



# **Subject Selection and Realistic Vocational Aspiration among JSS III Students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study examined school subject choice for realistic vocational aspiration among JSS III students in Obio/Akpor. The study is necessitated by choosing subject of study for the Senior Secondary School that may have far-reaching career consequences for many students which sought to find out ways involved in choice of subjects among JSSIII students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. A questionnaire was administered on 154 respondents from fourteen public Secondary Schools in the area. Only 73 (47.71%) of them indicated that their schools give students formal vocational guidance. While no respondent reported that intelligence, aptitude and personality are assessed, 34 (46.57%) and (53.43%) respondents indicated that interest and academic performance respectively are assessed and used for vocational guidance purposes. Also, students' score in subjects, students' choice and teachers' recommendation ranked first, second and third respectively among factors considered for approving subjects for students to offer. In order to improve the practice of vocational counseling of JSSIII students, with a view to enhancing them choose subjects for realistic vocational aspiration, it was recommended among others that students' mental ability aptitude and personality be assessed and considered in approving subjects for them to offer.

**Keywords:** School Subject Choice, Realistic Vocational Aspiration, JSS III students

## **INTRODUCTION**

National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) sees the Junior Secondary School (JSS) in Nigeria to be both pre-vocational and academic, meanwhile, the policy requires JSS to teach basic subjects which will help students to acquire further knowledge and skills. The recommended curricular at JSS level offers eight care subjects, a minimum of one pre-vocational elective, and at least one non-pre-vocational elective. This gives a total minimum often and a maximum of thirteen subjects that a student is expected to offer at that level of education.

According to Achebe (1986) the variety of school subject to which the JSS student is exposed is be wildering. She therefore contended that JSS students will need a lot of help by all school personnel especially the principal, teachers and counselors working cooperatively.

The FRN (2004) further provides that at the competition of JSS, students are to be streamed on the basis of their tests results, academic ability, aptitude and vocational interest into one of the following type of education.

- (i) The Senior Secondary School (SSS)
- (ii) The Technical College
- (iii) An-out-of-school vocational training centre
- (iv) An apprenticeship scheme

Our focus is on the Senior Secondary in this study, students are therefore, expected to be further streamed into any of science, arts, technology/technical or commercial disciplines. This is with a view of guiding the students to their future career.

Looking at the bulk of work in the Senior Secondary School, Achebe (1986) again stated that SSS students will be faced with another type of choice and decision. This ranges from widening his horizon at the junior stage to narrowing his subject options, relating them to specific but tentative job areas and further training areas to a particular lifestyle. As a result, Ipaye (1986) in Ehiozuwa (2011) said that choosing a course of study for the Senior Secondary is a major decision and one that may have far-reaching vocational and career consequences for many students.

Scholars like Okeke (1973) many years ago has pointed that a strong tie exist between occupational choice and the school curricular content to which individuals have been exposed. In his study in a Secondary Commercial Institute, he found that about 84% of the students reported that curriculum focus had been most influential in their choice of occupations and professions.

Also, students who had combined successfully general subjects with commercial subjects secured employment more quickly as account clerks, office clerks, and managers of commercial firms. This led Ogbodo (2002) in Ehiozuwa (2011) to warn that great care should be taken in the process of choosing subjects as any mistake can cause students a lot of setback. For instance, she illustrates that Senior Secondary III student wishing to study pharmacy but dropped chemistry in SSS I will not have all the required science subjects needed for studying pharmacy at the University level.

In the same vein, Ogunsanwo (2000) maintain that when a student fails to see the relationship between his/her desire to become a pilot and the need to known Mathematics and Physics or to become a physician and the need to take Biology in his School Certificate Examination, he/she could ignorantly drop Mathematics or Integrated Science at the end of JSS III. She then emphasized career information through school subjects.

However, many schools allow their students to choose subjects to offer without careful consideration of their ability, aptitude and interest; the future university courses and the possible careers to which the subjects could lead. It is for this reason that Ipaye (1986) in Ehiozuwa (2011) advocated for a school wide administered educational guidance programme at this period when choices have to be made.

This study is done to find out whether Secondary Schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State mount career guidance for the JSS III students in preparation for subject choice and to also examine the processes they adopt for the exercise

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to find out the processes/methods employed by Secondary Schools, in the research area, to help their JSS III students select subjects they offer at Senior Secondary School level for realistic career aspiration.

### **Research Questions**

The questions answered in this study are as follows:

- (1) What formal career guidance JSS III students received before choosing the subjects to offer in SS I?
- (2) What is the duration of the career days organized for students.
- (3) Who gives career information to the students in the school's career days?
- (4) How do career information givers provide information to students on career days?
- (5) What activities are featured in career days?
- (6) What traits of students are measured and used for career guidance?
- (7) What factors are considered in approving subjects for students to offer in SS class?

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

A survey design in which subjects were required to state the facts on ground was employed in this study.

### Population and Sample

All the 14 Junior Secondary Schools (JSS) in Obio Akpor who registered in 2016/2017 session. All the 14 public Secondary Schools which have both Junior (JSS) and Senior (SSS) sections in Obio Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State that registered in 2016/2017 session and the students constitute the population of this study. The stratified random sampling technique was used to select nine (9) SSS I students and two (2) staff from each school, thereby bringing the total sample for the study to 154 subjects. This number is made up of 28 staff (among which are teachers, counselors, career masters/mistresses) and 126 students of both genders.

The sample size is considered adequate since it is a fact – finding survey study in which subjects are required to state the facts on ground. Also, cited Ferguson (1981), Ehiozuwa (2011) avers that a minimum sample size of 30 is adequate if the population is unknown. That size, Ferguson believes could facilitate the use of Central Limit Theorem.

### Instrumentation

The instrument used for data collection in this study is a structured questionnaire called Subject Selection and Realistic Vocational Aspiration Questionnaire (SSRVAQ) which was constructed by the researchers. It is made up of 15 items, each with its options. The first 4 items of SSRVAQ sought basic information about the respondent and his/or her schools. The remaining 11 items were designed to elicit information about the procedures involved in helping JSS III students to choose the subjects they would offer in SS classes.

After constructing the questionnaire, the researchers gave it to two experts of Measurement and Evaluation who made useful comments and suggestions that helped the researchers to in fine the items. The instrument was then administered on 20 SS I students and 15 teachers of two schools that were not include halves of the scores yielded 0.84 split-half reliability co-efficient.

### Data Collection

One hundred and fifty four (154) copies of SSRVAQ were administered to the staff and students in their schools. The researchers supervised the staff and students to complete the questionnaire and waited to collect them. It was observed that it took each respondent between 10-15 minutes to fill and return the questionnaire. All the 154 copies of questionnaire given were also returned.

### Data Analysis

The descriptive statistics of frequency count, percentage, and rank ordering were used for analyzing the data collected upon which inferences were made.

## RESULTS

The results obtained are presented below along with each research question.

**Research Question 1:** *What formal career guidance JSS III students received before choosing the subjects to offer in SS I?*

**Table I: Respondents who indicated that their Schools Provide/do not Provide Students Career Guidance**

Respondents	Yes (No & %)	No (No & %)	Total (No & %)
Students	61 (48.41%)	65 (51.59%)	126 (100%)
Staff	12 (42.86%)	16 (57.14%)	28 (100%)
Total	73 (47.41%)	81 (52.59%)	154 (100%)

Table 1 above shows that only 73 (47.41%) of the respondents made up of 61 (48.41%) students and 12(42.86%) staff indicated that their schools provide formal career guidance to students that is aimed at helping them make good choice of subjects for career aspiration. On the other hand, 81 (52.59%) respondents comprising of 65(51.59%) students and 16(57.14%) said that their schools do not provide

students formal career guidance. This means that only a handful of students are privileged to have formal career guidance before they choose subjects meant to prepare them for their future. This is not surprising going by the response to item number 5 of the questionnaire (see appendix) of this study that only 3 out of the sampled schools have trained counselors in their services. The likely implication of this is that students may choose subjects that are incongruous with their abilities and personality traits.

**Research Question 2:** *What is the duration of the Career days organized for students?*

**Table 2: Duration of Career days organized for students.**

Respondent	Careers Days Duration (Number and %)				Total
	1day	2days	3days	Over 3 days	Total
Students	17(27.86%)	16(26.22%)	18(29.50%)	10(16.39%)	61(100%)
Staff	4(33.33%)	1(8.33%)	3(25.00%)	4(33.33%)	12(100%)
Total	21(28.76%)	17(23.28%)	21(28.77%)	14(19.18%)	73(100%)

It is revealed on table 2 above that the 73 respondents 21(28.76%), 17(27.86%), 21(28.77%) and 14(19.18%) of them said that the duration of the career days in their schools are 1, 2, 3 and over 3 day(s) respectively of the 51 students who indicated that their schools organize career days for students preparatory to their choice of subjects, 17(27.86%), 16(26.22%), 18(29.50%) and 10(16.39%) of them said the career days last 1, 2, 3 and over 3 day(s) respectively. Similarly, 4(33.33%), 1(8.33%), 3(25.00%) and 4(33.33%) of the 12 staff who confirmed that their schools organize career days for students reported that career day is organized for 1, 2, 3 and over 3 day(s) respectively. This implies that the time used for formal career guidance of majority of the students is too short for any meaningful activity to be carried out.

**Research Question 3:** *Who gives career information to the students in the school's career days?*

**Table 3: Career Information Providers in Schools**

Respondent	Career Information Provider (No & %)				Total
	Teachers	Career Officer(s)	Counsellor(s)	Guest Speaker(s)	Total
Students	30(49.18%)	0(0.00%)	0(0.00%)	31(50.82%)	61(100%)
Staff	7(58.33%)	0(0.00%)	0(0.00%)	5(41.67%)	12(100%)
Total	37(50.68%)	0(0.00%)	0(0.00%)	36(49.18%)	73(100%)

As can be seen on Table 3 above, 37 respondents made up of 30(49.18%) students and 7(58.33%) staff said teachers provide students career information in their schools. But 36 comprising of 31(50.82%) students and 5(41.67%) staff reported that career information is provided by guest speakers. Neither students nor staff numbers indicated that career officers and counselors provide students with career information in their schools. While it is good that guest speakers who are specialists in their disciplines talk to students about their professions, it is also useful for counselors who are trained in the art of provision information to supplement or complement the efforts of the guest speakers.

**Research Question 4:** *How do career information givers provide information to students on career days?*

**Table 4: How Career Information is provided in School**

Respondents	How Career Information is Provided (No & %)			
	One speaker talk on all disciplines	Few speakers talk on all disciplines	One speaker talk on each discipline	Total
Students	21(34.43%)	18(29.51%)	22(36.06%)	61(100%)
Staff	3(25.00%)	5(41.67%)	4(33.33%)	12(100%)
Total	24(32.87%)	23(31.51%)	26(35.62%)	73(100%)

As to how career information is given to the students (see Table 4 above), 24(32.87%) of the respondents which comprises of 21(34.43%) students and 3(25.00%) staff members said a single speaker talk on all disciplines. But 23(31.51%) respondents comprising of 18(29.51%), 5(41.67%) representing students and staff respectively indicated that few speakers talk on all disciplines, while 26(35.62%) respondents made up of 22(36.06%) students and 4(33.33%) staff reported that one speaker talk on each discipline. The implication of the findings that a single few speakers talk on all disciplines in some schools is that the correct information may not be given on same subject.

**Research Question 5:** *What Activities are featured in career days?*

**Table 5: Activities Featured in Career Days Held in Schools**

Respondents	Activities features in Career says (No & %)				
	Career talks only	Career talks & handouts	Film Shows on occupations	Occupational visits	Total
Students	35(57.37%)	26(42.63%)	0(0.00%)	0(0.00%)	61(100%)
Staff	10(83.33%)	2(16.67%)	0(0.00%)	0(0.00%)	12(100%)
Total	45(61.65%)	28(38.35%)	0(0.00%)	0(0.00%)	73(100%)

On the activities that are featured during provision of career information to students, 45(61.65%) respondents made up of 35(57.37%) students and 10(83.33%) staff, and 28(38.35%) respondents involving 26(42.63%) students and 2(16.67%) staff reported that career talks only and career talks combined with handouts respectively are given to students. No respondent reported that occupational film show and visits were part of activities featured in their schools during formal career guidance.

**Research Question 6:** *What traits of Students are accessed and used for career guidance?*

**Table 6: Traits assessed and used for career Guidance of Students**

Respondents	Traits Assessed in Career Guidance (No & %)					
	Interest	Personality	Aptitude	Intelligence	Academic Performance	Total
Students	28(45.91%)	0(0.00%)	0(0.00%)	0(0.00%)	33(54.09%)	61(100%)
Staff	6(50.00%)	0(0.00%)	0(0.00%)	0(0.00%)	6(50.00%)	12(100%)
Total	34(46.57%)	0(0.00%)	0(0.00%)	0(0.00%)	39(53.43%)	73(100%)

The table above reveals that students' interest and academic performance only were assessed for use for career guidance. This was reported by 34(46.57%) persons made up of 28(45.91%) students and 6(50.00%) staff and 39(53.43%) respondents comprising 33(54.09%) students and 6(50.00%) staff respectively. Students' personality, aptitude and intelligence were not reported among the traits assessed

during career guidance for purposes of subject choice. If the Parsonian equation of self-analysis + job analysis = choice proposed for vocational choice, as reported by Ehiozuwa (2007), is adapted for choice of school subjects as self – analysis + subject analysis = choice, some of the students would have been placed at a disadvantaged position as their essential personality attributes are not taken into cognizance in deciding the subjects they offer. This may amount to putting “square pegs into round holes”. (Ehiozuwa, 2011).

**Research Question 7:** *What factors are considered in approving subjects for students to offer in SS class?*

**Table 7: Factors considered in Approving Subjects for Students**

Factors	Students	Ranks	Staff	Rank	Total	Rank
Students’ choice/wish	126	1 <sup>st</sup>	26	4 <sup>th</sup>	152	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Teachers’ Recommendation	85	3 <sup>rd</sup>	25	5 <sup>th</sup>	110	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Students’ score in subjects	103	2 <sup>nd</sup>	57	1 <sup>st</sup>	160	1 <sup>st</sup>
Students’ score in Interest Inventory	58	5 <sup>th</sup>	30	3 <sup>rd</sup>	88	5 <sup>th</sup>
Students’ score in Intelligence test	20	6 <sup>th</sup>	20	6 <sup>th</sup>	40	6 <sup>th</sup>
Students’ score in Aptitude Test	10	7 <sup>th</sup>	10	7 <sup>th</sup>	20	7 <sup>th</sup>
Parents’ Wish	70	4 <sup>th</sup>	32	2 <sup>nd</sup>	102	4 <sup>th</sup>

On factors considered in approving subjects for students to offer, Table 7 above shows that students’ score in subjects with 160 points ranked 1<sup>st</sup> (student-103-2<sup>nd</sup>, staff 57-1<sup>st</sup>); students’ choice/wish with 152 points ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> (student – 126 – 1<sup>st</sup> staff – 26 – 4<sup>th</sup>); Teachers’ Recommendation ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> with 110 points (students – 85 -34d, staff – 25 – 5<sup>th</sup>); The 4<sup>th</sup> position was parents’ wish which amounted to 102 points (students = 70 – 4<sup>th</sup>, staff – 32 – 2<sup>nd</sup>). Students’ score in interest Inventory occupied the 5<sup>th</sup> position with 88 points (students – 58 – 5<sup>th</sup>, staff – 30 – 3<sup>rd</sup>). The 6<sup>th</sup> position was students’ score in intelligence test with 40 points (students – 20 – 6<sup>th</sup>, staff – 20 – 6<sup>th</sup>); and the 7<sup>th</sup> place went to students’ score in aptitude test with 20 points (students 10-7<sup>th</sup>, staff – 10-7<sup>th</sup>).

### **Recommended Measures for Improving the School Subject Choice**

In order to improve school subject choice among JSS III students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, and other Local Government Areas, for realistic vocational aspiration, efforts should go beyond the traditional ways of asking students to choose the subjects they would like to offer and/or the teacher deciding what subjects the students should offer on the basis of a single examination/test’s score in each subject. These old fashion should be complemented with the following recommended measures:

1. Students’ interest should be assessed during career guidance programmes and the result should form part of the basis for counseling them on what subject they should choose.
2. Similarly, students’ assessed aptitude and mental ability (intelligence) should be considered in helping students to choose subjects to offer.
3. Students should be taken out on occupational visits (escortions) to stimulate their interest in occupations and consequently the subjects that leads to them before making choice of subjects.
4. During vocational guidance that is intended to help students choose subjects, schools should show occupational films that will foster in the students a better understanding of their prevailing conditions in occupations and the subjects needed to enter into them.
5. Parents/Guardians play a key role in deciding the subjects that their children/wards offer. It is therefore, important that they themselves are guided on modalities for choosing subjects for realistic vocational aspiration. Such career guidance could be given to them during speech and prize giving days, school days, P.T.A meetings, etc. They could be invited to students’ career guidance programme so that they also share in the information given to students.
6. For examination scores to serve as reliable means of guidance, students’ cumulative scores should be used rather than scores from a single examination which may not give true picture of their actual ability.

7. The revelation in this study that most of the schools do not have professional counselors among their staff, once more brings to the front burner the need for every school to have a minimum of one professional counselor to perform solely counseling functions.

## CONCLUSION

An important step towards choosing career is the selection of relevant subjects that are congruent with a person's ability and interest. This would help the person to aspire realistically, train and enter into occupation that would bring him job satisfaction. Although this is not often an easy task, however, students need to be guided by means of objective information rather than on the basis of mere wishful thinking. The recommendations made above, if carefully explored, will no doubt bring about the desired improvement in the process of subject choice and consequently career counseling among Junior Secondary School Students.

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