Students' Academic Ability in School Based Assessment as Correlate of Career Choice

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Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analyzed and interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

Original Research Article

ABSTRACT

Aims: The study investigated students' academic ability in school-based assessment as correlate of career choice using assessment and counselling as a base. Specifically, it determines the relationship between the gender of students' academic ability in the school-based assessment and their careers choice.
Study Design: The study is correlation because it determined students' academic ability in school-based assessment subjects as related to their careers choice
Place and Duration: The study was carried out in Delta State of Nigeria using the senior secondary school III students who had to make choice of careers into various universities or tertiary institutions. The study lasted for 12 months (February, 2013 to January, 2014).
Methodology: A sample of 100 students was randomly selected through proportionate stratified random sampling technique. Data for students' academic ability were obtained from the school-academic record from the achievement test of teachers while career choice was obtained through a valid and reliable questionnaire. The data were analyzed with correlation techniques and each

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hypothesis was tested at .05 level of significance.

Results: The result of the study showed that students make choice of careers into the tertiary schools without considering their ability in the required subjects taught in the school. Each course into any tertiary school requires students to have credit passes in the relevant subjects.

Conclusion: The study examined students' ability in school-based assessment and their careers choice into tertiary schools. It was observed that students make careers choice without considering their academic abilities in the required subjects. Therefore, school counsellor should guide students to make appropriate careers choice in line with the academic abilities in the required subjects for tertiary schools. It implies that assessment should be done before career counselling.

1. INTRODUCTION

Most students in senior secondary schools make career choice into tertiary institutions without considering their academic ability or achievement in the required subjects from the school-based assessment [1]. Indeed, an individual's ability in the required subjects for a career should be considered first. This is the focus of the study, aimed at guiding students for their future careers. The study was based on assessment and counselling. Students should be assessed before counselling. Assessment helps to determine abilities in the required subject for a career. Then counselling help to guide students for the right careers choice in life. The transition of students from secondary school to tertiary institutions requires guidance and counselling (Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN, [2].

The Joints Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) and universities in Nigeria require each candidate to obtain five credits passes as admission requirement for any career. This implies that students should possess the academic ability in the required subjects for their future careers. Some students are influenced by parents, peer group and interest among others to make their career choice without considering their abilities in the school-based assessment [3,4]. This is a major problem that needs urgent attention. This is because some of the students end up being frustrated when they do not have the required credit passes for their chosen careers. They need to be well-informed about their abilities while in school. Therefore, results of school-based assessment should be provided to students in order to help them identify their abilities in the required subjects before deciding to choose any related career.

1.1 School-based Assessment

Assessment that takes place in schools is called school-based assessment. Teachers are more involved. Moreover, assessment is the use of valid and reliable test, observation, questionnaire, interview and other instruments in obtaining information about a student's behaviour upon which judgment is made [5]. The major task of assessment is to analyze information provided by many tests, interviews and observation and to combine the information to make complex and important judgments about individuals' behaviour [6]. School-based assessment has been defined as the processes and tools teachers use to make decisions about their students' progress [7]. The definition highlighted, present assessment as providing means of making judgment on students' behaviour based on the data collected and analyzed. The Federal Government of Nigeria [2,8,9] in its National Policy on Education has maintained that assessment should be based in whole or in parts of continuous assessment of the progress of students. Continuous assessment is expected to cover the three domains of behaviour including the cognitive, affective and psychomotor aspects of the students. It should be systematic, comprehensive, cumulative and guidance orientation. A handbook on continuous assessment by the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Technology [10] was published as a guide. It has been noted that school-based assessment takes into account the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of students' behaviour [11]. Students' ability in different subjects is determined through cognitive assessment.

In cognitive assessment, various levels such as knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation were examined to determine a student's ability. Ability test according to Aiken [12] includes achievement test, aptitude test and intelligence test. A student's consistent performance in any subject depends on the natural ability. It should be noted that some students are good in Art

while others in Science or Social Science. Hence, continuous cognitive school-based assessment help to identify a student innate ability to perform well in the required subjects for a career. This should be the main focus for any student seeking admission to study in any tertiary institution. However, counselling is necessary to guide the students make the right career choice in line with their abilities in the required subjects. Students' ability is measured for the purpose of academic and vocational counselling [12].

1.2 Academic Ability

Academic ability is the students' achievement in the school subjects. It is better for a student to be sure that he or she has credit passes in the required subject for a career before making a choice. Therefore, there is need for cognitive assessment to determine students' ability. It has been pointed out that all careers have their subject combination requirements and personal abilities which are supposed to be fully assessed before individuals can be deemed to be qualified to go into specific career (Onoyase & Onoyase, 2005). The school counsellor needs all the necessary information about students assessment results in their subject areas and required subject combinations for choice of career before vocational counselling can effectively commence. Senior secondary school students in Nigeria need to be guided toward making choice of career in line with their ability in satisfying the required subject combinations. The counsellors therefore, need this information after the assessment of students. Teachers are expected to teach and assess their students in various subjects. School-based assessment helps a teacher to make judgment about the behaviour of each student such as pass, good, satisfactory, unsatisfactory, distinction, credit, merit and fail. Counsellors, by their profession, are not teachers but have a working relationship with teachers to assess and counsel students. In Nigeria the senior secondary school is the last stage of secondary school education for each student. The students are expected to be admitted after their junior secondary school or universal basic education. It is a three year education programme. Before the end of the programme, students offer subjects for their Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE) with West African Examination Council (WAEC) or other external examination bodies. Students choose their subjects in line with the requirements of the Federal Government of

Nigeria [2] as entrenched in the National Policy on Education. Teachers teach and assess students in their chosen subjects. It is expected that students' choice of subjects should be in line with their career prospects. Unfortunately, most of the students are ignorant about matching their choice of subjects with a proposed future career. It was as a result of this problem that the National policy on Education emphasised guidance and counselling in secondary schools to be provided by trained counsellors. However, the success of vocational counselling depends on the school-based assessment where a student's academic ability is identified before choosing any related career. The ability of an individual could be identified through the use of achievement test, aptitude test and intelligence test. In this study, achievement test was considered.

1.3 Career Choice

The career choice of a student is the vocation or course chosen to study and practice for life. This depends mainly on the ability or performance of the students in the subject related to the careers choice. Thus, a student who chooses medicine as career and possess the ability in the related subjects will do well in life [4]. His or her ability in English language, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and Biology will be of good help for admission. On the other side, if a student chooses a course or vocation and has no ability or aptitude in the required subjects, he or she will only end up frustrated Otasowie [13].

This is why a counsellor is required in schools to guide students to make the right careers choice for future life. In Nigeria, the Federal Government of Nigeria [2] made it as a policy to have Guidance Counsellors in secondary schools to help students make the right choice of career. This became necessary to help solve the career problems among students in secondary schools. Some of the factors that determine choice of a career according to Ipaye [3] include interest, aptitude and talent (ability). Student often make choice without considering their abilities in the required subjects for a career Osadebe [14].

According to Ipaye [3] students are often prone to choose occupations without directly relating them to ability. Aptitude test or achievement test could be used to determine students' ability [15]. It was pointed out that assessment should be considered when making a career choice [16].

1.4 Counselling

Counselling is a service of guidance that every student needs. There are so many definitions about counselling aimed at making it more understandable and meaningful. In one aspect of the definition, Okobiah and Okorodudu [17:30] defined counselling "as a process of aiding normal people to achieve higher level adjustments, skills, which manifest themselves as increased maturity so as to be meaningfully integrated into the society and become more responsible citizen". Counselling has also been defined as a relationship in which a trained counsellor helps an individual to understand and solve adjustment problems [18]. Shertzer and Stone [19] pointed out that counselling denotes a wide range of procedures including encouragement, information giving and test interpretation. There are three main areas a counsellor can function to counsel students as pointed out by Esere [20] and Osadebe [21]. These include academic, vocational and personal-social. The area related to this study is vocational. Careers choice depends on students' ability in the required subjects.

1.5 Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study was to find out the relationship between students' academic ability in school-based assessment and their career choice. Specially, the study:

(1) Determined the relationship between students' academic ability in school-based assessment and their career choice.
(2) Determined the relationship between gender of students' academic ability in school-based assessment and their career choice.

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What is the extent of relationship between students' academic ability in school-based assessment and their career choice?
2. What is the extent of relationship between gender of students' academic ability in school-based assessment and their career choice?

The following null hypotheses were tested at. 05 level of significance.

HO_1: There is no significant relationship between students' academic ability in school-based assessment and their career choice.

HO_2: There is no significant relationship between gender of students' academic ability in school-based assessment and their career choice.

2. MEHODOLOGY

The study examined the relationship between students' academic ability in school-based assessment and their careers choice. It was a correlation study. The dependent variable was careers choice while the independent variable was academic ability of students. Thus, students' future career choice depends on ability in the required school subjects for admission into university or tertiary institutions

A sample of 100 students was randomly selected from a population of 3200 SSIII students, using proportionate stratified random sampling technique. A questionnaire containing careers for students' choice had face validity obtained through expert judgment and construct validity determined through factor analysis. The instrument has a 4-point scale. A reliability coefficient of 0.75 was obtained using Cronbach Alpha method to determine the measure of internal consistency. The questionnaire was used to obtain information about students' career choice. The achievement test used by the teachers to obtain students' ability has content validity.

The data collected were analyzed with point biserial correlation. The average score of each student in the chosen subjects was correlated with the correct matching of career choice. If a student chooses a career and had passed at credit level in all the required subjects, then a score of 1 is recorded as qualified. On the other side, if a student chooses a career and fails any of the required subjects, then a score of 0 is recorded as not qualified. One score was continuous and the other dichotomous. This required the use of point-biserial statistics. Phi-coefficient was used for career choice and gender because both variables are nominal (1 and 0). The research questions were analyzed using the percentage of the coefficient of determination to find the amount of contribution students' ability makes to their careers choice. Each hypothesis was tested at .05 level of significance.

3. RESULTS

The results were presented in line with the research questions and hypotheses.

Research Question One: What is the extent of relationship between students' academic ability in school-based assessment and their career choice.

The Table 1 below shows the extent of relationship between students' academic ability in school-based assessment and their career choice.

Table 1. Point Biserial correlation analysis on academic ability and career choice of students

Variable	N	R	r^2	r^2%	Decision
Careers choice					
Academic ability	100	0.16	0.026	2.6	Low

Table 1 above shows that the extent of relationship between academic ability and career choice of students is low. The academic ability of students from the school-based cognitive assessment contributed 2.6% to their careers choice. Therefore, 97.4% could not be accounted for due to other factors.

Research Question Two: What is of relationship between gender of students' academic ability in school-based assessment and their career choice.

The Table 2 below shows the extent of relationship between gender of students' academic ability in school-based assessment and their career choice.

Table 2 indicates that the extent of relationship between academic ability and career choice of students' gender is low. The academic ability of students' gender contributed 2.3% to their career choice. It should be pointed out that 97.7% could

not be accounted for by the statistics used due to other influencing factors.

Table 2. Phi-coefficient analysis on gender of students' academic ability in school-based assessment and their career choice

Variable	N	r	r^2	r^2%	Decision
Careers choice					
Gender	100	0.15	0.023	2.3	Low

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between students' academic ability in school-based assessment and their career choice.

The Table 3 below shows the relationship between students' academic ability in school-based assessment and their career choice.

Table 4 shows that the calculated r- value of 0.16 is less than critical r- value of 0.195 at .05 level of significance. The null hypothesis was therefore, accepted. The result maintains that there was no significant relationship between students' academic ability in school-based assessments and their careers choice.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between gender of students' academic ability in school-based assessment and their career choice.

The Table 4 below shows the relationship between gender of students' academic ability in school-based assessment and their career choice.

Table 4 indicates that the calculated r- value of 0.10 is less than the critical r- value of 0.195 at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis was accepted. Therefore, the result shows that there was no significant relationship between gender of students' academic ability in school-based assessment and their career choice.

Table 3. Point biserial correlation test analysis of academic ability and career choice of students

Variable	N	Calculated r- value	Critical r- value	Decision
Careers choice	100	0.16	0.195	Accept
Academic ability				

Table 4. Phi-coefficient test analysis of gender of students' academic ability and career choice

Variable	N	Calculated r- value	Critical r- value	Decision
Careers choice	100	0.10	0.195	Accept
Gender				

4. DISCUSSION

The result reveals that the extent of relationship between the academic ability and career choice of students was low. Most students make choice of careers without considering their ability in the required subjects. This is similar to some findings. Mordi [4] Otasowie [13] Onyango and Ndege [11], in their studies carried out in different locations found that students make choice of careers without considering their abilities in the required subjects. The results showed that there was no significant relationship between students' academic ability and their career choice. Most studies appear to be focusing on interest and other factors as responsible for career choice. It should be noted in this study that individual ability to pass at credit level is the underlining factor for career choice into universities and other institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. The Joint Admission and Matriculations Board (JAMB) and various institutions of higher learning require credit passes in subjects leading to any career. Therefore, each individual student should possess the required credit passes before any choice of career could be made. A candidate with enough credit pass has the opportunity of choice in various related careers. All these depend on the students' academic ability that should be considered first before other factors, influencing career choice.

The result also showed that there was no significant relationship between the gender of students and their career choice. The nature of the relationship was positive, and gender contributed to career choice of students. The result was similar to Ipaye [3] and Osadebe [14] who found that gender contributed to the career choice of students.

5. RECOMMENDATION

The following recommendations were made from the result of the study in line with assessment and counselling:

1. Ability of students in required subjects for a career should be considered first before allowing them to make career choice.
2. Students should always be guided with the JAMB brochure that states careers and the required subject areas.
3. Counsellors and teachers should give remedial attention to students in the subject areas of weakness to help improve their performances in making appropriate careers choice.
4. Counsellors should ensure that academic and vocational counselling are provided to the students regularly.
5. There should be presence of guidance counsellors in all the senior secondary schools by posting counsellors to schools where there is none.
6. Head of schools and other academic staff should encourage students to make careers choice according to their abilities in the required subjects.
7. Counsellors should administer general ability test battery to students to identify their strength and weakness in chosen subject areas for career choice.

6. CONCLUSION

The study examined the relationship between students' ability in school- based assessment and their career choice for tertiary institutions. The senior secondary three (SSIII) students were used for the study. It was observed that students make career choice without considering their abilities in the required subjects which they must pass at credit level. It appears students' career choices are influenced by other factors.

Therefore, the student should guided to make appropriate careers choice in line with academic ability. Assessment of students should be carried out before counselling them on career choice.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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