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## School Guidance and Counselling as a Tool for Skilled Workforce Development in Taraba State: Constraints and Prospects

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**Abstract:** Though often downplayed, the ability of school guidance and counselling to develop skilled workforce in the various sectors of Taraba State cannot be overemphasized. But it is undermined by many challenges. This study examine these constraints with a view to recommend measures that can possibly address them. The study adopted a survey research design. It employed both quantitative and qualitative methods of obtaining data. The target population of the study was the senior secondary schools in Taraba State. Equally, results were determined using mean and standard deviation. The findings of the study shows that guidance and counselling faces myriads of problems in schools across the state and this has impliedly undermined it potency as a tool for skilled workforce development. Lastly, the study concludes with recommendations on the necessary conditions that will encourage and strengthen guidance and counselling in schools across the state.

**Keywords:** Guidance, Counselling, skilled Workforce, Development, Constraints.

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### INTRODUCTION

Skilled workforce and manpower development has always been the quest of every society. This is because meaningful development in any society depends largely on its skilled workforce, which is a function of educational process and the availability of vocational information services. Our society is fast changing with the rapid technological developments we are witnessing in the twenty-first century, together with the forces of globalization. These have impliedly led to radical changes in the world of work. In fact, the changing nature of work is already perceptible in all spheres. It follows therefore that human development, of which education is such a vital part, must keep in step with these societal changes if people are to lead a productive and successful lives. The school as one of the agents of socialization is an integral part of an individual, it is needed for care for guidance to enable the child achieve greater awareness not only of who he is but also who he can become. In the past decades, a mismatch has been evident in many countries between the skills imparted by the national education system and those demanded by the workplace. This mismatch has been exacerbated in recent years with the integration of new technologies in almost every sphere of professional activity (Daniel 2006, Price Water house Coopers, 2012, UNESCO, 2004).

Consequently, in spite of its abundant human and material resources, Taraba state of Nigeria is still poor and agrarian (African Institute for Applied Economics Report, 2007). There is a high rate of imbalance and shortage of skilled personnel distributed across the various sectors of the state. For instance, there is acute shortage of medical personnel in many hospitals, clinics and dispensaries across the state while we have surplus of those who read administration or related courses. The same thing is obtained in other sectors. It is in view of the above that the Federal Government has inserted the need for guidance and



counselling courses in our schools in its National Policy on Education. This has helped to make all state governments to establish guidance and counselling units in their ministries of education. But the seeming pivotal role that guidance and counselling can play in turning around the fortune of the state's developmental efforts is not even realized by many including critical stakeholders. This study;

- 1) Examines factors militating against effective guidance and counselling in schools in Taraba State and
- 2) Explore the necessary conditions that will encourage and strengthen guidance and counselling in schools across Taraba state.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study adopted survey design and relied on both quantitative and qualitative methods of obtaining data. The population of the study was all the senior secondary school students in Taraba state, Nigeria with the enrolment figure of 73,641 and 1541 teachers in 171 schools averagely 23 secondary schools per the seven educational zones (according to *Taraba state teaching service board; 12may, 2015* ). The (senior secondary) schools in Taraba state were divided into seven educational zones. Thus, using simple random sampling technique, 12 schools was selected from each educational zone totalling 84 schools. 20 respondents were sampled from each selected school making 1680 respondents. Questionnaire was randomly distributed to the selected schools with the aid of field assistants. In the study, 1680 students and 140 teachers have been sampled from 12 schools each in the seven educational zones (20-questionnaire par school for students and 20 randomly distributed to teachers per zone) the zones are: 1. Jalingo zone, 2. Wukari zone, 3. Takum zone, 4. Karim Lamido zone, 5. Zing zone, 6. Bali zone, 7. Sardauna zone. Of the 1,680 questionnaire distributed to the students sampled population, 15 copies were not returned, 17 copies were wrongly filled and 10 copies were returned blank thus, rendering 42 questionnaires invalid. Results were determined using mean and standard deviation.

### Theoretical framework

Holland's (1959) theory of vocational choice emphasizes the importance of human needs and personality types in career fitness. The main assumption of this theory is that vocational choice is a manifestation of personality type which suggests that individuals in a particular occupation have fairly similar needs, personality characteristics and historical background. He further opine that by choosing a particular occupation, an individual projects onto one of the titles (lifestyle) he preferred as a result of his view and the view of the world of work. One is therefore required to adjust to each of the environment and develop certain skills with reference to the work setting. The congruence between an individual's personality and the environment in which he works then becomes a determiner of vocational satisfaction, stability and achievement. The implication of the above theory is that individual's personality characteristics such as the interiors, imaginations, competence, experiences, and their overall suitability for various kinds of occupation requiring different skills be explored. In the same vein, trait/factor theory seems to be the combination of the two propositions stated above. It is sometimes called directive counseling. Williamson (1972) explains personality as a system of interdependent traits of factors including abilities,



interest, attitudes and temperament. It is said that the development of the individual progresses from the infancy to adulthood as the above factors are energized and brought to maturity. In Williamson's (1972) opinion, the purpose of counseling is to facilitate the development of excellence in all aspect of human life. He further asserts that:

*The task of the trait-factor type of Counseling is to aid the individual in successive approximations of self-understanding and self-management by means of helping to assess assets and liabilities in relation to the requirements of progressively changing life goals and vocational career. (steffle and Grant, eds. 1972)*

The scientific study of the individual in this direction therefore includes:

- a. Assessing his traits with the use of psychological test and other means.
- b. Defining or portraying him in a unique way
- c. Helping him to know and understand his environment and
- d. Predicting probable success in certain ventures

Fundamental to trait and factor approach is the assumption that man seeks to use self-understanding as a means of developing potential. The achievement of self-discovery results in intrinsic satisfaction and reinforces effort to become all that one is able to become. Thus, instruments capable of assessing individuals objectively have been developed for counseling them on educational and vocational decisions. The implication of the above postulations is that counselors, teachers and other stakeholders should appreciate the importance of human needs and personality types in career fitness and help the students to understand their selves, their potentials, areas of strengths and weaknesses before choosing a career. Channeling student's potentials in the areas of strengths will result into skilled workforce.

#### **Factors Militating against effective Guidance and Counselling:**

Just like any other field, guidance and counselling is not without challenges. These ranges from personnel, materials to funding. These constraints have greatly hampered the effectiveness or otherwise of guidance and counselling in schools. The National Teacher's Institute module on guidance and counselling identified the following as some of the problems militating against effective guidance and counselling in schools;

- i. Paucity of trained counselors;
- ii. Doubt about the efficacy of guidance and counseling;
- iii. Blurred role of the guidance counselor;
- iv. Resistance by colleagues and principals;
- v. Feeling of suspicion of role/integrity of counselors;
- vi. Confidentiality, which is very pertinent in counseling;
- vii. Lack of commitment on the part of government;
- viii. Inadequate funding;
- ix. Lack of counseling office/room;
- x. Paucity of psychological tests; etc

The school is an integral part of individuals, it is needed for care for guidance to enable the child achieve greater awareness not only of who he is but also who he can become. In the



school system, the teacher, counsellor provides leadership for the academic and social development of the learner. The effectiveness of the teacher/counsellor to cope with these divergent roles is a point to evaluate.

Ruth (2005) opined that both the teacher/counsellor in most cases lack the matching skills to handle students' problems from variety of background adequately. Equally, she decried the scenario in most of our schools environment where the teacher is psychological distant from the students, in other word a covert hostility does exist between the teachers and the students. On the other hand our schools nowadays are plaque with diverse social problems ranging from misguided youths, reluctant juvenile delinquency, HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancy, examination malpractice, truancy, cultism, sexual harassment, increasing dissatisfaction with learning and working condition which are prevalent situations. Similarly youths have inculcated some imported values that are not in consonance with the existing practices in our society. Oladele (1987), observed that the problems mentioned above are as a result of rapid social changes in the society, furthermore, he noted that the excitements, anxieties, and confusions of today's world are reflected on the personalities of young adolescents. Unfortunately, some of these problems are seen by the youths as right and as a passage from adolescence to adulthood. The reality of the magnitude of the above mentioned challenges have a far reaching implications on school guidance and counseling, it requires matching skills for it to be effectively contained. Thus systematic guidance and counseling in the school environment becomes imperative. The situation calls for deliberate intervention programmes aimed at provision of advice or support by someone who have been trained within the educational sector to manage such problems.

### **Conditions that will strengthen Guidance and Counselling in Schools**

Guidance and counseling is already incorporated in the National policy on education and part of the school curriculum. But over the years it has been neglected by quite a number of schools. Okon (1984) maintained that one of the most important responsibilities of education and guidance is to help bring better distribution of young people to the offerings of the school, to the opportunities for higher education and to vocation. This is because many young people lack accurate and up-to-date information on wide variety of areas related to their growth and development. Therefore to encourage guidance and counseling in schools is a necessity. The National Teacher's Institute (NTI) module on guidance and counseling identify the following as conditions that will encourage vocational guidance and counseling in schools;

- i. Commitment on the part of the ministry of education and the school management on guidance and counseling in terms of adequate funding;
- ii. Establishing a guidance and counseling unit in the school;
- iii. Getting a trained counselor to man the unit;
- iv. Equipping the counseling unit with all the necessary equipment needed for proper counseling, for instance; career files, career library, electronic media like audio cassettes, television and video tape recorders etc.



- v. Organizing of career day/week: inviting individuals who are established and successful in their occupation to speak to the students about their careers. This will have to be either terminal or once every session.
- vi. Career conferences: are very important because they bring about the rubbing of minds of people from different works of life to share their experiences, failure on job and give report on researches carried out in different careers. Students at such career conferences will be exposed to occupational information that will be of benefit to them.

Excursion/plant visit: this is another effective way of strengthening guidance and counseling and disseminating career information. Excursion could be to anywhere but related to particular subject the students are offering while plant visit is specific and definite. It could be a factory or company, here they learn to see how things are made and under what condition, the needed hazard in the job etc.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Analysis of Students' Responses to the questionnaire

**Q1.** Do you have any idea on career guidance/counseling?

**Table 1.** Mean Responses & Standard Deviation on whether the respondents have idea on guidance and counselling.

	Zone	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Response	Yes	7	62.2857	9.12349	3.44836
	No	7	168.8571	3.43650	1.29887

The mean of 'Yes' response from all the zones is 62.2857 (with standard deviation of 9.12349) is lower than the mean of 'No' response which is 168.8571 (with standard deviation of 3.43650). This indicate that majority of the respondents in all the zones don't have idea on guidance and counselling.

**Q2.** Do you have a guidance and counseling unit in your school?

**Table.2.** Mean Responses & Standard Deviation on whether the schools in the zones have counselling unit

	Zone	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Response	Yes	7	107.2857	20.32826	7.68336
	No	7	126.7143	20.32826	7.68336

The mean response of 'No' from the respondents across the zones is 126.7143 (with the standard deviation of 20.32826) is stronger than the mean response of 'Yes' which is 107.2857 (with the standard deviation of 20.32826) this indicates that most of the schools across the zones do not have guidance and counselling unit.

**Q3.** Is the office of the counselor equipped with the needed facilities?

**Table. 3.** Mean Responses & Standard Deviation on whether counselling unit in schools are equipped with needed facilities



	Zone	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Response	Yes	7	107.2857	20.32826	7.68336
	No	7	126.7143	20.32826	7.68336

The mean response of 'No' from the respondents across the zones is 126.7143 (with the standard deviation of 20.32826) is stronger than the mean response of 'Yes' which is 107.2857 (with the standard deviation of 20.32826) this indicates that guidance and counseling units are not equipped with the needed facilities in most of the schools across the zones (where they exist).

**Q4.** Is there time allotment for guidance and counseling on your school time table?

**Table 4. Mean Responses & Standard Deviation on whether there is time allotment for counseling on school time table**

	Zone	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Response	Yes	7	50.4286	5.15937	1.95006
	No	7	183.8571	4.84522	1.83132

From the table above, the total mean response of 'No' which is equal to 183.8571 (with a standard deviation of 4.84522) is by far higher than the mean response of 'Yes' which is 50.4286 (with a standard deviation of 5.15937). Therefore it means that guidance and counseling session is not included in the time-table of most schools across the zones.

**Q5.** Have you ever had an encounter with a counselor?

**Table 5. Mean Responses & Standard Deviation on whether the respondent ever had an encounter with the counsellor**

	zone	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Response	Yes	7	111.0000	18.51126	6.99660
	No	7	123.5714	19.17339	7.24686

From the above table, the total mean response of 'No' from all the zones 123.5714 (with a standard deviation of 19.17339) is stronger or higher than the mean response of 'Yes' of all the seven zones which is 111.0000 (with a standard deviation of 18.51126). It therefore means that most students or respondents from across the zones never had encounter with a counselor.

**Q6.** Have you ever attended any seminar or conference on career development?

**Table 6. Mean Responses & Standard Deviation on whether the respondents ever attended any seminar or conference on career guidance.**

	Zone	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
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Response	Yes	7	59.5714	10.39001	3.92706
	No	7	174.0000	10.80123	4.08248

The mean response of 'No' which is 174.0000 (with the standard deviation of 10.80123) is stronger and higher than the mean response of Yes 59.5714 (with a standard deviation of 10.39001). It means therefore that most of the respondents across the zones have never attended any seminar or conference on career guidance and counseling.

**Q7.** Does your school organize career week?

**Table.7. Mean Responses & Standard Deviation whether the school organizes career week**

	Zone	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Response	Yes	7	25.1429	8.23465	3.11241
	No	7	193.1429	34.51294	13.04466

The mean response of 'No' which is 193.1429 (with the standard deviation of 34.51294) is by far higher than the mean response of 'Yes' 25.1429 (with the standard deviation of 8.23465) which means most schools across the zones does not organize career week for their students.

**Q8.** Do you think you are reading the course of your choice?

**Table.8. Mean Responses & Standard Deviation on whether the respondents are reading the course of their choice.**

	Zone	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Response	Yes	7	198.0000	4.32049	1.63299
	No	7	36.0000	4.32049	1.63299

Since the mean response of Yes 198.0000 (with the standard deviation of 4.32049) is by far greater than the mean response of No which is 36.0000 (with the standard deviation of 4.32049). It means that most students are reading the subject combination/ course of their choice.

**Q9.** Is the course you are reading (arts/science) informed by your attendance of the career week or your encounter with a counselor?

**Table.9. Mean Responses & Standard Deviation on whether the course read by the respondent is informed by attendance of career week/conference.**

	Zone	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Response	Yes	7	107.8571	8.93362	3.37659
	No	7	126.1429	8.93362	3.37659

The mean response of No 126.1429 (with a standard deviation of 8.93362) is higher than the mean response of Yes which is 107.8571 (with a standard deviation of 8.93362) thus, since the



No response is higher than the Yes response, it means that the course/subject combination which majority of the respondents across the zones are reading is not informed by their attendance of career week or encounter with the counselor.

### Analysis of Teachers' Responses

**Q10.** Are you a trained counselor?

**Table 10. Mean Responses & Standard Deviation on respondent being a trained counselor**

Zone	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Response Yes	7	4.8571	1.34519	.50843
No	7	15.1429	1.34519	.50843

The mean response of No 15.1429 (with the standard deviation of 1.34519) from all the zones is higher than the mean response of Yes which is 4.8571 (with the standard deviation of 1.34519) teachers indicating that most teachers are not trained counselors.

**Q11.** Does other staff assist the counselor (s) in doing their work as counselors?

**Table 11. Mean Responses & Standard Deviation on whether teachers assist counselors**

zone	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Response Yes	7	12.4286	1.51186	.57143
No	7	7.5714	1.51186	.57143

From the table above, the mean response of Yes 12.4286 (with the standard deviation of 1.51186) is higher than the mean response of No which is 7.5714 (with the standard deviation of 1.51186). This implies that most teachers across the zones do assist in playing the role of counselors.

**Q12.** Do you have a guidance and counseling unit in your school?

**Table 12. Mean Responses & Standard Deviation on whether there is counseling unit in schools.**

Zone	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Response Yes	7	7.1429	1.34519	.50843
No	7	12.8571	1.34519	.50843

Since the mean response of No from across the zones 12.8571 (with the standard deviation of 1.34519) is higher than the mean response of Yes which is 7.1429 (with the standard deviation of 1.34519). It means that most senior secondary schools across the zones have no guidance and counseling unit.

**Q13.** Is there time allotment for guidance and counseling on your school timetable?

**Table 13. Mean Responses & Standard Deviation on time allotment for guidance/counseling**





	zone	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Response	Yes	7	4.5714	1.27242	.48093
	No	7	15.4286	1.27242	.48093

Since the mean response of No-15.4286 (with the standard deviation of 1.27242) is greater than the mean response of Yes which is 4.5714 (with the standard deviation of 1.27242) it means that most schools across the zones do not have time allotment for guidance and counseling on their time tables.

**Q14.** Do your students show interest in counseling services?

**Table 14. Mean Responses & Standard Deviation on student's interest in counseling**

	zone	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Response	Yes	7	4.4286	.97590	.36886
	No	7	15.5714	.97590	.36886

Since the mean response of No 15.5714 (with the standard deviation of .97590) is more than the mean response of No which is 4.4286 (with the standard deviation of .97590). It means therefore that most students do not show interest in guidance and counseling.

**Q15.** Is the office of the counselor equipped with the needed facilities? (if there is)

**Table 15. Mean Responses & Standard Deviation on equipping counseling unit in schools**

	zone	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Response	Yes	7	3.1429	1.57359	.59476
	No	7	16.8571	1.57359	.59476

Since the mean response of No 16.8571 (with then standard deviation 1.57359) is higher than the mean response of No which is 3.1429 (with the standard deviation of 1.57359). This means that the guidance and counselling units of most schools across the zones are not equipped with the needed facilities.

**Q16.** Does your school organize a career week?

**Table 16. Mean Responses & Standard Deviation on organizing of career week in school**

	zone	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Response	Yes	7	3.7143	1.11270	.42056
	No	7	16.2857	1.11270	.42056

Since the mean response of 'No' from all the seven zones 16.2857(with the standard deviation of 1.11270) is higher than the mean response of 'Yes' from across all the zones which is 3.7143(with the standard deviation 1.11270). It means that most schools across zone does not organize career week for their students.



### **Summary of Major Findings/Results**

Findings from the foregoing studies revealed some of the challenges or constraints that militates against guidance and counselling in Taraba State;

Most respondents in senior secondary schools of the various zones are not acquainted or do not have an idea on guidance and counseling. Since they are not aware of the activities carried out in guidance and counseling, they show less or no interest in guidance counseling services, these can also affect their career choice. Moreover, though the teachers in the various educational zones are not trained counselors but acknowledged that they have an idea on career guidance and counseling thus, some of them assist in playing the role of counselors occasionally. In addition, there is a near absence of guidance and counseling unit in most schools across the zones. Even few schools where there are, the offices are not equipped with the needed facilities, hence not functional, this will also affect career choice among the students and the availability of skilled workforce. Also, most respondent submits that there is no time allotment for guidance and counseling on the school timetable (probably because it is still strange) and most of the students never had a one on one encounter with a guidance counsellor (s). Consequently, almost all of the schools do not organize programmes like career week/conference to educate them on career related issues. Thus, they are not exposed to subject combination of their chosen career thus it is likely that their teachers influenced their subject combination. The respondents identified lack of trained counselors, absence of counseling unit, needed facilities, problem of funding, ignorance or negligence and lack of support on the part of school management and other stakeholders, lack of interest on the part of the students, relative newness of the field, lack of conducive environment and motivation of counselors and non-allocation of time for counseling etc. as some of the factors militating against effective guidance and counseling in the schools.

### **Discussion of Findings**

It is glaring that guidance and counseling plays a very vital role in developing skilled manpower for development and schools should not take it for granted. But its effectiveness is undermined by a number of factors which have impliedly contributed to the dearth of the needed skilled workforce in Taraba State. However, school career guidance and counseling can be improved, to do this, avalanche of responses have been received from the respondents as follows; employing of trained counselors because most schools have no trained counselors. Similarly, as can be seen from the study, many students don't have idea on guidance and counseling this is because most schools across the zones have no guidance and counseling units and little or no attention is given to guidance and counseling. Thus, the respondents suggested that prompt and proper funding of guidance and counseling related activities including the provision of the needed facilities (materials), time allotment or inclusion of guidance and counseling on the school time table, establishment of guidance and counseling unit in all the schools, career weeks/conferences and other related activities should be encouraged in schools, career guidance and counseling should be offered as a subject and be made compulsory for all students, their exposure to career guidance and counseling will give them the basis for choosing the career of their choice and perform better in life. Correspondingly, Parents and other stakeholders should be informed of the



importance of counseling. There should be a good welfare package for counselors to encourage them to put more efforts. Equally, guidance and counseling work in school should not be the exclusive preserve of the counselors alone but other teachers should also assist where possible, as seen in the study many teachers claimed they assist in playing the role of counselors. Conducive environment for guidance and counseling should be created which range from a well-furnished office space with all the materials that will aid guidance and counseling to the mien or qualities of the counselors who are expected to be friendly, soft, loving etc. and even the good working relations between the counselors and the school management. In the same vein, students should be taken on trips/excursion to important sites and guidance should start right from the primary level. Lastly, adequate supervision and evaluation mechanism should be put in place to ensure that schools have functional guidance and counseling unit. This is where political will is required on the part of policy makers. For instance, schools in the state capital (zone A) and few others performs relatively better than others as far as this topic is concern, this may be attributed to the fact that they are very close to the ministry of education and other policy makers while the rest of the school in other zones probably thinks they are away from their prying eyes.

## CONCLUSION

After exploring the state of guidance and counselling in schools across the state vis-a-vis the prevailing condition in the world of work which is increasingly becoming more complex. Guidance and counselling in Taraba state schools is bedevilled by many challenges as seen in the study. This possibly inform the shortage or lopsided distribution of skilled workers across the sectors of the state. However, it is the candid submission of this study that despite the constraints, the role of school guidance and counselling in enhancing skilled workforce should not be downplayed. Thus, counsellors, teachers and other stakeholders should appreciate the importance of human needs and personality types in career fitness and help the students to understand their selves, their potentials, areas of strengths and weaknesses before choosing a career. Channelling student's potentials in the areas of strengths will result into skilled workforce when properly harnessed.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above discussions, this study recommends the following:

- 1) The ministry of education and Taraba state teaching service board and other policy makers should be proactive in ensuring strict compliance and proper implementation of policies related to career guidance and counseling in schools across the state through adequate supervision, and ensure that every school have not only a guidance and counseling unit but a functional one. Equally, the government should through the ministry of education and teaching service board and other relevant stakeholders embark on massive training and retraining of counselors to manage the counseling units in various secondary schools across the state. It should not only stop at that, but guidance and counseling activities should be adequately funded both at the state level and at the school authority level.
- 2) The schools should expose students to the realities in the world of work by organizing career talks, inviting resource persons who are successful in their various careers to share



their experiences with the students, debates, drama should be organized frequently. Guidance and counseling should be included in the school general time-table to be taken at least once every week. In addition, students should be exposed to career guidance and counseling at a very early stage in life, this will greatly help them in choosing the career that best fits them. Thus, career guidance related programmes should be introduced at the primary level so that once a child identifies his/her area of strengths at a very early stage it will be easy for him/her to master same when properly developed. This will enhance skilled workforce.

- 3) Finally, Policy makers and other relevant stakeholders should ensure that guidance and counseling unit in schools across the state are equipped with the needed facilities and be given the attention it deserves. In the same vein, school heads/administrators should adopt a team-approach to guidance programmes where all the major stakeholders; parents, teachers, counselors etc will be involve in the process. Even where there are no trained counselors, career masters can be appointed from the experienced staff, school guidance and counseling committee can be set up to take charge of the career related issues.

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International Journal of Educational Research and Management Technology

ISSN: 2545-5893 (Print) 2545-5877 (Online)

Volume 4, Number 1, March 2019

<http://www.casimediapublishing.com>

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