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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF IMPLEMENTING QUALITY EDUCATION IN GHANA, WEST AFRICA THROUGH THE USE OF CAREER GUIDANCE MOBILE APPLICATION

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Abstract. This study explores the Ghanaian education career choice model by examining the career decisions of secondary school students. Utilizing field research, SWOT analysis, inspection, and market research, the study aims to offer recommendations for improving the Ghanaian educational system. The research spans articles published between 2000 and 2022. The study focuses on supporting secondary school students (ages 13–17) in developing their skills and finding fulfilling careers by providing necessary information and resources. The objective is to evaluate the Ghanaian educational system, identify challenges and limitations affecting its quality, and propose actionable recommendations to address these issues. Ghana's educational landscape has evolved significantly since the pre-colonial era. Despite reforms aimed at enhancing the quality of life, the anticipated improvements in education quality remain elusive. The study highlights the potential of an intuitive mobile application for career guidance, enabling students to seek career advice, consult professional counselors, and persuade their parents to support their career choices. Findings on how the Ghanaian education system influences students' career decisions are detailed.

Key words: Quality Education, secondary school students, adolescent age thirteen to seventeen, Ghana Education System.

Introduction

This study examines how parents, friends, and lack of information are incorporated into teenager's career decision-making using case studies from West Africa. Adolescents make critical decisions every day that affect their future. The opportunities they will have throughout their lives are significantly shaped by the amount of time and energy they commit to learning and the subjects on which they focus their strongest efforts. Realizing their goals for their careers and personal lives is a major source of inspiration for students to work hard in their studies. However, in addition to relying on a student's talent, their hopes and aspirations can also be greatly influenced by the student's and their family's personal backgrounds, in addition to the extent and depth of their understanding of the working environment. In summary, pupils are unable to be what they do not perceive (Sefa Dei, G.J., 2011). When students make a well-informed decision based on their own strengths, they chase after their dreams with all their might. So, they

emerge from it stronger and have a greater beneficial influence on the communities they end up in. That way, there won't be potential engineers practicing teaching and great teachers struggling as medical doctors. Parents often try to steer their secondary school children in a different direction when it's time for them to make a career decision. Research shows that, due to a lack of direction, five out of ten students in Ghana choose courses without having all the necessary knowledge. For the most part, students are only concerned with getting into school, which causes them to either become frustrated after graduation or simply stop practicing altogether.

There were 488,000 reported cases of stress and depression in the workplace in 2015 and 2016, with 1,500 cases per 100,000 employees, proving that choosing the wrong professional path can lead to major health problems (Nyarko, N.Y. and Addo, H., 2013). In other words, "personality" matters when deciding on a profession. Researchers argue that students should begin thinking about their future occupations as early as kindergarten and continue through elementary, middle, and high school. One

of the best ways to avoid confusion and poor job decisions is to take a career exam earlier in life. Our approach is to provide a simple and fast way for people to consult with an expert about their career options so that they can choose a path that makes the most of their strengths. With the use of a user-friendly career guidance app on their mobile device, they should be able to seek advice from a trained counselor, discuss their options with their parents, and ultimately gain the green light to follow their dreams. The challenge that secondary school students confront when trying

to decide on a profession is something that this user-friendly career advisory mobile app aims to address. According to research, the majority of secondary school pupils do not have access to sufficient information to make well-informed judgments about their future careers. This includes details like job possibilities, obstacles, schools that provide relevant courses, proper subject combinations, etc. (Dr. Adu-Agyem, J. and Dr. Osei-Poku, P., 2012). Figure 1 depicts different phases involved in career decision-making.



Figure 1 – Phases of decision-making in career

Literature Review

History of Ghana Education

Ghana's education system began long before colonialism. This type of education was informal and indigenous, with information and skills passed down from elders to younger generations through word of mouth or apprenticeship. It was reinforced by a strong sociocultural milieu that promoted lifelong engagement. In the 16th and 19th centuries, respectively, Western education was brought to the Gold Coast (now Ghana) by European traders and Christian missionaries. Academic in nature, the curriculum was considerably different from that of

indigenous schools. The "fort schools," founded by European traders specifically for their mulatto students, served as the venue for the event. The intention was to produce educated locals who could work as clerks and storekeepers in business, government, and industry, so they made math, reading, and writing core subjects. It was commonly known that Christian missionaries used Western education as a teaching and evangelizing tool (Berthelemy, J.-C., 2006). The indigenous government launched a number of educational initiatives shortly before and after independence with the goal of raising the standard of education in the nation, building more schools around the nation, and providing funding to unaided institutions.

Still, some government programs led to problems in the educational system, and the most recent change in education was developed to deal with these anomalies. Ghanaian education needed a more practical emphasis in 1973; therefore, the government recognized the need to shift the intellectual focus of the curriculum. Consequently, to restructure the content and make it more relevant to Ghanaian culture, the Dzobo Committee was established. This was done to give the person the opportunity to significantly contribute to the nation's economic progress. Thus, new programs that were approved and put into effect by the government at that time were launched in 1974 as a result of the reorganized curriculum. The country's financial difficulties prevented the reform program from moving further than its first stages, even though it was supposed to be implemented in kindergarten, primary, junior, and senior secondary schools. In an effort to make the 1974 education reform more relevant and in keeping with Ghanaian culture and way of life, the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) government reexamined it in 1981. The education reform was examined in 1994 by the deHeer Ammisah Committee and assessed in 2002 by the Anamuah-Mensah Committee. They looked at the make-up and substance of the previous educational system in order to identify the anomalies in it and decide how best to address them in order to eventually promote high-quality education (Anamuah-Mensah Report, 2002). Thus, providing every individual with a thorough, excellent education is the aim of the new education change. This would make it possible for those who receive an education to live fulfilling lives and make meaningful contributions to the nation's socioeconomic advancement. Given this, it is essential to critically examine Ghana's recently redesigned educational system and talk about how to provide the highest caliber of instruction possible.

Structure of Education in Ghana

Ghana's current educational system comprises basic school education through tertiary education. Three (3) years of junior high school education plus six (6) years of primary school instruction make up the nine (9)-year basic education curriculum. Four years of technical and vocational education —also referred to as senior high school — are the next step. Depending on the particular program requirements, students may continue their studies at a post-secondary institution for three to four years after completing this level. Universities, colleges, polytechnics, institutes, and other post-secondary institutions that offer courses leading to the awarding

of degrees and diplomas are the providers of post-secondary education in Ghana.

Kindergarten (Pre-School) Education

Preschool instruction is incorporated into basic education in kindergarten, introducing 4-year-old children to formal education for the first time during a two-year period. The formative years are a child's early years, and they are particularly important for their physical and physiological development. The development of a child's personality, social skills, and intellectual stimulation all depend heavily on these formative years. By offering a high-quality pre-school education, preschool education also seeks to instill in children a love of learning and supports primary education. Therefore, it is necessary to establish a secure and loving atmosphere for the child by offering the necessary infrastructure amenities.

Primary Education

Education in primary school comes after education in preschool. Along with laying the groundwork for inquiry, creativity, and invention, it also seeks to reinforce the knowledge and skills learned in kindergarten and get students ready for higher education and training. The six (6) years of primary school comprise two stages that represent a child's growth and development. The lower primary is the initial stage, lasting three years, while the upper primary is the second stage, lasting an additional three years. It is intended that children in Lower Primary (ages 6–8) and Upper Primary (ages 9–11) go through different stages of education. Children in lower primary school are expected to acquire knowledge, attitudes, and skills through hands-on experiences during their first three years of education. Children should be assisted and encouraged to observe, think critically, criticize, ask questions, solve issues, and pick up new skills throughout their final three years of upper primary school.

Junior High School Education

A three-year junior high school education follows a primary school education shortly after it concludes. Ghanaian basic education gives pupils the chance to discover their aptitudes, interests, and talents. Students who attend junior high school are exposed to basic scientific and technological concepts and skills, which prepares them for further education. The primary goals of the junior high school programs are to ensure that students understand how to apply the cognitive and psychomotor domains of learning and to assist them in developing pre-technical and

pre-vocational skills that will enable them to build upon the knowledge and abilities they have already acquired at the primary school level.

Senior High School Education

Education through senior high school is highly valued in Ghana. Following their studies at the junior high school (basic level), students may continue their secondary education at this level. The major objectives of senior high school education are to prepare students for postsecondary education and training while also reinforcing the knowledge and skills they acquired in basic education. Students are also exposed to a range of pertinent occupational skills that are essential for both national and human development during their senior high school education. It also seeks to instill in kids a sense of selflessness and discipline, as well as an appreciation of the environment and the need to preserve it. Moreover, it cultivates a passion for lifelong learning among students. At senior high school, students begin to concentrate in one area or another, and it is at this age that they are usually accepted into specialized training programs and other establishments. Because people differ in their aptitudes, abilities, interests, and talents, the curriculum at this level is designed to accommodate these differences. After the 1987 Education Reform program was put into place, the senior high school system saw ups and downs over its three-year existence. The senior high school curriculum has drawn the most criticism, with some questioning whether it should last four years or three. Nevertheless, as it prepares students for admittance into postsecondary institutions, it is important to give it careful consideration and make every effort to succeed.

Technical and Vocational Education

The Anamuah-Mensah Committee Report states that the technical and vocational education and training objective is to give students who aspire to pursue professional postsecondary programs a foundational grasp of technical and vocational knowledge and abilities. Students who wish to contribute to the workforce are given specific technical and vocational knowledge and skills by them; they also provide students with the tools they need to become self-employed or employable and keep up with changing industry knowledge and skills. The contribution of technical and vocational education and training to the socioeconomic development of Ghana is anticipated to be substantial. Technical institutes, vocational institutes, secondary technical schools, and apprenticeship training centers are currently among the streams in technical and vocational education and

training.

Tertiary Education

Tertiary education is defined as instruction given beyond the secondary level. It is made up of universities, polytechnics, specialized schools, colleges of education, and other institutions that offer training leading to certification and degrees. In addition to producing high- and middle-level human capital for the various economic sectors, postsecondary education aims to develop critical and analytical thinking skills as well as the knowledge and skills necessary for doing both basic and applied research. Higher education is crucial to the generation, sharing, and use of knowledge to address developmental demands in the current knowledge-based economy. It also plays a part in promoting synergies throughout the economy and fortifying the whole educational system (Ministry of Education, 1994). The country's educational system must be strengthened at all levels by correcting any anomalies or deficiencies in order to guarantee the provision of high-quality education and to meet the goals of postsecondary education, national well-being, and economic development. A strong foundation in basic and secondary education is crucial for the success of postsecondary education and obtaining a top-notch tertiary education will be challenging in the absence of a strong basic education (Buama, L. K., 2009).

Case Study Description

Study Area Overview (Quality Education)

In any school system, receiving a high-quality education is essential. The provision of high-quality education is in the best interests of the government, the Ghana Education Service (GES), the Ministry of Education (MOE), and collaborating organizations in Ghana. It involves putting the right procedures in place, such as providing high-quality inputs and delivery throughout the educational process, to help produce exceptional educational results. Education in Ghana aims to produce well-rounded individuals who possess the information, skills, values, and aptitudes needed for self-actualization as well as for the country's socioeconomic and political transformation (Abdi, A. and Alie, C., 2005). The educational system's primary goal is to educate students using this comprehensive and superior method. To do this, the student must develop academically, psychologically, spiritually, emotionally, physically, and instinctively. Only then will they be able to favorably influence the nation's progress and adapt to advancements in other fields as well as technology. The purpose of the Ghanaian government's education

vision is to provide high-quality education to everyone by allocating sufficient funds and resources to meet these objective at all educational levels. Thus, it is crucial to establish an atmosphere that will support and encourage the provision of high-quality instruction in Ghana’s educational system. For this reason, learning and teaching should take place in settings that are gender-sensitive, secure, well-resourced, and have enough amenities. To provide a quality education, a teacher must apply child-centered approaches in well-managed classrooms and schools. This process requires qualified and motivated educators in addition to effective time management, skillful assessment, positive attitudes toward learning, efficient supervision, and good discipline. Other important components of quality education delivery include the efficient use of ICT as a teaching tool (Boateng, F., 1990).

Case Study Background

Parents’ influence and pressure are keeping a large number of Ghanaian secondary school students, who range in age from thirteen to seventeen, from pursuing their career goals. They settle for a job they’re not passionate about just to keep the peace at home, but they wind up failing

miserably at meeting all of the standards. Because of this, many of them feel depressed and unfulfilled, as if they are not living up to their potential. Students are unable to choose suitable programs to pursue at the Senior High School level due to a lack of assistance at the Junior High School level. Students from rural and suburban areas are disadvantaged greatly by this arrangement, which, if left unchecked, would support the aristocratic educational system that the government is rightfully trying to stop (Ministry of Education, 2002). In fact, research shows that choosing a profession that is a good fit for one’s personality and strengths actually leads to greater happiness and success. A student’s career choice is a crucial decision that they will face throughout their education. Given the gravity of the decision, it is essential to have access to accurate and sufficient information. Quality education is one of the Sustainable Development Goals that this study aims to fulfill. Improving Ghana and Africa as a whole is its primary goal. It is commonly believed that education is the key to resolving global socioeconomic issues, including hunger, poverty, and insecurity. The importance of education cannot be overstated (Fafunwa, A. B. and Aisiku, J., 1982).

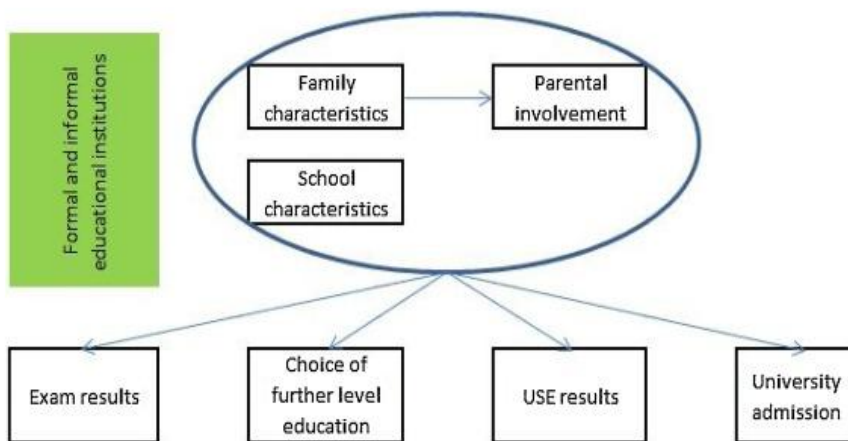


Figure 2 – Impact of parental involvement on children’s performance in school

Table 1 – SWOT analysis was performed to highlight the benefits and drawbacks of the study areas

<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Amazing contents - Suitable for junior secondary schools and Ministry of Education - Tele-counseling feature - Algorithm for suggested career choices - User friendly, highly interactive and engaging 	<p>Weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students in junior secondary schools may not have access to it. - Data subscription constraints - System Updates - Phone software compatibility - Network Constraints - Mobile device or laptop constraints
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<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The availability of the internet - The younger generation spends a lot of time on their digital devices. - The Tele-counseling feature on career choice will be great as they would be able to express themselves better and get answers to burning questions. 	<p>Threats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Online career coaching academy - Cyber Insecurity
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Methodology

A variety of publications on studies of quality education were sourced from several journal databases, including ResearchGate and Open Access journals. This research aims to mitigate the challenges associated with choosing a career path that equips students with the knowledge needed to achieve their full potential. Consequently, they will flourish as individuals and fulfill their purpose in the world. Adolescents in secondary schools, aged 13 to 17, frequently choose not to pursue their intended careers because of peer pressure and parental influence. Additionally, we wanted to know if they would be interested in a user-friendly mobile app that would support their profession decision and persuade their parents. A survey was carried out via Google, with 23 secondary school students

participating. A digital platform that provided solutions to their most pressing career-related queries was what 97% of them wished for. 99% of respondents to the study said they would use the suggested mobile application to take care of their needs. As reported by Career Hunter on February 14, 2017, a startling nine out of ten individuals between the ages of thirteen and seventeen regretted hurrying their career decisions. Many of them chose a university course at random because they had no idea what they wanted to do and felt pressured to decide because they were “running out of time. “The primary approaches used for the research were descriptive and content analyses of business ideate projects. In addition, a SWOT analysis was performed to highlight the benefits and drawbacks of the study area’s user-friendly career-advising software for mobile devices.

Table 2 – Survey Data

1. Did you run a survey?	Yes
2. Who did you target and how many participants were there?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adolescents in Junior Secondary School Students between the age of 14 and 16. - 23 participants took part in the survey.
3. How did you run the survey? Online, over the phone, etc.	Online (Google Form)
4. What categories of questions did you ask?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What do you enjoy doing without being paid for? - What do you enjoy doing but you would love to be paid for it? - How has it enhanced your choice of career? - What’s your desired career? - Are your parents, relatives, friends and teachers in support? - Would you be willing to use an application that could enhance your choice of career? - What features do you look forward to in a mobile application that could enhance your choice of career as well as convince your parents?
5. What were you trying to determine?	We were trying to determine the prevalence of adolescents who would like to use the mobile app; and 91.3% answered yes.
6. What was the breakdown of participants’ ages, gender, etc.?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Age 10-13(17.4%) 14-16(82.6%) - Gender Male 26.1% Female 73.9%
What was the most important data point?	93.1% of Participants will love to use the mobile App. We need to include this answer in our SWOT Analysis.

Young individuals who undervalue the education necessary to achieve their goals should anticipate that, given their upbringing and academic achievement, their early working years will be more difficult than they would have imagined. The fact that the majority of young people with aspirations that don't match their education come from underprivileged families is especially concerning. Career counseling has long been used to facilitate the labor market's smooth operation. It is now evident that it addresses inequality in an equally significant way. Reviews of the scientific literature indicate that young people who engage in school-based career development activities may generally, though not always, anticipate improvements in their future employment and academic performance. Young people who participate in effective career development programs can expand their career aspirations, have a better grasp of the connection between school and employment, and become more aware of the steps necessary to reach their objectives. Parents can have a significant and beneficial influence on decisions that impact a young person's career development. However, they also issue a warning that parental influence as a beneficial source might be compromised by excessive involvement in the decision-making process. Negative effects arise from parents overly controlling adolescents' career choices. It is important to warn parents against setting unrealistic expectations for their kids or taking their achievements personally. Therefore, parents ought to let their teenagers find their identity on their own, even though they should show genuine interest in and support of their career goals. Some teenagers are terrified of their parents' rejection if they decide to pursue a career in theater, music, or the arts rather than a lucrative field like law or medicine. If parents make it apparent that they have no particular expectations for their child's job, then the child will feel free to explore a wider choice of professions and choose one based on their own likes rather than those of their parents. (Education for All Global Monitoring Report, 2005). Figure 2 shows how parental involvement affects children's performance in school.

Results and Discussion

In addition to the financial consequences, numerous scientific studies demonstrate that choosing

the incorrect professional path can lead to major health problems. In 2015–2016, there were 488,000 cases of work-related stress and depression, with a prevalence rate of 1,500 cases per 100,000 workers. One of the best methods to prevent uncertainty and poor job decisions is to take a career exam early in life. Actually, studies demonstrate that individuals who select a professional path that aligns with their aptitudes and personalities are happier and more successful.

Students in secondary schools were the focus of our study. The Career Guidance mobile application will serve as a means of providing them with the essential knowledge they need to realize their full potential. Consequently, they will flourish as individuals and fulfill their purpose in the world. A survey was undertaken in order to ascertain the target's needs, and twenty-three secondary school respondents participated. A digital platform that provided solutions to their most pressing career-related queries was what 97% of them wished for. According to the poll, 93.1% of participants said they would adore using the Career Guidance mobile app. The most significant insights from our research emerged from both qualitative and quantitative data are demonstrated in Figures 3-5.

In addition to the mobile app, our research aims to look at a potential software version of career guidance that secondary school students without smartphones could soon be able to access via computers. Career Hunters is the main rival, but research indicates that consumers are complaining about not being able to generate their report after the exam, excessive data usage, and a lack of materials as promised. Therefore, by keeping our suggested career guidance program user-friendly and avoiding too frequent maintenance concerns, we will make sure that it is free of such product defects. The implementation of the Career Guidance application will be used in the first year to guarantee that secondary schools and the Ministry of Education in Ghana's two capital towns will test it extensively. Later on, we shall go on to other regions of Ghana. More attention will be paid to career counselors, private schools, and ministries of education. Ghanaian students and government agencies will have downloaded and installed a significant number of the applications over the first five years of their release. We intend to establish partnerships with corporate, governmental, and school owners.

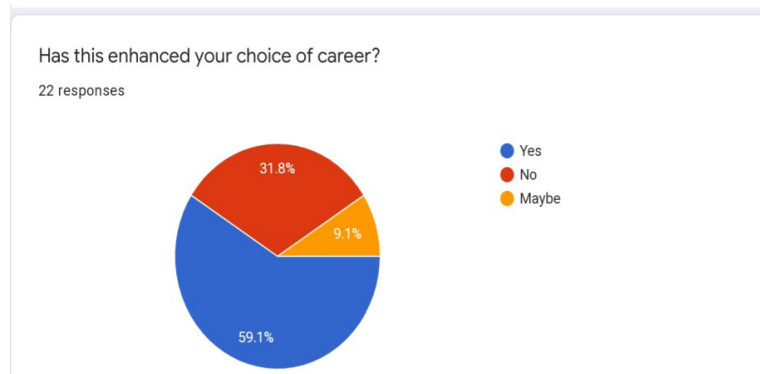


Figure 3 – The impact of the mobile app to the career choice

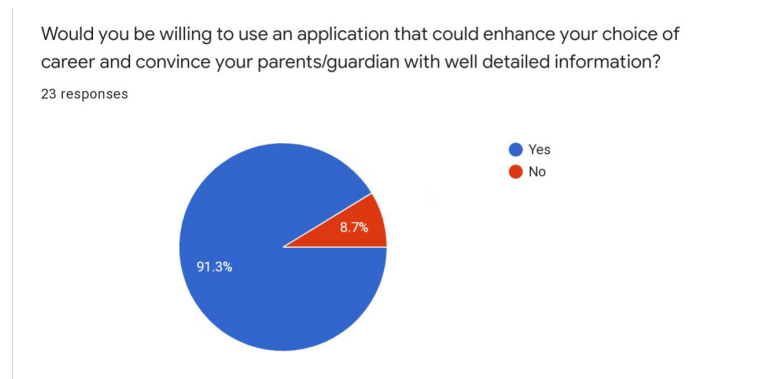


Figure 4 – Willingness to use the app in the future

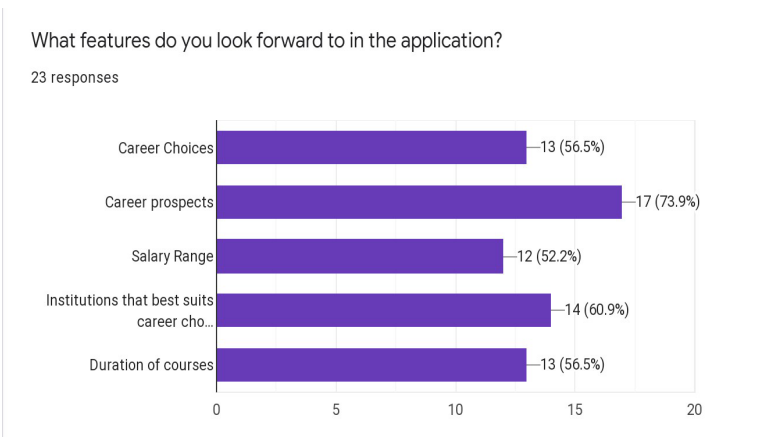


Figure 5 – Anticipated features of the app

Conclusion

Teenagers appreciated parental influence and guidance in the areas of career choice and occupational development. It's critical that parents support and encourage their children to explore all of their job alternatives in order to find the one that best suits them. The conversation should begin as soon as possible, and a large portion of the formative debate ought to

have taken place considerably earlier than this point of filling a specialty. Making poor decisions is less likely if the process is initiated early. Parents should exercise caution when discrediting their children's vocational aspirations. It is important to warn parents against setting unrealistic expectations for their kids or taking their achievements personally. Therefore, parents ought to let their teenagers find their identity on their own, even though they should show a

sincere interest in and support of their career goals.

When it comes to choosing a career in the arts, drama, or music over a high-paying profession like law or medicine, some adolescents are afraid of their parents' rejection. A child will feel free to explore a wider range of professions and choose one based on their own tastes rather than those of their parents if parents make it obvious that they have no specific expectations for their child's career. It is important for parents to stay in constant contact with their children and to support them in learning as much as they can about the areas of interest in their careers. Recognizing that their job is only to support their child in their career path, parents need to understand that letting their child make their own career decisions is the first genuine step toward adulthood for a young person. The aim of our study was to investigate the experiences that teenagers in Ghanaian secondary schools aged 13 to 17, consider while making profession decisions. We also planned to investigate the experiences that could offer obstacles.

The purpose of this study was to identify recurring themes in the experiences and thought processes of secondary school students regarding career choice. We aimed to gauge their perceptions of the new product we are developing, which is designed to significantly assist them in making informed career decisions and

convincing their parents of their choices. This study seeks to address the challenges that secondary school students face in selecting a career path. Research indicates that most secondary school students lack adequate information for making well-informed career decisions. Most students are still in the process of enrolling, which causes them to get frustrated after graduation or possibly quit altogether. The purpose of the Career Guidance mobile app is to guarantee that these students have access to the data they require in order to make informed career decisions. The mobile app will assist in raising the standard of the school, give parents useful information about their wards' preferred careers, and assist students in making well-informed career decisions. Additionally, it will increase instructors' effectiveness by assisting them in realizing how different every child is and how to connect with them most effectively. The fourth Sustainable Development Goal—Quality Education—is being addressed by the Career Guidance mobile app. Bringing about constructive change in Ghana (Africa) and the global community is its main goal. Most people agree that the best way to address global socioeconomic issues like hunger, poverty, and instability is through education. Since its importance cannot be overstated, education is essential (McWilliam, H.O.A. and Kwamena-Poh, M.A., 1975).

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