



Students career aspiration and choice of subject among senior secondary school students in Cross River State, Nigeria



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ABSTRACT

This research study assessed student career aspiration on the choice of subject in secondary schools in Cross River State. To achieve the research purpose, a research question was put forward and transformed into a null hypothesis. A brief review of related literature was undertaken with reference to the variable under study. The ex-post facto research design was used for achieving the purpose of this study and the simple random sampling technique was adopted in selecting the ten (10) local government areas used for the study. The proportionate simple random sampling technique was adopted in selecting the fifty four (54) secondary schools and the seven hundred and three (703) senior secondary two students used for the study. A structured questionnaire titled student career aspiration and choice of subjects (SCACS) was the instrument used for collection of data in the study. The reliability of the research instrument was established through the Cronbach Alpha reliability method. Chi-square statistical tool was used for data analysis. The findings obtained from analysis of data and hypothesis testing revealed that there was a significant influence of career aspiration on students' choice of subjects in the study area. It was concluded that students should be independent when it comes to making choice of subject. Based on these findings it was recommended among others that students with low interest in certain subjects should be encouraged to see those subjects as being important tool for developing good behaviour and peaceful co-existence.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of education is said to be attained when students are given the liberty to choose subjects which reflect their ability, capability and interest. In education, whether formal or informal, the success of every student depends on the subjects or skills he chooses to offer. Human reasoning, hopes, aspirations, attitude and values are thus generally known to depend largely on the choice

one makes. The degree of importance this variable (choice of subjects) hold on contemporary educational system, has motivated scholars to carry in-depth studies, on how to make secondary school students make choice of subjects to offer without the influence of external variables (Hewitt, 2010).

Despite the fact that students choose subjects at the beginning of their senior secondary school classes, majority of them drop those subjects in their last year for others because of their future aspiration. This is not a healthy development, rather, it is evidence of the shortfall in attainment of the goal and objectives of Nigerian

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education as enshrined in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2014).

Student career aspiration is another variable that may influence choice of subjects among senior secondary school students. Students start building their career when they get to senior section of the secondary school. Barile (2015) asked the following questions. Have you ever wondered why some individuals earn a professional degree while others drop-out of high school? Or do you ever think about why some individuals strive to be presidents of large corporations while others seem destined and satisfied to be in a minimum wage, manual labour job? Setting career goals at an early age might just be the answers to these questions.

Statement of the problem

The interest for a research in this area was triggered by a sense of concern on the number of students that eventually register for certain subjects in their senior secondary classes. With the current situation in Nigeria where youth of our time (both male and female) are involved in all sort of criminality ranging from cultism, terrorism, kidnapping, militancy, etc. Certain subject are supposed to be a dominant subject in secondary school because of its numerous importance which may include: inculcation of good moral values, development of sound individual who are morally and spiritually upright, individual who are honest and truthful to develop the society. Despite the above mentioned facts, there is a continuous declined in students' enrolment for WAEC/NECO examination in Cross River State.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of the study was to investigate whether student career aspiration influence choice of subjects among senior secondary school students in Cross River State. In specific terms, the study sought to establish whether career aspiration influences choice of subjects among secondary school students.

Research questions

In pursuance of this research problem and its purpose, the following research questions were formulated to guide the study. How does career aspiration influence choice of subjects among secondary school students?

Statement of hypotheses

There is no significant influence of career aspiration on students' choice of subjects.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Students' career aspiration and choice of Subjects

The subjects that students choose in school are pointer to their future career, so the decision is very crucial in the life of the students as it may affect every aspect of their lives. A right choice in subject making will always afford the students opportunity to actualize their future aspirations. Khoscrow-Pour (2014) defined career choice or aspiration as a process of choosing a career path which can involve choices regarding education and training for a given career. Developing the habit of career choice serve as guide for students to choose subjects that will help them actualize their dream.

The above assertion was supported by Nagy et al. (2006), who opined that, high school students are likely to enrol in subjects that will pertain to what they want to study in college. The authors conducted a study to investigate students' choice of career path; the following are the findings in Table 1.

Similarly, Ndalichako and Komba (2014) added that students' value attached to particular subjects is related to the extent to which the subject is relevant and applicable to their real-life situation. Students like subjects which enable them to obtain skills and knowledge to help them in their day to day activities. Notably, subject with irrelevant contents are difficult to follow and understand. This forces students to memorize concepts, which lead to their tendency to dislike those subjects. The students asserted the following in relation to the relevance of the subjects. Students in secondary schools are then greatly influenced by the potential for career opportunities and advancement; therefore, the more valuable a subject is to a future career, the greater the likelihood a student will enrol in it (Ackerman and Cross, 2006). Students' enrolment of subjects based on its relevancy to their future career aspirations becomes even more predominate as the students get closer to graduation and they begin to search for jobs (Wilhelm, 2004).

Nyamwange (2016) conducted a study to ascertain whether prior career knowledge has influence on choice of subject. The study found that 272 (91.9%) of all respondents indicated that having prior knowledge of what a career entails is important to developing ones career. In fact having prior knowledge prepares an individual to what one is about to enter and therefore a decision will be made while well aware of what one is to expect, what work habits are expected of them and the potential earnings. In addition, prior knowledge acts as a lens through which we view and absorb new information. The study found that 274 (92.5%) of all respondents indicated that individuals attach a lot of importance to their career shows that 74 (61.2%) of the 121 Respondents think that individuals who do not attach

Table 1. students' career path.

Career'Path	No of student (%)
Lawyer	27
Accountant/ Banker	25.83
Doctors/Physician/Dentist	21.19
Engineering	17.25
Social Scientist	5.30
Teaching	3.31

importance to their careers lack knowledge and information. Also, 21 (17.4%) believe that wrong career choice or coercion to join a career contributes to individuals not attaching a lot of importance to their careers. Other less significant reasons advanced by respondents for individuals not attaching a lot of importance to their careers are lack of positive attitudes and the type of personality.

Arising from the study findings, the study concludes that having prior knowledge about a career is important to developing and nurturing interest in the career. In fact prior knowledge prepares an individual on the conditions obtaining for a career and one will decide to enter a career from a point of choice of subjects. It is in this connection therefore that Sharf (2010) contends that clarity and meaning of life are expressed in one's career. Consequently, it is by being armed with better information and proper guidance that individuals are able to make appropriate career decision.

METHODOLOGY

The ex-post facto research design was adopted for the study. The aim was to determine the variables under study influence on the dependent variable.

The study was carried out in Cross River State. Cross River State which is made up eighteen (18) local government areas which is divided into three education zones of Calabar, Ikom and Ogoja. The population of this study consisted of all senior secondary school students in public and private secondary schools in Cross River State. Statistics from the Cross River State Ministry of Education shows a population of 27,898 (Table 2).

Simply random sampling was used to select the sample. The sample for the study was of seven hundred and three (703) senior secondary school two (SSS 2) students. The first stage of sampling was to select the local government areas used for the study. The researcher wrote the names of the eighteen (18) local government areas that make up Cross River State according to their strata on little pieces of papers, folded the papers into small ball-like shapes which were turned into a container, the papers were mixed and the

researcher blindly picked fifty percent (50%) of the paper balls from the container according to their strata 50% from Calabar Education Zone which amounted to a total of four local government areas, 50% from Ikom education zone which amounted to a total of three local government areas and 50% from Ogoja Education Zone which amounted to a total of three local government areas; resulting in ten local government areas. The local government areas that were picked out of the container were automatically selected to be used for the study.

The second stage was to select the public and private secondary schools used for the study. To select the private schools for the study, the stratified random sampling technique was adopted in selecting 10 percent of private schools in each of the selected local government areas used for the study. This amounted to eight (8) private secondary schools. The proportionate simple random sampling technique was adopted. In the ten local government areas selected, the names of the school were written on pieces of paper and folded into ball-like shapes. The paper-balls was put in a container and mixed properly. The researcher blindly picked 40% of the total number of balls in the container. The schools whose names appeared on the picked pieces of paper were selected as the sample for the study. Therefore, Calabar education zone 20 schools were selected; Ikom education zone (16 schools); and Ogoja education zone (18 schools) totalling 54 schools as the sample for the study.

The third stage was to select the respondents (students) used in the study. In the school, the proportionate simple random sampling technique was adopted in selecting twenty-eight percent (27%) of students in each of the selected secondary schools for the study.

Instrument for data collection was a questionnaire tagged *student career aspiration and choice of subjects (SCACS)* which was constructed by the researchers and validation ascertained. The reliability was determined using Cronbach alpha and the result obtained ranged between 0.724 and 0.843 which showed high reliability of the research instrument.

RESULTS

The null hypothesis stated that there is no significant influence of career aspiration on students' choice of subjects. The independent variable in this hypothesis is career aspiration which is categorized into education related, health related, engineering related, public service related, law related and agriculture related while the dependent variable is students' choice of subjects which is characterized into Yes and No. Chi-square statistical tool was used for data analysis. The result generated is presented in Table 3.

Table 2. Distribution of senior secondary school students in public and private secondary schools by local government areas in Cross River State.

S/N	LGA	No. of schools	No. of students		Total
			Male	Female	
1	Akamkpa	18	981	959	1940
2	Akpabuyo	6	334	345	679
3	Bakassi	3	175	162	337
4	Biase	16	814	741	1555
5	Calabar Municipality	16	1909	2644	4553
6	Calabar South	7	1223	2451	2674
7	Odukpani	15	713	681	1400
8	Abi	12	618	616	1234
9	Boki	30	564	623	1187
10	Etung	12	204	146	350
11	Ikom	19	1305	879	2185
12	Obubra	19	896	709	1605
13	Yakurr	17	923	600	1523
14	Bekwara	6	561	325	886
15	Obanliku	13	482	403	885
16	Obudu	26	1232	997	2229
17	Ogoja	14	683	509	1192
18	Yala	20	766	718	1484
Total		269	14,384	14,508	27,898

Source: Cross River State Secondary Education Board, 2018.

Table 3. Chi-square analysis of the influence of career aspirations on students' choice of subjects in secondary schools in Cross River State.

Career choice	Choice of CRK		Total	Chi-square	Sig.
	Yes (%)	No (%)			
Education	136 (95.10)	7 (4.90)	143	287.239*	0.000
Health related	6 (3.16)	167 (96.84)	173		
Engineering	70 (52.63)	63 (47.37)	133		
Public service	79 (45.25)	85 (54.75)	164		
Law related	42 (77.78)	12 (22.22)	54		
Agriculture	10 (32.26)	21 (67.74)	31		

*Significant at 0.05; df = 5; Critical $X^2 = 11.07$.

As presented in Table 3, the result of analysis showed that the calculated X^2 value of 287.239 is higher than the critical X^2 value of 11.07 at 0.05 level of significance with 5 degree of freedom. This implied that the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, there is a significant strong influence of career choice on students' choice of subjects in Cross River State.

The result further revealed that 136 students representing 95.10% of students chose Education related career while 7 representing 4.90% did not. Again, the result also showed that 6 students representing 3.16% of

students chose health related career while 167 representing 96.84% of the students did not. About 70 students representing 52.63% of students chose engineering related career while 63 representing 47.37% did not. Again, 79 representing 45.25% of students chose public service related career while 85 representing 54.75% did not. Also, 42 students representing 77.78% of students' chose law related career. Finally, 10 students representing 32.26% of the students chose Agriculture related career while 21 students representing 67.74% did not. This result showed that students' choice of career

significantly influenced their choice of the subject in the study area.

DISCUSSION

Career aspiration and students' choice of subjects

The report of finding showed that the calculated X^2 value of 287.229 is higher than the critical X^2 value of 11.07 at 0.05 level of significance with 5 degree of freedom. The implication of this finding is that there is a significant influence of career choice on senior secondary school students' choice of subjects in secondary schools in Cross River State. This result can be attributed to the fact that at the senior secondary school level, students are should be allowed to choose their subjects among other alternative subjects based on their future choice of career. Fewer science-based students will always choose the subjects as compared to students in the arts and humanities or social sciences. This mainly accounts for the disparity in senior secondary school students' choice of subjects in schools in the study area.

This finding is in agreement with the finding of Ndalichako and Komba (2014) which reported that students' value attached to particular subjects is related to the extent to which the subject is relevant and applicable to their real-life situation. Students like subjects which enable them to obtain skills and knowledge to help them in their day to day activities. Notably, subject with irrelevant contents are difficult to follow and understand. This forces students to memorize concepts, which lead to their tendency to dislike those subjects. The students asserted the following in relation to the relevance of the subjects. The finding of this study also supported the finding of Gross (2006) which stated that students in secondary schools are greatly influenced by the potential for career opportunities and advancement; therefore, the more valuable a subject is to a future career, the greater the likelihood a student will enrol in it. Students' enrolment of subjects based on its relevance to their future career aspirations becomes even more predominate as the students get closer to graduation and they begin to search for jobs (Wilhelm, 2004).

The finding of this study also supported the finding of Khoscrow-Pour (2014) which revealed that the subjects that students choose in school are a pointer to their future career, so the decision is very crucial in the life of the students as it may affect every aspect of their lives. A right choice in subject making will always afford the students opportunity to actualize their future aspirations. Khoscrow-Pour (2014) defined career choice as a process of choosing a career path which can involve choices regarding education and training for a given

career. Developing the habit of career choice serves as a guide for students to choose subjects that will help them actualize their dream.

Conclusion

Based on the statistical findings obtained from the study, it was concluded that there is a significant influence of career aspiration on students' choice of subjects in public and private secondary schools in the study area. The implication of this is that, an individual decision is usually influenced by some other factors. This also challenged the students to be independent bearing in mind that the choice they make might make or mar their future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- School counsellors should guide students on proper subject combinations that will lead to their desired future career aspiration.
- Student should bear in mind that choice of subjects is a pointer to their future aspirations and therefore, should make their choice wisely.

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