



Full Length Research Article

THE NEED FOR CAREER GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING IN SCHOOL: A CASE STUDY OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 15th February, 2016

Received in revised form

28th March, 2016

Accepted 17th April, 2016

Published online 31st May, 2016

Key Words:

Career Guidance and counseling,
School System,
Primary and secondary students
Papua New Guinea.

ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to analyze the education system of Papua New Guinea regarding the state of career guidance and counseling in the school system through a critical analysis of educational reform documents and perceptions of teachers, students and parents. The rationale is to offer recommendation for improvement where there seems to be a challenge. The study used a mixed of empirical and qualitative research method. This approach enabled the researchers to widely scrutinize different education policy documents and apply a semi-structured interview guide and semi-structure questionnaire for 22 respondents (teachers, students and parents) respectively. Specific results from the study revealed the absence of a policy framework for career guidance and counseling in the school system of Papua New Guinea. Therefore, the paper recommends the promulgation of a comprehensive policy for career and guidance counseling in the school system with compulsory directive for implementation.

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INTRODUCTION

Today, literature emphasizing educational policies to enroll more kids in school has overwhelmed recent articles; with less emphasis placed on their careers. In order to be productive and responsible citizens in this 21st century, children require more than just education but an education enthused by sound career guidance and counseling. Studies have shown that many people who pursued education void of career guidance and counseling often end up making poor life's choices and investing more than required resources, energy and time compared to the other way round. As indicated by Zelloth (2009), it is common sense that ill-informed and ill-thought-through initial education and occupation choices could result not only in individual dissatisfaction and lower level of learning and employment productivity, but also in high public and private costs in terms of people dropping out from school. Being cognizant of this variation, most countries nowadays are considering adapting to flexible education policies that recognize career guidance and counseling as means to improve schooling and secure better future for children.

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As a country, the state of Papua New Guinea (PNG) has recorded tremendous educational reforms and policies in recent years, which have enrolled nearly 2 million pupils in elementary, primary, secondary, and vocational and distance learning programs, Department of Education (2015). Despite these achievements in recent years, the ratio of guidance officers to students stands at 1:14,000, Kravia and Pagliano (2015). This indicates that there are responsible factors for the poor situation of career guidance and counseling in the education system. Therefore, these factors need to be identified to enable means for improvement. The economy of Papua New Guinea, unlike some developing countries; is experiencing an incredible performance compared to several decades ago. However, sustaining this progress requires growing people with the right type of knowledge and skills required by the job market through sound career education. Therefore, this study explores the education system of Papua New Guinea relative to its prevailing state of career guidance and counseling with particular emphasis placed on primary and secondary schools. It endeavors to identify areas that demand interventions with the aims to: enable students make informed career choices in preparation for university and colleges; create awareness of the various forms of professions and their requirements; make career guidance services

available in all primary and secondary schools without any barriers; reduce students drop-out rate, reduce mismatch and the unemployment rate; and to ensure sound administration of career guidance and counseling across the school system. The study uses a mixed of empirical and qualitative research method. This approach to enable the researchers to widely scrutinize different education policy documents and apply a semi-structured interview guide and semi-structure questionnaire. Aside from documentary analysis, the study targets 22 respondents including teachers, students and parents respectively to ascertain their views on the condition of career guidance and counseling in the educational system of Papua New Guinea. This approach further put forth better understanding of how career guidance and counseling has evolved over the years. so as to offer recommendation for improvement where there seems to be challenge.

Literature Review

Defining Career

The term "career" is spoken and understood by education stakeholders in many ways and the thoughts are growing at an incredible rate; mainly in developing countries. However, latest works by Derr (1987), Arthur (1989), Arnold (1997), and Beukes (2009), were concerned with the sequence of a mutual or reciprocal action between the individuals with society, education and organizations throughout their lifespan. Weinert, Driver *et al.* (2001 & 1990) developed series of patterns including the career concept that sees a career as a lifelong involvement; the linear career concept that defines a career as a steadily upward movement on some clearly defined ladder; the spiral career concept that defines career as a series of different careers, work related experiences constituting the whole life span of a person that is generally seen with regard to a number of stages from one phase of life to the next. Schein and Maanen (1977 and 1982) and Driver (1982) indicate that the individual's self-definition of career is a person's own subjective idea about work life and his/her role within it. they go on by stating: talents, motives and values are inter-related into a more or less congruent total self-concept through a reciprocal process of learning to be good at those things we are motivated to do and value, learning to want and value those things we are perfect at, and avoid those things we are not motivated to do or do not value, resulting in loss of abilities or skills in those areas.

Defining Guidance

Guidance is a multifaceted activity with varying meanings in different countries. In education, we find reference to guidance counselors in Malta, Czech Republic, Finland and Ireland. In Ireland, career education officers and study counselors in Finland. In Czech Republic and Malta, guidance is termed as career path counselors and school godmothers, Sultana (2004). However, works by UNESCO (2000) and Watts and Kidd (2000) defines guidance broadly as a scope of processes designed to enable individuals to make informed choices and transitions related to their educational, vocational and personal development. Educational guidance requires providing assistance to learners in their choices, adjustments to learning, the curriculum and school life. Assistance is provided on the right type of education required for learners' to pursue while

ensuring that the right balance is kept in order to meet the human resource needs of a nation. UNESCO (2000) further articulated that, as a process, guidance involves a series of actions or progressive steps which move towards a goal and is not a simple matter. As such, Hui (2002) argues that remedial guidance aims to meet the immediate needs of the students' personal and social problems, preventive guidance is more proactive, focusing on anticipating 'critical incidents' that students may experience, by teaching them effective coping skills. The Danish Ministry of Education (2004), regarded guidance as a process that continuously should help young people become more conscious of their abilities, interests and possibilities. Inspectorate (2005) dissects personal and social development, educational guidance and career/vocational guidance as the three interlinked areas of guidance.

The Relationship between Guidance and Counseling

Guidance and counseling are two sides of the same coin. Although the goal in both cases is to assist the person, the two concepts are not the same. Technically, counseling has a more in-depth meaning. The American Psychological Association (1956) defines counseling as overcoming obstacles to their personal growth, wherever these may be encountered and towards achieving optimum development of their personal resources. Mallum (2000), Bulus (1990), define counseling as that process which takes place in a one to one relationship between an individual troubled by problems with which he could not cope with alone. This assistance, as argue by these scholars can take many forms such as educational, vocational, social, personal, emotional or moral assistance. Hui (2002) describes 'guidance' as helping students in their whole-person development and 'counseling' as helping students to cope with distress and confusion. Counseling in fact, denotes a more therapeutic and personalized intervention, whereas guidance embraces a larger range of activities Herr *et al* (2004). Watts and Kidd (2000) further expands on these subjects. Undoubtedly, knowledge of personal development skills and basic counseling skills can influence the outcome of career guidance intervention. Indeed, while guidance and counseling may be viewed as two sides of the same coin, there is a strong link between them.

Defining Career Guidance

The concept of career guidance has been widely used during the early days as vocational guidance. However, the traditional term vocational guidance has been improved to career guidance Watts and Fretwell (2004) to focus on elements that support lifelong learning and career development throughout life. Thus, this change has enabled the formation of an international definition of career guidance to include services and activities designed to assist individuals of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make education, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers. Such services can be found in schools, universities and colleges, in training institutions, in public employment services, in the workplace, in the voluntary or community sector and in the private sector. The activities may take place on an individual or group basis and may be face-to-face or at a distance (including help lines and web-based services). The definitions stated above were confirmed by the OECD (2003a), Council

of the European Union (2004), the World Bank (2003), and Rolling International Symposia on Career Development and Public Policy (2001). The current term career guidance brings the two together and stresses the interaction between learning and work.

Career Guidance in Primary and Secondary Schools

OECD (2004) stresses, as employment and education policies seek to widen choices and create systems, career guidance becomes increasingly important for public policies. Literatures by OECD & European Communities (2004); OECD (2003a); Association for Career and Technical Education (2008); Joyce *et al.* (2011); Loan and Van (2015) emphasized the need for early preparation regarding the changes in the world of work and education about career choices and decision-making in primary and secondary schools. Phipps (1995) elucidated, five year olds can talk about the job they want when they grow up, six to eight year olds have already begun to narrow down the number of occupations they are prepared to consider in the future. Miles Morgan Australia (2003), children start to rule out options at an early age because of the unconscious influences of parents, their friends and the stereotyping of occupations. Studies conducted in developed and developing countries revealed career guidance programs have been widely adopted into their school system. In the Mediterranean region, Comparative Analysis of Career Guidance research by Sultana and Watts (2007) shows that countries such as (Algeria, Egypt, Turkey and West Bank and Gaza Strip) have introduced career education into their school curriculum. According to Zelloth (2009) in his report on the demand for career guidance in the European Union neighboring countries, Turkey is the most advance in which, career courses are included as part of class guidance programs in all types of schools, integrated with personal and social education. In Singapore, Loan and Van (2015) career guidance is based on appropriate activities for students from primary to postsecondary school levels. In South Africa, research done by the World Bank (2003) have shown that the General Education and Training Life Orientation curriculum makes provision for career education across its school system with a view to assisting pupils with career choices, and subject selection at the end of Grade 9 and, through to the end of secondary schooling. Students learn about the different fields of work, the sectors of the economy, and the requirements for different types of work.

Hoyt *et al.* (1974), stressed the importance of comprehensive career information that should be organized into instructional programs offered to all students. A case study by Joyce *et al.* (2011) in the secondary schools in Kenya found out that, students in schools without or with inactive career offices were likely to be disadvantaged in degree programme decision making. Similarly, work done by the Association for Career and Technical Education (2008) indicates that, without structured guidance activities, young people tend to drift through their high school education without gaining knowledge of all the career opportunities available to them or the skills that are required. Consequently, some become discouraged and drop out of high school; others miss the connection between high school, postsecondary education and the workplace and make career decisions based on inaccurate or incomplete information. Guidance in schools is that area of

the schools provision that is distinctively directed towards helping pupils realize their full potential in preparing for adult and working life. Schmidt (2001) and OECD (2003a and 2003b) argue that because career guidance and counseling is an important avenue, schools must take a developmental approach, tailoring the content of career education and guidance to the developmental stages that students find themselves in, and including career education classes and experiences throughout schooling, and not just at one point. The literatures above shows to what extent various countries around the world have attempted to implement career guidance and counseling in their school systems, with varying degree of accomplishments. Thus, this raises the following questions: Can Papua New Guinea adjust its education policies to accommodate career guidance and counseling? Or will it avoid it? Details shall be discussed later in this study.

Method

The study used a mixed of empirical and qualitative research method. In the work of Sidhu (1984), mixed research methods such as empirical and qualitative provides for better depth of outcomes.

Approach and Sample

The present study uses documentary analysis, semi-structured interview and semi-structured questionnaire. These approaches researchers the researchers to scrutinize different education policy documents from Guidance Office, Department of Education and administer a semi-structured interview guide and semi-structure questionnaire to 22 respondents including teachers, students and parents respectively. Using interview and questionnaire technique, data were gathered from five (5) public and private primary and secondary schools including Tokarara Secondary School, Jubilee Catholic Secondary School, Hohola Demonstration Primary School (North-West) and Kilakila Primary and Secondary School and Koki Primary School (South) in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea.

The following five questions serve as the foundation for this research:

- Is career guidance provided to students in primary and secondary schools?
- How is it provided and at what stage is it delivered?
- What kind of career information is delivered?
- Is there any policy context for career guidance?
- How the policy has been implemented if there is any?

In order to address the above research questions, the researchers used interview and observation techniques as the data gathering strategies. These strategies were depended on the three conditions which were: 1) to elicit data needed to gain understanding of the phenomenon in question; 2) to contribute different perspectives on the issues; and 3) to make effective use of the time available for data-collection. Categorically, out of the 22 respondents, students accounted for 8 (5 secondary and 3 primary), teachers accounted for 6 (senior high schools), and parents accounted for the remaining 8 (5 working class and 3 farmers). Data for the research were collected between July 30 and August 30, 2015 by one of the

researchers who had taken a vacation home (Papua New Guinea).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Specifically, results from this study are in two-fold. The first one derived from documentary analysis of national education policies and laws gathered from the Guidance Office which operates under the Department of Education. The second one originates from a semi-structured interview guide and semi-structured questionnaire administered to teachers, students and parents purposefully to grasp their perceptions on the subject of career guidance and counseling in Papua New Guinea school system. In such approaches, it is essential to separately articulate the findings for better understanding. Therefore, the research findings are presented beginning with documentary analysis. The documentary examination unearths quite interesting findings from this study. The documentary analysis reveals despite series of educational reforms and policy documents, there were no policies on career guidance and counseling in the Papua New Guinea educational system or as a policy of its own. Though the national curriculum (2003b) identifies career pathway and the world of work as part of the educational objective but it plants students on their own to identify their potential career paths and what to expect in their working life. Since 2003, our analysis discovered the Government of Papua New Guinea has introduced series of policies including Gender Equity in Education (2003a), School Learning Improvement Plan (2006), Improving Students' Behaviors and Welfare (2009) and Inclusive and Special Education (2012) to increase enrollment and improve education outcomes but the subject of career guidance and counseling has not felt into limelight.

Interestingly, further documentary analysis revealed a traditional conduct of school guidance and counseling in some of the primary and secondary schools. As indicated by Kravia and Pagliano (2015), in Papua New Guinea, the term school guidance and counseling refers to a process of helping individuals to understand themselves by discovering their own needs, interests and capabilities in order to formulate their own goals and make plans for realizing those goals. A Behavioral Management Policy (2009) which was implemented by the Department of Education and the Guidance Division serves as a guide for both teachers and students. This policy sets the standards for what accounts for good and bad behaviors and demands teachers and students to exhibit good behaviors to ensure healthy academic environment. UNESCO (2011) guidance officers work in the secondary/high school system and support teachers in their counseling duties. These officers also assist in primary schools with counseling services. In a nutshell, our examination of different educational policy documents established that there was a complete lack of policy framework on career guidance and counseling in Papua New Guinea. As indicated further by Kravia and Pagliano (2015), the ratio of guidance officers to students is 1:14,000. Overall, guidance and counseling service in Papua New Guinea is grossly inadequate with about 17 guidance officers looking after the guidance and counseling needs of approximately 1.5 million students, Department of Education (2004). The research discovered that career guidance was not provided to students in primary schools. On the subject of counseling, our

analysis further deduced counseling was merely focused on students' behavior. Currently, primary school-based counseling programme is very weak and is not up to date at present. This finding was further validated by the Department of Education (2015) which reveals 45 per cent of primary schools do not have a school-based counselor; and in 80 per cent of those schools that do, the counselors lacked any form of basic training and the provisions was mixed; combining academic counseling with spiritual and emotional counseling.

At the secondary level, the study realized that career guidance service was provided particularly to grade 12 students towards the end of their studies when they were about to graduate. A career expo program which was recently introduced in the country is the only initiative thus far. However, the career expo program lacks basic ingredients to ensure students are well informed on the subject of career as lifetime occupancy. According to the guidance officers when interviewed, during the career expo program, they invite tertiary institutions to come and display their courses and the type of requirements which students had to achieve in order to get an admission into their institutions. Sometimes, principals from each province are invited to go to the universities and they showcase and give them their CDs so that when there is a career exhibition, they could show it to students. In some parts of the provinces where the terrain makes it difficult to travel, many students miss out on career information. In reality, guidance and counseling in both primary and secondary schools are mainly focused on academic, behavioral problems and of subject choices which were viewed by schools as being of higher priorities. Career guidance and counseling in itself is marginalized in the school system in Papua New Guinea. The already limited and untrained guidance counselors tend to spend much of their time on the learning and behavioral problems of a minority of pupils, at the expense of the help needed by all pupils in relation to their educational and occupational choices. Watts and Fretwell (2004) dissects that guidance on such choices tends to focus mainly on immediate educational decisions, rather than on occupational decisions and on longer-term career implications.

Findings and Discussions from Teachers, Students and Parents

The 22 respondents engaged during the one on one interview which covered 8 students, 6 teachers and 8 parents revealed quite disappointing information on the status of career guidance and counseling in the primary and secondary school system of Papua New Guinea. The parents, when interviewed, fiercely informed the researchers that they had no knowledge of the presence of career guidance and counseling in the school system of PNG. Nearly 80% of the parents' respondents seem to be aware of the relevance of career guidance and counseling in schools but registered their frustration that such worthwhile endeavors was completely absence across the school system as far as they were aware. Two of the parents interviewed together around the Jubilee Catholic secondary school in north-west of Moresby disclosed "we have couple of children attending secondary private and public schools but they never one day discussed meeting a career guidance and counselor at school". In summary, career guidance and counseling did not exist according to the parents'

respondents. The teachers' respondents covered in this research hailed from three different secondary schools including Tokarara Secondary School, north-west of Moresby; Hohola Demonstration Primary School north-west of Moresby; and Badihagwa Secondary School, South of Moresby. On account of their responses to the questionnaire, the teachers, in principle expounded that the school system of Papua New Guinea lacks career guidance and counseling programs. Findings from the teachers' respondents revealed that there was no policy framework on the subject of career guidance and counseling in the school system. However, they expressed their awareness of some kind of counseling in few schools done by schools' principals and sometimes fellow teachers, basically focused on students' behavior improvement rather than a full scale of career guidance and counseling. In a nutshell, the teachers' respondents referred to such undertaken as a dull initiative because its conduct does not seem to make any significant impact on students' future occupations. In agreement with the teachers' respondents, the students' respondents acknowledged there was no career guidance and counseling program in the schools and not only to speak of policies. 60% of the students' respondents however, indicated their participation in the national career expo program but described the event "boring and distasteful" since it was not tailored to drive hidden ambitions in school goers. In summary, the students' respondents have not had the opportunity to interface with a career guidance and counseling, although the need is glaring across the school system.

Implications and Conclusion

Career guidance is a covering services intended to assist people of any age and at any point in their lives, to make education, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers. It would be inappropriate to ignore such programs in schools as it is through such programs that students acquire the ability to make rational career decisions and make the right choices to transit to the next level of education and employments. In this study, despite the fact that career guidance and counseling was recognized as a tool to awaken hidden talents and vocation in the soul of pupils, the lack of such program in the school system in Papua New Guinea implies that students risked missing out on important career opportunities hidden in their souls. As stressed by educator Emma Goldman, "no one has yet realized the wealth of sympathy, the kindness and generosity hidden in the soul of a child. The effort of true education should be to unlock that treasure". Children are the future leaders. If the government of Papua New Guinea also holds this concept, then the time is now to take appropriate action in order to grow a community of healthy and passionate professional young people.

In 2013, there were about 1,868,724 students enrolled in the school system in which primary schools accounted for over 50%, SABER Country Report, (2015). As such, the absence of a career guidance and counseling in the school system implies that these pupils were left to themselves in confronting their future occupation; something which possibly could endanger the students' career decision making and their performance in school. Findings from the documentary analysis concluded that there was no policy framework in place for career guidance and counseling in the school system of Papua New

Guinea. Although career guidance and counseling was considered an integral part of the school system but the subject was yet to gain policy attention and implementation across the school system. The semi-structured interview guide and questionnaire administered to teachers, students and parents further validate this conclusion. Implementing career guidance and counseling across the system is very essential not only for students but also for a country because such endeavor helps to shape students in the right career path which can later make them professional stakeholders in society. In the interim, this study has provided sufficient empirical evidences on how career guidance and counseling can impact students' lives for better learning environment and society.

Recommendations

The current state of guidance and counseling in the school system of Papua New Guinea demands immediate reform in order to meet the current ongoing changes in education and labor markets. Therefore, the study recommends the promulgation of a comprehensive national policy for career and guidance counseling in the school system with compulsory directive for implementation nationwide as a means to help engage pupils in planning their career aspirations and dreams respectively.

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