

The Role of Job Shadowing in Career Development of Pupils in Secondary Schools of Chipata District of Zambia

by

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Abstract

Career guidance is one of the critical components of secondary school education in Zambia as it helps learners to make informed decisions about the choice of training and job prospects. The study investigated the role of job shadowing in career development in selected secondary schools in Chipata District. Job shadowing is one of the career guidance activities that gives chance to learners to get exposed to the world of work while observing an employee perform his or her job. A descriptive research design was used. A total of 50 pupils from 5 secondary schools, 5 guidance teachers and 5 deputy head teachers were selected from 5 schools through stratified random sampling for the pupils and purposive sampling for the members of staff. A questionnaire and an interview guide were used as instruments for data collection. The study revealed that some learners had not experienced neither were they exposed to job shadowing in career guidance services. The results further revealed that the guidance teachers opted for career exhibitions and talks rather than facilitate for job shadowing in career development of learners as it was seen to be too involving for the learner, teachers and workers. Based on these findings, the researcher recommended that secondary school guidance teachers should be equipped with different tools and mechanisms to develop career aspirations of learners in schools to ensure progression into satisfying careers.

Key Words; *Career Guidance, Job shadowing, and Chipata district.*

Background

Education is held in high esteem in many societies and countries globally. It is hoped that education is supposed to provide a form of preparation of the young into responsible adults that will contribute to national issues. The guidelines on the administration and management of guidance and counselling in the education system by the Ministry of Education (2014) in Zambia states that school guidance has four main components that are interrelated and these include educational guidance, personal guidance, social guidance and career guidance. It is from this understanding

of career guidance that schools organise different career related activities that are aimed at helping learners to make informed choices about their career aspirations. The issue of career guidance is developmental in nature because it tries to link the current state of a learner to his/her future aspirations.

There are various activities that guidance teachers in schools are expected to be doing to address the issues of career development of learners. Some of the expected activities ought to include talks on specific career related topics including training providers, field trips in workplaces of learner's interest, work attachments, career counselling, job shadowing and other classroom-based interactions.

The Job Shadowing Handbook (1994) tries to clarify what job shadowing is to high school students as an activity where a student will follow an employee at a workplace for a day or two to learn more about a particular job or industry. It should be differentiated from educational tours that are as stated by Ndhlovu (2015) aimed to take learners to identified industries or institutions so that they can relate theory to practice. Both activities require prior arrangements with the industry or institution being visited. It is worth noting that through such activities like job shadowing, a learner can acquire first-hand information about a particular occupation and has a chance to witness their desired occupation or career. The knowledge and experiences acquired through such helps in making solid decisions about their career that they intend to pursue after secondary school.

Ndhlovu (2015) writes that *"human beings are endowed with the quality of extraordinary adaptability which enables a person with normal intelligence, coupled with training, adapt to situations even if there limitations, and fit in a variety of jobs"* to this he adds that there is now emphasis on the success in any vocation or job being determined by an individual's personality, motivation factors, that work through a vocational pattern where the minimum job requirements are met. From this understanding job shadowing as a career activity in secondary school can assist an individual who already has a level of motivation by desiring the job to assess ones personality as well as the job requirements before making a final decision to take on the training after secondary school. It is however not known how job-shadowing activities are being used to prepare secondary school students for the world of employment in the Zambian schools.

In the writing of English (2018; 31) on the responsibility of education to prepare students for the needed labour force states that;

I then examined the literature on college and career readiness and found that school curriculum, school counsellor contact, familial influence, specific career education experiences, and early implementation and instruction are important components toward creating more knowledgeable and self-efficacious students. Adolescent work and job shadowing are primary examples of those experiences (or instruction).

More evidence on the need for exposure to the world of work through such experiences is also seen from Buzzeo and Cifci (2017) that participating in a work experience placement is potentially a far-reaching activity for the young people that has a positive impact on employability skills, maintain interest in education, making career decisions as they gain knowledge of the world of work. Activities that are planned to use the context of work have been part of career education in the British secondary schools. It is found to be necessary to study how the activities like job shadowing were assisting young people in Zambian secondary schools in their career development.

There is little documented information on the career development activities that is recorded in the Zambian secondary schools. Academic performances are of national interests in that the Ministry of Education has a designated branch that runs and administers national examination including grading and certification. On the aspect of guidance especially career guidance the onus and initiative remain mostly with the guidance teacher at school level. Without a proactive approach little is known or is done to help shape the career aspirations of the learners. This article documents the role of job shadowing in career development in secondary schools of Chipata District Eastern Province.

Statement of the Problem

While every year students complete their secondary school to join higher education or go direct to join the unskilled labour force or other avenues in the society, Mwanza (2021) argued that little attention has been paid to the career guidance and counselling services in the secondary schools as most of the teachers aim at improving academic scores for learners. Malinda and Mundyata (2021) adds that pupils are completing their secondary education with little to no knowledge of the world of work and how to find work despite schools having provisions for career guidance services. This means that some of these students lack exposure to the world of work and training in secondary schools as they complete their education program even in the face of

career guidance and counselling. Mader et al (2017) adds that job shadowing has a long history of use in the way young people come to know the world of work through initiatives from schools and other social organizations. Basing on the above statement, a question remains unanswered as to what role job shadowing plays in career development of learners in secondary schools in Zambia. This study aimed to fill that gap by exploring the role of job shadowing in career development of pupils in secondary schools of Chipata.

General Objective

The study explored the role of job shadowing in career development of pupils in secondary schools of Chipata.

Specific Objectives

The following specific objectives guided the study;

- (i) To investigate the use of job shadowing as a tool for career development of learners in secondary schools.
- (ii) Ascertain the challenges faced in the use of job shadowing in career development of learners.

Research Questions

The study had the following research questions;

- (i) How is job shadowing used as a tool for career development of learners in secondary schools?
- (ii) Which challenges are faced in the use of job shadowing in career development of learners in secondary school?

Significance

Apart from contributing to the already existing body of knowledge on job shadowing as a career guidance activity, the findings and conclusions of this study may provide a new avenue regarding the way job shadowing in career guidance services are provided in secondary schools in Zambia.

The study may also help on how to deal with the challenges faced in the use of job shadowing as an activity in career guidance. The findings further may be useful to guidance teachers, school managers, the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders on how job shadowing in career guidance could be handled in secondary schools in Zambia.

Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework as stated by Grant and Osanloo (2014) outlines the theoretical principles, constructs, concepts, and tenants of a theory. The social cognitive theory was chosen for this study to aid interpretation of the findings and guide discussions in that this theory is based on the principles that encourage learning by observing others. The individual's knowledge gaining is mainly through observing others within social interactions, experiences and other media influences (Zhou and Brown, 2015). This is similar to what job shadowing does allow a student to observe a professional as he or she does the work and through this the student is expected to gain knowledge about the world of work relating to the career prospects.

The study therefore assumed that individuals in this case students/pupils observe others perform task (behaviour) in job shadowing and see the results of the tasks (behaviour) they remember the events and use such knowledge to guide subsequent behaviours and knowledge to make career decisions. Jenkins et al (2018) wrote that the social cognitive learning theory was developed by Bandura from the mid-1970s and has been widely used in research across disciplines. The theory explains how individuals acquire and adopt knowledge. It was seen to be ideal to use to guide and interpret the exploration because it looks at the interplay between multiple factors that contribute to learning.

Literature Review

Guidance plays a vital role in preventing educational, personal, social, mental, emotional, and other similar problems among secondary school learners (Esuong et al., 2010). Guidance goes further in helping shape the lives of many students in areas relating to their career development. Glenn (1993) echoed that in many schools counsellors and educational psychologist ascribe to the view that decisions relating to employment and preferred careers are a developmental task of mid to late adolescents. And that it is at this phase in their lives that students give thought to their preferred employment and how to attain it.

A study by English (2018) investigated the job shadowing as a mechanism for college and career readiness. The study aimed at better determining whether job-shadowing programmes in high school provide students with a better awareness in career decision making self-efficacy, understanding on entry requirements and the characteristics of jobs and careers. The study used a randomized control trial that had two conditions on a volunteer sample of 30 respondents. Among the many

recommendations that the study made based on the findings it was stated that English (2018: 86) “*although it was important for schools to compete academically, we must implement curriculum that requires our young people to explore, acquire, and return future jobs*” by this, schools are encouraged to prepare the young not only academically but also for the world of work. From this study therefore, it is clear how important job shadowing is and the role it plays in the career preparedness of young people in the American schools.

Works done by Eljido-Ten and Kloot (2015) looked at experiential learning in work integration learning of students in university and how it could help improve work readiness of accounting graduates. Used a case study to collect data using semi-structured in-depth interviews with employer representatives and surveys with students. The findings included information such as small to medium enterprises and large firms both gave a good platform for training opportunities that encouraged work integrated learning that was seen as a positive experience by employers and students. The study explored how work integrated learning improved work readiness of university students in the accounting field and not secondary school students in job shadowing. Drawing from such a study, it becomes important to explore how a similar concept that allows students exposure to the world of work is being done in secondary schools. Therefore, this paper aimed to bring out the role of job shadowing in career development of secondary school students in the Zambian context.

Mader et al (2017) reported an innovative twist in the job shadowing experience that it did not only provide a means to real world exposure but was a way to generate real time information that could be used in classroom discussions. Some of the findings in the study showed an appreciation from the students that the job shadowing experience gave them an opportunity to be in the field and that they had direct contact with professionals doing what they might be doing for the rest of their lives. From this study, despite being conducted among students in a tertiary institution in sales, the value and importance that job shadowing plays in career development of the young is seen.

Malinda and Mundyata (2021) investigated the role career guidance played in secondary schools of Lunshaya district Zambia in the preparation of pupils/students for tertiary education. The study used a descriptive design with a total of 56 sample population. Some the results in the study showed that career guidance had a significant positive role in the way the service was used to prepare your people for

tertiary education. The study also showed that there was a low turnout in students seeking the service at weekly level and the resources to adequately provide the service were also not enough. Despite some of the challenges that were identified in the study there were also some positives like increased academic performance, reduced pregnancy rates.

Despite such literature in Zambia on career guidance, activities such as job shadowing in career guidance development were not investigated. Therefore, arising from this, this article attempted to bring out the role that job shadowing plays in the career development of students in secondary schools of Zambia.

Methodology of the study

The exploration used a descriptive design that according to Nyimbili (2020) aims to bring out the state of affairs, as it exists at present to collect the qualitative data from 5 secondary schools. This design was seen to fit well as the study brought out the respondent's experiences, thoughts and how they perceived the role of job shadowing in career development of secondary school students. Mkandawire (2019:145) state, "*Qualitative data collection methods are those strategies used to collect information based on subjective assessments of opinions, behaviour, attitudes and social interactions*".

The sample was sixty (60) respondents. That comprised of fifty (50) selected grade twelve (12) students picked through a stratified random sampling technique and responded to open ended questions on a questionnaire. The strata of the students in the schools were made of only those students in grade twelve (12) because they were assumed to have undergone the secondary school education program and were near completion, therefore would inform the study. Ten (10) students from each of the five secondary schools were picked using a raffle draw to participate in the study.

Members of staff who were interviewed included 5 guidance teachers and 5 deputy head teachers that were purposely sampled using criterion strategies of sampling looking at the virtue of their positions and functions in school. It was assumed that the guidance teachers and deputy head teachers had experience in the phenomenon of student job shadowing and therefore will tell the story that would inform the study (Creswell, 2013). The data collected was grouped according to the objectives and analysed, discussed and presented.

Findings and Discussions

Job Shadowing for Career Development of Learners in Secondary Schools

Job shadowing programs in secondary school guidance work are one of the tools needed to help give first-hand experience to secondary school students. English (2018) adds that many schools require students to participate in job shadowing programs with the aim of authenticating the work experience in order to reduce the harmful effects of adolescent work. It was established in this study that some of the guidance teachers had knowledge of the need for job shadowing experiences in their learners in Zambia. An expert in the field in this case guidance teacher stated that;

The job shadowing activity creates a lasting effect on the students.

The effect has different results on the learners as to some the activity caused them to cement their dream job while others it made them think of changing as they felt not able to do the work.

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From the foregoing, it is seen that job shadowing helped to cement the desire for the dream job in some learners because they came to face the reality of the job as they shadow someone doing the work. The experience at times allowed the student to observe even the challenges and advantages involved in doing the work. This is like what the Social Cognitive Theory suggest on knowledge gaining in similar manner that “*such acquisition of knowledge and skills comes through ‘enactive mastery experience’, i.e. direct experience of skills or tasks, and ‘mastery modelling’, i.e. observational learning from role models*” (Gong, Huang & Farh, 2009: 767 in Jenkin et al., 2018). Some guidance teachers noted that

the school prepares the adolescents in secondary school for higher education in colleges and universities. The choice of this tertiary education can be influenced by job-shadowing experiences that gives the practical aspect that the formal school may not cover in its core subjects.

In this, students have an experience that allowed them to gain knowledge that may include observing professionals doing the work while learning the ethics of the job and other considerations that comes with the job being performed.

The study established that Job-shadowing gives chance to secondary school pupils/students to learn about different work cultures and other demands that help them to enter college and university with an understanding of the needed skills that they need to possess and develop. A student noted that;

through visits to places that offer employment and observing the specialist in their jobs doing their daily routines, pupils can be helped to see the realities and first-hand information about the world of work. The cultures in workplaces and other work demands in the industries they desire to join.

This is seen to be a kind of learning that learners would not acquire through normal classroom attendance, as it may be limited in diversity. Such experiences outside the classroom in this case in the industry as advanced by the cognitive theory are like interactions between the social and cognitive factors of learning that will eventually influence the behaviour and choices of students.

Some of the pupils stated that job shadowing in the places they visited helped them to develop a clear goal and clarity about what training they need to pursue after secondary school. The contacts and connections they made facilitated for social persuasions into the careers while shadowing gave them a platform to build on their career aspirations.

Similarly, in the Social Cognitive Theory, individuals are said to learn best when exposed to a model or knowledgeable individual willing to model them and guide them on the steps to complete a given task (Zhou and Brown, 2015). Knowledge gained through such experiences and interactions makes the pupils challenge their own thoughts and improve their understanding of reality. In this way learners can make informed decisions with a level of understanding that can be appreciated.

Challenges in the use of Job Shadowing in Career Guidance of Learners

With all the notable advantages that job shadowing experience gives to secondary school learners. The activities do come with some challenges on both the teacher and the learners. A few challenges were unearthed in the study. These challenges affect the way these activities are done and at times lead to avoidance for

those guidance teachers who are unable to navigate their way through the huddles despite being tasked with aiding career development of the young.

Some respondents observed that the idea seemed new to them and where not sure how the school system would integrate such into its program as they stated that they have not seen it happen in their practice as guidance teachers. A teacher respondent mentioned that *“the activities of job shadowing were not practiced in many schools, I actually have not seen any school within our location promoting such initiatives”*. Some of the guidance teachers in some schools did not have any experience in job shadowing as such the concept was seen to be only applicable in higher learning institutions that demanded similar approaches like internships. A deputy head teacher noted that *“the idea of job shadowing was seen to be not easily attainable as there were very few industries that would meet the needs for several courses and job prospects. Some of the career choices have no industries in the immediate locality.”* With such views it was noted that the town did not have the industries to respond to the careers that some students desired as such, organising a shadowing experience meant that it needed to be arranged in a distant place in another town that the students were to visit. This came with economic implications and time consuming.

A Student noted that *“I have desire to visit and learn something about mining, the only challenge is that there are no mines in the district.”* With such findings it was clear that the students were not being exposed to a variety of career, vocation and professional opportunities. This calls for more explorations into ways to provide exposure to the career options even for students living in remote or undeveloped towns.

Other respondents equally stated that most of the employers seemed reluctant to take on an adolescent to do an observation especially with the health issues of the covid 19 where physical interactions are advised to be at minimum. Some of the students mentioned the guidance teacher’s attitude towards students was not welcoming. A student stated that

It is expected that the guidance teacher would be more open minded and help us to feel welcomed as we discuss issues to do with our career choices. But in most cases the teachers are always busy and find it hard to meet us as they have more things to do in the school.

The guidance teachers through their training are expected to use various tools at their disposal to attend and respond to student issues. A guidance teacher stated that;

Some of the pupils seemed not ready to make a career choice and were not sure of which workplaces they would visit. As such tagging them along with others would only mean to them like going for an outing or tour in the industry without attaching meaning to it.

Such an understanding may be perceived somehow to divert from the thoughts advanced by Glenn (1993) that it was at this period of their lives that students give thought to their preferred employment and how to attain it during the year 11 and year 12 of their school. The argument is clarified by Glenn (1993) that a career choice is not a single event as it may be a view held by others traditionally but involves occupation choice which may happen at various points in the life of an individual and other choices that affect the career.

There are many tools and initiatives in career guidance that when well utilized would make a teacher to be proactive enough and make career guidance an exciting and lasting experience for the learners. Such tools include arranging for activities like job shadowing. It was well observed that most teachers had knowledge and ideas about job shadowing but opted for employers to give talks in school unlike arranging for job shadowing experiences. One respondent echoed that:

It was easier to have an employer or training provider come in school and give a talk to students for an hour or so without affecting much of curriculum time as guidance activities were not on the school timetable. A guidance teacher would negotiate for such a time unlike excusing students for the whole day or two to be out in the industry.

Arranging for career talks and exhibitions were seen to be ideal especially that activities provided a level of control on time within the school. The Ministry of Education (2014:05) on school guidance services encourages among other services that a school guidance programme should provide placement of individuals in this case students/pupils into professions, careers, and vocations, and should also arrange research services that should involve looking into emerging and contemporary issues in guidance and counselling. With this understanding guidance teachers and schools are expected to explore and offer a flexible programme that allows students to research into different opportunities. One way is to organise work-based experiences like job shadowing.

The analysis also noted that the most ideal time for secondary school students to do job shadowing was during the time schools go on break. The normal learning time in a term does not have time for such activities. The term is covered and every teacher is in a hurry to complete their planned teaching. Therefore, guidance teachers through the school authorities needed to collaborate with parents, pupils, and employers to arrange for such favourable times that would not disturb the teaching schedules.

Conclusions

In conclusion, job shadowing is an important activity in career guidance. When well-used and implemented students will not only benefit from the work experience gained but will also gain a level of understanding through observation of the skills and basic competencies in a particular career and job prospect. The onus is on the school administrators through guidance teachers to rehearse, sensitise and assist in arranging for such opportunities with the parents, employers, and the students themselves.

Despite the challenges reviewed like guidance teacher's attitude, availability of industries in the town, economic and time challenges, faced in the implementation of job shadowing, there is an urgent need to explore various ways of offering work-based experiences to enhance career guidance and development for secondary school pupils. Activities like Job shadowing in career development of the learners allows students to experience first-hand the world of work and acquire information about their careers beyond the classroom.

Recommendations

Following the findings, the study made the following recommendation;

- Secondary school administrators and guidance teachers need to utilize various career guidance tools in secondary schools that accord students the opportunity and exposure to experience the world of work and training while in secondary school through activities like job shadowing, field trips and tours to ensure progression into satisfying careers.
- The Ministry of Education to institute deliberate initiatives that encourage companies and institutions to collaborate with schools to allow activities that are work based like job shadowing for secondary school students during

holidays as this will help young people to make informed decisions about their training leading to jobs and careers.

- Further Research could be taken to establish how work experience-based career activities in secondary schools are being conducted in the province and the Country.

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