form1	3.04	.279	

Note: * $p < 0.05$

The Post Hoc result using the Tukey HSD test in Table 5 proved that there was a statistically significant difference between Form 3 students ($M = 3.19$, $SD = .353$) and Form 1 students ($M = 3.04$, $SD = .279$) with regard to career needs since the p-value of 0.004 is less than 0.05 significant level. The finding of this study tallies with the research finding of Mamossa and Agerhack (2011) which revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in career needs among the different levels in SHSs. In reference to the current study, the mean scores among the different academic levels showed that Form 3 students had high career needs than their counterparts in the other levels. A possible reason for the current result could be that final year students have the tendency in searching for jobs after graduation in case they did not get the required grades and/or financial support to pursue tertiary education (Gyan, Tweneboah, & Oti, 2002). Career information is very important for this cohort of students so that those who want to work after graduation could do that without much difficulty. For example, in Ghana it is well known that the Ghana Police Service, Ghana Armed Forces, Ghana Prisons Service and The Migration Service recruit senior high school graduates for employment.

Hypothesis 2: There is no statistically significant difference in academic needs among the different academic levels in senior high schools in the Nadowli-Kaleo District.

The hypothesis was tested to find whether there was a statistically significant difference among Form 1, Form 2 and Form 3 students with regard to academic needs. The result are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: One Way ANOVA of academic needs among the different levels

Sources of variance	Sum of squares	Df	Mean	F-Cal	P
Between Groups	.017	2	.009	.198	.820
Within Groups	11.941	277	.043		
Total	11.958	279			

Note: $p > 0.05$

Table 6 presents the results obtained from the One-Way ANOVA. The result shows that the p value of .820 is more than the significant level of 0.05 implying that there was no statistically significant difference in the ways students in the different levels have academic needs [$F(2,277) = .198$, $p > 0.05$]. In this respect the null hypothesis was accepted. This finding contradicts Mamossa and Agerhack (2011) who found out that there was a statistically significant difference in academic needs among students in different forms in the SHS. The reason for the current finding could be that every student, no matter their academic levels, want to be academically good so that they would be sure of gaining admission into tertiary institutions (Stephenson, 2013).

7. Conclusions

From the findings of the study, it could be concluded that:

- 1) Students' academic needs include improving test taking skills, developing effective learning skills and learning to time management
- 2) Students' career needs include relating interest with careers, using the internet for career information and knowing educational requirement for careers.
- 3) There was a positive statistically significant relationship between career and academic needs of students.
- 4) There was a statistically significant career needs difference between Form 3 and Form 1 students in the senior high schools
- 5) There was no statistically significant academic needs difference between Form 1, Form 2 and 3 students in the senior high schools

8. Implications for Guidance Practice

One of the functions of education is to provide opportunities for each student to reach their full potentials in the areas of educational and career development. It is a fact that students hope to be gainfully employed after schooling and for that reason they need the school to assist them to pursue their academic and career goals concurrently. To achieve this schools must ensure that guidance services, which are essential support services for

students' academic and career development are well implemented. Many occasions, students do not patronize guidance programmes simply because their needs which may include academic and career are not captured in such programmes. School counsellors would do a great service to students if they are able to find out students' needs and organize programmes such as academic guidance and career guidance frequently for them most especially when they are in the final year.

9. Recommendations

- 1) In other to ensure that senior high school students are assisted to achieve their academic and career needs, school counsellors should include academic and career needs in their guidance and counselling programmes.
- 2) Teachers should give academic as well as career information to students during classroom interactions. Because teachers meet students frequently in class and are therefore better positioned to give informally some academic and career information to their students for them to adjust favourably in those areas.
- 3) Career guidance should be organized more frequently for final year students than their counterparts in Form 1 and Form 2, since there is the possibility that some of them would like to work after graduation.

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