

Awareness and Use of Career Information Sources among Secondary School Students in Selected Schools in Ikenne Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper was to investigate the awareness and use of career information sources among secondary school students. The survey research design was used for the study. Data collection was done with the aid of a questionnaire. Out of 228 copies of the questionnaire administered, 200 were successfully retrieved. The retrieved copies were analysed and interpreted using simple percentage and frequency distribution method. The results revealed that secondary school students are more aware of parents, teachers and churches as sources of career information. However, when it came to utilizing sources of career information, parents, classmates and teachers were mostly utilized. In the aspect of usefulness of information received, information received from parents, churches and teachers were found to be most useful. Among the challenges faced when seeking career information, delays and inaccuracy in information received topped the list. Based on the findings, the study recommends among others, that parents assist their children in utilising other sources of career information as this would widen their understanding and assist them in making more intelligent decisions.

Keywords: Career choice, Career information, Information seeking behaviour, Information sources, Nigeria, Secondary school students.

INTRODUCTION

The quest for career information begins to manifest mostly during the late teenage years as high school students become conscious of their social expectations and begin preparation for career exploration (Dupont & Gingras, 1991; France, 1990). Preparation for career exploration according to Herr & Johnson (1989) require that students actively seek out information about alternative choices; learn about their own skills, attitudes, values, and interests; and discover educational and career opportunities.

Wilson (2000) notes that in the course of information seeking, individuals may interact with manual information systems such as a newspaper or a library or with computer-based systems (such as the World Wide Web). Awareness and use of such information resources are expected to assist secondary school students make informed choices rather than narrow their reliance for career related information on third parties who may not fully understand their career needs.

Statement of the Problem

The choice of a career is an important life decision which requires active seeking of information in order to arrive at an informed choice. However, notwithstanding the variety of information sources in existence today, it seems that many secondary school students may be ignorant of basic information sources which could aid career planning. Where such is the case, secondary school students may be ill-equipped for career planning. It is in the light of this, that the present study investigates awareness and use of career information sources among secondary students in selected secondary schools in Ikenne Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The major objective of this study was to find out the awareness and use of career information sources among secondary school students in selected secondary schools in Ikenne Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria. To realize this objective, the following research questions were raised:

1. What is the level of awareness for career information sources among secondary school students?
2. Which sources of career information are mostly utilized by secondary school students?
3. To what extent do secondary school students consider career information sources useful for career decision making?
4. What are the challenges faced by secondary school students when seeking career information?

Scope of the Study

The scope of this study was limited to Babcock University High School and Ilisan High School. The schools

were selected based on ownership. While Babcock University High School is privately owned, Ilishan High School is owned by the state government. The two schools represent both private and public secondary schools in Ikenne Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Career, according to Okobiah & Okorodudu (2004), refers to a variety of work and non-work situations which usually span through the entire life of an individual. According to the authors' career is generally related to a pattern of decision, transaction and adjustments which affects one's role in work, education, family, community development and leisure. Julien (1999) notes that information used by students in making decisions about their future career includes attitudes and beliefs acquired during childhood, including specific information provided by a number of sources, including: parents, other family members, family friends, peers, guidance counsellors, teachers, libraries, the mass media and government career centres.

Research by Olayinka (1993) found out that high school students acquire career information from other family members as affirmed by 41% of the study respondents, while 35.5% consulted their parents. McKnight (2009) in a similar study also affirmed that parents, family members, internet and teachers are the most used sources for acquiring career information. A study by Witko, Bernes, Magnusson & Bardick (2005) came to the conclusion that most senior high school students feel 'most' comfortable approaching their parent(s) and friends for help with career planning. Patton & McCrindle (2001), while investigating senior students' view on career information at Queensland, however, found out that the state's tertiary courses publications were perceived as most useful information source for post-school careers, followed by school career advisors. Alexitch & Page's (1997) study also show that students find career advice from their high school teachers as being useful than the advice they receive from their high school guidance counsellors.

With recent technological advancement, the Internet has emerged as an important source for career information sourcing as affirmed by Offer's (2000) study which revealed that 80% of college students gain career information from a computer than from a book or a person. The finding by Offer (2000) is supported by Borchert (2002), who claim that the influence of people in the closer circle of friends, family, and academia do not particularly sway, influence, or lead students when it came to the career choice process.

There is no doubt that secondary school students' face daunting challenges in the course of career information gathering. Julien (1999) identified challenges faced in gathering career information as: situation in which people do not know what information is needed; situation where information required may simply not exist; not knowing where to find the information that one realizes is needed; lack of awareness of the existence of sources for information; lack of communication skills; lack of self-confidence or ability; discouragement by sources approached for information; delays encountered in information seeking; inaccurate or inappropriate information received.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey design was used for the study. The population was made up of 544 students from Ilishan High School and Babcock University High School. Stratified random sampling technique was used for selecting 228 (42%) of the population. A self constructed questionnaire was used for data collection. Out of 228 copies of the questionnaire sent out, 200 were successfully retrieved.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

School	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Babcock high school	126	63
Ilishan high school	74	37
Gender		
Male	72	36
Female	128	64
Age		
Less than 15 years	88	44
16-20 years	109	54.5
20 years and above	3	1.5
Class level		
Ss2	135	67.5
Ss3	65	32.5

Source: Field Survey 2012

Findings from Table 1 indicate that 128 (64%) of the respondents were female while 72 (36%) were male. Out of the total number of respondents, 109 (54.5%) fell within the age bracket of 16-20. This is not surprising considering the fact that only the senior classes (S.S. 2 and S.S. 3) were used for the study.

In order to ascertain the level of awareness of career information sources, respondents were asked to indicate their level of awareness on a scale of 1-5, where 1 represents the lowest level and 5 the highest level.

Table 2: Level of awareness of career information sources among Secondary students

Awareness of career information sources		5		4		3		2		1	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
A	Parents	82	41.0	34	17.0	21	10.5	27	13.5	33	16.5
B	Church	76	38.0	31	15.5	32	16.0	24	12.0	34	17.0
C	Teachers	70	35.0	38	19.0	34	17.0	25	12.5	19	9.5
D	Books/ publication	64	32.0	41	20.5	30	15.0	31	15.5	29	14.5
E	Internet/website	59	29.5	27	13.5	34	17.0	23	11.5	55	27.5
F	Library	49	24.5	42	21.0	20	10.0	29	14.5	50	25.0
G	Friend/ Class mates	48	24.0	20	10.0	41	20.5	54	27.0	34	17.0
H	Television	42	21.0	36	18.0	45	22.5	20	10.0	50	25.0
I	Counsellor	35	17.5	39	19.5	33	16.5	34	17.0	56	28.0
J	Government career centres	34	17.0	27	13.5	33	16.5	34	17.0	54	27.0
K	Radio	33	16.5	17	8.5	46	23.0	36	18.0	55	27.5

Source: Field Survey 2012

Considering responses on the scale of 1-5, most respondents are more aware of parents as sources of career information as affirmed by 116 (58%) of the respondents who indicated awareness levels between 5 and 4. This was followed closely by teachers 108 (54%) and church 107 (53.3%). Respondents were least aware of as a source of career information as indicated by 91 (45.5%).

Responding to the second research question which sought to identify the sources of career information that are mostly utilized by secondary school students, respondents indicated the following as seen in table 3.

Table 3: Sources of career information mostly utilized by high school students

SECTION D: Sources of career information mostly utilized by high school students							
Various sources of Career information		Agree		Disagree		Undecided	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
a	Parents	167	83.5	23	11.5	6	3
b	Friends/Class mates	158	79	30	15	10	5
c	Teachers	158	79	28	14	12	6
d	Books /publications	157	79	19	10	12	6
e	Television	155	77.5	29	14.5	14	7
f	Government career Centre	147	73.5	35	17.5	16	8
g	Church	146	73	30	15	20	10
h	Internet / website	143	71.5	36	18	13	6.5
i	Counsellor	140	70	36	18	21	10.5
j	Radio	131	65.5	42	21	18	9
k	Library	128	64	48	24	16	8

Source: Field Survey 2012

Findings from Table 3 affirm that among the sources of career information, the most utilized sources are parents 167 (83.5%), teachers 158 (79%) and friends/class mates 158 (79%). However, the least utilized sources are library 128 (64%) and radio 131 (66%).

Findings for the third research question which sought to identify the extent to which respondents consider career information sources useful for career decision making is seen in Table 4.

Table 4: The extent secondary school students consider career information sources useful for career decision making

SECTION E: The extent secondary school students consider career information sources useful for career decision making									
Career information sources useful for Career decision making		Very Useful		Useful		Not useful		Never	
a)	Parents	127	63.5	57	28.5	11	5.5	3	1.5
b)	Church	109	54.5	62	31.0	18	9.0	5	2.5
c)	Teachers	100	50.0	76	38.0	14	7.0	3	1.5
d)	Books /publication	86	43.0	87	43.5	14	7.0	6	3.0
e)	Friend/Class mates	81	40.5	96	48.0	13	6.5	4	2.0
f)	Library	80	40.0	89	44.5	24	12.0	3	1.5
g)	Counsellor	77	38.5	75	37.5	34	17.0	11	5.5
h)	Internet /website	76	38.0	89	44.5	20	10.0	10	5.0
i)	Radio	67	33.5	95	47.5	27	13.5	6	3.0
j)	Television	60	30.0	117	58.5	13	6.5	6	3.0
k)	Government career centres	58	29.0	91	45.5	33	16.5	14	7.0

Source: Field Survey 2012

As seen in Table 4, majority of the respondents, 127(63.5%) considered parents as very useful source of career information, followed by church 109 (54.5%) and teachers 100 (50%). Television and government career centres were considered least useful by 60 (30%) and 58 (29.0%) respectively.

Several challenges were found to face secondary school students when seeking career information as indicated in table 5.

Table 5: Challenges of career information.

	Challenges	Percentages of respondents
1	Delays encounter in information seeking	70%
2	Inaccurate information received	67%
3	Ignorance of where needed information is located	67%
4	Ignorance of needed information	65%
5	Lack of awareness of the existence of sources	64%
6	Lack of communication skill	63%
7	Lack of self confidence	62.5%
8	Non existence of required information	61.5

Source: Field Survey 2012

Among the challenges facing secondary school students in the process of seeking career information, delays encountered in information seeking topped the list as affirmed by 70% of the respondents, followed closely by inaccurate information received, 67% and ignorance of needed information, 67%. The least challenges were identified as lack of self confidence 62.5% and non-existence of required information 61.5%.

Discussion of Findings

The findings indicate that secondary school students are aware of most sources of career information although the extent of awareness may vary. Even among respondents who indicated an awareness level of between 2 and 1, there is that vague knowledge of existence of information sources. This affirms the assertion by Julien (1999) that information used by students in making decisions about their future career includes attitudes and beliefs acquired during childhood; specific information provided by a number of sources, such as parents, other family members, family friends, peers, guidance counsellors, teachers, libraries, the mass media and government career centres.

The sources of career information that are mostly utilized were affirmed to be parents, teachers, friends and classmates. This is in agreement with the findings of Olayinka (1993) and McKnight (2009) whose studies found out that high school students acquire career information mainly from parents and teachers. It is also in agreement with Witko, Bernes, Magnusson & Bardick (2005) who found out that most senior high school students feel 'most' comfortable approaching their parent(s) and friends for help with career planning. The proximity of the respondents to those individuals may, however, account for the extent to which they are used as career information sources.

All sources of career information were considered useful as indicated by more than half of the respondents in all cases. However, information acquired from parents, teachers and churches topped the list in the rating of usefulness. The positive response given to the Church as a source of career information is, however, surprising. The finding is in disagreement with that of Patton & McCrindle (2001), who found state's tertiary courses publications and school career advisors as most useful for acquiring career information. The discrepancy in finding may be attributed to the fact, that government career centres and counsellors are the information sources that respondents for this study are least aware of, which may not be the case in Pattons & McCrinles' case. Findings also differ with that of Offer (2000) whose study show that college students gain career information from a computer rather than from a book or a person. The findings also revealed that secondary school students find career information acquired from teachers more useful compared to that acquired from counsellors which is in agreement with Alexitch & Page (1997) whose study revealed that students find career advice from their high school teachers as being useful than the advice they receive from their high school guidance counsellors. In the process of career information seeking, delays, inaccurate information and ignorance of where needed information is located were found to be the greatest challenges faced by secondary school students. The findings in this case corroborate the work of Julien (1999) which identified not knowing where to find needed information, delays and inaccurate or inappropriate information received as part of the challenges facing high school students quest for career information.

Conclusion and recommendation

Career information is needed by secondary school students in order to make intelligent decisions concerning their choice of career. Although most secondary school students are aware of various kinds of career information sources, they still face challenges in their quest for career related information. Based on the findings, the study recommends that:

In as much as parents are rated as very useful sources of career information, it is necessary for them to expose their children to the usefulness of other sources of career information as this would widen their understanding and assist them in making more intelligent decisions.

Even though books/publications were indicated as one of the top four mostly utilized career information sources, the library was rated the least in terms of usage. This implies that while secondary school students may find books/publications useful, they may not be getting those resources from the school library. It is, therefore, important that school libraries acquire books/publications related to career guidance as this would make them more relevant to the information needs of students.

Secondary schools should endeavour to make their school counsellors more relevant in meeting the career information needs of students. This is particularly necessary as most respondents are not aware of counsellors and do not utilize them as compared to other information sources such as parents and teachers. Those designated as counsellors should, therefore, be made more visible within the school environment and empowered with necessary resources to enable them provide required career guidance for students. Likewise, communication tools should be provided by schools in order to check delays encountered in career information seeking.

The Government should also establish career information centres that will provide secondary school students with government publications in the areas of career as this would help minimize inaccuracy in information received by secondary school students.

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