

# The Provision of Guidance Services in Colleges of Education in Northern Ghana

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## Abstract

The study examined the provision of guidance services in colleges of education in Northern Ghana. The study employed the survey design. Stratified random sampling, quota sampling and simple random sampling techniques were used to select a sample size of five hundred (500) students. Questionnaire was the instrument used to gather information for the study. The results were analyzed using tables, frequency and percentages. The study revealed that orientation, information, appraisal, counselling and placement services were the most provided guidance services, whereas consultation, referral, and follow-up were the least provided services in the colleges. The study further showed that benefits of guidance services to students brought about the improvement of students behaviour and discipline and the development of positive attitude towards education. Also, the study discovered that inadequate funding, lack of computers and internet facilities were major factors that inhibited the effective delivery of guidance services in the colleges. The study recommended that counsellors should sensitize students about the availability of consultation, referral and follow-up services. Also, government, non-governmental organizations and parent-teacher associations should collaborate to provide adequate funds to enhance the effective delivery of guidance services in the colleges of education.

**Keywords:** Guidance services, Colleges of education, Benefits of guidance services, Effective delivery, Northern Ghana

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## 1. Introduction

Education creates opportunities for students to explore and develop their talents and potentials in the areas of educational, vocational, social and emotional development. It is important to note that the school creates a conducive environment for students to realize their potentials. To achieve this, the school must ensure that guidance services are integral part of education. Guidance services prepare students to assume responsibility for their decisions and grow in their ability to understand and accept the results of their choices (Kauchak, 2011). Kankam and Onivehu (2000) view guidance as an educational construct that involves experiences that assist learners to understand themselves, accept themselves, and live effectively in their society. A UNESCO report (2000) stated that experts agree among themselves that there are three major components of guidance. These are educational guidance, vocational guidance and personal-social guidance. The three components are relevant to this study. Guidance services are provided to address the varied needs of students. These services include orientation, information, placement, appraisal, counselling, referral and follow-up services.

Nziramasanga (1999) states that families and parents are faced with many pressures and do not have time to give their children the necessary guidance. He emphasized that parents expect the school to provide solutions to the indiscipline in schools caused by their children. Eyo, Joshua and Esuong (2010) opine that if the society is not to be plagued by a group of disgruntled, frustrated and unrealistic individuals, then, it is desirable that adequate guidance and career information be provided, to enable the school and society arrive at a realistic vocational choice for their children for the realization of their potentialities.

The role of guidance services in the college system cannot be over-emphasised. Guidance assists college students to identify careers to pursue. By this, it helps students choose the right vocation, which they will pursue in life. Besides, guidance services assist students in their social life to be able to adjust in the society they live. They have to face life problems such as managing academic challenges well in order not to drop out of school, able to avoid crime and do not indulge in drugs and substance abuse, among others, that might ruin their lives. As a vital component of any type and any level of education, the absence or non-utilization of these guidance services in the present-day college system could lead to negative consequences

Although colleges of education are expected to provide guidance services to address the needs of their students, there is the unprecedented rise in crime, violence among students (riots and strikes), increased cultism, wrong career choice, involvement in drugs and alcoholism among other issues as indicated earlier. All these make one to wonder whether guidance services are actually provided or whether students derive benefits from these services? And whether there are factors that inhibit the effective delivery of guidance services in the colleges of education in Northern Ghana (Upper East, Upper West and Northern Regions). It is against this background that this paper sought to address the following objectives:

1. identify the types of guidance services provided in the colleges of education in Northern Ghana to address the needs of students.
2. examine the perceived benefit of guidance services to students in colleges of education in Northern Ghana
3. interrogate the factors that inhibit the effective delivery of guidance services in the colleges of education in Northern Ghana.

## 2. Research Questions

1. What guidance services are provided by the colleges of education in Northern Ghana to address the needs of students?
2. What are the perceived benefits of guidance services to students in the colleges of education in Northern Ghana?
3. What factors inhibit the effective delivery of guidance services in the colleges of education in Northern Ghana?

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Study Area/Design

The study was carried out in colleges of education in Northern Ghana. The Northern sector of Ghana comprised three distinct administrative regions. They include the Upper East Region, Upper West Region the Northern Region. The research design used for the study was the survey design. According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993), surveys involve the selection of a sample of respondents and administering questionnaires or conducting interviews to gather information on variables of interest. Since this study sought to obtain descriptive and self-reported information from students about the provision of guidance services, the survey design was the most appropriate. Corroborating this assertion, Coleman and Wampold (2003) stated that the survey method is an appropriate design for assessing guidance programmes and services.

### 3.2 Population, Sample and Sampling Procedure

The target population of the study comprised all students in the seven colleges of education in northern Ghana. The accessible population was 805 and made up of second year students in the three sampled colleges of education. The second year students were preferred to first and final year students in the sense that, the first years have not stayed long enough in the colleges, may not have had enough experience, and may be handicapped in providing information required for the study. With regards to the final year students, they were out of campus for Teaching Practice and were not available to provide the desired information. It is therefore imperative to use the second year students since they were not only available but had enough experience regarding issues about guidance services.

Stratified random sampling, quota sampling and simple random sampling techniques were used to select a sample of 500 students for the study. The researcher stratified the respondents into schools and gender. Secondly, quota-sampling technique was used in selecting the students. This was done by considering the total number of students in each college and the corresponding percentages of the sample population. Thirdly, a simple random sampling technique was used to select the students in each college considering gender. The distribution of population and sample are showed in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of Population Sample

College of Education	Population			Sample Size		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
St John Bosco (Navrongo)	168	115	283	104	71	175
Nusrat Jehan (Wa)	184	56	240	114	35	149
Tamale	157	127	284	97	79	176
Total	509	298	807	315	185	500

### 3.3 Research Instruments

Close ended questionnaires rated on a five-point likert type scale ranging from “strongly agree” (SA) representing a score of 5, “agree” (A), representing a score of 4, “not sure”( NS) representing a score of 3, “disagree” (D), representing a score of 2 and strongly disagree representing a score of 1. Twenty-three questionnaire items made of 2 items for bio-data and 21 items for the main study.

As part of ensuring the content validity of the questionnaire, the researcher consulted two lecturers from the Department of Psychology and Education, University of Education, Winneba and the Director of Counselling Centre, University of Cape Coast. Also an expert in Measurement and Evaluation (Director, Link Development) was also consulted. They examined, scrutinized and made suggestions which were incorporated into the questionnaire to ensure their suitability in measuring the attributes being assessed. Also, the test-retest was used

to determine the reliability of questionnaire. The reliability co-efficient was calculated which yielded a value of 0.78 which was considered acceptable.

### 3.4 Data collection Procedure

Permission was sought from the principals and counsellors of the colleges to meet the participants. The purpose of the study was explained to the students to allay their fears as far as expressing their views about guidance services in their respective colleges was concerned. Counsellors in the various colleges assisted in administering the questionnaires to students. Students answered and returned all the questionnaire. There was a hundred percent return rate of the questionnaires.

### 3.5 Data analysis

Descriptive statistics was used to analyse the data collected for the study. The items of the completed questionnaires were coded and fed into the SPSS version 16 software package and analyzed. The data was organized into frequency counts and converted into percentages. The results were then presented in tables, which formed the basis for discussions.

## 4. Presentation of Data and Analysis of Results

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents based on Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	315	63
Female	185	37
Total	500	100

Table 2 shows 315 students (63.2%) were males whereas 185 (37%) were females. The male out-numbered the females because many male students might have been admitted into the college of education than females in the three Northern Regions of Ghana. Although the males were the majority, the results will not be affected because both sexes share similar characteristics as students and need guidance services. Kauchak (2011) affirmed this assertion by stating that guidance services prepare both male and female students to assume increasing responsibility for their decisions and grow in their ability to understand and accept the results of their choices.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents based on Age

Years	Frequency	Percentage
20-25	400	80.0
26-30	98	19.6
31-35	2	0.4
Totals	500	100

From Table 3, 400 (80%) of the respondents ages were between 20-25 years whereas 98 (19.6%) were between 26-30 years while 2 (0.4%) were between 31-35 years. From the age distribution, an over whelming majority (80%) of students ages were within 20-25 years. This means most of them are young. This youthful period is critical in their lives because they have many expectations and require guidance services to be able to meet such expectations. According Taylor and Boku (2006) a training college has the responsibility of training its students in all ways that make them useful in the society in which they live or work.

## 5. Analysis of Students' Responses

**Research Question 1:** What guidance services are provided by colleges of education in Northern Ghana to address the needs of students?

Students were presented with a list of eight guidance services. They were requested to tick the services they thought were provided in their respective colleges of education. A total of five hundred (500) students responded to the questionnaire. The data collated related to a number of times a particular guidance service was chosen by the students. To facilitate the analysis, the five-point Likert scale was modified into a three-point Likert scale. Thus, "never and seldom" were collapsed into "not provided." In like manner, "often and always" were merged together as "provided" while "not sure" stood independently. The responses are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Guidance Services provided in the Colleges of Education in Northern Ghana to address the needs of Students.

Guidance Services	Not Provided		Not Sure		Provided	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Orientation Service	74	(15)	71	(14)	355	(71)
Appraisal Service	110	(22)	65	(11)	336	(67)
Information Service	112	(22)	73	(15)	315	(63)
Counselling Service	163	(33)	37	(7)	300	(60)
Placement Service	112	(22)	104	(21)	284	(57)
Referral Service	300	(60)	66	(13)	134	(27)
Consultation Service	306	(61)	56	(11)	138	(28)
Follow –up Service	318	(64)	66	(13)	166	(23)

Table 4 reveals that majority of the students agreed with the affirmation that orientation (355:71%), appraisal (336:67%), information (315:63%), counselling (300:60%), and placement (284:57%), services were the most provided guidance services in the colleges of education with orientation topping the list. On the contrary, majority of the respondents indicated that referral (300:60%), consultation (306: 61%) and ‘follow-up services’ (318:64%) were the least provided services.

**Research Question 2:** What are the perceived benefits of guidance services to students in colleges of education in Northern Ghana?

This research question sought to find out from respondents about the perceived benefits of guidance services. The five-point Likert scale was re-classified into a three-point Likert scale. Thus, “strongly disagree and disagree” were merged together as “disagree”. Similarly, “strongly agree and agree” were merged together as “agree” while “not sure” stood independently. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Perceived Benefits of Guidance Services to Students in Colleges of Education in Northern Ghana

Benefits of Guidance Services	Disagree		Not sure		Agree	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Improve behaviour and discipline	26	(5.3)	28	(5.5)	446	(89.2)
Develop positive attitude towards education	35	(7.0)	34	(6.8)	431	(86.2)
Build positive self-image	31	(6.2)	46	(9.3)	422	(84.5)
Improve academic achievement	40	(8.0)	40	(8.0)	420	(84.0)
Assist in setting of realistic goals	46	(9.2)	54	(10.8)	400	(80.0)
Help in the identification of talents and potentials	57	(11.4)	50	(10.0)	393	(78.6)
Improve knowledge about careers and job seeking skills	95	(19.0)	72	(14.4)	333	(66.6)

Table 5 reveals that majority of the students (446: 89.2%) agreed that guidance services **improved their behaviour and discipline** while 28 (5.5%) disagreed and 26 (5.3%) were not sure whether guidance services could improve their behaviour and discipline or not. Similarly, majority of the students (431: 86.2%) indicated that guidance services helped them **build positive attitudes towards education**. On the contrary, only 35 (7%) disagreed whereas 34 (6.8%) were not sure. On the part of **positive self-image**, majority (422:84.5%) of the students agreed that guidance could assist them build positive self-images. On the contrary 31 (6.2%) students disagreed while 46 (9.3%) were not sure. Regarding **improvement of academic achievement**, majority (420:84%) of the students agreed to it, while an equal number of students either disagreed (40: 8%) or were not sure (40: 8%). In a similar view, majority of the students agreed that guidance could assist them **set realistic goals in life** whereas 46 (9.2%) disagreed and 54 (10.8%) were not sure. Also, majority (393: 78.6%) of the students indicated that guidance services could assist them in the **identification of talents and potentials** as compared to a minority 57 (11.4%) which disagreed or were not sure 50 (10%). Finally majority (333: 66.6%) of the students were of the opinion that guidance services could **improve their knowledge about careers and job seeking skills** whereas 95 (19%) disagreed and 72 (14.4%) could not indicate their opinion as to whether guidance services could improve their knowledge about careers and job seeking skills or not.

**Research Question 3:** What factors inhibit the effective delivery of guidance services in the colleges of education?

This research question elicited responses from students about factors that inhibit the effective delivery of guidance services in their respective colleges of education. Lists of factors were provided. The respondents were requested to indicate their opinion as to whether a particular factor was inhibiting the delivery of guidance services in their respective colleges of education and to what extent. Their responses are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Factors that Inhibit the Effective Delivery of Guidance Services in Colleges of Education in Northern Ghana.

Factors	Disagree	Not sure	Agree
	Freq.%	Freq. %	Freq. %
Inadequate funds	63 (12.6)	27 (5.4)	410 (82.0)
Counsellor/s office lacked internet facilities	89 (17.8)	11 (2.2)	400 (80.0)
Too much work load for counsellor/s	95 (19.0)	15 (3.0)	390 (78.0)
Counsellor offices do not have computer	116 (23.2)	66 (13.2)	318 (63.6)
Location of counsellors office not convenient to ensure privacy and confidentiality	187 (37.4)	35 (7.0)	278 (55.6)
Counsellor office not spacious	218 (43.6)	16(3.2)	266 (53.2)

Table 6 reveals that inadequate funds (410: 82%), lack of internet facilities (400: 80%), workload for school counsellors (390 : 78%), lack of computers (318: 63.6%), location of counsellor’s office not being convenient for privacy (278: 55.6%), and counsellor’s office not spacious enough (266: 53.2%) were major factors that inhibited the effective delivery of guidance services. These factors are considered inhibitors because the respondents were very conclusive with the majority of them affirming that those inhibitors were endemic in the colleges with “inadequate funds topping the list” with 410 respondents representing 82%.

#### 4.1 Discussions of Results

With regard to the type of guidance services provided, the study revealed that the **orientation service** was the most provided guidance service in the colleges. This finding corroborates the findings of other researchers. For instance Sackey (2007) found that orientation services were dominant in senior high schools in the Central Region. Similarly, Nyarko-Sampson (2010) reported that orientation services were the most dominant guidance service in Southern Ghana Colleges of Education. This is probably so because of the important role orientation service play in helping new students get acquainted with school rules, traditions and be able to cope with the school environment, teachers and colleagues, among others. This means students in the colleges of education could be assisted to feel emotionally and mentally secured in their new environment. Another major provided guidance service was **information service**. This finding agrees with the findings of Mensah (2007) and Yarney (2013) who revealed that information services were major guidance services provided in teacher training colleges in the Eastern Region and Junior High Schools in the Efutu Municipality of Ghana respectively. Mensah (2007) asserted that teachers in training colleges in the Eastern Region collaborated with their school counsellors in the provision of information regarding the educational, vocational, personal welfare of students. Through information services, students in the colleges of education could be assisted to make intelligent choices of their educational programmes, occupations and social activities. Also, **counselling service** was one of the major guidance service provided in the colleges of education. The current findings share similar views with other researchers. Chireshe (2006) and Mawusi (2013) found that counselling services were a major part in school guidance programmes. For instance, Mawusi study revealed that social-personal counselling, educational/academic counselling, adjustment counselling, and developmental counselling were the major counselling methods employed to address students disciplinary problems in South Tong District in the Volta Region, Chireshe (2006) asserted that counselling service offers students the opportunities for self-knowledge and self-development through individual or group intervention. This current finding suggests that college counsellors would establish one-to-one relationship with students in their respective colleges to identify students needs, design strategies, and services to satisfy such needs.

On the contrary, the study established that **follow –up** was the least provided guidance service in the colleges of education. This finding is in tandem with the finding of Nyarko-Sampson (2010) who revealed that follow –up services were the least provided guidance services in Southern Colleges of Education in Ghana. Counsellors cannot ignore follow-up service. May be they use them but their clients are not aware. Follow-up services are crucial in the school guidance programme by revealing to counsellors how their referred or past clients are progressing in their new or current environment. Another least provided guidance service was **consultation service**. This finding supports the findings of Sedofia and Ocansey (2013) and Namale and Awabil (2018) who revealed that consultation services were not regarded as major guidance services and as a result were not effectively implemented in some senior high schools and colleges of education in Ghana. The situation where consultation is not popular in the college guidance programme is worrisome. It means counsellors may not interact with teachers, administrators, parents, health personnel, and peers of clients to discuss issues related to academic performance, behaviour, health status and the role each stakeholder should play in the successful development of the individual student. With lack of consultation, it may be difficult for counsellors to deal with delinquent problems such as absenteeism, lateness, truancy, and other school related maladjusted problems. **Referral service** was one of the least provided service. Referral services are important in school guidance

programme that it cannot be overlooked. May be counsellors do referrals but the students are not aware. Not every student needs referral except those whose cases merits it. This view agrees with the view expressed by UNESCO (2000) that sometimes some students' problems and concerns are beyond the capability of the school counsellor. In such cases, the counsellor's role is to establish a referral network.

Regarding the perceived benefits of guidance services the study found that it **improves students behaviour and discipline**. This finding is in tandem with the findings of Yatich (2011) and Abid (2006). Yatich (2011) reported that effective guidance curbed indiscipline issues such fighting, lying, cheating in examination, rudeness, and truancy displayed by students in schools. In a similar vein, Abid (2006) found that effective school guidance programmes had significant influence on improving students' disciplinary problems. Discipline and good behaviour provide good conditions and atmosphere for teaching and learning which eventually improve students academic achievement. Besides, when guidance services are employed to address students' disciplinary and behavioural problems, it minimise students' hooliganism, riots, strikes and the consequences of such negative actions by students. The **development of positive attitude towards education** was identified as another benefit of guidance services to students. The current finding is consistent with the findings of Lapan, Gysbers and Ptroski (2003) and Lonborg and Bowen (2004). They affirmed in different studies that guidance services increased students feeling of safety and sense of belongingness in the school environment. If students have positive attitudes towards education, they will be emotionally, physically and psychologically ready for schooling. This could improve their school attendance and result in the improvement of their academic performance. The third benefit is the **building of positive self-image**. It is important to note that students are of the opinion that guidance services help them develop positive self-image towards life. Students with positive self-image develops good interpersonal and social relationships, enhance their happiness and health status, among others. All these could lead to better academic performance. A UNESCO Report (1998) confirmed this finding when it observed that guidance services help students improve upon their self-understanding and self-esteem. Another finding was that, guidance services equipped students with **good study and time management skills**. It is in the right direction for students to be aware that guidance services could help them develop good study and time management skills. By this, students could be assisted to develop good study skills like notes taking, time management, reading strategies, examination and anxiety management techniques, among others. Students who acquire good study skills would be adequately prepared and have much confidence and write examinations without engaging in examination malpractice. Corroborating this finding, Abid (2006) observed in a study that school guidance programmes had significant influence in improving and fostering positive study habits and study skills of students which enhanced their academic achievements. Similarly, Alemu (2013) reported in a study that improvement of study skills was the most important benefits of school guidance programmes.

On factors that inhibit the effective delivery of guidance services in the colleges of education in northern Ghana, the study revealed inadequate funding, lack of computers and internet facilities, too much workload for counsellors and inconvenient locations of the counsellors' offices as the major inhibitors. **Inadequate funds** means counsellors will not get the needed resources to effectively and efficiently organise their required programmes and activities. Besides, the colleges may not be able to sponsor their counsellors to attend capacity building seminars and workshops to abreast themselves with modern trends in guidance and counselling. This finding is consistent with other findings. For instance, Kafwa (2005) revealed that inadequate funding leads to lack of facilities and resources which constitute a hindrance to the effective school based guidance programme. Also, Wanjala (2011) found that inadequate funds and resources constitute the greatest obstacles for the organization of guidance activities. Another inhibiting factor was **lack of internet facilities**. Counsellors need internet facilities to do research to update their knowledge on new concepts, skills, techniques and theories in the field of counselling. Also, the use of internet by counsellors could promote the exchange of ideas, information locally or internationally with colleagues and other professionals that could lead to better understanding and addressing of clients problem-situations. The lack of internet facilities for counsellors in the colleges of education means counsellors cannot easily exchange or access information with colleagues, or from websites among others. By this, school counsellors may not be abreast with time and new trends in counselling. Confirming this finding, Schmidt (2007) observed that internet facilities and access are useful for coordination, accountability and planning activities and its absence negatively affect counsellors work. **Workload** for school counsellors was another inhibitor. This finding is consistent with the findings of other researchers. Charema (2008) revealed in a study that teaching workload constitutes a major hindrance to effective counselling in schools as perceived by school counsellors. In another breadth, Egbochuku (2008) affirmed that counsellors workload and teacher- counsellor roles conflict were identified as barriers in the provision of guidance services to students. The situation where counsellors combine teaching with counselling is worrisome. If counsellors combine teaching with counselling, counselling will be sacrificed for teaching. This is because teaching is paid for and counselling is not. Besides, when counsellors teach for long hours they will be tired and may not be physically strong and psychologically prepared to receive and handle distressed clients who require tact, patience,

tolerance in handling. Also, **lack of computers** was a major inhibitor. The lack of computers in the counsellors' offices in the colleges means that they cannot properly store and preserve information about their clients electronically for future purposes. Instead, they would have to rely on pen and paper method, which cannot guarantee the safety and life span of their clients' information. This finding tally with the research findings of Patrick and Flanagan (2008) who revealed that computer application in counselling help counsellors to track their clients' information and progress, decrease the space needed to store files and enhance documentation and storage of data for their clients.

## 5. Conclusion

First, the study established that orientation, information, appraisal, counselling and placement services were the most provided for guidance services whereas consultation, referral, and follow-up services were the least provided services in the colleges.

The study further revealed that the benefits of guidance services to students brought about the improvement of students' behaviour and discipline; the development of positive attitude towards education; the building of positive self-images; the improvement of academic performance; the setting and achievement of realistic goals and targets in life, among others.

Also, the study revealed that inadequate funds, work overload, lack of computers, lack of access to internet facilities, inconvenient location of counsellors offices and offices not spacious enough were major factors that inhibited the effective delivery of guidance services in the colleges.

## 6. Recommendations

Based on the findings and the conclusions, the following recommendations are hereby made:

1. There is the need for counsellors to create awareness and sensitize students about the availability and importance of consultation, referral and follow-up services so that students could patronize them.
2. The Government of Ghana, Non-Governmental Organizations, Parent-Teacher Associations and Old Students Unions should collaborate to provide adequate funds to enhance the effective delivery of guidance services in the colleges of education.
3. Counsellors should be allowed more time to be able to provide guidance services to students. By this, there is the need for the Ministry of Education and Ghana Education Service to formulate a policy to minimise the teaching load or exempt counsellors from teaching and other responsibilities that might interfere with their responsibilities as counsellors.
4. As part of making counsellors offices conducive and attractive for students to access guidance services, government, principals and parents should collaborate to provide spacious offices at convenient locations and equip such offices with computers and accessories, and internet facilities.

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