

Rudolf Steiner University College

Master Programme in Waldorf Education

**Master Thesis**

GUIDANCE COUNSELLING AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT IN CAMEROON:

POST SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES.

**Deborah Seh Beng**

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**Rudolf Steiner University College**

Master Programme in Waldorf Education

Oslo, Norway

## Abstract

Career development is a part of every young Cameroonian student's dream. Education is portrayed by various studies as a medium to realise this career dreams which often entails; being educated in order to acquire jobs and live a good life. In order for these youths to acquire the education that prepares them and enables them to build and manage their careers, guidance counselling is highlighted as a great tool. Guidance counselling in secondary school assists the students amongst others, to make good decisions about study subject and planning a path into career development. Through this assistance, youth would be able to better pursue careers which may enable them not only to participate in the functioning of the society, but to be social and economically stable.

To get insight into this phenomenon, a qualitative research designed was employed. With the use of qualitative interviews, made up of semi-structured questions, data was collected from four post secondary school students in Cameroon and analysed upon the study's conceptual framework; consisting of human capital, functionalism, and education as a necessity for life theories, and the concept of welfare.

The analysed research findings revealed that education was a vital tool to acquire jobs and to ensure wellbeing for both the recipients and their society as a whole. Meanwhile, guidance counselling was highlighted as a very important vessel to achieve economic and social success in life. More so, many ideas were suggested for making the service more effective.

The conclusion drawn from this study was that, guidance counselling is a very important tool for students career development and that it was necessary for parents and teachers to work together with the guidance counsellor, to provide the best assistance for the students.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

The objective of this research study is to investigate young people's perceptions of guidance counselling offered in secondary\high schools in assisting students at this level with career development challenges in Cameroon. The study is as well focusing to seek potential suggestions which may contribute in rendering even better quality guidance counselling service to these students. This study therefore, builds on post-secondary school students' (former secondary\high school students from general education backgrounds) experiences to investigate this phenomenon.

In this chapter I discuss the background of my study beginning with a briefing of what the guidance counselling program entails in secondary schools and its place in education in Cameroon. I also present and explain my personal motivations for embarking on this research journey, the research questions and the concepts used to explore the phenomenon of interest, as well as the aims and contributions of the study. Moreover, a brief introduction of how the research project was carried out is outlined, and I close the chapter with an outline of my thesis' layout.

## 1.1 Background to the study

The guidance counselling program in schools and secondary schools in particular, focuses on assisting students make considerable choice of study subjects; choice of high school and tertiary education. The program also strives at enhancing students' discipline and scheduling; reduce dropout rate as well as helping them make relevant career decisions. Therefore, the service does not only help students bridge transition challenges from one level of schooling to another (primary to secondary, secondary to post-secondary, post-secondary to tertiary). On the contrary, it also increases their awareness about educational opportunities and career development. The assumption is that students may be exposed to crime, dropout, or make adverse decisions about their educational and career development choices if not properly guided. In sum, the program focuses on the academic, career, and personal development of the individual (Basham, 2011; Chireshe, 2006; Gladding, 2012; Kelechi & Ihouma, 2011; Kuhn, 2004; Ojo & Rotimi, 2006; Zabel, 2007). However, some studies have expressed doubts coming from some students and parents regarding the place of guidance counselling to students' education and career development path in particular (Canada Millennium

Scholarship Foundation [CMSF] and Canadian Career Development Foundation, [CCDF] 2004; Zabel, 2007).

Nonetheless, guidance counselling services in secondary schools, according to Schiersmann, Ertelt, Katsarov, Mulvey, Reid, & Weber (2012), requires the expertise of a trained guidance counsellor to provide students with the best possible assistance as far as career development is concerned. The counsellor therefore, is expected to assist students in a double folded matter; firstly, he\she assist students with making choices about study subjects and secondly about career decisions and development. However, with the changing world of work today, this distinction is no longer valid. Consequently, both aspects are treated side by side, with the later typically referred to as career guidance counselling. The school is regarded as a vital tool to promote and enhance this move. In other words, the school should, through the aid of guidance counsellors, help students acquire sound education and also prepare them in the area of career development (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2013; Kelechi & Ihuoma, 2011). But what specifically does career guidance counselling sought for? People may ask.

According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the World Bank (WB), the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Educational and Training (CEDEFOP) and the European Training Foundation (ETF), career guidance counselling helps to promote and achieve the following goals:

- **Lifelong learning:** combating early dropout rates from school and ensuring efficiency in education and training so that adequate knowledge and skills are available in the society; necessary for the labour market.
- **Labour market goals:** guaranteeing the match between demand and supply in the labour market, taking care of unemployment and enhancing labour mobility.
- **Social equity goals:** supporting equal opportunities for all and fostering social inclusions regardless of gender, culture, religion or race.

The idea behind these goals is that individuals are likely to becoming more motivated and productive if, with the help of guidance counselling, they are able to make good decisions in relation to their interest, abilities and desires, of study and of work. Thereby providing

opportunities to all in the society to be socially 'equal' and to feel more included (Hansen, 2006; UNESCO, 2013).

Apparently, the concept and goals behind guidance counselling (and career guidance counselling which is a part of the service) has become so attractive that many nations around the world and Cameroon in particular, have now integrated the concept into their educational systems. By so doing, they have included the program into their educational curriculum and view it as one of the very important activities students have to benefit from.

The place of guidance counselling in Cameroon schools is portrayed in the "orientation law on Cameroon education (law No. 98/004 of 14 April 1998) .... Educational counselling and psychological activities shall be carried during the child's period of schooling at all levels of education" (Mesonge, 2012, p. 3). This implies that the Cameroonian educational authorities are of the conviction that the guidance counselling program is crucial to the education and development of its students. Therefore, as a way of reminding stakeholders of the importance of the program to education, the second Friday of October each year has been set aside as the national day for guidance counselling in the country. In as much as the day is intended to commemorate the initiation of the guidance counselling program to schools, it is also set aside as a day to sensitize the students and the general public of its importance on every aspects surrounding the learners' education and their career development in particular ("10<sup>th</sup> edition for the national day of guidance counseling-Cameroon minister of secondary education Louise Bapes Bapes", 2015).

However, the bone of contention at this point is what young students in particular actually know of the concept guidance counseling in regards to career development, and how valuable they and the Cameroonian society at large view the concept. Moreover, how effective is the service provided to secondary/high school students, and what is demanded to make the service even better? These questions are raised considering that certain studies such as Bomda, (2008a) and Mesonge, (2012), as well as some individuals in the society persistently talk of the malfunctioning of the service and its providers in helping students with academic and career 'orientation.'

These worries and concerns come at a time when many individuals and scholars in the Cameroonian society today are not only laying blames of high level of youths' unemployment on the lack of available jobs in the Cameroonian labour market and on the

high rate of corruption, bribery and fraud; on the contrary, many are now pointing accusing fingers on either the absence of, and or the lack of proper guidance and counselling services rendered to secondary/high school students, prior to higher education studies (Bomda, 2008; Mungwa, 2013; 10<sup>th</sup> edition for the national day of guidance counselor – Cameroon minister of secondary education Louise Bapes Bapes, 2015). Consequently, guidance counselling of students at the secondary/high school level is increasingly a topic of discussion on many platforms nowadays. However, many schools (especially those of the private sector) have no or very few guidance counsellors – leaving the students lacking. On the other hand, those that have are not visited by a great deal of students; their importance is still to be known by many (Mungwa, 2013).

## **1.2 Personal motivation**

Amazingly, my interest for this topic started rather unconsciously. As is the case with many, if not all Cameroonian youths, I was ambitiously looking forward upon graduating and obtaining my bachelor's degree in the early 2000s, to find a job and to have and live 'a good settled adult life'. However, one year after graduating from the university, nothing of that dream was realized and neither did it look like it would. Many of us young graduates began searching and engaging in just anything worth generating an income. I can still hear the voices of many parents/guardians including mine, blaming the government for 'frustrating' young people's lives by not providing jobs for them. This was and is especially so because from personal experience, education (formal schooling) is regarded as a gateway to acquiring jobs and living a good socioeconomic life, not just for the beneficiary but also for his/her family.

However, apart from blaming the government, there was always this little voice from within which kept asking if I had made the right decisions along my educational ladder thus far. Between 2010 and 2012, it was like I had found the answer; in many media platforms and social gatherings, the need for, absence and 'poor' guidance counselling service always surfaced when discussions about youth unemployment, unambitious attitude and deplorable socioeconomic wellbeing arose. I then recalled that while in secondary school, many of us saw no reason visiting the guidance counsellor's office despite her countless efforts at making students know her roles – a similar situation is still registered today unfortunately (Mungwa, 2013). It then dawned on me to investigate young people's experiences with the guidance counselling program in assisting them with career development today. This interest

was even more stimulated when on several occasions, where I had had conversations or listened to other Cameroonians discuss the social and economic plight of youths, the conclusions has among others issues, being the lack of guidance counselling to secondary school students. My interest was then drawn to find out, and to make a contribution on the importance of guidance counselling in fostering the social and economic wellbeing of the youth and the society at large. Therefore, I moved on to find a question that can enable me gain insight into and throw light on this interest.

### **1.3 Research question**

In order to understand the importance of guidance counselling to career development and to bring forth relevant contributions on the subject, I decided to explore former secondary/high school students' experiences with guidance counselling focusing on career development. This was done through the help of the following research questions:

***Main research question:*** What are post-secondary school students' experiences with guidance counselling in relation to their career development in Cameroon?

- How can guidance counselling services be improved to benefit secondary school students? (This question serves as the main contribution to my study.)

In Cameroon like in many countries, education is a vital tool in achieving growth and development. The education a person acquires is expected to build competencies and empower him or her to be able to contribute positively in his/her personal growth and in the advancement of the society at large (Mungwa, 2013; Tatangang, 2011). Consequently, Mungwa (2013, p. 8-9) asserts thus “the importance of the crucial role of guidance counselling to serve as a motivation for education”. Guidance counselling is therefore a very important player to assist youths in realising these roles.

Through the above stated main research questions I therefore wish to explore post-secondary school students' experiences with and perceptions about the guidance counselling program. This is in a bit to contribute in emphasizing the importance of the program to present and future secondary/high school students' career development in relation to enhancing socio-economic welfare. Meanwhile, to facilitate this overall research contribution, the second part of the research question, aims to bring forth contributions to the improvement of the service.

Using a basic interpretive qualitative study design which enables individuals to construct meaning of their experiences on a phenomenon, I interviewed four post-secondary school students in Cameroon. I also made use of various theories and concepts, as the conceptual framework of this study in order to gain insight into my research question. These were: *the human capital theory* which emphasizes the relationship between acquiring education and work/social wellbeing, *education as a necessity of life* which portrays education as an absolute necessity for the growth and continuity of a society, *functionalism theory* which presents education as a vital part in society's functioning, and the *concept of social welfare* which is concerned with human wellbeing.

#### **1.4 The aim and contribution of this research**

The aim of this research is to find out the importance of guidance counselling to youths' career development in Cameroon. Through this, the study seeks to contribute to the enforcement and improvement of guidance counselling services in providing students with a sense of direction as far as career development is concerned. The underlining notion is career guidance counselling (as highlighted by various studies and authors presented in this thesis) could be a key tool in lighting a candle for a brighter social and economic wellbeing for not only themselves but their families and the society in general. Thus this research study will be a contribution to the body of knowledge of education in connection to social welfare.

Therefore, the contribution of my study is mostly for general education secondary/high school students, who usually are victims of unemployment and related socioeconomic plight (Mungwa, 2013). In addition, the study centers on secondary school students most preferable from Form three to five (these are the upper forms in the first cycle of secondary education) and those in the Lower and Upper Sixth classes (constituting the high school or second cycle of secondary education in Cameroon) since they are at the level where decision making and preparing for higher education and entering the job market is crucial.

#### **1.5 The structure of this thesis**

To facilitate understanding and coherence of this thesis, the thesis is divided into six main chapters, outlined briefly below:

The introduction: This chapter presents a brief background on guidance counselling - the central topic of this research, as well as the rationale for the study. It further presents my personal motivation behind the study, the research questions which facilitated my research

project and an explanation of the aims and contributions of the study. Moreover, the chapter highlights the method and methodology and the conceptual framework of my research and ends up with an outline of the thesis structure.

**The literature review:** The first section of this chapter presents a detailed overview of the concept of guidance counselling (relating to career development) from an international and national perspective. Discussions and arguments from previous related studies as well as emerging theories and concepts from the fields of education and social welfare; as they relate to the subject of guidance counselling and career development, are also presented. The second section of the chapter presents the conceptual framework and its constituting theories and concept, derived from the literature, and constituting the study's foundation.

**Methods and methodology:** The qualitative research design employed and the epistemological/ontological stance respectively, used as the philosophical background of this study are highlighted and justified. This chapter also provides a detailed description of the data collection procedure and the coding and categorization process of data analysis. The chapter closes with information about maintaining qualitative in the study; that is information on validity, reliability and reflexivity, together with the code of ethics employed in this study.

**Research findings:** The data generated from the interviews; specifically reporting the interviewees' experiences and perceptions are presented in this chapter.

**Discussion:** The findings are discussed and interpreted in relation to the conceptual framework, the literature review and my own intuition, as they bring forth important contributions to the enhancement of the guidance counselling program on secondary/high school students' career development.

**Conclusion:** In this chapter, a wrap off of the research findings and recommendations for further practice are made. The study's strength and limitations as well as areas for suggested further research are also presented.

## 2 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter opens with a brief introduction to the historical evolution of the guidance counselling program. It then proceeds to discuss what the program entails and its place in secondary schools. The subsequent sub chapters dwell into discussions and arguments on the importance of guidance counselling to students' career development and on how the service could be provided much better in Cameroon. The curtains for this literature review chapter are drawn with the presentation of the thesis' conceptual framework.

### **2.1 The origin and evolution of guidance counselling**

The aim of these historical overviews is to provide a base for understanding the development and the use of the guidance counselling concept in this research study.

#### 2.1.1 The history of guidance counselling from an international viewpoint

The level of development of the concept guidance and counselling differs among countries because it is old to some, while relatively new to others. In addition, writers like Aubrey (1977, 1982) states that guidance counselling is comparatively new to other professions and has since been a mix-match of other disciplines such as physiology, anthropology, and sociology.

The origin of guidance counselling is traced back to the late 1890s and early 1900s in the United States of America (USA). With the end of the agrarian revolution, cities in the USA witnessed rapid influx of migrants from the rural areas seeking for work in established factories in the cities. The outcome was a change in social and economic situations.

Residential areas became tightly populated, schools had larger numbers of students with varying backgrounds, and many people, especially the youths, were unemployed and poor. The deplorable conditions of unemployed youths especially, called for urgent need to make their lives better and to solving social problems arising within the communities. Moreover, there was need to help students overcome the post traumatic effects of the First World War (Aubrey, 1977; Goodyear, 1984; Oye, Obi, Mohd & Bernice, 2012; Chireshe, 2006). It was thus out of these concerns that the guidance counselling movement was born.

From the resulting situation, Frank Parson, often referred to as the founder of the guidance movement, instituted the Boston Vocational Bureau in 1909. His perception was “choosing a vocation was a matter of relating three factors:

1) a clear understanding of yourself, your aptitudes, abilities, interests, ambitions, sources, limitations and their causes; 2) a knowledge of the requirements and conditions of success, advantages and disadvantages, compensation, opportunities and prospects in different lines of work; 3) true reasoning on the relations of these two groups of facts (Parson 1909, p. 5).

Parson’s goal was to help young people learn about their strengths and weaknesses; he believed such knowledge could enable them make good vocational choices. Consequently, at that time, guidance counselling was highly focused on problem avoidance, character building and the world of work; making it vocational in nature. Studies hold that until date, however, guidance counselling practice the world over is largely built on the foundation of Parson’s thoughts (Gladding, 2012; Ojo & Rotimi, 2006).

Others pioneers in the development of the guidance movement amidst others were; Clifford Beers, Eli Weaver and Jesse Davis who instituted the first guidance program in US’s public schools in the late 1930s. From then on, the concept shifted on to various professions such as the health section and travelled far and wide to various countries.

### 2.1.2 The history of guidance counselling from a national viewpoint

Guidance counselling has in various forms, existed in Cameroon and other African countries for many years. However, according to UNESCO (2000), guidance counselling formally started and became integrated into the education system in most African societies only during the late fifties (1950s). This started as a result of numerous social and economic plights of the youths (girls in particular). This plight emerged in part with the breakdown of extended family ties; extended family members (uncles, aunties, cousins) hitherto acted as counsellors to their young ones. The former taught the latter about various professions and trades practiced within their communities and about their local rules and norms (Adegoke & Culbreth, 2000).

Consequently, African education ministers resolute that their educational system would be a key player to addressing the ills faced by these youths and in enhancing their growth and

development. As a result, in April 1997, a board of governors consisting of education ministers from various African countries was formed to see to and run the affairs of the guidance counselling program (UNESCO, 2000) in Africa.

## **2.2 The concept of guidance counselling**

Before diving into the core concern of my study, (students' experiences with guidance counselling in connection to their career development and how the service can be improved in Cameroon) it is necessary to shed some light on the key constituting concept; guidance counselling, in order to grasp its background meaning.

There are varying definitions to the concept of guidance and counselling and some writers have attempted making distinctions between the two. UNESCO (2000) defines guidance as:

A process, developmental in nature, by which an individual is assisted to understand, accept and use his/her abilities, aptitudes and interests and attitudinal patterns in relation to his/her aspirations....guidance as an educational construct involves those experiences that assist each learner to understand him/herself, accept him/herself, and live effectively in his/her society (p. 7).

It also defines counselling as “a learning-oriented process, which occurs usually in an interactive relationship, with the aim of helping a person learn more about the self, and to use such understanding to enable the person to become an effective member of society” (UNESCO, 2000, P. 7).

On their part, Ojo & Rotimi (2006) refer to guidance as awareness educational services provided to help people understand themselves, in accordance with accurate, reliable and valid information on themselves and their environment. They also define counselling as “a process of helping individuals or group of people to gain self-understanding in order to be themselves” (p. 2). Meanwhile, Gladding (2012, p. 6) emphasizes that “guidance centers on helping individuals choose what they value most, whereas counseling help them make changes”. Notwithstanding, some studies affirm that counselling is basically a component of guidance. In other words, that guidance comprises of many service of which counselling is one of them (Chireshe, 2006; UNESCO, 2013; Oluremi, 2014)

Drawing a margin between these concepts seems difficult, taking a closer glance at the definitions highlighted so far because as some writers put it, both words are overlapping in

meaning. Shertzer and Stone (1976, cited in Oluremi, 2014) concurs with this view and argues that attempts to differentiate between these concepts has been unsuccessful. Although UNESCO (2000) agrees that a distinction of these concepts is usually difficult, it however harmonises with Oluremi (2014) with the opinion that differences between guidance and counselling can more or less be made and depends on the context and theoretical orientations with which they are employed.

Meanwhile the debate to distinguish between both concepts continues, as exemplified above, many authors have come to the conclusion that both concepts are similar and overlapping in meaning. As such, many as well as Cameroon use the term “guidance counselling”, side by side and so shall it be adopted in this study. Meanwhile, the discussion will be based on guidance counselling more or less from a Cameroonian context since the term is applied differently in different countries (Hansen, 2006).

Although the basis of this study is not on building differences and similarities between the concepts guidance and counselling, it is however imperative to elaborate on this aspect so as to provide understanding, clarity and set the frame for my study.

Guidance and counselling services are provided to assist individuals with all sorts of problems and decision making across different fields of life as I have explained above. Amongst these is guidance counselling addressing individuals’ career issues, referred to as career guidance counselling. The focus in my research project is on career guidance counselling services provided in educational institutions. But what is it about?

It is worth noting here that, my use of the term career guidance counselling in this research project does not in any way insinuate that career guidance counselling and guidance counselling are two separate departments in secondary schools in Cameroon. On the contrary, and as mentioned earlier, career guidance counselling is a service within guidance counselling. As such, it is in this sense that it is used.

### 2.2.1 Career guidance counselling

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2004) and in the World Bank report define career guidance as “services intended to assist individuals, of any age and any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers” (UNESCO, 2013, p. 242). This definition implies

providing assistance to individuals as they make various choices in relation to their career development path. It is therefore, far from implying; making choices for people or persuading them to choose one opportunity over another, as usually misunderstood by some. In contrast, career guidance counselling is concerned with making information available and providing it to individuals, about the world of work, educational and employment opportunities. Moreover, individuals are assisted in making various choices based on interest, abilities and skills, in relation to available opportunities (Hansen, 2006; Oye et al., 2012; UNESCO, 2013).

However, many may raise the following question; ‘where are the available opportunities for youths to choose from?’ This is because Cameroon is characterized by limited economic and social choices, coupled with high rate unemployment and underemployment. To add to this worry, Hansen (2006) makes reference to a study by Watts and Fretwell who emphasized that a country’s decision to invest in career guidance should be guided by the condition that individuals in the said country are able and free to make independent career decisions. In other words, that the country possesses the necessary resources for people to make decisions. Therefore, is guidance counselling indeed an option for a country as Cameroon? Notwithstanding, and to address the above question, Hansen (2006) argues that low and middle income countries (LMIC) (such as Cameroon) like high income countries decided to invest in career guidance counselling for various reasons. Inclusive is the reason that:

Low-or middle-income country also recognizes that human resource development is an integral part of overall national economic development and the promotion of social solidarity. Employers in LMIC also increasingly recognize the need to encourage their workers, and youths, to develop new skills to meet rapidly changing skills demands (Hansen, 2006, p. 5).

This implies many countries across the globe, including Cameroon deem it necessary for their youths in particular to develop both economically and socially so as to be able, not only to supply the market with apt labour, but also for them to acquire and live a sustainable life. Hence career guidance counselling is uphold as a medium through which young people in particular could be assisted to make educational and occupational decisions in the view of attaining this sustainable life (Mungwa, 2013).

Therefore to facilitate this process of assisting individuals make educational and occupational choices, career guidance counselling services are provided in educational institutions, work places and other community institutions. Since this study is focused on guidance counselling provide to secondary school students, I will as a result, draw our focus and center the discussion only around guidance counselling services provided in secondary educational (general education) settings to assist young people with educational and dealing with career development matters.

### **2.3 Guidance counselling in secondary schools and the role of the guidance counsellor**

The focus of this research project is to explore post-secondary school students' experiences with the guidance counselling program in relation to career development and to seek means by which the service could be rendered more effective to assist secondary school students in their career development journey. Therefore, in this sub chapter, I present a briefing of what the guidance counselling program entails in secondary schools and the role of the guidance counselor.

Chireshe, (2006) ascertain that the guidance counselling program focuses on assisting students make considerable choices of study subjects; choice of high school and tertiary education; enhancing students' discipline and scheduling; reduce dropout rate as well as helping them make relevant career decisions. These are made possible through a school guidance counsellor.

The school guidance counsellor is an individual educated and trained in guidance and counselling. He/she bears the responsibility of assisting students with a variety of issues relating to educational, vocational and social preoccupations. These include: providing students with ready information and knowledge about subjects of study, occupations and social challenges aligning to their studies. In other words, school guidance counsellors guide students to choose study subjects, plan and organize their studies and to have a better understanding of themselves. The intent is so that the students are empowered with the ability to face and manage their educational, personal and career development challenges in a more constructive manner. By so doing, the counsellors assist students with educational and career decision making. These activities are facilitated through counselling sessions executed on a one-on-one talk between the counsellor and an individual student, a discussion session with a

group of students, or in a classroom as a classroom lesson (Mungwa, 2013; Ojo & Rotimi, 2006; Oye et al., 2012; UNESCO, 2013; Schiersmann et al., 2012).

Oye et al., (2012) accentuates that, the decisions students should make with the help of guidance counselling, should be those with the capacity to lead them to successful completion of their education and a guide to the pathway of career planning and development. In the same voice, some studies hold that, the help and advice students receive from counsellors should enable them to pursue future and further learning, and develop careers which best suits their interest, abilities and values (Erford, House, & Martin, 2003; Schiersmann et al., 2012; UNESCO, 2013). However, the question remains if the program is indeed functioning in Cameroon in the manner that can enable students achieve these benefits.

In the preceding sub sections of this review of related literature, I have so far examined the concept of guidance counselling and its facilitator; the guidance counsellor. An understanding of these is crucial to building a comprehension of the other parts of this review. Before plunging into the importance of guidance counselling to students' career development; the focus of this present sub section, it will be vital to examine one more but important concept, constituting a great portion in this research project-career development.

### 2.3.1 Career development

To start with, today, the term *career* is defined in a more inclusive way as the sequence of work an individual performs in the course of his/her life (Arthur, Hall & Lawrence, 1989; Gysbers & Henderson, 2001; National Career Development Association [NCDA], 2003). The NCDA specifically, describes it as “the totality of work one does in his/her life time” (p. 2). To this, UNESCO (2013) makes it clear that the definition is inclusive of every individual's life long process of learning and work, and not his/her progression within an organization or occupation as career is referred to in the traditional sense of the word.

According to Gysbers & Henderson (2001, p. 2), within this context, *Development* on its part denotes “individuals are always in the process of becoming”. They argue that although focusing on different developmental areas (for example physical and intellectual) is vital, it is equally of key importance to integrate these areas in the discourse of career development. The definition of development in this regard, is rooted in comprehensive guidance and counselling which on its part is founded upon human development theory (human development deals with the freedom individuals have to become what and who they want to

be and to foster their wellbeing). Comprehensive guidance counselling by its name is the provision of guidance counselling in a more comprehensive, developmental manner (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001).

Accordingly, career developing is the “total constellation of psychological, sociological, educational, physical, economic, and chance factors that combine to influence the nature and significance of work in the total lifespan of any given individual ” (NCDA, 2003, p. 2). Career development, building on the explanations above, is a process individuals experience and engage in consciously or unconsciously. To this, Hansen (2006) adds that career development is not a onetime activity, rather a continuous process throughout one’s lifespan. Callahan and Garner (cited in Kelechi & Ihuoma, 2011), confirms this view with the assertion that career development is a “dynamic process that requires individuals to engage in the ongoing assessment, analysis, and synthesis of information about the world of work and self” (p. 52-53). However, for the sake of this study, I shall be dwelling only on career guidance assistance offered to students in secondary school because this is a crucial point of individual development.

According to developmental theories by Ginzberg, Ginsberg and Herma, for example this process usually begins as far back as childhood- where as children we have ‘dreams’ of what we want or wish to become when we grow up. It transcends through adolescent to adulthood and old age; thereby making it a lifelong process of learning and developing. While Erikson adds that, individuals face various crises that tend to shape their personality as they grow. This is depicted as a major challenge for adolescents in choosing careers. Consequently, it is important to assist these youths to make wise choices, considering that they are young people at the heart of personal development challenges.

#### **2.4 The importance of guidance counselling to secondary school students’ career development in Cameroon**

The significance of guidance counselling to secondary school students’ career development around the world and in Cameroon in particular, cannot be overemphasized. A number of reasons are associated with the importance of enhancing guidance and counselling for students’ career development in Cameroon. Some of these include: the significance of education to people’s lives, the need for adaptation to a highly dynamic 21<sup>st</sup> century, and the need to curb students’ or youths uncertainties with respect to career development.

#### 2.4.1 The role of education

For the sake of this study, the term education here is restricted to schooling or formal education. Education is held in high esteem in Cameroon and other societies; although it could bear different definitions, based on time and space. Nsamenang & Tchombe (2011) and UNESCO (2000) claim that before the insertion of western education (schooling/formal education) in Africa, the continent's education prepared individuals to take up various occupations, learn and inherit the rich cultural norms and values and caring for group members. These were the aspects necessary for the wellbeing and evolution of their communities. However, the table turned with the introduction of western education, introduced first by the early missionaries and then the colonial masters (Britain and France in the case of Cameroon).

The aim of education then became to facilitate the spread of the gospel message, trade and promote 'literacy'. Thus the indigenous people were now trained into and given diverse post of responsibilities such as interpreters, teachers, clerks, catechist, overseers and nurses. With this new culture, the conviction for schooling was that it would facilitate socioeconomic growth and provide the people with a good life (Cameroon Youths and Students Forum for Peace [CAMYOSFOP] & Friedrich Ebert Stiftung [FES], 2014; Mungwa, 2013; Nsamenang & Tchombe, 2011; Tatangang, 2011). CAMYOSFOP & FES (2014) emphasis this point with the assertion that "the aim of western education in Cameroon from inception was and has always been to prepare the beneficiary for work" (2014, p. 8). Nsamenang & Tchombe, (2011) and Tatangang (2011) hold the same view by confirming, though in dismay, that education in Cameroon was and is today still build upon achieving socioeconomic benefits. Mungwa (2013) sheds more light on this observation with the argument that "today, education is essentially for the purpose of choosing a career with the purpose of working to develop one's society ..., to solve the problem of our developing society" (p. 8-9). Hence it is in this regard that the term education is treated in this study; that is as a means of socioeconomic benefits.

Consequently, Mesonge (2012) in her study; *Cultural socialization patterns and its impact of female career choices in Cameroon* posits that, education is perceived as a pivot for young people most especially, to pursue 'great' careers and acquire well paid jobs. On the same grounds, Chireshe (2006) holds that children generally attain school to acquire education so

that they can have a better future, while Bottoms and Young (2008, p. 7) asserts; “School is about preparing students for success in life”.

Likewise, several studies acclaim education as the tool which prepares young people for a bright future, self fulfilled life with significant contribution to the social and economic well-being of themselves and their communities (Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation [CMSF] and Canadian Career Development Foundation, [CCDF] 2004; Hughes & Karp, 2004; Tatangang, 2011). In fact Tatangang (2011) maintains that education which does not enhance these aspects is “a waste of scarce resources” (p. 461). With education viewed this way, one could say education is a means to acquiring better social and economic life – vital for social wellbeing or welfare. Social welfare, Midgley (1997) asserts, manifest on three levels; providing people’s basic needs (for example, education, health and feeding), managing social problems (for example, unemployment and delinquency) and fostering wellness opportunities. These features according to Midgley (1997) are the fostering grounds for wellbeing.

From the above discussion, the idea of education envisaged as a lead to social and economic welfare could therefore be said to be embedded in educational and welfare theories such as the human capital theory, the theory of education as a necessity of life, functionalism theory and social welfare. Highlights of these theories as they relate to the topic of discussion are examined below.

#### 2.4.2 The theory of social welfare

The term, welfare or social welfare is entwined in a plethora of disciplines such as economics, social policy, sociology and psychology, and its application varies per country or society. There is bound therefore, to be variations in its definition, depending on the discipline under which it is understood and the society upon which it is applied (Greve, 2008). In addition, welfare can be understood both from a macro (society) and micro (individual) perspective rendering its definition “confusing because it refers to both a particular program and to the condition or well-being of a society.... the conditions of health, prosperity, happiness, and well-being” (Blau & Abramovitz, 2010, p. 21). Despite these discrepancies, some studies, deriving their interpretations from economic and sociological perspectives, have equated social welfare to wellbeing (the moments and aspects that enhances welfare in a society). Their argument is that individual and group welfare can be

determined by certain factors. These include; having a job and earning and using income, being happy or faring well (Blau & Abramovitz, 2010; Burchi, 2006; Greve; 2008; Sumner; 1996). Interpreting the findings of a Eurobarometer report on *poverty and exclusion* of some European countries, Greve (2008) goes further and contends

A clear relation can be found, for example, between objective poverty and those who find that having a good job is the most important necessity for having a good life.... welfare and a good life are connected to having a job (p. 55).

This is especially the case for low income countries like Cameroon where welfare is mostly on the micro level and not on the macro like most high income states. Therefore in the case of this study I am making use of Midgley's (1997) definition of social welfare in terms of human wellbeing – the state of faring or doing well, grounded in a merge of economical and sociological approaches (Greve, 2008). Simply put, most of us will agree to pursue good life than poor or bad life conditions. This wellbeing Sumner (1996) avers more or less are determined by decisions we make about life's factors such as work, marriage, education and having children or not. These decisions consequently, determines our social and economic viability; necessary for individual and community welfare. Consequently, quality guidance counselling can be an essential element to assist secondary school students in Cameroon make choices with positive impact on their career development, via the education they pursue. Hence, it could be said at this point that as far as this study is concerned, education becomes the vehicle to journey on to social and economic wellbeing; 'good life'.

At this juncture, some individuals might expostulate however that, presenting education in this manner ultimately implies it functions as machinery for human capital, (the production of skills and labour to the market) - a concept often criticised as far as the role of education is concerned. Be that as it may be, Burchi (2006) challenges this view, with the claim that education, which according to human capital propagators is one of the inputs to economic resources, allows people to have a better life. He adds that economic resources are vital only if people can use it to satisfy their needs. In line with this, Midgley (1997) points out that opportunities for people in a society to move forth and gain the ability for ensuring a wellbeing and satisfying their needs “can be enhanced by government educational programs, and most countries today invest extensively in education to promote these opportunities”

(p.5). Hence, education is very important for human welfare and development, and not merely for the provision of skills as postulated by human capital theorists (Sen, 1959, 1997).

### 2.4.3 Education as a necessity of life

Closely related to the previous concept discussed above, presenting education as a vehicle for social welfare is one amongst the theories in John Dewey's *Democracy and Education*; the theory of education as a necessity of life. According to Dewey (2007), the social life and existence of a given society is secured for continuity when the older members initiate and educate the younger members by means of communication or education, "into the interests, purposes, information, skills, and practices ... ideas, hopes, expectations, standards, opinions" (p. 2) of that group. Burchi (2006), Mohan (2012), and Oye et al., (2012) concur with Dewey's thoughts and advance the claim that education empowers an individual to know him or herself much better, empowers him or her to access information, acquire knowledge, values, norms and skills, and be able to use them for growth, survival and wellbeing.

Moreover, Dewey claims that "life" covers customs institutions, beliefs, victories and defeats, recreations and occupation.... but the continuity of life process is not dependent upon the prolongation of the existence of any one individual" (2007, 7-8), instead education fosters this continuity. He argues that by means of education, the older generation of society are able to communicate and transmit the customs and knowledge of the society to the youths and that through this communication process, the common interest of the society is shared and maintained. Dewey (2007) therefore depicts that education remains one of the most powerful tools to maintain the existence and continuity of a society. This is because people will die and be gone but the education of a society will always remain. However, He continues that teaching and learning of and by the youths of the survival of their society, is not sufficient to maintain the continuity of life in the society. Rather, he points out that:

Deliberate effort and the taking of thoughtful pains are required. Beings who are born not only unaware of, but quite indifferent to, the aims and habits of the social group have to be rendered cognizant of them and actively interested. Education, and education alone, spans the gap (p.8).

This gap of ignorance of the society's being and values can only be filled through education. Education as a main instrument is thus capable of empowering individuals and groups to

develop and be capable of maintaining the growth and continuity of that society, through the endeavours they make.

To this, Burchi (2006) argues for example that, education is a major ingredient for attaining food security in developing countries. Hence one could say the role of education to people's life cannot be under looked. This is because above other aspects, it serves as a security for and continuity of individual as well as a group's life, thereby being an aspect of absolute necessity (Dewey 2007). Therefore Chireshe (2006) argues that guidance counselling can assist youths acquire necessary education and to make potential career development choices to enable them attain sustainable lives.

In addition, Dewey (2007) asserts that living together educates, enables self-reflection and enables individuals to have a better understanding of their selves. In other words, by living and relating with each other in a society, people communicate and learn from one other. This enables them to discover who and what they really are. In the same way through the interaction with the guidance counsellors, secondary school students can come to understand their strength, abilities and develop the potentials for making good career development decisions.

#### 2.4.4 Functionalism theory

From a functionalist point of view, education is perceived as one of the constituting elements of society which contributes to maintain a good balance and well functioning society; social and economic welfare in this case. Mooney, Knox, and Schacht (2007) purport that functionalists like Emile Durkheim and Herbert Spencer demonstrate that society is made up of interrelated parts, working together for the common good of the society. Each constituting part of society therefore has a role to play in the overall stability of the whole. If one part fails to function properly, the entire system is affected.

The functionalists argue that education constitute a part of society which for example, “offers a way to transmit a society's skills, knowledge, and culture to its youth” (Mooney, Knox and Schacht, 2007, p. 1). This implies that for education to transpire, there must be an interaction between the old and young generation of a society. In case of failure of such interaction, the younger generation expected to be the new builders and torch bearers of their society, will be left incognizant of the nature of the society. Consequently, education will not occur.

According to the functionalist perspective therefore, if education which is one of the parts of

the system is dysfunctional, the social stability of the entire society will be distorted (Jones, 1986; Sever, 2012)

Moreover, functionalists view the role of education as that which prepares the youths to be citizens and workers who function in manners that ensures the survival of the larger society. It follows as a result that, though the growth of the individual being is necessary, it is the integration of the younger generation into the functioning of the larger society which is key to education. In other words, the need of the larger society surpasses that of the individual. Therefore, the role of education in the light of functionalism is to certify that the youths are integrated into the affairs of their society, provided with adequate skills and knowledge essential for taking up occupational roles (work) and meaningfully participating in the cohesion and stability of the society. This in summary constitutes what the functionalists refer to as the intellectual, social, political and economic purposes of education or schooling (Levinson, Cookson, & Sadovnik, 2002)

However, conflict theorists, typically spearheaded by the works of Marx and Weber, have criticised most of the functionalist theorists' assumptions on education. "Whereas functionalists view society as based on value consensus, conflict theorists tend to see the social order as a product of coercion and ideological manipulation" (Levinson, Cookson & Sadovnik, 2002, p.270). Conflict theorists argue that society is comprised of different groups of people and interest competing for power and interest in contrast to different parts working together as the functionalists claim. Consequently, education is seen as a mechanism that creates inequality in the society (Levinson, Cookson, & Sadovnik, 2002; Mooney, Knox, & Schacht, 2007; Sever, 2012).

Notwithstanding the aforementioned criticism of the functionalism theory in education, the functionalists maintain that the need of education differs in place and time. As a result, and based on the fact that my study analyses the value individuals in Cameroon especially, hold of education (portrayed by authors such as Mungwa, 2013 and Tatangang, 2011) as far as social and economic wellbeing is concerned, without much thoughts the importance of guidance counselling to give a hand to students' career development becomes, I dare to say apparently significant. Hence, my study situates itself within the functionalist perspective of education.

#### 2.4.5 Economic and social changes in the 21st century

The second major reason advanced for the importance of guidance counselling to secondary school students' career development in Cameroon is based on socioeconomic changes in this present 21<sup>st</sup> century. As Ziebell (2010, p. 2) puts, "the days of a lifetime career, a pension, and a gold watch at retirement are long gone". The 21<sup>st</sup> century due to globalisation and rapid technological advances, is witnessing a great deal of changes in all facets of life especially in the social and economic domain with particular focus on the world of work. Gysbers & Lapan (2009) declare that technological advances are moving so fast as near the speed of light causing massive changes and diverse social and individual values, and in the world of work.

In the world of work today, several studies argue that people are no longer choosing a career at a given time in their lives as it were the case some two decades ago. Rather, people now make various career changes and choices at various points of their working life based on their interest, skills, values and opportunities; in a bid to keep at pace with the change phenomenon (Gibson & Mitchell 2006; Gysbers & Lapan, 2009; Hansen, 2006; Tatangang, 2011; UNESCO, 2013). For this reason, individuals have to learn various competences as they oscillate among careers. Thus, "increasingly, learning and work are intertwined, on a lifelong basis" (UNESCO, 2013, p. 242-243); implying careers and education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have shifted from a lifetime to being a lifelong concept and process (Obi, Oye, Mohd, & Bernice, 2012).

Furthermore, propelled by technological advances and globalization, people now find themselves moving beyond borders to work in positions and places they never dreamt of. According to Hansen (2006, p. 14), "markets can now be global in scope....By 2000 there were 175 million international migrants....Of these, 86 million were migrant workers". This situation has instilled high competition and demands a flexibility of skills in the present labour market. Moreover, this state of affairs "are having and will have substantial impact on the career, personal/social, and academic development of our children and adolescents" (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006, cited in Gysbers & Lapan, 2009, p.x).

Against this backdrop, low and middle income countries such as Cameroon must prepare themselves to meet up with this trend. The way to this Tatangang (2011) claims is by providing sound guidance and counselling services to students in order to make educational

and career choices and decisions which better prepares them for work in this present era. Therefore, Bottoms and Young (2008) assert that students have to be soundly equipped in order to succeed today. In relation, Gibson & Mitchell (2006) emphasize the necessity for guidance counsellors to be aware and be up to date with this trend so they can assist students in the best possible way there is, with their decision making process towards career development.

The underlining notion here is that by means of guidance counselling, students will gain information about changes in the world of work especially, make educational and career choices which better prepares them to transit from school to the labour market, and be able to manage their careers (UNESCO, 2013) In addition, Sultana (2014) appraises the enormous contribution guidance counselling has on people's lives - career development being a part of life.

#### 2.4.6 Human capital theory

Adam Smith (1776) and Alfred Marshall (1890) formulated the basis of the human capital theory and years later Schultz (1961) and Becker (1962) gave more flesh to it and became the main advocates of the theory (Burchi, 2006; Mulongo, 2012). The human capital theory originally has its roots in the field of economics. However, for the sake of this study, the theory will be treated as it applies to the field of education. According to Psacharopoulos (2006, p. 144), the underlining assumption of the theory is: “the sacrifice of resources today for the sake of a stream of benefits in the future”. With this, the theory perceives education as an investment with financial benefits and a “determinant of economic growth” (Burchi, 2006, p. 195). Meanwhile Vila (2000, p. 21-22) argues that:

The economic benefits that education bestows are not limited to higher expected production or lower production costs. They could also consist in direct additions to welfare possibilities in terms of longer life expectancy, less criminal behaviour, stronger social cohesion or greater political participation.

Psacharopoulos (2006) illustrates these benefits with the claim that a more educated person is more likely to be more productive, earn higher income and to have a better welfare situation than a less educated person. One may therefore argue that education was introduced in some countries under the umbrella of benefaction. I make this claim because studies in Africa and Cameroon in particular assert that education was introduced during the post colonial era

mainly for the employability of its beneficiaries (CAMYOSFOP & FES, 2014; Nsamenang & Tchombe, 2011; Tatangang, 2011). Tatangang (2011) joins in with Nsamenang & Tchombe, (2011) to particularly lament that this model has not changed even today; a situation they blame to be the mind behind the educational system's production of "disappointing results for Africa" today (Nsamenang & Tchombe, 2011 p. 7).

In the educational terrain however, the human capital theory is often criticized for its attitude of operationalizing education as an economic good. Nonetheless, the theory cannot be avoided in Cameroon for example where education as Tatangang (2011) maintains, is considered a gateway to employment and 'good life' Burchi (2006) in harmony with Tatangang's (2011) assertion argues that "who is educated is more likely to find a job" (p. 197). As a result, education in a country like Cameroon is perceived as a mechanism to acquire good jobs and better life (CAMYOSFOP & FES, 2014; Tatangang, 2011). Even so, the human capital theory "stressed the significance of education and training as the key to participation in the new global economy" (Fitzsimons; 1999, para. 3). Cameroon is a part of this global economy hence this claim applies to it as well; I would say.

Consequently, I make use of the human capital theory in this study on account of the above mentioned premises. The reason is that as deduced from these studies, the human capital theory cannot be left out when the aim of education in Cameroon is being analyzed. Accordingly, in order for young people in Cameroon to make choices which could enable them acquire jobs and have a place in this highly competitive global market of today; guidance counselling could be of high importance (Fitzsimons, 1999; Hansen, 2006; Tatangang, 2011).

Notwithstanding, the human capital theory in education has always come under severe criticisms. I will now briefly present some of such criticisms. It is important to illuminate on this aspect so as to give this study its place within this theory.

#### 2.4.7 Criticisms of the human capital theory on education

Firstly, Mulongo (2012) asserts that the human capital theory has been criticized on account of portraying schooling as a machinery for supplying labour to the market and for presenting the labour market as being undoubtedly capable of absorbing various human capital.

Secondly, Fitzsimons (1999) argues that the theory fails to fathom human abilities and their activities beyond being commodities trade-off. This according to him, "is an impoverished

notion of capital” (para. 8). Finally, and closely linked to the first point, Blaug (1987), cited in Fitzsimons (1999) contends that the human capital theory should rather demonstrate that “not that education contributes to growth, but that more education would contribute more to growth at the margin that more health, more housing, more roads etc” (Blaug, 1987, cited in Fitzsimons, 1999, para. 11). Therefore he criticizes the theory on count that other activities and not only education, contribute to growth. He therefore goes ahead and disclaims the assertion of education being the promoter of growth, with his argument that there are other resources invested in to the educational system which are often left out when measurements about the gains of education to growth are made. This implies according to Blaug (1987, cited in Fitzsimons, 1999) that education cannot be certified as the major promoter of growth in a society because other costly resources have been invested into education whose cost must equally be evaluated before such conclusions are drawn.

In the light of Africa and Cameroon in particular, Nsamenang & Tchombe (2011) maintain that contrary to what was preached by the human capital theorists, “school education has not automatically brought economic growth and societal development in Africa”(p. 7). Rather the result has been mass unemployment amongst graduates, amidst an inadequate educational model.

Despite the aforementioned criticisms, however, I employ the human capital theory in this study because though in one way researchers such as Nsamenang & Tchombe (2011) and CAMYOSFOP & FES (2014) condemn its usage, they, on the other hand, conjointly agree with Tatangang (2011) that the human capital theory still is the dominant theory in most of Africa’s educational policies; Cameroon included. In support of the latter argument, Psacharopoulos (2006, p. 113) strongly argues that “education has some value, may be self-evident. Otherwise, why are trillions of dollars spent annually on education around the globe? Both states and individual who incur such expenses must expect a benefit in return”. Although Psacharopoulos (2006) heads on to illustrate that the said benefit of education can be easily measured in monetary than social benefit terms, he however maintains that “education is a big business” (p. 119). This implies some countries belief educational products are necessary for their socioeconomic development. Therefore the theory cannot be neglected when education and the career development of students is discussed.

Nevertheless, after the above analysis, I am aware that the theory does not cover every aspect as far education and human capital theory is concerned, as well as of its limitations. However, it is a useful tool to explore my research problem; considering the aim of education in Cameroon, examined above. Moreover, in the midst of these, the choice to make is left in the hands of the students; the reason why in my opinion, backed by the literature herein, the guidance counselling service could be improved to assist these students.

## **2.5 Secondary school students' uncertainty towards career development**

Another astonishing aspect for which my study lays emphasis on the importance of guidance counselling to Cameroonian secondary school students' career development is uncertainty. I harness the term uncertainty in this study in the sense of some students not being aware or capable of identifying career path they might wish to pursue upon completion of post secondary education, buttressed by, for example; Pond (2010); Reid & West (2010); Ziebell (2010). Pond (2010) purports that many students in the United State responded 'I don't know' (in the 2002/2004 Educational Longitudinal Study) when asked about career (s) they envisaged pursuing. Uncertainty was also expressed by some high and post secondary Canadian and Dutch students in similar research studies undertaken in these societies.

Meanwhile, some studies allege that the rationale for uncertainty in students is two-folds. On one hand, Pond (2010) holds that this results from personal behavioural concerns such as low-self efficacy and or low self-esteem. Making allusion to Bandura's (1977, 1982) self-efficacy theory, Pond (2010, p. 1) defines this phenomenon as "an individual's level of confidence in and beliefs about his/her capabilities to successfully carry out courses of action, perform given behaviours, accomplish given tasks, and attain desired performance outcomes". Lopez (2006) adds that this phenomenon is very peculiar to young people; bearing adverse effects on their educational and career planning and development, and that uncertainty leads to indecisiveness.

On the other hand this uncertainty is brought about by uncertainty in the socio-economic environment; characterised by constant changes in the labour market. This is depicted by labour market with constant, lay-offs, downsizing, increase number of self-employed, part time, contingent and teleworkers for example. These, coupled with the lack of career information only results in youths being uncertain to make potential career decisions and

decisions about career development (McMahon & Patton, 2002; Reid & West, 2010; Ziebell, 2010).

Notwithstanding the above arguments, UNESCO (2013) argues that most students are indeed certain of which career path(s) they wish to follow no matter the socioeconomic changes. Similarly, some Cameroonian students might actually be aware of what they want to do in the future; most go to school believing to get good jobs and better lives thereafter. Unfortunately, most leave school immature enough to make career decisions and without any thoughts or plans on how the journey to 'better life' will be like (Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation [CMSF] and Canadian Career Development Foundation, [CCDF] 2004; Mesonge, 2012; Obi et al., 2012). Suffice it thus to say that guidance counselling can be a vital force to help students bridge these uncertainties and be better prepared for career development. Some individuals in the Cameroonian society believe ("Cameroon Today News", 2015) unemployment would have been less among Cameroonian youths should they had received guidance counselling while in secondary school.

In conclusion, this section of my review of literature has advanced various thoughts from different studies and researchers portraying the importance of guidance counselling to Cameroonian secondary school students. Despite these, the decision to make is left in the hands of students. As such there is a call to make the program more effective so as to aid students before the latter commence post secondary education, with career development issues.

## **2.6 Challenges; ways forward**

My goal for carrying out this research project and this thesis write up as mentioned earlier, is to explore the importance of guidance counselling to students' career development and to find out, and put forward some potential contributions or suggestions on how this service could be provided better in Cameroon. This section of my thesis will as a result; based on literatures from around the world, be focused on highlighting some potential contributions to this effect. Firstly, I will discuss some identified malfunctions of the service and secondly, bring in potential recommendations to its effectiveness.

### 2.6.1 Set-backs to effective guidance counselling practice in Cameroon secondary schools.

Although guidance counselling is not entirely a new concept to the Cameroonian educational environment, diverse loop holes have been identified regarding the effective provision of the service to secondary school students; especially with regards to career development issues.

To start with, there is the problem of paucity of trained guidance counsellors in most secondary/high schools. Guidance counsellor to student ratio in Cameroon is comparatively very low; “about 1:700 instead of 1: 300” prescribed by official text (Mesonge, 2012, p. 3). Moreover, trained counsellors are mostly found in state-run secondary/high schools while most students in mission (religious denominations) and lay-private institutions are left out. In addition, some guidance counsellors, among those employed by various schools have been accused of the lack of duty consciousness; they are often not available to attend to students or busy with other matters (Mesonge, 2012; Mungwa, 2013). This consequently, impacts negatively to the smooth functioning of the guidance counselling program in providing assistance to students.

Secondly, studies claim that those employed as guidance counsellor in some schools apparently lack the expertise with which to provide adequate service to students under their tutelage. Bomda (2008a) in part, blames the inadequate employment and school-drop outs for example, to the irresponsibility and lack of expertise of some guidance counsellors in schools in Cameroon. Tatangang (2011) take sides with Bomda’s (2008) claim and ascertains that guidance counsellors in Cameroon are not doing their jobs. He justifies this argument by demonstrating that this accounts why many post secondary students are still confronted with adaptation, un/underemployment and drop-out challenges.

Finally, the ineffectiveness is also due to ignorance on the part of students and parents alike, of the importance of guidance counselling on students’ career development issues. From personal experience, most students do not see the reason why they should visit the school’s guidance counsellor; some think it is just a waste of time and that the counsellor is just there for formality reasons, a situation which has not really changed today (Mesonge, 2012).

Moreover, parents most especially, seem to remain the only guidance counsellor a child will have. They presume they are better placed to help and encourage their children about which study subjects the latter should choose and with subsequent career development challenges.

As such, they fail to see the place and importance of the school guidance counsellor (Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation [CMSF] and Canadian Career Development Foundation, [CCDF] 2004; Mesonge, 2012; Zabel, 2007). Mesonge (2012, p. 9) states that in Cameroon

Most parents still do not seem to realize the importance of career choice in the life of their children. They impose certain careers on their children.... indirectly pushing them to choose fields of studies and consequently careers in relation to their sexes.

Bomba (2008a), disagreeing to this practice by parents, asserts that without knowing, some parents in Cameroon are the cause of their children's poor performances at school and unemployment situations.

The picture painted above of the situation of guidance counselling practice in relation to students' career choices and development may seem very unpleasant. However, the Cameroonian government through the ministry of education has been making significant efforts to boost the service ("Cameroon Today News", 2015; Tatangang, 2011).

Unfortunately, there are still wide cries of the insignificance and ineffectiveness of guidance counselling, especially in aiding secondary school students with career development matters. For this reason therefore, the following subsection, in relation with the rationale of this study, stated earlier, presents some potential recommendations in making the service more effective, drawn from an ocean of studies.

### 2.6.2 Possible ways forward

The fewness of guidance counsellors in schools across the nation makes their availability to a wide range of students difficult; hence the need for more in government, private and lay-private schools is crucial. Ojo & Rotimi (2006, p. 27) advocates that "a typical school with a population of 1,000 students is expected to have four counsellors". However, it is not enough to have guidance counsellors in every school. Importantly, they need to possess the skills and required expertise (Mghweno, Mghweno & Baguma, 2014). In addition, "they need to be good. Weak services may cause more harm than they benefit people and societies" (Schiersmann, 2012, p. 23) and may cause these young people make regrettable decisions, leading to failures in their career development. Therefore, government, policy makers and other educational stakeholders have the responsibility to ensuring that students are provided with competent guidance counsellors.

Regarding guidance counsellors' lack of duty consciousness and motivation pointed above as one of the gaps for effective practice, it could be helpful for school principles to maintain a high level supervision on guidance counsellors. Equally, it could be helpful for evaluation schemes to be carried out (each school term for example) so as to seek objective evidence of the service's benefits or not to students. In Botswana for example, evaluation is done by inspecting records, interviews, questionnaires and observation. In Canada and America, the perceptions of students, parents and teachers are used as a key tool for evaluation (Chireshe, 2006). Hence supervision and evaluation programs are highly recommended to ensuring effective GC in schools.

On the case of insufficiencies and lack of working materials, Gysbers (2009, p. 121) notes "for a guidance and counselling program to function effectively, adequate financial support and a budget for providing materials and equipment are crucial". Therefore with appropriate support and equipments counsellors would be better equipped and motivated to provide better services to students and to meet their needs.

From another standpoint, some studies advocate for the inclusion of students' voice and needs in the guidance counselling process as a way of improving its effectiveness. The claim is that most students (to some degree) are aware of their abilities, interest and values just as they are of career (s) they wish to pursue in future (Basham, 2011; Obi et al., 2012).

UNESCO, (2013, p. 249) confirms that "Students are often good judges of their own skills and the characteristics that may make them better suited to one job than another". They as well have preconceptions about the world of work, gained through different experiences and so are not just empty vessels to be filled by a guidance counsellor (Gysbers & Lapan, 2009; Ziebel, 2010).

Thus based that students are self-aware and of the world around them, seeking their needs and including their voice when drawing up GC plans for career development could be imperative. This would enable guidance counsellors to have a lead on students' wishes and provide better directives on how and where to assist them. Meanwhile, one might doubt this assertion being that studies by Pond (2010) and Mesonge (2012) buttress the fact that most students are unaware and doubt what study subjects and subsequently career path to follow even after completing their secondary education. Nonetheless, Basham (2011) argues that this issue of students' voice "must be addressed to ensure student participation and ownership of

what is a critical time of decision making which could have major future impacts on an individual's ability to reach his or her academic, work, income and economic potential''(p. 107). Thus implying, working together with students is equally essential to make guidance counselling program effective. The assumption is that students would feel included and more confident with the program (Basham, 2011).

A further suggestion advanced for making the guidance counselling program more effective in assisting students with career development challenges, is the necessity for guidance counsellors to work closely with parents and teachers. In Cameroon for example, youths' career choices are highly influenced by their parents; Bomda (2008) criticises this act, as mentioned earlier. Notwithstanding, some studies suggest that parents play a profound role in their child/children's career development concerns; they follow up their children's study progress, gather labour market information and encourage their children to follow this or that study area and career path (Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation [CMSF] and Canadian Career Development Foundation, [CCDF] 2004; Zabel, 2007).

Zabel (2007) therefore, advocates the imperativeness for guidance counsellors to make parents aware of their function in helping their children; an assertion supported by Kuhn (2004). If this is done it would motivate parents to encourage their children to attend to the school's guidance counsellor and as well, parents would better understand who the counsellor is and work together with them for the common benefit of the children; hence, rendering the program more effective.

Similarly, teachers are more frequent in interacting with students and hold essential information about each of them which could be very helpful for guidance counsellors (Ojo & Rotimi, 2006; Oye et al., 2012). Herring & White, (1995) assert that "counselling programs are unsuccessful without the support and acceptance of teachers" (cited in Kuhn, 2004, p. 23). As a result, a good guidance counsellor - teacher relationship will contribute in rendering the service more effective.

Finally, we are living in a world highly controlled by information and communication technology (ICT). ICT has been portrayed by some scholars as a useful tool to enhance career guidance counselling to students. Counsellors could use ICT to search and provide important information to students (such as labour market information), communicate faster and on a regular basis with students and parents, by means of emails and telephone calls and or school

websites for example. More so, they could use videos and other graphics on career development to pass on a lesson. These are recommended as having the potentials to increase access, quality and enhancement of the guidance counselling services (Kuhn, 2004; Obi et al., 2012; Pond, 2010; UNESCO, 2013). However, Gibson & Mitchell (2006) warned guidance counselors to be conscious and up to date when using information from the internet; it is open to all and information within changes over night.

## **2.7 Conceptual framework**

According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2012, p.89), the conceptual framework functions as “the device that makes sense of data”. It comprises of concepts and or theories, used as the basis upon which the research question is given meaning, the method and design of the project is established, findings reported, data analyzed and interpreted, thereby facilitating a comprehension of the entire research project in a more meaningful way.

My research project focuses to explore the importance of guidance counselling on students’ career development and contributions for making the service more effective. The conceptual framework of this project comprises of concepts and theories within the fields of education and social welfare, emerging from the review of literature presented above. These include; human capital theory, welfare, education as a necessity for life and functionalism theory; all working in an interwoven matter.

The human capital theory in the light of this research project emphasizes the importance and relationship of having work and attaining a good life by means of education. As argued above, the educational policies in Cameroon present education as a tool through which individuals can gain skills and acquire good jobs (Mungwa, 2013; Tatangang, 2011). Therefore I utilise the theory in this research project in this regard.

The concept of welfare which I use in line with the theory of education as a necessity for life connects wellbeing (socio-economic) to having a job and earning income. Wellbeing is determined by the decisions people make (such as education and marriage) which could either influence their socioeconomic situation negatively or positively (Greve, 2008). The theory of education as a necessity for life portrays education as a channel via which this wellbeing could be made by means of the communicated messages passed-on in the schools. In other words education is a vital vessel through which values and norms are taught to and

learned by the students. This prepares them to make good decisions and take up ventures with the potential of attaining and to live a 'good' life (Dewey, 2007).

Meanwhile, the functionalism theory highlights education as one of the constituting part of the society which contributes to a balance and smooth functioning society to ensure its wellbeing (Mooney, Knox, and Schacht 2007). In this study, the functionalism theory canopies the human capital theory, the concept of welfare and the theory of education as a necessity for life because they together, emphasize the importance of education and making earnings. The result of this is the achievement of socioeconomic benefits; hence wellbeing.

It is worthy to recall that this research project's underlining aim is to explore how guidance counselling could serve as a key element in assisting secondary school students with career development challenges leading them to acquiring 'good' jobs and attaining better socioeconomic situations (after schooling). Also, that the study's contribution is geared towards the enhancement of the service to enable young people acquire this socio-economic wellbeing.

Based on the conceptual framework therefore, my research is employing the qualitative approach and making use of in-depth interviews as the data collection modus. Merriam (2002) asserts that the qualitative approach facilitates an understanding of people's perceptions and interpretation of phenomenon around them. Hence I am using this approach to comprehend post-secondary school students' experiences with guidance counselling in helping them with career development issues. This is facilitated by the use of qualitative interviews (Merriam, 2002)

Moreover, the presentation of the findings, their analysis and discussion has been guided by this study's conceptual framework. The interviews were first presented and then analysed based on the concepts and theories emerging from my study's literature review. Finally, the discussion of students' perceptions of the importance of guidance counselling to career development and their opinions of how the service could be improved, were guided by interpretivism; the guiding philosophical assumption of this thesis, which holds that reality is socially constructed.

## **2.8 Summary of the literature review chapter**

My research project seeks to explore student's experiences with the guidance counselling program in Cameroon in respect of getting assistance with career development, and to

highlight some contributions to making the service more effective. The overall motive as mentioned earlier, is to contribute to the socio-economic welfare of individuals and the society at large.

The literature review presented herein has explored this problem and demonstrates that guidance counselling is essential for students' or youths' career development. The service has the potential to assist students make good study decisions, introduce them to career development aspects and assist them equally in making potential career decisions which could lead them to good careers; most so long for. Moreover, the review highlights the complex situation of the 21<sup>st</sup> century world, especially regarding the world of work which necessitates for students in this era to be properly guided if they have to gain a place in it.

Furthermore, with the assistance students get from the guidance counselling service, they stand a better chance to acquire good jobs and enhance their personal socio-economic wellbeing, that of their family and the society in general. Therefore, making the service more effective is not a choice but a necessity (according to the various studies employed herein) and so the literature has endeavour to showcase ways by which guidance counselling program can be made more effective in Cameroon. However, though some local studies (Cameroon based studies) emphasize the importance of guidance counselling to students' career development in Cameroon, it is has been difficult to find any contributory literatures on how the service could be made more efficient.

Finally, the conceptual framework of this study is made up of the human capital theory, the concept of welfare, the theory of education as a necessity for life and the functionalism theory. All of these are correlated and form the base on which this study's design is built, data is collected, analyzed and discussed as will be presented in the next chapter.

## 3 RESEARCH METHOD AND METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate post secondary school students' experiences with the guidance counselling program as a guide to career development in Cameroon. Through this, my goal is to find out how these former secondary/high school students experienced and perceived the program in assisting them with the phenomenon of career development.

Equally, I seek to know from their standpoints, contributions that might be advanced to enhance the service in assisting present and perhaps future secondary school students with career development in Cameroon. In other words, this study is intended to gain insights of the importance of guidance counselling to young people's career development as well as search for and bring forth some contributory opinions for reinforcing the provision of the service to assist students with career development.

In order to realize the intension of this research project, I investigated and analyzed the experiences of former/post secondary school students in Cameroon who had consulted a guidance counsellor during their secondary and or high school days to seek guidance with career development issues. To this regard, the four participants included in this research project were chosen due to their suitability to the study's objectives. Therefore, I adopted the basic qualitative research approach to explore the experiences of these individuals and the meaning they made of them. This approach was deemed appropriate because it enabled me to gain insight (with the aid of qualitative interviewing technique) to the meaning these post secondary school students make of their encounters with the guidance counselling service in assisting them with career development.

The method and methodology chapter is often referred to as the practical chapter of a research study. Thus, in this research project, this section hereby highlights the research method and methodology; the what, how and why of the data collection and analysis process. In other words, this chapter conveys how the data was collected, why it was collected and how it was analyzed in relation to my study's conceptual framework and research design (Merriam, 2002).

The chapter opens with the philosophical background of the study – a typical traditional with qualitative research which paves the way for understanding the social world within which

phenomena exist and are interpreted. It continues with an overview of the study's research design, a description of the data collection procedure, data analysis and the ethical considerations with respect to the study and its participants. I also present aspects of validity, reliability and reflexivity of my study.

### **3.2 Philosophical assumption of the study**

My study is embedded on two philosophical assumptions typical to qualitative study of this kind. These are epistemological and ontological assumptions; concerned with “what is regarded as acceptable knowledge” (Bryman, 2012, p. 27) and the subject of reality respectively (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2009).

#### **3.2.1 Epistemological assumption**

The epistemological position of my study is interpretivism. The basic assumption behind this philosophical perspective is that reality is socially constructed. According to Creswell (2009) individuals through interactions with one another in the society and from historical and cultural norms, “develop subjective meanings of their experiences - meanings directed toward certain objects or things” (p. 8). The meaning individuals attribute to their experiences and or actions, and those of others, shapes the way they act and react towards others. This epistemological stance is typically rooted in phenomenology; a main intellectual tradition and philosophy concerned with “how individuals make sense of the world around them” (Bryman, 2012, p. 30). The meaning people make of their experiences provides a rich variety of view from which the researcher could make interpretations. Consequently, the interpretations are inductively generated – essentially based on the individuals' points of view (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2009).

With respect to the fact that my study was concerned with constructing meaning of post secondary school students' experiences with guidance counselling in relation to career development, I found the epistemological premise well suited with my research. Rather than simply importing my own subjective interpretations of their experiences, I wanted the interpretations to rest upon the meaning or reality the participants in this research constructed of their experiences (as postulated by interpretivism – epistemological position). These experiences were obtained by the use of qualitative (open-ended) interviews and constituted the basis upon which interpretations were made; rendering an interpretive and inductive quality to this study.

### 3.2.2 Ontological assumption

My ontological stance for this study was constructivism which assumes “that social phenomena and their meaning are continually being accomplished by social actors” (Bryman, 2012, p. 33). Firstly, this implies that the meaning individuals make of their experiences and actions are socially constructed and secondly that, these meanings or interpretation are always in a state of flux in time and space. In other words, meaning according to the ontological premise, is not constructed in a vacuum; rather, by people in and through their interaction with social phenomenon and with one another. As such, reality, depending on time and place, is always susceptible to change and has no definitive version.

My research was socially constructed because it was concerned with exploring students’ experiences with guidance counsellors as far as career development is concerned.

Consequently, the interpretations that were made from the experiences they recounted were based on their present experiences and interpretations made and cannot be applied in the future as they were not absolute realities. This is because these interpretations and experiences are bound to change with the passage of time (Bryman, 2012).

### 3.3 Research design

A basic qualitative study design, interpretive in nature was adopted for this study. I adopted this design which “seek to discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved, or a combination of these” (Merriam, 2002, pg. 6), to explore former secondary school students’ perceptions on the significance of guidance counselling in assisting them with career development matters. This design according to Merriam (2002) provides the opportunity for the researcher to understand what interpretations or meanings people make of situations and phenomena around them; by means of their experiences or perspectives. Data, via for example, interviews (as is the case in this study) is obtained from participants - providing a rich description of the situation which together with the literature used in the study, forms the basis for data analysis. Moreover, the researcher (I) who is the principal tool of data collection inductively analyses the data and from this, interpretations are then established from his/her own perspective (Merriam, 2002). Meanwhile, Bryman (2012) emphasises the role of the research design as a logical framework which guides the data to be collected and its analysis, to answer the research question as unambiguously as possible. Therefore, the interpretive qualitative design was used for my

study with focus to understanding students' experiences with guidance counselling on their career development issues. Interviews were used as the data collection technique and I the researcher as main instrument of data collection and analysis. Using a qualitative design implied rendering a much more subjective characteristic to the research project; notwithstanding, this design facilitates an examination of phenomenon in their natural setting (Bryman, 2012).

### **3.4 Planning and data collection procedures**

#### **3.4.1 Research participants**

As stated above, my research project was interested in examining post secondary school students' experiences with guidance counselling in the light of assisting them with career development matters. Thus, participants in this study were purposively selected. According to Merriam (2002) and Silverman (2010), purposive sampling; as this approach is called, allows the researcher to critically think and cautiously choose participants who are most suitable to provide sufficiently rich data to a study. As a result, I decided to carefully choose and include in this study, only individuals who had consulted a school guidance counsellor to discuss about career development issues. I found this a better option; to get connected and involved only with those who best suit the research's theme and who could provide answers to my research question.

Suitable participants for the study comprised of young adults who had completed high school or post secondary school (from the Anglo – Saxon system) within the last five years and who either are at higher education level, in the job market or working already. The timeframe of five years was established because I wanted to deal with the latest state of affairs of the guidance counselling program which like other programs is been exposed to reforms from time to time. Moreover, participants were chosen from different schools not to do a comparative study but just so as to get a rich overview of experiences as far as the topic under discussion is concerned and within the parameters of this research project. I ended up with participants who did not only complete secondary and high school education in completely different schools but from four (of the ten) different regions of the country. This was good for the study since my wish and intent was to have the participants' experiences with different guidance counsellors.

Therefore, I had two laid down criterion for selecting the participants in this research project. Firstly, they should have completed secondary/high school education from Anglo- Saxon institutions within the last five years prior to this research. Secondly, they must have consulted a guidance counsellor on the topic of career development principally. As such, those included in this study met these conditions. This was very important to drive the study to its right direction (Merriam, 2002).

#### 3.4.2 Number of participants

To proceed with participant selection and data collection, my study was made up of four participants. Silverman (2010) advocates that the number of participants depends on the problem of study. In addition, Bryman (2012) maintains that it is the researcher's responsibility to determine his/her sample size in so far as he/she makes clear why the number is appropriate. Accordingly, the rationale for having four former secondary school students participate in my study was to acquire valuable and manageable data; considering the time frame of the research project and space in my thesis. In addition, this was sufficient to answer my research question as well as to guarantee validity and reliability in the study.

#### 3.4.3 Establishing contact

Getting hold of potential participants was one of the greatest challenges I had to deal with in this research project. In the process I came to understand why it was so difficult to find suitable participants; most of those I contacted made me understand that they never consulted any guidance counsellor while in secondary/high school (although they did have guidance counsellors in their schools). Some explained that the reason they never consulted the guidance counsellors was because they did not understand their role in the school and so thought the service was unimportant. On the other hand, others who had at some point sought for assistance from the guidance counselling service did so for various reasons other than career development. To bridge this challenge therefore, I decided to make use of friends, and family to assist me in this search; this is how I ended up with the participants in this research project. I think this helped me to a large extent, to avoid bias in the selection of participants and reporting the data because those who finally participated in the study were unknown to me and carefully selected. Studying participants known to the researcher such as colleagues, friends, Creswell (2009, pg. 177) warns that “the problems of reporting data that are biased,

incomplete, or compromised are legion”. Therefore the approach I employed helped me in avoiding any such biases.

Prior to selecting those who finally participated in this study, a letter of consent was sent out via email, detailing the purpose, procedure of my research project as well as the advantages and risks of participation (Kvale, 2007). Because I was not physically close to the selected participants, I initiated an initial contact with them through phone calls and requested for a meeting with each via phone, email or Skype; depending on the medium of communication each of them felt comfortable with. During this digital meetings or calls I had the opportunity to again introduce myself and the research. Doing this created a good relationship with the interviewees such that when we met for the interview proper, there was less tension in the air; I would say. Notwithstanding, I was conscious of my role as researcher and not a ‘friend’ in order to give the research interview the professionalism it deserved.

#### 3.4.2 Data collection procedure

Kvale (2007, p. 1) asserts that “If you want to understand how people understand their world and their lives, why not talk with them. Conversation is a basic mode of human interaction”. Talking with people usually is a two way process of questioning and listening, and the most valuable way of knowing people’s inner thoughts and making possible comprehension out of them. In other words, the meaning individuals construct of phenomenon and their world can better be comprehended when they tell of it and are listen to (Creswell, 2009; Kvale, 2012). Thus I proceeded to talk (interview) and collect my empirical data.

#### 3.4.4 Interviewing

The empirical data for this study was collected by the use of qualitative interviews, semi-structured in nature and made up of open-ended questions to lead and guide the interview. In qualitative research, qualitative interviews are most likely the method used for it centres on the interviewee’s point of view and the value him or her places on such views. Also, this form of interviewing allows respondents to elicit their experiences and opinions as freely as they wish but at the same time makes it possible for the researcher to control the interview by using for example an interview guide (Bryman 2012; Creswell, 2009). Moreover, it allows more space for the researcher to “ask further questions in response to what are seen as significant replies” (Bryman, 2012, p. 212). Kvale adds that it “provides a richer access to the subjects’ meanings” (2007, p. 7) as a result of the face-to-face interaction and “is a

construction site for knowledge'' (Kvale, 2007, pg. 7). These characteristics add up and ascribe a very flexible feature to qualitative interviewing.

Since my research was focused on people's experiences, this form of interviewing was adequate to generate valuable data in line with the overall research design mentioned earlier above, and to provide answers to my research questions. To acquire my required data consequently, I interviewed four former (or what I referred to in this study as post-secondary school students) at four distinct locations chosen by them. All interviews were conducted in Cameroon over a period of three weeks which was very sufficient since I had pre-established contacts with the participants. The first interview took place during the first week of the data collection period. However, the interview was conducted at a site chosen by me at the interviewee's request. I benefitted from this opportunity to choose a site which rendered good quality recording; of course I made sure my interviewee was comfortable with the choice.

The second interview was supposed to be conducted during this same week, unfortunately the individual I had to interview decided to withdraw from the study without actually giving me a reason. (He did not answer my calls nor did he reply to any of the text messages I sent to him two days prior and until the day we had arranged to meet). I was lucky to find a replacement thanks to a friend. And so the other three interviews were held during the second week and the sites were selected by the respective interviewees with the last of them conducted over some cups of ice cream in a public join.

The same questions from my interview guide (see appendix A) were asked to each research participant to kick-start the conversation and yet keep it within context (Bryman, 2012). Based on the responses the interviewees provided as they narrated their experiences, other follow up questions were asked for in-depth explanation and clarification purposes. Each interview lasted for an hour and the last one for an hour and a half because the interviewee had more to share. All the interviews were tape-recorded with an audio tape recorder and a smart phone as backup. I also listened attentively and took down some notes to ensure no information was missed out.

At the end of each interview, I had a little conversation with each participant to find out how he or she felt and also to create an opportunity for the participant to say whatever might have slipped-off his or her mind in the course of the interview. I ended each interview session by thanking the participant for participating in the research project. I was very touched when the

interviewees thanked me for giving them the opportunity to share their experiences on a topic they said they found crucial but which before now they had not shared. This for me was proof for the relevance of my research interest.

However, gathering data using the interviewing technique is not void of limitations. Creswell (2009) points out for example that the researcher's presence may cause bias in the interviewees' responses. Thus, I took some measures to limit these. For example as already mentioned above, I started off by establishing pre-contacts with the participants so we became familiar with each other before the interviews were held. Also, I allowed them to choose the time and venue of the interview; this helped them to feel more comfortable, more engaged and relaxed during the interview sessions. However, I ensured that the locations chosen were suitable; that is void of noise and external interferences in order that my recording had no interferences and that I obtained good quality recordings. Moreover, that the interviewee did not have to worry about been over heard (Bryman, 2012), thereby ensuring the ethics in the interviewing process.

#### 3.4.5 Interview guide

The interview guide can be refer to as “the brief list of memory prompts of areas to be covered that is often employed in unstructured interviewing or to the somewhat more structured list of issues to be addressed or questions to be asked in semi-structured interviewing” (Bryman, 2012, pg. 442). As earlier stated, the data for this study was collected with the aid of an interview guide. This was made up of six open-ended questions. Using the guide in the interviews helped me to order a sense of direction for the interviews and consequently the data collected. Meanwhile, it provided room for follow up questions in each interview as the need arose. In some cases, the sequence of questions in the interview guide was not followed based on the responses provided for a previous question (Bryman, 2012). My interview guide is presented in appendix A below.

#### 3.4.6 Pilot test

I conducted two test interviews with two individuals who had previously had encounters with the guidance counselling. One of the two individuals had received guidance counselling assistance from a guidance counsellor who did not attend a professional guidance counselling school but trained from other source (not disclosed here for confidential reasons). The other participants on the other hand had visited the guidance counsellor for assistance with subject

orientation and not specifically career development. I used both individuals because to a large extent they were familiar with my research subject and so I considered them suitable for the pilot test. Doing this helped me practice in-depth interviewing which I had not been accustomed to, and to test the appropriateness of my questions and the data which could be obtained. After carrying out this test I reframed some of the questions in my interview guide to their present form; presented in the last part of this thesis.

### **3.5 Data analysis**

In analyzing the data for this research project, my main concern was to grasp post-secondary school students' perceptions of guidance counselling in the light of career development. I was equally interested in understanding the reasons they advanced for the suggestions of enhancing the provision of the service. In other words, I was looking forward to construct meaning out of the interpretations these individuals made of their experiences with guidance counselling in relation to career development. The way to go about this was to analyse the data.

Creswell (2009) explains that:

The process of data analysis involves making sense out of text ... data. It involves preparing the data for analysis, conducting different analysis. Moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data ... representing the data, and making an interpretation of the larger meaning of the data (pg. 183).

As such, I searched deeper and deeper into the data for understanding and to make interpretations of what were said. Otherwise known as inductive data analysis – bottom up approach, this kicked off simultaneously with the data collection process in an iterative and reflexive way (Bryman, 2012). Accordingly, I started the analysis phase during each interview session by making meaning out of what each interviewee said and sending it back to him/her in the form of clarifying questions. In this way I got the chance to understand the interviewees better and the interpretations they made of what they told (Creswell, 2009; Kvale, 2007).

#### **3.5.1 The coding process**

To reduce my empirical data and sought for meaning out of it, I employed the coding process (Bryman, 2012). Therefore, proceeding with the analysis process, each interview's audio tape

was carefully listen to and transcribed verbatim immediately (the same day or week) after conducting the interview; while still fresh in mind. According to Bryman (2012), this helped to gain a better understanding of my data and prevented been flooded with so much data all at once. Next, the tapes were listened to a second time while I checked through the transcriptions to make certain no information was left out. After doing this, I carefully read through each transcribed text together with the field notes taken twice, to acquire a general idea and sense of the data's content. I then moved on to another round of reading and this time, circled out, underlined and allocated some key words and phrases in the margin, to various segments – this was the initial coding stage (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2009).

The process of creating my codes was both open (inductively from the data) and pre- set (I had generated codes such as employability, wellbeing from the study's conceptual framework), thus I now coded the data with respect to the research question. First, I paid attention to the perception of and the values post secondary school students in this research study, ascribed to guidance counselling in assisting them with their career development. Next I focused on their views on how the service could be improved. During this coding process, I equally kept an eye on the concepts making up the conceptual framework. This process was repeated in all four transcripts individually. The analysis process was thus inductively (simply analysing the data) and deductively (analysing in relation to pre-codes) driven (Bryman, 2012).

The generated codes were then grouped based on their similarities and/or differences with respect to my research question and conceptual framework. From these, three broad themes emerged (see the findings section below) under which interpretations were made in the form of descriptive passages, to convey my research findings.

### 3.5.2 Research reliability

In a qualitative research study like this one, the issue of reliability is inherently valuable to evaluate how reliable or consistent the study is. Reliability is concerned with whether the outcome of the research project could be repeated and if the approach used is consistent not only for this study; for example, but with other researchers. Simply put, it deals with the trustworthiness and consistency of the study (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2009; Kvale, 2007). Reliability can be ensured through various procedures. Gibbs (2007), cited in Creswell (2009) asserts reliability can be ensured by avoiding mistakes in aspects like transcription and

coding which might bring about misleading interpretations. Consequently, to ensure this study's reliability, I cautiously transcribed my tape recorded interviews and made sure that the tapes were readily available to use in cross checking that the transcripts and the tape matches. In this way, reliability is ensured by the detailed and acute transcriptions and recordings, which can be made available to the public. The detail description in this chapter of my research project's method and methodology further enhances the reliability of this study.

### 3.5.3 Research validity and reflexivity

Validity is another very important criterion for evaluating the strength of a qualitative research study. Research validity deals with the accuracy of the overall research findings (Creswell, 2010). In other words, validity is concerned with portraying to one self as researcher, the research participants and audience that the “‘findings’ are genuinely based on critical investigation of all ... data and do not depend on a few well-chosen ‘examples’ ” (Silverman, 2009, p. 276), thereby determining its accuracy.

This accuracy can be made certain by employing various measures. However, for the sake of this study, internal and external validity was harnessed as they best suited my research methodology (Bryman, 2012). Internal validity is concerned with whether there is compatibility between the research's observations and the theoretical themes or idea developed from it. External validity on the other hand refers to the extent to which the research results can be generalised.

I ensured validity in this study by sending back to the participants, the interpretations I made of their interviews. In so doing, they were able to assess the material's accuracy. Moreover, I described the research findings in a detail and coherent matter thereby bringing forth clarity to the entire research result and making it more “‘realistic and richer’” (Creswell, 2009, p.192). However, the findings of this research cannot be generalised; rather, it can only be seen as perceptions from a few post secondary school students in Cameroon.

Moreover, I was aware not to influence the research process especially the data collection procedure with my background in the fields of education and social sciences. Although this background shapes my interest and method of conducting this research project (Bryman, 2012), I tried to insure that this did not openly affect the process. By so doing, I was conscious of reflexivity in my project.

### **3.6 Ethical consideration**

Ethical precepts are very essential in a qualitative research study as this. Many writers stress the importance of ensuring such issues as participants' anonymity, confidentiality, benefit, respect and trust (Bryman, 2012; Creswell; 2009; Kvale, 2007; Silverman, 2010) as they contribute to a good quality qualitative research. Bryman (2008) outlines crucial ethical principles which should be taken into consideration by qualitative social researchers as broken down by Diener and Crandall (1978), (cited in Bryman, 2008). These include procedures that ensure that no harm, whether physical or emotional is done to the participants; that participation in the research project is by participants' own volition, that their privacy is highly respected and that participation in the study is not based on deception. According to Bryman (2008) and Kvale (2007) ethical considerations should run from the very start right through to the final report of a research study. These considerations were at the back of my mind once I began this research study.

Thus, to maintain ethics in this study, and specifically before and during the data collection process, I contacted and informed my research participants about the length, width and depth of my project. In order words, I briefed the participants on the entirety of my project and about their role and safety as participants. This was done by sending a letter of consent to each participant introducing myself, detailing the purpose of the study, its benefit to them, how the data would be collected, treated and discarded and guaranteeing their unique confidentiality and anonymity. I also made them aware of their complete freedom to withdraw from the study at any time as they wished. To make certain that the participants were aware of what they were getting engaged into, I gave room for them to express their worries or any question(s) they had. However, I was aware trust could only be achieved if the participants found me trustworthy enough. To ensure this trust thus, I offered my interviews the possibility of viewing and reviewing my interpretations of their interviews before the final thesis was submitted. This was also done because except for one, the participants overlooked the point of signing the letter of consent. Their explanations for not doing so were that they trusted me and were happy to share their experiences so that other students could benefit from the guidance counselling service as well. To further ensure ethics for this study, I made sure to write only what was gathered as data without falsifying them, without criticising any participant and without any use of harm words or language.

### **3.7 Chapter summary**

In this section, I have presented the qualitative research design I used in my study in relation to the study's conceptual framework. The main philosophical positions owing to the methods and methodology used in exploring and analysing post secondary school students' perception with guidance counselling in view of assisting them with career development, have also been presented. Equally, I have described the data collection procedure, aspects of validity, reliability and ethical considerations employed to ensure quality to the project. In order words, this chapter has presented how data for the realisation of this research was collected, what was done and the reasons why. The data collected is presented and analysed in the subsequent chapter.

## 4 RESEARCH FINDINGS

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of my research which as outlined above, seeks to understand post-secondary school students' (in Cameroon) perceptions on guidance counselling with regards to career development. To gain insight into this subject and provide answers to the research questions, I conducted qualitative interviews with four young Cameroonians (two males and two female) in different localities in Cameroon. Two out of these four participants are university graduates; one is a graduate from a professional higher institution, while one is in her last year at the university. Their perceptions as they relate to the research question and conceptual framework are presented here under three main themes emerging from my data. These themes are also in connection to the conceptual framework of this study; as will be illustrated below.

Moreover, due to the fact that my research was engaged with seeking participants' experiences on the above stated subject, I was therefore interested in exploring the meaning they made of their experiences with guidance counselling in relation to the subject of career development. Consequently, my presented and analysed findings in this chapter are based on social constructivism - the epistemological premise of making meaning out of social phenomenon, such as is the case with the participants of this research study (Bryman, 2012).

Meanwhile, in the presentation and analysis process, respondents' own words verbatim are presented where necessary as a way of including their voices. Moreover, for confidentiality sake, the interviewees will be referred to as Miss B (a last year undergraduate law student), Miss C (an invoice controller for a clearing firm), Mr N (a corporate lawyer) and Mr Y (a health service quality control worker).

#### 4.1.1 Data presentation and analysis in connection to the conceptual framework

As pointed out above, the presentation and analysis of my research findings is effectuated in close collaboration with the conceptual framework of this study. This implies that the codes, categories and subsequent themes presented below were on one hand inductively driven (from the data), and on the other they were deductively driven; from the conceptual framework. The conceptual framework of this study, presented under the second chapter (chapter 2) of this work, as a reminder, is a web of educational and social welfare theories

(human capital, social welfare, education as a necessity for life and functionalism) working together. The aim as stated earlier is to showcase the importance of guidance counselling in youth's career development in the light of enhancing socio-economic wellbeing in the society. Therefore, the research participants' perceptions of guidance counselling in regards to career development and on how to enhance the service, is presented and analysed based on their views but also in association with the conceptual framework.

In order to analysis the data based on my study's conceptual framework, some codes were predefined. These include, welfare/wellbeing and education vis à vis employment. However, these codes from the conceptual framework did not influence the analysis of the data but served as a guide. The other codes as will be shown below, originated from the empirical data. The list below illustrates the main themes, categories and codes used to present my findings.

**1. Guidance counselling as a path finder** (*main theme*)

❖ Uncertainty (*category*)

- I don't know
  - Dilemma/confusion
  - Immaturity
- } Codes

❖ Personal development (*category*)

- Self awareness
  - Self confidence
  - Open-mindedness
- } Codes

**2. Communal living** (*main theme*)

❖ Family and group well-being (*category*)

- Responsibility
  - Obligation
  - Paying back
- } Codes

- Socio/economic welfare
- ❖ Education for employability and independence (*category*)
  - Job acquisition
  - Self dependence
  - Professional education
  - Settled life

Codes

**3. Guidance counsellor – teacher – student – parent collaboration** (*main theme*)

- ❖ Guidance counsellor – parent collaboration
- ❖ Guidance counsellor – teacher collaboration

Categories

As mentioned above the findings for this study are presented thematically in this chapter. The three main themes that emerged from my data were: career guidance counselling a path finder, communal living and guidance counsellor- teacher- parents- student collaboration.

I will begin with themes and subthemes emerging from the first and main part of my research question; *what are post secondary school students experiences with guidance counselling in relation to their career development?*

**4.2 Guidance counselling as a path finder**

With strong assurance and insistence in their voice tones, all my interviewees proclaimed guidance counselling as that special little torch which shows the way into the world of career decision making and development. The assistance provided by the guidance counsellor greatly helped them in overcoming challenges faced with future career visions and led them to objectively find a way forward with their career concerns. Miss C expressed that;

When you are counselled you know which path to take, you know which choices to make ya! You look at your background you know which decisions to make, that’s you know exactly what way you are going; you are not lost....from his advice I really had to trace a path.... I really had to trace a path

Miss C carefully described that she gained insight and direction on how to go about her much desired future career aspiration. The guidance counselling assistance you receive

enables you to become aware of for example, which higher educational institutions and program(s) of study could be likely relevant to pursue dreams. Equally, it makes you 'grow up' and be more conscious about yourself, the current situation of the country in terms of work and the economy; into which you are soon to enter, Miss C narrated. She explained moreover that you become more informed and aware of the 'way' ahead which hitherto, seemed bleak. You become confident and bold to stand up tall before the family and voice your opinion and decision about educational plans. This was important because according to her, she had through guidance counselling and the choices she was standing for, paved her way into her much cherished future life. At the end, she was able and is still able today to make concrete and relevant career choices and decisions. For the process of career decision making and development is "just like taking a path, taking a good path, you need someone who will guide you ahead ya!" so guidance counselling can help one find that path, Miss C observed.

Similarly, Mr Y expressed with satisfaction that the guidance assistance he received while in secondary/high school enabled him to see things clearly towards dreams realisation. He had this to say;

I also had a dream of wanting to do food science and nutrition...so I was asking myself if food science and nutrition really required me to do food and nutrition, and it's only when I went to see the counsellor that I realised that ehhhhh you must not necessarily have food and nutrition.

This marked the beginning of some sort of mind openness and making concrete decisions about choice of study courses leading to career development, he depicted. And then, he explained that these were decisions that were to have great impact on his "immediate future" (schooling) and "far future" (what to do after schooling). So finding the way into these futures was very crucial. For as Mr. Y relates, he expected to get direction on these future preoccupations; "my expectations were actually to be directed on what to do". Consequently realizing his success at the university, he affirmed that guidance counselling assistance on career development challenges did not "misled". Rather, Mr Y reveals that it builds and provides a solid background encompassing education, personality and profession which until date accounts for him finding his way and for his success. He confirms this by unveiling that; "I have never seen myself lacking anything, my educational background ehhh the base is

really solid because of those choices I made.’’ According to him, he was confused and lost but literally found himself after the encounters with the guidance counsellor.

In connection, Mr N recounted that;

I don't know which direction I could really eh, I don't know which way to take to reach to reach this place and objectives. I expected from the counsellor to confirm on my opinion, either to confirm or to say ok you are making ....you are going to the wrong way and show me the way....but I know that the work of the counsellor is not to impose on you ... so I was expecting her to confirm my plans, to guide me and to to to...to put like a light on my way... so that I should adjust and continue the journey.

To be directed and assisted with fears and worries about what field of study and which way to take to arrive to possible careers that seemed suitable for his personality and skills upon leaving high school were of great concern to Mr N. He mentioned that, it was a major concern because it was beneficial to find the ‘‘way’’ and prepare for the life ahead which can rather be unpredictable; family crisis for example may arise at anytime so one needed to be ready. Mr. N said the following in relation;

So if you have the opportunity to plan and start things now so that your future will be better why not? So you start thinking that ok let me arrange my way so that at the end of the day I will be enjoying.

This light to his way forward was astonishingly illuminated with the help of the guidance counsellor who carefully but surely, provided very useful information and directives about study and career; options matching his abilities and personality. The outcome of this assistance is the reason behind his ‘‘enjoying’’ today.

Mr. N went on to describe two scenarios where the guidance counsellor can help students find their way;

‘‘ You may have somebody who knows where he is going to but at a level or at a point he is a bit lost. Then he has doubts whether he should take this way or take this way? But he knows; this is the place where I want to reach. So the counsellor may also help.... Or you have somebody who says ok I don't know exactly where I am going, I don't know where I am going, I don't have any idea. So to find your

way, either a counsellor may help you to find your way or either the counsellor may help you to confirm your way”

Guidance counselling no matter the case is a resourceful way finder as can be deduced from Mr. N's extract above.

Meanwhile Miss B in few words recounts how confused she was about trying to determine what she wished to do in future. Because in her steady words, “a career is my life investment”. As she mentioned, she thought that the counsellor could better help her with making a decision on whether to pursue arts or sciences subjects since she like both series (fields). To bridge this state of confusion, the guidance counsellor offers a lot of important information and directives in a friendly and soft spoken manner, Miss B described.

#### 4.2.1 Uncertainty

In a state of confusion, dilemma and not knowing what to do or where to go is a common challenge faced by all my respondents in this study, which necessitated them to find a way or path ahead with career development. Uncertainty as revealed in my findings is that state where the choice or decision to make with study options on the one hand and career on the other is unknown and unclear; participants portrayed. This was triggered by various characteristics amongst the interviewees. Three (3) out of the four (4) participants interviewed, disclosed facing uncertainty with the question relating to choice of study courses and career options. One (1) of the three (3) above in addition, attributed it to lack of maturity. Meanwhile one (1) out of the four (4) attributed the state of uncertain to the question of not knowing which path to take to arrive at his most desired and already identified career.

Mr N related that his response when asked what he intended to do after completion of secondary education was “I don't really know what I wanted to do” because though his language skills were quite glaring, still he had no clue about what to study and what career to pursue. After encounters with the guidance counsellor and gaining some insight into his skills and personality, his aspiration as a young man were now driving towards hoping to someday work in a company. However, he was unable to identify neither the type of company nor the occupation or field he wanted to work in. Mr N. said that;

when I noticed that ok I want to work in a company, ok I started questioning myself; ok which company at the end of my studies I'm I going to apply to? ... I wanted to work in a company but in which field precisely I didn't know.

So this lack of a clear vision and knowledge becomes a hindrance for career growth which was made clearer with the assistance of the guidance counsellor.

Mr Y acknowledged that complete dilemma was his fate before meeting the guidance counsellor to deliberate on his career development. He explained that:

When I was going for guidance counselling, I was somehow in a dilemma. I was in a dilemma.... I had to write the GCE [General Certificate of Education] and have some papers which will always ... which will always stand in my CV for the rest of my life. So it was necessary that I make a choice so that I should not regret why I had those papers rather than other papers.... I wanted to do engineering ... but what engineering? I knew that there was chemical engineering, computer engineering, and building engineering. Yea I liked food engineering; I like food science and nutrition. That's where the dilemma came from.

In this state of dilemma, worries about choices to make with regards to study options, fright of failing and regretting in future and the anxiety of wanting to reach a dream, clouds the mind, depicted by Mr. Y's explanation. At such junction, the best and most trusted person to offer help and clear these clouds was the guidance counsellor. He described the guidance counsellor as a professional at what she does, an independent person he had the ease of expressing his thoughts, fears and worries to, and one he believed could help him out of this dilemma.

Meanwhile, Miss C, on her part, had a different take about uncertainty. Unlike Mr. N, Mr, Y and Miss B who faced uncertainty at the level of study and career option, she knew what she wanted to do upon leaving secondary/high school but unfortunately was unsure of how to find the way to her intended future career. For she recounted;

I went and met the guidance counsellor. When I met him, the first question he asked was C... what do you intent to do? What do you intent to do in future and what to you like to do now? I told him I like designing. ... based on what I liked

to do, he advised me of where to go to; which I did ... but little did I know that after going to see the guidance counsellor, I had to go to a professional school

For according to Miss C, she was quite sure of her career aspiration as well as the educational ladder to climb up to it. However, little did she realise she actually did not know the route she was to pursue. Hence she was astonished to have ended up attending a professional school in contrast to her vision of attending a normal general education university; she narrated. Comparing herself to many of her secondary school classmates and friends who went through university education, Miss C related that most of them were not sure of what they were going to study at the university neither were they aware of what they were going to do with what they had studied. It is in that light that she considered herself very lucky to have been guided by the guidance counsellor while in secondary school because according to her, that is the reason behind her success today.

#### 4.2.2 Personal development

Through assisting students with career development, all the interviewees in this study said that they experienced a major growth in their personal development. In the process of assisting him find his path with career development, Mr N described how he equally found himself through the guidance counselling assistance sessions with his guidance counsellor. Therefore his overall impression of the program was that; “I found it very very beneficial, it was very beneficial, there was lots of benefits in it”. According to him it was beneficial because in one way his personal development witness an upright turn. Mr. N said:

The impact they had on building my devvv... my ehhhh what is it called?  
Personal development! ... Because I was shy; I was not able to stand like that and discuss and all these things; they are the ones who really build it and made me confident ... she said be confident.... You have skills in you.

The significance of this personal development upturn is that it provides a solid and confident foundation needed for future work life. He also explained that it is also important characteristic for one to have as he/her grows into becoming a man, (referring to himself) and role model for his/her younger ones. In addition, Mr. N pointed out that even though after consulting with the guidance counsellor you might seem not to have had the “concrete answers you were expecting” to your career plans, still, you will realise a change in thinking perspective; “you may know that ehhh, ok I have known something more” This Mr. N said

enables you to become conscious about the skills you possess and where they can better be fitted; thereby locating your career path. He continued by describing how a person can possibly “find his domain” outside the schooling circle, upon graduating from secondary/high school and become just as successful as someone who went through all the phases of formal education. The possibility of such happening is due to the fact that guidance counselling facilitated self-awareness and open-mindedness, Mr. N explained.

Positively appreciating the guidance counsellor’s professionalism, subtleness and reliability, Mr. Y described how he became aware and confident in himself through guidance counselling assistance. He became capable of taking important decisions pertaining to his career development, and is able to express himself effectively in every milieu he finds himself in, even today. These constitute aspects he considers to be critically important in career building and development.

All interviews described how and commented that guidance counselling positively impacted their self efficacy. They became more confident, self aware as important characteristics to shape their decision making process and finding their path for their future careers. To this regard, all expressed satisfaction with the level of professionalism with which their respective guidance counsellors performed their services. For as Miss B puts it, “she was more like a best friend one could have. Ehhmm ... she was like ok, everything is okay but that’s how you have to do ... she did not condemn.... she created a good environment for me to open up”.

### **4.3 Communal living; a responsibility and obligation**

For three (3) out of the four (4) respondents in this study, the essence of embarking on a sound career development route, in addition to other concerns, was due to the fact that they are part of a family and a group. They depicted that high level of interrelationship characterised this family and group, and so love, concern and support for one another is invariably important. In addition, the love and concern for family and society in general is considered a key issue that influences educational and career decision-making. The post secondary school students interviewed in this study expressed this theme of communal living on two fronts. Firstly, family and group well-being, and secondly, education for employability and independence.

#### 4.3.1 Family and group well-being

With the exception of Mr. Y, out of the four (4) participants, three (3) of them made known that the well-being of their family and society was in one way an obligation and on the other a responsibility they had to fulfil. Portraying these aspects, Miss. B described that making a good career choice and pursuing a good career is as important as having her family and community at heart. Therefore, a matter relating to career development is something;

Ehhh, eh hh ... I cannot just joke with ... it's something I have to do for myself, my family, my nation and the world.... help me get a good job and better my family my nation, and everyone around me Miss B said.

According to Miss B it was a responsibility and obligation to make certain that she supports and take good care of not only herself, but her family as well and all those who might need care and assistance around her. She mentioned this to be the main reason why she had to ensure that she prepared and set a solid career foundation. She highlighted that the reason for ensuring this was so as to enable her shoulder this task. Miss B implied that it was therefore a way of giving back, and an act of solidarity to the family and community at large; considering the care and support she had received from them. Therefore the choice she was making at that stage of her education and life were to reflect the accomplishment of these responsibilities. With this in mind, Miss B related that, the guidance counsellor was considered better placed to assist her meet her objectives.

Mr N on a similar page explained that it was important for him to be guided at secondary school so that upon leaving the higher education level, he would be able to take up the responsibility of catering for the social and economic wellness of his family. He carefully related that contributing to family welfare is not only viewed as a responsibility but also as an aspect that will go a long way to gain one respect in the society as an accomplished man. Mr N told me that:

A good social environment and assistance because when you have all these means you can take care of your family, and when you take care of your family you too you can ... you are feeling good ... and the family also sees you as a man who has succeeded ...you are acknowledged ... in the family and ... in the society.... When you are recognised as someone who has succeeded, it's a good point.

Ensuring the welfare of the family is a responsibility which results in self satisfaction once you are able to accomplish. On another account, it attracts social recognition and acknowledgment from one's family and society in general; Mr N declared. He implied that the combination of this self satisfaction and recognition turns to be a driving force that pushes one to want to acquire the best of guidance counselling for career development matters. Mr. N also portrayed that supporting the welfare of the family was an obligation and so it was time for him to consider "paying back" his parents for all they have done for him. He had this to say:

So you say ok you are going to school; I want to have ehghm, I will have my diplomas, when I have my diplomas, in quotes, I will pay back the money that my parents spent on me. So that's the objective.

For Mr. N, although it appears to be an unspoken motive, paying back parents for having brought you up to the point of maturity and self -sufficient was a valuable obligation for every child.

In support to the fact that contributing to the well-being of the family and society is a vital concern when making career development choices, Miss C explained that family is very important and that is why: "I take care of those people around me". She went on to elucidate that you had to consider your family background when making choices on what and where to study and about what career to embark on. If you come from a poor family background, it is necessary to make career development choices which can easily fetch you a job so you can take care of yourself and those next to you; Miss C added. She unveils that:

I tried to like look at my background. My uncle is the one sponsoring me; will he be there forever to do that? Ya! He won't be there! So let me cease this opportunity and achieve something that will help me.

In the view of Miss C, although the communal lifestyle facilitates one's survival, still it is necessary to consider how rich or poor your family is when making career choices. This is because those facilitating your growth and survival may no longer be available someday and it will become your place to take responsibility of your, and the welfare of others.

#### 4.3.2 Education for employability and independence

As Miss B, Miss C, Mr. N and Mr. Y told of their experiences with guidance counselling on the subject of career development, one of the fundamental points which all mentioned was their desire to acquire education that would facilitate the acquisition of jobs, earn money and be independent men and women. The trend is, after higher education, you are considered a mature person capable of taking charge of your own life, Miss C related. So therefore it is important to attend higher education institutions believed to have a higher probability of job acquirement. Miss C went ahead and recommended that when assisting students with career development, the guidance counsellors should look “at the economy and the job market” and not necessarily on what the student wishes to do - for what they need is getting a job after studies.

You need to get a job after completing higher education: “because after my studies everybody was just like; you are now a grown up, ya! You are now a grown up; go and manage and see what you can do for yourself, our hands are now off you.”, Miss C explained and portrayed that acquiring education was important for job achievement and self independence. Because she choose to attend a professional higher education institution Miss C disclosed that:

after I left the professional school, I won't say that I stayed home for more than emmm, for up to a year ... because ehhh by 2012, I was already working.... since that year I won't tell you that I have ever slept hungry; I have work, I take care of myself, I take care of those people around me.

According to Miss C, the education she acquired did not only secure a job for her but it accounts for her self-sufficiency today. With some degree of pride in her voice, she counted herself lucky in the midst of her classmates who are still wandering in search of jobs. She is lucky because she was duly guided by a guidance counsellor. She highlighted that education in an unstable economy of today, is essential for employment and consequently independence. However, Miss C's emphasis on education as a tool to achieve employment and independence is specifically on professional education. She unravelled that: ‘like for example, most of my friends who left university, most of them are at home’ because they were not counselled to go through a professional school. After her encounter with the guidance counsellor, Miss C said that:

After they [family] were forcing me to go to the university and I said no I can't. Take the money you want to send me to university, take it and send me ehmm because my school fee was 600,000 FRS.; so I said I don't want to go to the university, take that money and send me to a professional school, take that money and send me to a professional school. That's how they gather the money and sent me to ... professional school.

Of course for Miss C, professional education was better than general education. She supported this claim by making reference to an uncle of hers who could not find a job after obtaining his general education degree from the university. Miss C narrated:

I said it won't help me because I even saw the example from my own uncle who went to the university and spent three years; when he came back he was lost. He had to start selling shoes yes! A degree holder starts selling shoes! Then when selling shoes, it was like he met some friends, they told him; leave those shoes and come let's train you into a trade. They started training him in what I am doing now; custom transit, then from there he found his way. Until today he is now somewhere in ... so you see that everything is still boiling down at professional training not general education.

Mr. Y strongly supported this assertion and recommended professional education especially for the Anglo-Saxon schools in the country. For in his view, the reason why most young people from Anglo-Saxon schools do not get jobs in comparison to their Francophone counterparts is that the English system of education in Cameroon is mostly theory base. He explained that:

An English child goes to school and has his Ordinary Level Certificate [obtained upon completing the first cycle of secondary education], you ask him, what do you want to do?; I want to have my Advanced Level Certificate [obtained upon completing the second cycle of secondary education]; what do you want to do?, I want to have my degree [bachelor degree]; what do you want to do?, I want to go and do a masters degree and Phd; who has never ever worked! How can you want to be doing research when you don't have any practical knowledge?

According to Mr. Y education is valuable for employment, however, in the context of the country's and world's present economic situation, professional education is key for it offers

its attendees the likelihood of obtaining jobs and becoming “better placed” than people like himself (Mr. Y) who attended general education.

Meanwhile Mr. N from another angle narrated how you grow up with and believing in the notion instilled in you by your parents that education is a medium through which you will gain financial independence and be off your parents’ shoulders. This notion does not change even after secondary and university education he said. He added that only later in life does another thought adds on to the thought of education for financial benefit; this is the thought of wanting to be a ‘man’ in the African context of the word man. Mr. N disclosed that:

You are going to school to have your own money so that your parents will be free and you will take care of your own responsibilities. So you grow with it and as far as you are climbing steps; secondary school, university, the financial benefits ... are in your head We are in an African context, to be a man I mean a good man, a good man; you should have a wife or a family. You should build a family and to build a family, you should have the means to take care of the family. Those means they are ... they are, as they [parents] highlighted to you, ... are coming from your school; because what you learnt, ... it’s from what you learnt that you are going to have your independence, a balance in the society... you will be well established.

He explained that when you are capable to have a family, you have attained manhood; you are economically and socially viable and you have a ‘settled head’ – nothing to worry about. Mr. N. herein elucidated two major aspects. On one side, the education you obtain allows you to be financially fit and independent from your parents and on the other side the job you acquire as a result of sound education, provides you with the ability to establish a family; thereby enhancing community continuity.

Although almost all respondents related the interconnectivity of education and employability, it was Miss C who strongly concluded by depicting that education in the world of today is essentially “the base ... I think education is just for us to know how to fit our selves in every situation or every place we find ourselves”, to survive and not necessarily for job acquisition.

As mentioned earlier in the introductory part of this chapter, the themes generated from the research data and presented here as research findings, are presented thematically in relation to the research question(s). The previous section has so far presented the findings in relation to the first part of the research question (post-secondary school students’ experiences with

guidance counselling in relation to career development). Therefore at this junction, findings relating to the second part of the research question; *how can guidance counselling services be improved to benefit secondary school students* are presented below.

#### **4.4 Proposed recommendation for improvement**

Findings relating to this part of the research question were more distinct and varying as presented below. The first part of the findings presents the one main general theme; *guidance counsellor - teacher - parent - student collaboration* (which is sub divided in two parts; guidance counsellor - teacher collaboration and guidance counsellor - parent collaboration). The second part presents the more distinct views.

##### **4.4.1 Guidance counsellor – teacher – student – parent collaboration.**

This was a common theme highlighted by all interviewees however, expressed on two levels.

###### **(a) Guidance counsellor – parent – student collaboration**

All interviewees depicted that there is a degree of parental involvement on students' career development which necessitate a strong based collaboration between the guidance counsellor and the students' parents in assisting them with career development. To this, Miss B related that although the guidance counsellor was better placed to assist her with career development challenges, nonetheless, the voice of her parents on the subject was inevitable. She unravelled that: ‘daddy said, you are this type of person; a talkative, you should do journalism, if you were quiet, sciences would have been best’. For her, the parent is always a key player in the career development race.

Meanwhile, out of respect, trust, influence, and because they are often seen as role models who want the best for their child (ren), parents should equally be included Mr. N noted. He went further that:

but after I discussed with my parents; because when you are going like that, when you go back to your parents and they say ... it is good ... because I have my father who is a great man....From that point, my father put aside communication skills ... yes and I followed because at the end of the day I said ok, he was telling me and giving me examples ... he will show you that you will face this problem and all these things.

He explained that parents want to see their children succeed, settled in life and ensure family continuity. Hence, the reason they interfere in their educational and career choices. Mr. N narrated that:

let's say your father may say ok I did banking, I succeeded in banks, you too could do banking and succeed ... because at that point it's just that he wanted something, somebody on his back so that when I [father] will drop the business you will take over the business.

So parents are also very concerned to make sure that the family source of income and welfare is secured, he clarified. Mr. N portrayed that although they have no formal training like school guidance counsellors, and that their focus is mostly on the “trivial” monetary gains of the service, notwithstanding, they have the student interest at heart.

Mr. Y shared more or less same views as Mr. N and noted that in an African context where parents have some sort of an influence in the career decisions of their children, disrespecting their views is not always much of an option. As a result, it would be important to get them involved. He continued that:

Your counsellor may be your father, your counsellor can be your school counsellor, but actually you need a counsellor. That's why I still hold strongly that the two counsellors should always consent to ehh ... to assure the betterment of the child ... A parent can be choosing a career for a child based on the strength he sees at home, you are choosing a career for a child as a counsellor based on his educational strength....Make the parent to know that you are like a parent to the child in school ... so I think that the counsellor has to consent with the parents.

The need to combine professionalism (the counsellor) and parental mentoring according to Mr. Y will produce effective assistance for the child's career development process.

#### **(b) Guidance counsellor – teacher – student collaboration**

Mr. N referring to his case, especially, elaborated on the issue. For him the counsellor should work hand in gloves with the student's, “main teacher” (what is often referred to as class master or mistress) because the latter knows the student very closely in most cases. He or she is capable of relating valuable information about students' class performances, strengths and weaknesses in certain subjects to the counsellor which could be useful when assisting the

student with career development challenges. Mr. N recounted the relationship between his English language teacher (the class mistress) and the counsellor so he said; “I think for me it’s the way that helped me”

He went further and described that the guidance counsellor was always in contact with the English language teacher during his guidance counselling progress since students often related their problems to the former. So because of this back and forth discussion on his behalf, between the English language teacher and the counsellor, Mr. N thought that certainly the English language teacher may have “...told her friend (the guidance counsellor) that ehhe he is a good student in various classes” and so this collaboration between the two, greatly contributed for the success in the assistance he received. Mr. N therefore, thought that this close collaboration would be beneficial when assisting other students with career development as well.

However, all interviews passionately disclosed that the preference was the guidance counsellor because; Miss B said: “the counsellor is better to help me ... she is very informative”; Mr Y disclosed: “she was nice, independent person, accessible, confidential ... knows my educational background” ; Miss C narrated: “where I am today is because of the guidance counsellor” and Mr. N also said: “ a counsellor has experiences, has been trained for as compared to parents who have not”. According to the interviewees, parents’ opinions are important but the most reliable is the guidance counsellor’s because of her training and experiences in providing assistance to students.

#### 4.4.2 Varying suggestions for improvement

##### **More practical lessons and commitment**

In order to make the service more attractive for students Miss B thought “they have to do more practical work ... like video lessons uhmm, they have to be more devoted, committed”. She continued that the counsellor has to be there to assist the students with career challenges and various school challenges at all times. Miss B also related that the guidance counsellor is sometimes absent when students really need her: “most at times when we need her she is not around ... uhmm she had to relent a lot because maybe her work was the lightest amongst all the teachers”. Thus, Miss B proposed the need for a course delegate who could be working together with the guidance counselling and relating important information from the latter to the students – especially in the latter’s absence.

### **Effective sensitization**

On this subject, Miss C emphasized the need for an even stronger sensitization of current secondary school students on the importance of guidance counselling on their career development in particular. Miss C said: “the first thing they have to do is sensitise the students” without which many students will remain lost she depicted. She supported her recommendation by narrating the story of some of her friends who expressed regrets “crying that oh I didn’t know about the guidance counsellor”. She also explained that her friends blamed their current jobless situation on the fact that they were not counselled about the importance of professional education. As a result, Miss C unveiled the importance of “follow up”, saying that it is not just enough for the school authorities to announce the existence of the school guidance counsellor to students. Rather, they have to ensure that students consult the guidance counsellor; they have to sensitise the students more on the importance of guidance counselling on their career development.

### **The need for a workable curriculum and empowerment of guidance counsellors**

For Mr. Y, the already good guidance counselling service could be made even better with certain aspects put in place. Firstly, is the need for a feasible curriculum; Mr. Y said this:

they should have a defined curriculum that should run for the whole school year so that by the time a child finishes one form the child knows that ... by the time you finish form five you know why you are taking physics, you know the challenges in physics, you are ready to encounter them ... how to chose a profession then a career ... teachers hardly say that in class.

According to him, guidance counsellors lacked a proper curriculum for teaching the students and so there is the need for such a curriculum. Mr Y also explained that in addition to other topics, such a curriculum should be competent to orient the students per class, about every study subject and the job outcomes associated with each. Secondly, he disclosed that guidance counsellors should “be capacitated; they should be involved in ... leadership programs, career orientation, eeehh orientation training and conferences, yeh! They should be updated on career ehhhh changes”. This will empower the guidance counsellors so they can in turn; empower students significantly in respect to career development. Mr. Y continued that when guidance counsellors are capacitated through such programs, not only will they be

proficient in assisting students with job search tips, but be able to empower them for entrepreneurship.

### **Work gadgets and the use of social media**

Mr. Y and Mr. N recommended for working gadgets such as “telephones” and “tablets”, to be put at the disposal of guidance counsellors so they could communicate with students’ parents directly about the students’ progression in school, and how both parties could assist the student with career development. Moreover, Mr. N strongly recommended the production and provision of study materials for students to facilitate their comprehension of the role of guidance counselling in relation to career development. He related: “there are books like that they could create a pamphlet and give to students to read!”; disclosing that the student’s knowledge of the subject is only limited to what he or she hears from the guidance counsellor. This situation he depicted, only accounts for the ineffectiveness of the service; students are not fully engaged.

Mr. N, on his part, proposed the use of the internet and social media by the guidance counsellor in providing assistance to students. He noted:

give information to students, easy access, easy access to students maybe ... now like that we have social networks ... counsellors should have accounts you see?, a platform where students can comment ... like we are using whatsapp ... ok maybe facebook.

According to Mr. N, the authorities in place should make provision of gadgets such as tablets, phones and computers with internet access to guidance counsellors, to facilitate easy access to students. He highlighted that most young people today are very much interested and involved with social media; a forum the guidance counsellor can utilise to get closer to most students.

### **Guidance counsellors need more authority**

Explaining that guidance counsellors need more authority in order to make their presence felt among the students, Mr N. thought that “principles and authorities of the school should give more powers to counsellors because in some schools mostly public ones, they are not really considered ... maybe some people are seeing them as decorations but for me, it’s wrong”. He

outlined that the counsellors have something special to share with every student and therefore, should be giving the chance to perform and deliver great service to students.

#### **4.5 Chapter summary**

In this chapter, I have presented my findings on post-secondary school students' take on guidance counselling in assisting them with career development, and their suggestions on how the service could be provided much better. Findings from the first part of my research questions revealed that the interviewees' expressed satisfaction and gratitude to the guidance counsellors in assisting them clear doubts/uncertainties; a common characteristic among them. It was for the purpose of clearing these uncertainties that guidance counselling is considered to serve as a path finder for their career development. The findings also uncovered communal living as the main theme influencing students career choices in Cameroon and employability as one of the major end results of education; reason why guidance counselling is of utmost importance.

The second part of the research question unveiled interviewees suggestions on how to render quality guidance counselling service to current and future secondary school students. In this light, the need for collaboration between the guidance counsellor, the teacher, the student and his or her parents is echoed as a profound element to facilitate career guidance assistance to students. Meanwhile various options were voiced as measures to up-lift counsellors and their service provisions. Amongst these was the empowering of guidance counsellors through seminar training, the provision of some modern technological gadgets and use of social media in reaching out and ensuring that every student is reached by the guidance counsellor; especially in the changing society of today.

The discussion of the themes and subthemes emerging from the findings will be discussed in the next chapter in relation to the study's conceptual frame work and the reviews of related literatures on the topic.

## 5 DISCUSSION

### 5.1 Introduction

As mentioned in the preceding chapters, the goal of this research study is to explore and seek an understanding of the importance of guidance counselling to secondary/high school students' career development; from the view point of post or former secondary school students in Cameroon. In this regard, the essence of this chapter is to present the discussion of the findings of my empirical data presented in the previous chapter. The goal here is to interpret and facilitate an understanding of the place of guidance counselling to young people's career development. In order to accomplish this, I will discuss my findings with reference to the literature review and conceptual framework of this study (which as well shaped the research findings) presented earlier in chapter two, as well as some personal reflections. Specifically, I will ground my discussion upon the conceptual framework of human capital theory in education, education as a necessity of life, social welfare and functionalism theory, as I pave the way to answering the research questions and its objective. Nonetheless, my goal here is to interpret the findings as much as possible in an attempt to bring forth new knowledge and understandings on the topic under investigation, and not to prove or disprove any of the above stated concepts or theories. Therefore, the participants' perception of the role and influence of guidance counselling to career development is at the centre of this discussion.

The findings of this research suggest that the post-secondary school students in Cameroon who participated in this study, collectively, and overly are contented with the assistance received from guidance counselling in the face of career development. Their expressed satisfaction is typically geared in the direction of gaining employment and realising some form of socioeconomic welfare and stability. Moreover, the purpose of ensuring communal wellbeing and continuity is heralded as a key essence of being guided with career development challenges. These analyses will be demonstrated as they relate to the study's conceptual framework in the subsequent subsections.

The discussion presented in this chapter centres around the first part of my research question; that is interpreting participants' perceptions about guidance counselling with regards to career development. The second part of the research question focusing on the suggestions post-secondary school students put forward as ways of enhancing the practice of guidance

counselling in assisting secondary/high school students in Cameroon with career development, is presented in the conclusion chapter as contributions for practice.

## **5.2 Participants' experiences and perceptions of guidance counselling on their career development trajectory**

The first part of my research question seeks to investigate post secondary school students' experiences with guidance counselling assistance they acquired while in secondary and or high school in relation to their career development. This subsection as a result will provide a comprehension into the views they present as very satisfactory, as well as the extent to which the assistance they received has and is playing a significant role in their world of career decision making and development.

## **5.3 Perception of the importance of guidance counselling to career development**

### **5.3.1 Contributing to the proper functioning of the society**

The future to one and all remains an unknown phenomenon but planning and preparing for it can begin at any time within an individual's life. This can go through various channels, with the aim of arriving at a specific or desired point or goal. The interviewees in this study perceive the need for guidance counselling for career development purpose as a way to approach a future which of course is unknown but worth worrying for. However, the over edging concerned of this future is geared towards the attainment of individual and group stability which requires the individual to be able to make sound choices relating to education and job; so as to occupy a place and to function in the society.

The need to prepare for this future triggers the need to be guided with career development as implied by the research participants. Not only do these participants live within a society characterised by social, political, economic and cultural institutions; these institutions equally depend on each other and work together for the common survival of the entire country (Levinson, Cookson, & Sadovnik, 2002; Mooney, Knox, & Schacht, 2007 & Sever, 2012). Even so, as Mr. N (one of the interviewee participants) implied, Anglophone youths in Cameroon must compete with their francophone counterparts (perceived to be better-off in terms of the education and training they acquire), to gain access into the various bodies of society. In this regard, it becomes imperative to find a path; which will enable individuals

within this society to fit themselves into and occupy a place where they can showcase and utilise their capabilities to contribute to and ensure this stable and proper functioning society. In relation to the conceptualisation of schooling held by the functionalist (presented in chapter two above), in connection to the views of post secondary school students in Cameroon who participated in this study, this research study thus argue in support to the fact that the education youth people acquire should prepare and capacitate them to take up functioning roles in the society. Similarly, the guidance assistance helps to facilitate this process.

Accordingly, the interview participants hold that to be guided by the school guidance counsellor is the gateway for possibly pursuing the 'right' course in education; a constituting element for a conventional functioning society (Mooney, Knox, & Schacht, 2007). The positive impression made by these participants of the guidance counselling service and its providers in helping them find their path as far as career development is concerned, raises the question why some studies (Bomda, 2008; Mesonge, 2012; Tatangang, 2011) argue against the effectiveness of the program.

Still on the functioning role however, and looking through the functionalists' lens, Mooney, Knox, and Schacht (2007, p. 1) view education as the tool that "offers a way to transmit a society's skill, knowledge and culture to its youth" so that they are made competent in various skills which their society so needs to ensure its stability and functioning. As a result, it becomes comprehensible that UNESCO (2000) and the research participants perceive guidance counselling as a main path to find a way through which they could be able to contribute to the society's functioning in the nearest future.

In the light of the above this study argues that the fact that the research participants sought for advices from the guidance counsellor regarding making choices of educational subject and subsequent career decisions implies, they on one hand were enthusiastic about gaining skills and knowledge which would be adequate to function in the society. On the other hand, due to immaturity, dilemma, uncertain and confusion, the only way for some young people in Cameroon who participated in this research study to approach a desired future, is to seek for help and direction in career decision making. No better option consequently, can be considered other than the school guidance counsellor (Bottom & Young, 2008; Sultana, 2014)

Although I interviewed individuals who completed secondary and high school education from different parts of Cameroon and guided by different guidance counsellors, it is appealing to discover that their common interest in being guided is influenced by the desire to locate a space where they can function in the community. The question one might ask is whether this perception has been influenced because they ended up successful; that is, occupying functioning roles in the society? (In terms of job acquisition) Equally, one wonders if their impression would have been the same as presented here and now if they had in some way experienced any negative situation vis-à-vis guidance counselling. These questions are raised due to the fact that, my research participants and their experiences are quite basically alike.

In order to be equipped to contribute to the overall functioning of society therefore, the post secondary school students in Cameroon, viewing their experience in retrospect, perceive education as the vessel to facilitate this move. The education students should acquire should enable them to be proficient and productive participants in the society (Hughes & Karp, 2004; Tatangang, 2011).

As a result of this need to pursue education with the tendency to effectively build students, the interview participants recognize professional education as a key form of education for students to pursue in the present era of the country. In relation to the literature review of this research study and its conceptual framework, the aspect of professional education as a preferred form of education, emerges from the research findings as a new contribution to this research study. With this form of education the knowledge students acquired readily enables them fit to take up jobs, for examples - enabling them to contribute to the solidarity of the society. Therefore, the research participants consider professional education as the major player for skills, knowledge and job acquisition which enhances the society to properly function.

Nonetheless, from the suggestion of professional education presented in the analysis that precede, the question that arises is what becomes of those students who cannot afford attending professional education, perceived as the safe type of education to pursue in order to be successful in this society. Therefore, this study argues that the participants' perception and suggestion of professional education is influenced by their experiences and encounters with guidance counselling assistance in relation to their career development. This study argues

further that this perception is equally highlighted due to the participants' encountered successes, resulting from pursuing professional education; or successes encountered by their close collaborators from pursuing the same form of education.

Meanwhile, the drive to contribute to society's functioning is paramount; one obvious challenge the students must bridge so as to be competent to achieve this is personal growth and development. In the career development journey, individuals must grow in every area pertaining to personal development. For example physical and intellectually, for this aids to better prepare them for the process (Gybers & Henderson, 2006; Pond, 2010). It therefore becomes the duty of the guidance counselling program to help them bridge these challenges by assisting them to have a better knowledge and understanding of themselves (Ojo & Rotimi, 2006; Oye et al. 2012). The question is how does one intend to excel in his or her educational pursue and be capable of making career decisions, and contribute to the proper functioning of his or community without knowing his/her self?

The answer to this lies in the assistance acquired from the guidance counsellor. In order to be functional the participants thought that help from the guidance counsellor is eminent. They maintain that building self-confidence is an aspect which enables students to not only be able to make sound choices of study subjects but with career development as well as in the work life. In addition, the need to be self-aware is an important factor in the personal development trajectory. This enables the student to become conscious or more conscious of his or her skills and abilities and to start thinking in a more realistic manner which can facilitate them to "find his domain", as related by Mr. N.

The participants in this research were only to a large extent, able to build and bridge this personal development gap through the guidance counselling assistance obtained from their respective counsellors. Although the assistance one gets may not fully be one's expectations, nevertheless, the assistance enable the participants to break away from shyness, low self-esteem and become open-minded and great thinkers.

Therefore, for students to find their path in to the education that leads them to their desired dreams and from which they would be able to participate in the solidarity of their society at large, the interviewed participants perceived that, one of the greatest barrier students most overcome lies with personal development. As such, the guidance counsellor is very beneficial in assisting them to overcome this wall (Chireshe, 2006).

### 5.3.2 The continuation of life

The findings of this study show that the need for the sustainability and continuity of the social group within which the research participants found themselves remains a trivial issue to them. Through the experiences related by these participants, it became lucid that the family and the society at large is held very close to the heart and one will go miles and do just whatever it takes to ensure its continuity. Consequently, education is seen as the tool which facilitates the acquisition of knowledge and skills required to ensure what Dewey (2007) refers to as to as the “social continuity of life”.

The post-secondary school students in this study perceive the education they acquire as a tool that enables them to identify, develop skills, and utilise them for the common benefit of the group. In other words, education is a facilitating channel for equipping some young people in Cameroon to be the torch bearers of their family and society at large.

Education moreover, empowers and facilitates the access to valuable information, norms and values needed for the growth, survival and wellbeing of the society at large (Burchi, 2006; Dewey, 2012; Mohan, 2012 ; Oye et al. 2012). In a society like Cameroon whose economy for example is constantly in a state of flux (like is the situation with economies around the globe), the participants of this study view education as a means to adjust and function. Therefore, in order to literally meet up with this trend, they perceive that making right choices of study subject is primarily the basic step for acquiring education which ensures this continuity of life.

With this perception of the continuation of life and with education viewed as a vehicle for its realisation, post secondary school students in Cameroon view guidance counselling as the main element to assist them acquire the education they sort for and to develop relevant careers options which enhances their ability to contribute to this continuity. However, the question is to what extent has guidance counselling service been capable of assisting, and to what extent are the current career paths of the research participants, influenced by guidance received?: when Mesonge (2012) and Bomda (2008) argue about the ineffectiveness and inefficiency of the program in assisting students with career development.

To answer this question, findings of this research reveal that post secondary school students were generally very satisfied, as mentioned earlier, with the nature and quality of assistance from the guidance counselling service. The counsellors do not only portray professionalism

in the execution of their jobs but the assistance they provide has long lasting impact on the students' self-awareness, self-believe and in their overall decision making process about work and study. This is evident in the safe career choices all the interview participants perceive to have made thus far in their career life; decisions which pays off in the light of the present economic scenario of the country. In relation to these views, this research study consequently holds that guidance counselling is a major tool to assist students in the Cameroonian society to pursue education with the capability of empowering them to ensure the continuity of life in this society. One of the main areas where this “social continuity of life” is portrayed is through communal living.

However, the above mentioned analysis and conclusion is drawn basically only from the experiences and perceptions of the participants of this research which is rather very small and extremely homogeneous if compared to a larger Cameroonian society.

### 5.3.3 Communal living

The need to be guided with career development is mainly related to the fact that the post-secondary school students in Cameroon perceive the maintenance of the wellbeing of their families and society at large as a responsibility and obligation they must fulfil. Through the interviews, they expressed the wellbeing of the family and society in general, both on a social and economic level (Blau & Abramovitz, 2010) as salient. This wellbeing is made certain by the decisions people make about aspects such as work, education and marriage (Sumner, 1996). In this regard, the interviewees undoubtedly perceive the importance of guidance counselling in assisting them with decision making about educational choices of study and building careers. Similarly, their perception is that this should enable them meet up with their responsibility and obligation of ensuring the wellbeing of love ones.

By bringing this aspect of communal living to the spotlight, one can thus say that the driving-force for obtaining education and seeking guidance counselling assistance for career development in the Cameroonian society is the aspects of group solidarity. This awareness of group solidarity or cohesion as I perceive it through the interviews is embedded deep into the thoughts of the participants, such that it influences every decision-making relating to education and career development. As a result, and based on the cultural values of the society, it becomes an issue of necessity to contribute to and maintain the cohesion in the group.

Moreover, it is argued that wellbeing can be attained amongst other aspects, by having a job and earning and using income (Blau & Abramovitz, 2010; Burchi, 2006; Greve; 2008; Sumner; 1996). As Greve (2008, p. 55) describes it, “welfare and a good life are connected to having a job”. In connection, post-secondary school students in Cameroon who shared their experiences in this study therefore want to be guided because they consider education which leads them to career with the potential of employment and earning money as education which equally provides the capacity to pay back and take care of their families and love ones.

With this notion, I argue in this research that the interview participants in this study clearly associate their experiences of being guided with career development to the overwhelming interest of wanting to partake in ensuring the wellbeing of the society. By so doing, the family and group is taking care of; thereby enhancing the continuity of life in the society.

According to Dewey (2007), this continuity of life is guaranteed when the older generation communicate down society’s valued aspects to the younger generation, in an effort for them to be matured and be contributors to the society’s social order. In relation, post-secondary school students regard the guidance counsellors as this older generation with the potential to assist secondary school students pursue educational and career paths, through which they can be able to give back and take care of their parents, families and society; a chain which continues from one generation to another - hence, enhancing the continuity of life.

As revealed in the research findings, post secondary school students in this study view the guidance counsellors as elders with the ability to adequately and competently guide them. Also, the participants perceive the guidance counsellors as elders worth being respected because of the experiences they have and share in the course of the counselling sessions. Such experiences that they share, provide reliable information about career development and the world of work. Therefore, this aspect of information transmission from the elders to the young as Dewey claims and as experienced by the research participants is fundamental to the continuity of life.

#### 5.3.4 Education for employability

“A career is my life investment” is the strong perception Miss B holds of the need to be guided with making educational subject choices and career development; a common view expressed by all participants. Most African and Cameroonian researchers (CAMYOSFOP & FES, 2014; Nsamenang & Tchombe, 2011; Tatangang, 2011; UNESCO, 2013) in particular

who through their works speak about the importance of education to young people in this part of the world, rarely fall short of attributing this importance to the acquisition of jobs or employment. To the post secondary school students who participated in this research project, the goal of the particular type of education they pursued was to fulfil their dreams of becoming professionals in various works of life in the future. They as such made use of guidance counselling to see to and reinforce their move into these dreams.

Authors like Tatangang (2011) and Burchi (2006) argue that education is the means through which people in the society can get jobs and earn a happy living. Burchi (2006, p.197) holds that “who is educated is more likely to find a job”. In this regard, the interview participants attribute the dilemmas and confusion that characterised their decision making with regards to study subjects and educational institutions to pursue after high school, to the desire to ensure that they would be able to gain employment thereafter. Gaining the ‘right’ education and subsequent employment serves as the basis to the attainment of independence/self-sufficiency and a first step to be recognized in the society as having a successful life.

Meanwhile it could be said here that the participants of this study make this claim in relation to the fact that they have been so far successful in obtaining jobs with the education they obtain (which on the one hand is in line with the views of human capital theory in education). However, in the reality of the employment situation in Cameroon, this is not especially the case with most young people who have just like the interviewee participants in this study acquired similar education. In the research findings, Miss C. makes reference to her uncle who after completing university education ended up as a small scale shoe vendor in the market; being unable to find a proper job suitable with his educational qualification. One therefore expresses doubts about the human capital theory in a situation like this. In addition, one wonders if the assertion of “who is educated is more likely to find a job”, Burchi (2005, p, 197) applies to such society.

Despite this worries, based on the employment related successes some post secondary school students in Cameroon who share their experiences in this research achieve, this study argues that education remains a vital tool for the acquisition of employment in the society. Based on their experiences as well, the research in addition, argues that guidance counselling plays a salient role in assisting secondary school student with career development challenges. The acquisition of employment by means of the education consequently fosters wellbeing of the

student and his/her society at large, thereby ensuring social wellbeing and the continuity of life in the society.

In addition, findings related to education as a gateway to employment and becoming economically independent for example equally connect this success in life with the ability of starting a family; an institution very well cherished and respected in the Cameroonian society. The interviewee perceive the ability of family establishment as a success which earns one a “settled head ” as Mr N described it. All thanks to the job acquired by means of education and guidance counselling assistance. Thus, establishing a family is considered a means of extending the family or group lineage as well as enhancing once again the continuity of life Dewey (2007) describes.

Promoters of the role of education in the achievement of employment often make use of the human capital theory in education. Human capital theorists in education (Psacharopoulos, 2006; Burchi, 2006; Fitzsimons, 1999) argue that education plays a significant role in the provision of human resources to the labour market which is much needed if such markets are to function effectively. They assert that education provides the labour market with the production of necessary skills and labour, higher productivity at a low cost; there by considered as a “determinant of economic growth” (Burchi, 2006, p. 195).

Those educated have the potential to be more productive, earn better wages and have a better welfare situation. Moreover, another economic benefit of education to the society is that it helps to curb crime, contribute to longer life expectancy and enhance the social solidarity of the group (Psacharopoulos, 2006; Villa, 2000).

The investigated participants in this research project through their present employment achievements and economic soundness, to a great extent, identify themselves with this economic benefit of education. The participants portray that this would not be possible without assistance from the guidance counsellor; perceive not only as been informative on educational courses and possible careers suitable to one’s personal desires and capabilities but who helps to find path.

Although some studies (Bowles & Gintis, 1975; Fitzsimons, 1999 ; Mulongo, 2012) criticise the use of the human capital theory in education for reducing humans to mere commodities ready to be sold in the labour market, post secondary school students interviewed in this project together with the views of other authors, (such as Nsamenang & Tchombe, 2011 &

Tatangang, 2011, who on one hand criticise the insertion of the theory upon education in Africa) portray that the theory indeed still applies to the education in Cameroon today. Therefore, in the light of the findings of this research study, the question raise relates to what grounds critics of the human capital theory on education based their argument? And whether there is need for a customised set of arguments to be used as a benchmark to criticise human capital theory on education per the society of study. Based on the findings of this project, I dare say that human capital theory plays a key role in the education as well as the career decision young people make in the country. Accordingly, it is the duty of the guidance counselling program to ensure that secondary school students as they transit from one level of education to the other, are profoundly assisted to make considerable decisions about choices of study, higher education so they get jobs in the future (Chireshe, 2006).

However, as mentioned earlier above, I make this claim with regards to the experiences of post secondary school students interviewed in this research. The question that arises from here is whether this study would have perceived human capital theory and giving it the same importance as in this instance if the interviewed participants had experienced conflicting views about education and employment. The obvious answer would have been negative. Consequently, the perception of human capital theory on education would have been question. But since this is not the case in this study; because the responses are rather alike, the importance of human capital theory is highlighted only in relation to the perception of those interviewed in this study.

Because post secondary school students who shared their experiences in this research project believe that one of the main goals of them being educated is so that they can be fit for future work life, most of them therefore envisaged the need to be selective about the form of education that will be in context with especially the economic situation within which they found themselves. As a result, they perceived that professional education is a suitable found of education that prepares the Cameroonian youths to gain specific skills and knowledge attractive for the job market. They implied in other order words that the general education all of them acquired in secondary and high school is good but not good enough for most jobs in the labour market. Again the research participants identify the guidance counsellor as one who has the potential to help secondary school students be at pace with the present labour market trend and to assist the latter to pursue the suitable form of higher education – professional education in this regard.

The review of related literature to this study presented above in chapter two, presents the need for guidance counselling to assist students with choices about educational institutions, however, no specific form of education was identified. It is therefore interesting to discover that the findings of this study as perceived by the interview participants, see and presents professional education as an option for general education students to consider upon completing secondary and high school.

Thus far, the above section has presented students perceptions in relation to the importance of guidance counselling on secondary school students' career development. The findings that has been interpreted in this section highlights the fact that post secondary school students attribute the overall notion of being guided with career development challenges to the continuity of life. This concept (continuity of life) is embedded and closely related to the concept of education as a necessity of life, human capital theory, functionalism theory, and welfare theories.

As has been portrayed, these theories function as a web in this research. By this I implied that the continuity of life would not be possible if not that the individuals are able to work and earn money; a determinant of social welfare as portrayed in this study. Equally, there might be malfunctioning of the society if not for the contributions from society's institution such as education. Therefore, the theories in this study are intertwined in each other as demonstrated in the discussions above.

After having discussed the findings of the empirical part of this research study in relation to the study's conceptual framework, literature review and my own intuition, the next section of this study will discuss findings relating to the second part of the my research questions, pertaining to ways of improving the service; as presented in the findings chapter above

#### **5.4 Chapter summary**

Discussion of the research findings on post secondary school students' perception of the importance of guidance counselling in relation to career development has been presented in this chapter. This was accomplished in the light of this study's literature review and conceptual framework. The overall perception of the importance of guidance counselling to students' career development portrays the services on a high satisfaction level as the means for young people to attain their dreams.

The discussion revealed the essence of ‘the social continuity of life’ as the central concept that triggers secondary school students to seek and find paths for the realisation of this dream. The education which students acquire has the potential to equip them both socially and economically to become active participants contributing to the proper function of the society. Moreover, this education is perceived as the tool for fighting unemployment, gaining suitable employment and fostering the welfare of the society at large. Therefore education is a concept that ensures and enhances the continuity of life. Guidance counselling as a result is perceived as the machinery that enhances students’ personal development, rendering them capable to make decision concrete decisions about education and work.

Moreover, the human capital theory was perceived as an unavoidable concept in the field of education in the Cameroonian context for it is the backbone for pursuing education in such a society and a promoter of the continuity of life.

Furthermore, various suggestions advanced as contributions to the improvement of the guidance counselling service summarily, holds the service with great esteems that demands both human and material inputs for its smooth running.

## 6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 6.1 Introduction

At a time when unemployment and underemployment of the Cameroonian young school leavers is not only attributed to the lack of job opportunities in the Cameroonian labour market but also to the guidance (commonly referred to as orientation, in Cameroon) assistance these young people receive in the course of their education, the need for career guidance counselling has been brought forth to the spotlight as an utmost necessity in the country (Bomda, 2008; Mesonge, 2012; & Tatangang, 20011). It is in connection that this research was carried out with the aim of bringing forth the importance of guidance counselling to secondary students' education and contributions on how to make the service more effective. It was equally to investigate how the education pursued and acquired, with the help of guidance counselling, could contribute to the social and economic wellbeing of these students, the family and the society at large. The findings of this study helped to emphasize these importances.

After having discussed the findings of this research study in relation to the study's conceptual framework, literature review and my own intuition in the previous chapter, the focus of this chapter is to draw a conclusion of the overall study. In addition, this chapter will equally present the strengths and limitations of this study as well as suggestions for further research on this topic and or field. Meanwhile, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the second part of my research question which seeks the participants' suggestions for improving the guidance counselling service is also presented here as recommendations for practice.

### 6.2 Review

The objective of this research study was to examine the perceptions of post-secondary school students in Cameroon with regards to guidance counselling assistance towards career development; drawing from their personal experiences with the service. Likewise, the objective was to find out the participants' recommended suggestions on how to make the service more efficient in assisting secondary school students. To attempt this, four post or former secondary school students were contacted and participated in this study to provide answers to the following research questions;

- What are post secondary school students' experiences with guidance counselling in relation to their career development in Cameroon?
- How can guidance counselling services be improved to benefit secondary school students?

Since my concern was to interpret the meaning these young people made of their experiences, a qualitative interview technique, semi-structure in nature was thus employed with the help of an interview guide, to obtain the participants' views/answers to the questions stated above. In other words, this technique was used to understand the meaning these participants make of their experiences with guidance counselling in assisting them with career development issues, as well as their suggestions for improving the service. This study was therefore mainly a basic qualitative study, interpretive in its nature and based on the philosophical stance of constructive interpretivism; interpreting the meaning the participants constructed of their respective experiences.

### **6.3 Findings**

These findings are related to the first part of the research question (post secondary school students' experiences with guidance counselling in relation to career development). First and foremost, the findings of this study revealed a very homogenous group of participants in terms of their perceptions on the importance of guidance counselling assistance to secondary school students' career development, and in terms of the 'safe' career choices they made. The findings showed that the participants hold very positive perception on the importance of guidance counselling to secondary school students' career development. This perception is based on the help they received from their respective counsellors. They portrayed this assistance to be the backbone of the various 'safe job choices' they made resulting to their successes today as far as job attainment is concerned.

Due to the impressive impact of the guidance counselling assistance received by the post secondary school students in this study, guidance counselling assistance for career development purposes is viewed as a path finder for young people's future. To start with, the path to personal development; self-realization, self-confidence and self-awareness are made clear, and secondly, the path to making and pursuing sound educational choices in relation to career choices is illuminated. These aspects therefore become the stepping stones for acquiring positions and participating in the functioning of the society.

Similarly, because no man is an Island, especially in a society like Cameroon, it becomes absolutely imperative to pursue education with the potential of earning a job and money so that one is able to assume his or her responsibility and obligation of catering for the family and society as a whole – thereby ensuring its wellbeing (socially and economically). The need for guidance counselling is as a result very important to aid young people make the best possible decisions in education and career development so they are able to fulfil this task. By so doing, the continuity of life in the society is also guaranteed. As described by Dewey (2007) one of the elements to facilitate the continuity of life is via communication and the education handed down to the younger generation by the elders in the society. The education secondary school students in Cameroon acquire should or permits them to gain knowledge and skills for example, and the guidance counsellor is a valuable person looked up to facilitate this process.

The findings also helped to uncover that means of fostering the continuity of life in the Cameroonian society does not end at maintaining its social and economic stability but equally that building a family is crucial. When an individual is able to build a family, he or she is considered successful in the eyes of the family and society and he or she earns the title of being a ‘man’. In the same light, building a family is an aspect of continuing life in the society at large. Consequently, education is seen as a vital tool to achieve these.

Meanwhile, education maintains its role as in time past; as the medium for gaining employment in the society. The anxiousness and desire to be guided in secondary school with decisions making about study subjects and further educational institutions to pursue is essentially linked to the concern of gaining employment after schooling. My analysis of the findings brought me to the conclusion that education to the views of some individuals in Cameroon, to a large extent, is pursued for the sake of gaining jobs. The acquisition of employment enables the beneficiary to be socially and economically self-sufficient, independent and secure. Therefore, it is important that secondary/high school students are properly assisted by the school guidance counsellor to pursue education with the probability of gaining employment. In this regard, professional education is presented and hailed as a better option of education which coins the youths to specific fields and possibly guarantees employment than a general education will do; very important to succeed in the country today.

In connection, guidance counsellors are very qualified, experienced and exercise professionalism in providing aid; making them the best alternatives to assist secondary school students with educational and career decisions. Therefore, the importance of assisting students with career development challenges is tied to the necessity of having trained, trustworthy and accessible individuals as guidance counsellors. When students are guided (from the secondary level) by these individuals, they are likely to pursue education which allows them obtain jobs, which in turn allows them to have the potential to foster the socio-economic wellbeing of the society at large. This helps to foster the sustainability and continuation, as well as enhance a better functioning society.

#### **6.4 Limitations of this study**

The first limitation of this study deals with the difficult of generalising the findings of this study to the entire guidance counselling situation in Cameroon. This is as a result of the study being a qualitative one. This research project can only be seen as a mirror which provides understanding of some former secondary school students' experiences with guidance counselling in relation to career development in Cameroon. The views of other such audiences could be different; as such, the findings and conclusion herein cannot be generalised but rather be understood only within the frame of this research project.

In addition, the participants of this study were chosen from a few cities in the country. So, although the research refers to them as post secondary students in Cameroon, they are just a selected few in various locations of the country. Even though this makes generalisation of the research findings difficult, however, they are a part of the Cameroonian society and it is in this context that this research views them as 'students in Cameroon'.

Another limitation has to do with the use of the concept human capital in education. In order words the perception of education as a means of employment. This concept is highly criticised by some scholars. One of the participants in this study even disproves the concept when she referred to a relative of hers who was educated but yet found no job.

Notwithstanding, this concept occupies a central place in this study since a larger part of the findings portrays the need of education and being guided to the acquisition of employment; especially in such a society.

Furthermore, a limitation I had to deal with in this study pertains to the difficulty and lack of sufficient literature about guidance counselling in Cameroon schools. This problem was dealt

with by using a wide variety of literature on the subject of study from different countries and countries similar to Cameroon and using them as they best fit my study context.

On the other hand, this research has facilitated the comprehension of the importance of guidance counselling to secondary school students' career development in Cameroon from another angle. By means of the findings, new knowledge have emerged which current secondary school students and practitioners in the field of guidance counselling in educational institutions can learn from.

Moreover, by means of this research study, students' voices (who are the beneficiaries of the program) have been heard - unlike many studies that mostly concentrate on the guidance counsellors and their service provision. Therefore, although the research project has to limitations, it equally has great achievements and contribution to the research field of education and social welfare.

In addition, as was the intention of this research to contribute in rendering the guidance counselling service more effective, various suggestions to this effect have been presented in this study.

## **6.5 Suggestions for improving the guidance counselling service**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the participants' suggestions of possible ways of improving the guidance counselling service in assisting secondary school students in Cameroon is presented here as contributions for practice.

### **6.5.1 Guidance counsellor-parent collaboration**

Post secondary school students interviewed in Cameroon for this research project, strongly recommend a solid partnership between the guidance counsellor and students' parents in assisting the students with career development. Mr. N describes parents as role models and especially his father as "a great man" with the interest of seeing their children succeed in life. The parents on one hand wish is to ensure that their children pursue education and career which is in line with their interests and abilities. On the other hand, they want their children to be their successors and continue the family legacy or to follow in their footsteps and work in the same 'fruitful' jobs as them. Mesonge (2012) and Zabel (2007), assert that parents often fail to see the role of the guidance counselling in assisting their children with career development for they regard themselves as better placed to provide such assistance. To bridge

this gap and offer relevant assistance to the child who is at the centre of concern, there is need for guidance counsellors and parents to work together (Zabel, 2007; Schiersmann, 2006; Findings for Manitoba, 2004 & Bomda, 2008).

### 6.5.2 Guidance counsellor-teacher collaboration

Oye et al., (2012) and Ojo & Rotimi, (2006) argue that teachers are bearers of valuable information about students which can greatly contribute in the guidance counselling process to career development. However, most of the interview participants (but one) in this study do not share the same opinion; they see the guidance counsellor as independent, trained, most informative and the best person to assist them with career development. One might thus question the existing relationship between students and their teachers in schools.

Notwithstanding, Mr. N describes the close collaboration between his English language teacher and the guidance counsellor – a collaboration which he perceives to be the reason behind the beneficial guidance counselling assistance he received which he perceives as paying off well today.

In line with the above, this study holds that as a step to potentially contributing to the quality of guidance counselling assistance offered to secondary school students, it could be fundamental to consider and build good working ties between the guidance counsellor and the parents on one hand and the guidance counsellor and the teacher on another. Other suggestions advanced to the improvement of the service are discussed below.

### 6.5.3 More practical lessons and commitment

Practical lessons such as videos will engage the students to the guidance counselling program and as such render it effective especially when matched up with counsellors who are not unconscious (Bomda, 2008) but take pride in providing services to students. Equally, having a course delegate working together with the guidance counsellor is a possible option to solve the problem of absentee guidance counsellors; at least information can be related from the guidance to the students via the delegate.

### 6.5.4 Sensitization

Miss C describes how uninformed most students are about the importance of guidance counselling in assisting them with career development, a situation (Mesonge, 2012) laments still occurs today despite numerous campaigns. The need for emphasis and sensitisation is

highly recommended, if students have to benefit from the advantages of being guided as portrayed by the interview participants in this study.

#### 6.5.5 Work gadgets and the use of the social media

It was surprising to know that guidance counsellors have no proper working curriculum in executing their studies. One would wonder how they plan and execute their duties. Gybers (2009, p. 121) argues that “for a guidance and counselling program to function effectively, adequate financial support and budget for providing material and equipment are crucial”. Thus the interview participants suggest the provision of electronic devices such as telephones and tables and the use of social media to ease communication between the guidance counsellors and parents. If this be the case, this implies that, guidance counsellor will be up to date (Gibson & Mitchell, 2006) with information surrounding the provision of guidance counselling and as such render the service more attractive and effective.

### 6.6 Suggestions for further research

The findings of this research study portrayed that students are more comfortable and confident to be guided by a female guidance counsellor. As such it might be appropriate to investigate students’ perceptions with male and female guidance counsellors and to examine how their perceptions of receiving assistance for career development is influenced by the gender of the guidance counsellor.

Furthermore, this research focused on students with experiences with guidance counselling in relation to career development. At the end, the findings were very homogenous. Therefore, it might be of importance for further studies to be done with those youths who never seek assistance with guidance counsellors as far as career development is concerned.

In addition, further studies might be important to explore the views of those who experienced conflict with the guidance assistance they obtained so as to have insight to aspects that causes such conflicts and how they can be avoided.

Lastly, due to the limited capacity of this research study, the views and contributions of guidance counsellors on the importance of guidance counsellors, the difficulties they face in providing their services and suggestions for solving them, could not be investigated.

Therefore, it could be necessary to carry out a research on this.

In conclusion, this research project has investigated the views and contributions of post-secondary school students in Cameroon in relation to the importance of guidance counselling to secondary school students career development. Through this study, guidance counselling has been brought to the spotlight as is a vital tool to assist secondary school students in Cameroon to gain quality education which can help them acquire and live a sustainable life. In addition, contributions on how the service can be improved in relation to practice, has be brought forth as suggested by these students.

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## 8 Appendices

### Appendix A

1. What were your expectations with guidance counselling with regards to assisting you with making career choices?
2. Why did you need to be guided with making career choices or development by a guidance counsellor? Can you outline some of the reasons?
3. In what ways did you think guidance counselling could assist you with your education to acquire some social or economic benefits?
4. What were your experiences after consulting the service? Can you describe how the meeting or meetings went?
5. How helpful was the service to you and how helpful do you think it can be for current secondary school students? What do you think of it?
  - a) How did the guidance you received influence your present choice of career?
6. Are there any needed improvements for the service? Can you suggestion some of them and why?