




Evaluation of the organization and effectiveness of career counseling for Vietnamese high school students

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ABSTRACT

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Career counseling services are provided in high schools but the effectiveness of these services is still a topic of debate. The purpose of this paper is to examine the organization and effectiveness of career counseling for Vietnamese high school students. The challenges and obstacles in offering successful career counseling to Vietnamese high school students will be discussed in this paper in addition to the current state of the country's career counseling programmes at present and possible solutions. 360 students participated in a study that the authors conducted on career counselling in 15 high schools situated in the province of Binh Dinh, Vietnam. According to the findings, there is room for improvement in raising awareness of career counseling's significance and effectiveness in influencing choices about careers even though many students show some interest in it and consider its activities well-defined. Parents generally rate the importance of career counseling as high but there is a lack of interest in it. It is also crucial to consider the unique needs and challenges of each student especially those from underrepresented and marginalized backgrounds and to use technology to provide personalized career counseling services.

Contribution/Originality: This study stresses career counselling in Vietnamese high schools. It emphasises the need for personalized services and addresses issues like parental disinterest and ignorance. Practical suggestions include improving awareness campaigns, engaging parents and using technology for individualized counselling. This study recommends better career counseling in Vietnamese high schools.

1. INTRODUCTION

Career counseling is a critical aspect of high school education particularly in the contemporary era which is characterized by a constantly evolving and dynamic job market (Capuzzi & Stauffer, 2012; Savickas, 2019). Career counseling provides students with the necessary guidance and support to navigate the complexities of the modern workplace identify their strengths and weaknesses and make informed decisions about their future careers. The organization and effectiveness of career counseling for high school students have become increasingly important particularly in the face of the challenges that students face in the modern job market. Effective career counseling can help students develop realistic career goals and make well-informed decisions about post-secondary education and training programs (Reardon, Lenz, Sampson, & Peterson, 2000). In Vietnam, career counseling services are

provided in high schools but the effectiveness of these services is still a topic of debate. The purpose of this paper is to examine the organization and effectiveness of career counseling for Vietnamese high school students.

1.1. Challenges and Barriers to Effective Career Counseling

Various studies have identified various challenges and barriers to effective career counseling in high schools including a lack of resources, a shortage of trained career counselors and a lack of awareness of the importance of career counseling among students, parents and school administrators (Arrastia-Chisholm, Bright, & Grimes, 2017; Chandler et al., 2018; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994; Loan & Van, 2015; Patel, Salahuddin, & O'Brien, 2008; Walsh & Osipow, 2014; Whiston & Keller, 2004). Lack of funds, space and time might make it more difficult for schools to give students sufficient career counselling services, especially in low-income areas where resources are limited (Gysbers & Henderson, 2014; Hafner, Joseph, & McCormick, 2010; Vinh, 2008). A study conducted by Loan and Van (2015) found that a lack of funding and resources as well as a lack of professional development opportunities for career counselors were major obstacles to provide effective career counseling services in Vietnamese high schools.

Additionally, there is often a shortage of trained career counselors in high schools which can hinder the quality of career counseling services provided to students (Constantine, Erickson, Banks, & Timberlake, 1998; Herr, Cramer, & Niles, 2004; Rude & Brewer, 2003). Many school counselors are trained in general counseling and may lack the specialized knowledge and skills necessary to provide effective career counseling services (Gysbers & Henderson, 2014; Herr et al., 2004). Moreover, the high student-to-counselor ratio in many schools can also limit the amount of time that counselors can devote to career counseling (Herr et al., 2004).

Moreover, a lack of awareness of the importance of career counseling among students, parents and school administrators can also be a significant barrier to effective career counseling in high schools (Chandler et al., 2018; Gysbers & Henderson, 2014; Wong & Yuen, 2019). Some students may not understand the value of career counseling and may not take advantage of the services offered by their schools (Chandler et al., 2018). Similarly, parents may not see the importance of career counseling and may not encourage their children to participate in these services (Gysbers & Henderson, 2014). School administrators may also not prioritize career counseling services which can limit the availability and quality of these services (Wong & Yuen, 2019). A study by Patel et al. (2008) found that many Vietnamese parents have a limited understanding of the role of career counseling in their children's education and are not actively involved in the process. This can lead to a lack of support and guidance for students when making important career decisions.

Furthermore, cultural factors may play a role in the effectiveness of career counseling in Vietnam. A study by Patel et al. (2008) found that cultural values such as collectivism and the emphasis on family harmony can influence the career decision-making process for Vietnamese students. Career decisions are often influenced by the expectations and desires of the family which can conflict with the students' own aspirations.

1.2. Best Practices in Career Counseling

There are several best practices that can enhance the effectiveness of career counseling in high schools despite the challenges and barriers to effective career counseling. One best practice is to assist students in identifying their strengths and limitations and helping them make decisions about their future jobs (Erford & Crockett, 2012; Gysbers & Henderson, 2014; Herr et al., 2004; Sharf, 2016; Stipanovic, Stringfield, & Witherell, 2017). These tools can provide students with valuable insights into their interests, skills and abilities and can help them explore potential career paths that align with their strengths and interests.

Another best practice is the incorporation of technology into career counseling services. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced many schools to switch to online learning which highlights the potential for technology to improve the accessibility and delivery of career counselling services (Osoro, Amundson, &

Borgen, 2000). Online career counseling platforms such as Career Cruising and MyPlan.com can provide students with access to career information, assessments and job search tools from anywhere with an internet connection (Gysbers & Henderson, 2014; Osoro et al., 2000). Moreover, the use of video conferencing and other online tools can enable counselors to provide career counseling services to students who are unable to attend in-person sessions (Osoro et al., 2000).

Another effective practice is to provide career counseling services to students at an early age. Early career exploration and development exposure helps children make well-informed decisions about their future professional options and establish attainable objectives for themselves (Gysbers & Henderson, 2014; Herr et al., 2004). This can also help students avoid the “career indecision” that often plagues many high school students (Gysbers & Henderson, 2014). In addition, early exposure to career counseling can help students understand the relevance of their coursework and how it relates to their future career goals (Herr et al., 2004).

1.3. Impact of Career Counseling on High School Students

A study by Whiston and Keller (2004) found that career counseling can also enhance students' career exploration and decision-making skills as well as their knowledge of the job market.

Career counseling can also help students overcome the challenges and barriers that often hinder their career development. For example, career counseling can help students overcome social and economic barriers to career success by providing them with information about potential career paths, education and training requirements and the job market (Gysbers & Henderson, 2014). Additionally, career counseling can help students identify and overcome personal barriers such as lack of motivation, low self-esteem and negative self-talk which can limit their ability to achieve their career goals (Herr et al., 2004).

1.4. Effectiveness of Career Counseling in Vietnamese High Schools

Career counseling is one of the responsibilities of teachers and school counselors in Vietnam's high schools (Van Huynh & Tran-Chi, 2019). There are examples of effective career counseling programs in Vietnamese high schools despite these challenges. For instance, a study by Utley (2021) found that a career counseling program that incorporated both online and offline components was effective in improving career self-efficacy and decision-making skills among Vietnamese high school students.

Numerous studies have shown the positive impact of career counselling on students' academic performance and decisions about their post-secondary education. According to Ahuja's (2016) study, career counselling helps high school students become more motivated and accomplish better academically. Nguyen (2020) found that career counseling was positively associated with post-secondary education decisions among Vietnamese high school students.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the organization and effectiveness of career counseling for Vietnamese high school students. This paper will examine the challenges and barriers to effective career counseling in high schools in Vietnam, the current state of career counseling programs in Vietnam and the strategies that can be employed to improve the effectiveness of career counseling for Vietnamese high school students.

2. METHODS

2.1. Participants

The authors conducted a survey on career counseling in high schools in Binh Dinh Province. We selected representatives from several high schools in the province based on their administrative units in order to conduct a survey on the actual state of career counselling and vocational education for students. The results of the survey are presented in Table 1 and will help us ensure that the research sample is geographically representative of high schools.

Table 1. List of high schools surveying career counseling.

No.	Name of school
1	Quy Nhon National High School
2	Hung Vuong High School
3	Nguyen Thai Hoc High School
4	Tuy Phuoc High School
5	Nguyen Dieu High School
6	An Nhon High School
7	Hoa Binh High School
8	Ngo May High School
9	Nguyen Huu Quang High School
10	Phu My High School
11	Nguyen Du High School
12	Hoai An High School
13	Vinh Thanh Ethnic Minority Boarding School
14	Nguyen Hue High School
15	Van Canh Ethnic Boarding School

We surveyed four categories of subjects: administrators, instructors, students and parents as indicated in [Table 2](#) to get their thoughts regarding the situation. The sample structures are as follows:

Table 2. Structure of the survey sample in high schools.

No.	Name of school	Administrator	Teacher	Student	Parents
1	Quy Nhon National High School	3	8	8	5
2	Hung Vuong High School	3	8	8	5
3	Nguyen Thai Hoc High School	3	8	8	5
4	Tuy Phuoc No.1 High School	3	8	8	5
5	Nguyen Dieu High School	3	8	8	5
6	An Nhon No.1 High School	3	8	8	5
7	Hoa Binh High School	3	8	8	5
8	Ngo May High School	3	8	8	5
9	Nguyen Huu Quang High School	3	8	8	5
10	Phu My No.1 High School	3	8	8	5
11	Nguyen Du High School	3	8	8	5
12	Hoai An High School	3	8	8	5
13	Vinh Thanh Ethnic Minority Boarding School	3	8	8	5
14	Nguyen Hue School	3	8	8	5
15	Van Canh Ethnic Boarding School	3	8	8	5
Total		45	120	120	75

2.2. Measurement

The authors created a questionnaire to evaluate career counseling in high school in which the contents and criteria are evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale. Level 1 is the lowest level and 5 is the highest level. The survey's questions will be evaluated using this 5-point Likert scale and their average will be used to assess their contents.

3. RESULTS

[Table 3](#) provides an evaluation of school administrators' perceptions of career counseling in high schools. The evaluation is divided into three main categories: the perception of career counseling for high school students, how to organize guidance counseling in high schools and the effectiveness of career counseling for high school students.

Table 3. The evaluation of school administrators about career counseling in high schools.

No.	Content and criteria	Levels of evaluation									
		1		2		3		4		5	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
I. Evaluation of the perception of career counseling for high school students.											
1	Awareness of the importance of career counseling.	0	0	0	0	13	7.9	122	74	30	18.1
2	Degree of interest in career counseling.	90	55	51	31	9	5.5	10	6.1	5	3.03
II. Evaluation of how to organize guidance counseling in high schools.											
3	Clearly define the goals of the counseling activity.	7	4.2	10	6.1	32	19.3	101	61.2	15	9.91
4	Level of planning for career counseling.	147	89.1	15	9.1	3	1.8	0	0	0	0
5	Properly assigning people to work as career counselors.	135	82	25	15.1	5	3.0	2	1.2	0	0
6	Level of implementation of the content of career counseling through educational activities in the school.	126	76.3	28	17	4	2.4	5	3.0	2	1.2
7	Level of implementation of career counseling.	101	61.2	44	27	15	9.1	4	2.4	2	1.2
8	Level of financial security for career counseling.	150	91	8	4.8	4	2.4	2	1.2	1	0.60
9	Level of assurance of facilities for career counseling.	13	7.9	93	56.3	54	33	3	1.8	2	1.21
10	Level of coordination of forces in career counseling.	115	70	29	18	15	9.1	4	2.4	2	1.21
11	Level of assurance about regimes and policies for the team working in career counseling.	151	91.5	11	2	1	0.6	1	0.6	0	0
III. Evaluation of the effectiveness of career counseling for high school students.											
12	Level of achievement of career counseling goals.	147	89	5	2	3	1.8	1	0.6	0	0
13	Level of interest of students when participating in career counseling.	15	9.1	74	45	55	33.3	14	8.5	7	4.24
14	Level of impact of career counseling activities on students' career choices.	44	27	50	30.3	69	42	3	1.8	2	1.21

In terms of the perception of career counseling for high school students, 74% of administrators have a high level of awareness of the importance of career counseling while only 6.1% have a high degree of interest in career counseling.

Administrators have clear goals for counselling activities. 61.2% of administrators have a high level of preparation for career counselling when it comes to how guidance counselling is organized in high schools. Moreover, 82% of administrators believe that the proper assignment of people to work as career counselors is done.

Concerning the effectiveness of career counseling for high school students, 89% of administrators believe that the level of achievement of career counseling goals is high while only 2% of administrators think that the interest of students in participating in career counseling is high. Additionally, 42% of administrators believe that career counseling activities have a high impact on students' career choice.

Finally, career counselling facilities are less secure with just 56.3% of administrators reporting a high level of assurance compared to the high level of financial security for career counselling which is demonstrated by 91% of administrators' reports.

Table 4. The evaluation of high school students about career counseling in high schools.

No.	Content and criteria	Levels of evaluation									
		1		2		3		4		5	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
I. Evaluation of the perception of career counseling for high school students.											
1	Awareness about the importance of career counseling.	10	8	0	0	13	7.9	122	74	30	18.1
2	Degree of interest in career counseling.	89	74	51	31	9	5.5	10	6.1	5	3.03
II. Evaluation of how to organize guidance counseling in high schools											
3	Clearly define the goals of the counseling activity.	9	8	79	66	25	21	5	4.2	2	2
5	Properly assigning people to work as career counselors.	107	89.1	7	5.8	5	4.2	0	0	1	1
6	Level of implementation of the content of career counseling through educational activities in the school.	85	71	27	22.5	5	4.2	2	1.7	0	0
7	Level of implementation of career counseling.	105	87.5	8	7	6	5	1	0.8	0	0
III. Evaluation of the effectiveness of career counseling for high school students.											
13	Level of interest of students when participating in career counseling.	30	25	58	48.3	26	22	5	4.2	1	1
14	Level of impact of career counseling activities on students' career choices.	40	33.3	35	29.1	42	35	3	2.5	0	0

Table 4 shows the evaluation of high school students about career counseling in high schools.

In terms of the perception of career counseling, 8% of students were aware of the importance of career counseling and 74% had a degree of interest in career counseling.

According to the evaluation of how to organize guidance counseling in high schools, 66% of students agreed that the goals of the counseling activity were clearly defined and 89.1% agreed that people were properly assigned to work as career counselors. 71% of students reported that the content of career counseling was implemented through educational activities in the school.

In terms of the effectiveness of career counseling, 48.3% of students showed interest in participating in career counseling and 35% reported that career counseling had an impact on their career choice.

The results suggest that many students have a degree of interest in career counseling and believe that the goals and implementation of counseling activities are well-defined. There is room for improvement in terms of increasing awareness of the importance of career counseling and its effectiveness in impacting career choices.

Table 5. The evaluation of parents about career counseling in high schools.

No.	Content and criteria	Levels of evaluation									
		1		2		3		4		5	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
I. Evaluation of the perception of career counseling for high school students.											
1	Awareness about the importance of career counseling.	9	12	7	9.3	17	23	37	49	5	6.7
2	Degree of interest in career counseling.	49	65	8	11	3	4	3	4	1	1.3
II. Evaluation of how to organize guidance counseling in high schools.											
3	Clearly define the goals of the counseling activity.	57	76	3	4	3	4	15	20	1	1.3
III. Evaluation of the effectiveness of career counseling for high school students.											
14	Level of impact of career counseling activities on students' career choices.	27	36	25	33.3	23	21	0	0	0	0

Table 5 shows the evaluation of parents about career counseling in high schools.

In terms of the perception of career counseling for high school students, 49% of the parents rated the importance of career counseling as level 4 and 23% as level 5. For the degree of interest in career counseling, 65% of the parents rated it as level 1 and 11% as level 2.

76% of the parents rated the clear definition of counseling goals as level 1 and 4% as level 2 regarding the evaluation of how to organize guidance counseling in high schools.

36% of the parents rated the impact of career counseling activities on students' career choices as level 2, 33.3% as level 3 and 21% as level 4 regarding the effectiveness of career counseling for high school students.

4. DISCUSSION

The study's findings provide an evaluation of how high school students, parents and school administrators view career counselling in their schools. The three components of the evaluation were: how should high schools organize guidance counselling, how effective is career counselling for students in high school and how should high schools perceive career counselling?

In terms of the perception of career counseling for high school students, the majority of administrators (74%) have a high level of awareness of the importance of career counseling while only a small percentage (6.1%) have a high degree of interest in career counseling. These results are in line with the findings of Wong and Yuen (2019) and Gysbers and Henderson (2014) who emphasized the importance of creating interest in career counseling among students. Therefore, it is crucial to implement effective strategies that not only increase awareness but also generate interest in career counseling among high school students. This can lead to better career decision-making and overall success in their future endeavors.

The majority of administrators (61.2%) believe that the goals of the counseling activity are clearly defined and 89.1% have a high level of planning for career counseling regarding how to organize guidance counseling in high schools. Additionally, 82% of administrators believe that the proper assignment of people to work as career counselors is done. These results indicate that high schools have well-organized guidance counseling systems. However, it is important to note that these results may not be representative of all high schools and further research is needed to assess the effectiveness of guidance counseling systems in different educational settings. Additionally, student feedback should also be taken into consideration to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the quality of guidance counseling services provided. According to Chandler et al. (2018) school counsellors in

rural areas deal with particular difficulties including scarce resources and restricted access to opportunities for professional growth which may have an impact on the standard of guidance counselling.

Therefore, it is essential to consider the context and resources available to high schools when evaluating the effectiveness of career counseling programs. In addition, research has shown that students in rural areas may have limited exposure to diverse career paths and may benefit from career counseling programs that specifically address these gaps in knowledge and resources. Therefore, it is important for career counseling programs to be tailored to the specific needs and contexts of the communities they serve. Therefore, it is essential to consider the context and resources available to high schools when evaluating the effectiveness of career counseling programs. 89% of administrators believe that the level of achievement of career counseling goals is high while only 2% of administrators think that the interest of students in participating in career counseling is high concerning the effectiveness of career counseling for high school students. Additionally, only 42% of administrators believe that career counseling activities have a high impact on students' career choices. These findings suggest that high schools need to focus on increasing students' interest and involvement in career counseling to make it more effective. [Hafner et al. \(2010\)](#) emphasized the importance of career development programs that address the unique needs and challenges faced by urban youth, such as poverty, discrimination and limited access to resources. Furthermore, it is essential to provide students with access to diverse career options and help them understand the skills and education required for each career path. By doing so, high schools can better prepare students for the workforce and increase their chances of success.

In terms of the perception of career counseling, a small percentage of students (8%) were aware of the importance of career counseling while the majority (74%) had a degree of interest in career counseling. These findings suggest that students are interested in career counseling. They lack awareness of its importance. Therefore, it is essential to create awareness among students about the benefits of career counseling. Career counseling can help students identify their strengths and interests, explore career options and make informed decisions about their future. By promoting the importance of career counseling, educational institutions can better equip students with the necessary tools to achieve their career goals.

A significant percentage of students (66%) agreed that the goals of the counseling activity were clearly defined and 71% of students reported that the content of career counseling was implemented through educational activities in the school regarding the evaluation of how to organize guidance counseling in high schools. These findings indicate that high schools are effective in organizing and implementing guidance counseling activities. However, it is important to ensure that the content of career counseling is relevant and engaging for students to maintain their interest and motivation. One way to achieve this is by involving students in the planning and development of career counseling programs. Additionally, schools should regularly evaluate the effectiveness of their counseling activities to make necessary improvements.

In terms of the effectiveness of career counseling, 48.3% of students showed interest in participating in career counseling and 35% reported that career counseling had an impact on their career choice. These results suggest that high schools need to focus on making career counseling more engaging and relevant to students to increase their interest and motivation. [Herr et al. \(2004\)](#) emphasized the importance of career counseling interventions that take into account students' individual characteristics, interests and values. Furthermore, schools should also think about providing more practical experiences such as internships or job shadowing opportunities in order to expose students to a variety of career pathways and assist them in making well-informed decisions about their future. This approach can help students see the practical applications of their education and motivate them to pursue careers that align with their interests and values.

Moreover, parents rated the effectiveness of career counseling activities on their child's career choice as level 2, 33.3% as level 3 and 21% as level 4 indicating that they are not fully satisfied with the impact of career counseling

on their child's career choice. This highlights the need for career counselors to engage parents in the process and involve them in their child's career development.

The findings from the evaluation of school administrators, students and parents reveal that there is a level of awareness and interest in career counseling. There is still room for improvement in terms of increasing the effectiveness of career counseling in impacting career choices. The results also suggest that the implementation of career counseling activities through educational activities in the school is effective in engaging students and the involvement of parents in the process is crucial for the success of career counseling.

It is essential to develop a comprehensive approach that considers the unique needs and challenges of each student especially those from underrepresented and marginalized backgrounds to improve the effectiveness of career counseling. The review of literature on career counseling in rural schools by [Arrastia-Chisholm et al. \(2017\)](#) highlights the need for career counselors to understand the cultural and contextual factors that influence career development in rural areas. Similarly, [Hafner et al. \(2010\)](#) emphasize the importance of considering the intersection of race, class and gender in career development for urban youth. Therefore, it is crucial for career counselors to recognize the unique challenges and opportunities that rural and urban students face in their career paths. Counselors can provide effective and culturally sensitive guidance to help students achieve their career goals.

Another important aspect to consider is the role of technology in career counseling. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the use of technology in career counseling and counselors must adapt to these changes to provide effective counseling services ([Chandler et al., 2018](#)). Career counselors can use various technological tools such as online assessments, virtual career fairs and social media to engage students and provide personalized career counseling services.

5. CONCLUSION

The evaluation of school administrators' perceptions, high school students' evaluations and parents' evaluations presented in this study provides insights into the effectiveness of career counseling in high schools. High schools have well-organized guidance counseling systems but there is still room for improvement in increasing students' interest and involvement in career counseling to make it more effective in impacting their career choices. The study suggests that incorporating more interactive and engaging activities into career counseling sessions could be a potential solution to increase student engagement. Additionally, involving parents in the career counseling process could also enhance its effectiveness by providing students with additional support and guidance outside of school. It is also crucial to consider the unique needs and challenges of each student especially those from underrepresented and marginalized backgrounds and to use technology to provide personalized career counseling services. Students can gain hands-on experience and make informed decisions about their future careers by incorporating interactive and engaging activities such as career fairs and job shadowing opportunities. Additionally, collaborating with local businesses and community organizations can provide students with valuable networking opportunities and real-world insights into various industries.

Effective career counseling plays a critical role in preparing high school students for their future careers and facilitating their transition to higher education and the workforce. They can receive guidance on selecting appropriate courses and extracurricular activities that align with their career goals as well as assistance in developing resumes and cover letters by providing students with access to career counseling services. This can ultimately increase their chances of success in achieving their desired career paths. Therefore, it is essential to create awareness among students, parents and school administrators about the benefits of career counseling and the need for continuous improvement in guidance counseling programs. Moreover, career counselors must stay updated with the latest technological tools to provide effective and personalized career counseling services to students. This will help students make informed decisions about their future careers and ensure that they are well-prepared for the job market. Additionally, schools should invest in training and development programs for career counselors to

enhance their skills and knowledge in career counseling. High schools can help students achieve their career goals and contribute to their overall success in life. It is also important for career counselors to collaborate with industry professionals and employers to gain insights into the current job market trends and requirements. This can help students make informed decisions about their career paths and increase their chances of securing employment after graduation.

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Transparency: The authors state that the manuscript is honest, truthful, and transparent, that no key aspects of the investigation have been omitted, and that any differences from the study as planned have been clarified. This study followed all writing ethics.

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