

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE  
ROLE OF THEIR COUNSELLORS IN THE KUMASI  
METROPOLIS OF THE ASHANTI REGION OF GHANA

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REGION OF GHANA

BY

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the award of Master of Philosophy Degree in Guidance and Counselling

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## DECLARATION

### Candidate's Declaration

*I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.*

Candidate's Signature:.....Date:.....  
Name: Juliana Audria Assabieh

### Supervisors' Declaration

*We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

The study was a descriptive survey conducted to investigate the role of the Senior High School (SHS) counsellors as perceived by Senior High School students in the Kumasi Metropolis of the Ashanti Region of Ghana. A simple random sampling technique was employed to select eight (8) senior high schools from the eighteen (18) senior high schools in the Kumasi Metropolis. Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were employed to select female and male students for the study. In all, 400 students, made up of 256 males and 144 females were selected from a total of 27113 students for the study. A questionnaire was used to solicit responses from the students.

The findings revealed that, generally students had positive perception on the roles of the SHS counsellor. However, they perceived the counsellor's role of assessment and appraisal as fairly important. This finding probably suggests that, teachers are not carrying out such functions in their schools which might stem from the fact that they do not possess the requisite expertise in this area.

The study showed further that although majority of the respondents were aware of the existence of the counsellor in their schools, they hardly consulted him or her. It was suggested that the school counsellors should promote a positive perception of their roles and most importantly work positively with students.

Again, it was recommended that heads of institutions and the Ghana Education Service (G.E.S) should make sure that counsellors they appoint in the schools have adequate training to handle the guidance and counselling programmes.

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## **DEDICATION**

To Francis Avoh. He understands.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Background of the Study**

Guidance and counselling in Ghana has until recently seemed not to have attracted much attention by way of intense structural and curriculum reform. According to Essuman (1999), serious work in establishing guidance and counselling in schools, however, began in the late 1960s by the Curriculum Research Development Unit (CRDU) of the Ghana Education Service (GES). This was as a result of the outcry of Ghanaians for a meaningful education for their children which reflected the manpower needs of the country (Essuman, 1999). Due to this, the Youth Employment Department was created to cater for the unemployed middle school leavers less than 20 years with regard to placing them into suitable jobs after giving them vocational guidance.

According to Ackummey (1989), the need for vocational guidance had become so strong by 1962 that the Ministry of Labour and the Chief Education Officer agreed to establish a national system of vocational guidance with the following aims:

1. Introducing occupational literature into schools through the Ministry of Education (MOE).
2. Developing lines of communication between various ministries and the employment services centre.

3. Providing officers employed in the public employment centres with course work in counselling and supervised experiences.
4. Incorporating clerical labour to ensure more efficient selection and placement procedures.
5. Improving contact between the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education. The two bodies were to establish the Youth Employment Committee.

And to this end the establishment of a national system of vocational guidance was an attempt to make the education system reflect the economic development and manpower needs of the country.

Despite all these interventions to achieve the national goal, it was found out that the government was not satisfied with the process of meeting the manpower needs of the country. This therefore brought about the change in the content and structure of education in Ghana. In 1987, there was the introduction of the six years primary school, three years, Junior Secondary School (JSS) and three years Senior Secondary School (SSS) which was to replace the old system of four years of middle school and seven years of secondary which was phased out in 1994. In this new structure, the curriculum or content of education was to take into account the vocational needs and skills of the people. Thus vocational, business and technical subjects were introduced into the curriculum at the JSS and SSS of education

This probably made guidance and counselling very important for course selection and placement purposes. For example, JSS students needed to be guided toward an awareness of their vocational interests, aptitudes, and personalities for educational and vocational development and for placement

into SSS and beyond SSS into tertiary institutions and occupations (Essuman, 1999). Hence the government of Ghana directed the Ghana Education Service to introduce guidance and counselling in the nation's second cycle institutions, possibly in pursuance of the Dzobo Committee (1972) recommendations. In order to make the establishment of guidance and counselling complete the University of Cape Coast (UCC) was made responsible for the training of counselling personnel to serve in second cycle institutions as guidance co-ordinators.

In 1976, the Institute for Educational planning and Administration of the University of Cape Coast started conducting intensive 8 weeks in-service training course in guidance and counselling for teachers of second cycle institutions. These teachers become school counsellors in second cycle schools and were designated guidance co-ordinators (Essuman, 1999).

With the operation of Guidance and counselling for over three decades, one would have anticipated graduates of Ghana's second cycle institutions to have been made more mature, make better choices in terms of educational, vocational and personal decisions, but it seems this is not the case. This situation appears not to be different from the general picture in the world since studies and researches conducted in USA and other parts of the world also point to the fact that counselling has been relegated to the background with the worst offenders being educational administrators (Erge, 1990).

Available evidence shows that students, teachers, administrators and some counsellors themselves do not fully understand or accept the counsellor's role (Ocansey, 2001). Examining the perception of people on the role of the counsellor, Shertzer and Stone (1976) came out with different

views and ideas from students, teachers, administrators and parents. They came to a conclusion that the image of counsellors held by many students is that of the academic advisor. The students therefore expected the counsellor to be abreast with the courses, curricula, educational as well as vocational opportunities that exist. Unfortunately, they did not expect the counsellor to deal with personal and social issues.

Pipher (as cited in Bruce & Cockreham 2004, p. 334) acknowledged that adolescence has always been a challenging time in a person's life, but believes that in today's fragmented, chaotic world with its dangerous, sexualized and media saturated societies, adolescents face incredible pressures. Such students need help in their growth towards emotional maturity. Adolescents must be taught to understand themselves and become more understanding and accepting of others. Rice and Leffert (1997) are of the opinion that schools "are ideally positioned to initiate and maintain activities and services to enhance the psychological development and well being of the youth" (p. 19).

The above view can only be accomplished if schools provide effective school counselling services. According to Nziramasanga (1994) there are many pressures imposed on the family, parents tend to have little time with their children to give them the necessary guidance. The parents expect the school to provide solutions to their children's indiscipline in secondary schools (p. 74).

UNESCO (2002) also adds that “African adults have become more concerned about earning money and are less occupied with many traditional practices that formerly contributed to the upbringing of young people”(p. 2). It is evident that increase in diverse student problems and the current economic situation have made the need for effective counselling services even more critical now than in the past. Thus, the growing number of social, economic and family problems has resulted in an increased need for school guidance and counselling services.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The new millennium is well under way with increased pressure from legislators, parents, and administrators to define and defend the continued presence of school counsellors in education (Paisley & Borders, 1995). Secondary school counsellors continue to be besieged with many contradictions regarding their role in the school setting as reflected in the research literature. Moreover, the actual and ideal roles versus the perceived roles of counsellors are significantly different (High, 1993).

In response to an attempt to define the role and functions of the secondary school counsellor, many authors have acknowledged specific roles and functions for the secondary school counsellor, but have neglected to create a comprehensive viewpoint that might facilitate a better understanding of the contributions the school counsellors actually make to facilitate the success of students during and after high school (Fitch, Newby, Ballestro & Marshall, 2000).

According to Kuhn 2004, various stakeholders' perceptions of the school counsellor's roles and functions have been studied over time. However, students' perceptions have not been assessed to the degree that other stakeholders' perceptions have been assessed. For instance, a study conducted by Ibrahim, Helms, and Thompson (1983) looked at how administrators, parents, and the business community view the school counsellor, but did not look at how students view the school counsellor. The study proclaimed that "students were not included in the sample group because of the cost and complexity of drawing a sample group of students" (p. 597).

In Ghana also, much need to be done in the literature with regard to senior high school students' assessment of the role and functions of secondary school counsellors. For instance a study by Ocansey (2001), sought to find the perception of senior secondary school teachers and heads of the roles of guidance coordinators in the central region of Ghana.

It is because of this gap in the literature that this researcher believes that further research in this area is warranted. It is the belief of the researcher that SHS students, both male and female with varied backgrounds may provide valuable insight to assist in further defining the role of the secondary school counsellors. Hence the current study seeks to find out the perception of students of the role of SHS counsellors in the Kumasi Metropolis of the Ashanti Region of Ghana.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to:

1. Investigate students' perceptions of the role of the SHS counsellors.
2. Investigate whether students make use of the school counsellors.
3. Determine whether Students in the final year have positive perception towards the role of the counsellor than those in the second year.
4. Determine what differences exist between male and female students' perception of the role of the SHS counsellor.

The study investigated the role of the SHS counsellors as perceived by SHS students in the Kumasi Metropolis of the Ashanti Region of Ghana. Two (2) research questions and three (3) hypotheses were raised to address the problem.

## **Research Questions**

The research questions developed for this study include:

1. what is the perception of students on the role of SHS counsellors?
2. to what extent do students access the services of the counsellors?

## **Hypotheses**

1. **H<sub>0</sub>**: There is statistically no significant difference between the perceptions of male students and female students on the role of SHS counsellors.

**H<sub>1</sub>**: There is statistically significant difference between the perception of male students and female students on the role of SHS counsellors.

2. **H<sub>0</sub>**: Students perception of counsellor roles does not depend on the programme they offer.

**H<sub>1</sub>**: Students perception of counsellor roles depend on the programmes they offer.

3. **H<sub>0</sub>**: There is statistically no significant difference between the perceptions of final and second year students on the role of the SHS counsellor.

**H<sub>1</sub>** There is statistically significant difference between the perception of final and second year students on the role of the SHS counsellor.

### **Significance of the Study**

As a result of this study Senior High School counsellors may have a better understanding of how their roles can assist students and which roles were perceived as most important to the student and which were perceived as least important. This study may also contribute to policy modification changes or the formulation of new policies regarding the SHS counsellor's role. More importantly, this study will add to the limited research literature on SHS students' perceptions of SHS counsellors. It is the view of the researcher that the study could lead to a possible clarification of the counsellors' role in the schools.

Again, with the current interest in and a call for guidance in schools, the study may help to identify what students expect from the school counsellors in the SHS setting, and what improvement could be done to enhance their role. It may also make the counsellors more appreciative of their role, if they know of what services students expect them to render, by providing what is lacking. Finally, the study may serve as a resource material

for students of Guidance and counselling, administrators and teachers in the school and training institutions and for policy makers.

### **Delimitations of the Study**

The study is delimited to only students' perception on the role of the SHS counsellors, it could have taken care of other areas such as administrators, teachers, parents and community's perception of the SHS counsellors but it is delimited to only students so that an in depth investigations could be done.

Again, the study is delimited to services spelt out by the guidance profession rather than that of the Ghana Education Service (GES) because the researcher believes the GES definition of the roles of the SHS counsellor is narrower and needs improvement.

### **Limitations**

An important limitation of the study is related to the selection of suitable schools that represent students with diverse backgrounds. Again, there is the problem of high ratio of students in the humanities to students in the sciences which is a characteristic of senior high schools. It was also realized that the quota of fifty (50) students given to each school was not proportional, which can limit the power of statistics. Finally, the sample used was selected from the Kumasi metropolis only; therefore, generalization of the result is restricted to the Kumasi Metropolis.

## **Definition of Terms**

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions are considered:

### **Functions of the SHS Counsellor:**

These refer to those tasks which the SHS counsellor performs as part of his/her professional duties.

### **Guidance activities:**

They are the formalized activities which the school takes to make guidance and counselling operational and available to students (Shertzer and Stone, 1981).

### **Perception:**

It is defined as a belief or opinion often held by many people and based on appearance, previous experiences and assumptions.

### **Role:**

It is defined as a pattern of professional behaviour applicable to an individual or to a professional group.

### **Role of the SHS Counsellor:**

Refers to the sum total of those functions the SHS counsellor is expected to perform as part of his/her professional duties.

### **Senior High School Counsellors:**

These include teachers who have qualification in guidance and counselling or teachers without qualification in guidance and counselling who have been appointed by the school authorities to act as guidance co-ordinators or school counsellors.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

This chapter reviews literature that is significant to this study. It includes the theoretical framework which is made up theories on perception, guidance and counselling services in the secondary schools, the functions and roles of the SHS counsellor. Others are the empirical framework which is also made up of perception of the role of the SHS counsellor by students, administrators, teachers and other researches done on the counsellor's role perception significant to this study.

#### **Theoretical framework**

Due to the wide variety of psychologies, there is no single generally accepted definition of perception. This in short means that perception cannot rigorously and thoroughly be defined. Its meaning ultimately resides in the function it plays within a complete theory of psychology.

#### **Theories on Perception**

Perception is the process by which organisms interpret and organize sensation to produce a meaningful experience of the world. Sensation usually refers to the immediate, relatively unprocessed result of stimulation of sensory receptors in the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, or skin. Perception, on the other hand, better describes one's ultimate experience of the world and typically involves

further processing of sensory input. In practice, sensation and perception are virtually impossible to separate, because they are part of one continuous process.

Thus, perception in humans describes the process whereby sensory stimulation is translated into organized experience. That experience, or percept, is the joint product of the stimulation and of the process itself. Relations found between various types of stimulation (e.g., light waves and sound waves) and their associated percepts suggest inferences that can be made about the properties of the perceptual process; theories of perceiving then can be developed on the basis of these inferences.

Since the perceptual process is not itself public or directly observable (except to the perceiver himself, whose percepts are given directly in experience), the validity of perceptual theories can be checked only indirectly. In psychology and the cognitive sciences, 'perception is the process of acquiring, interpreting, selecting and organizing sensory information (Wortman & Loftus, 1998).

A group of researchers interested in perception were known as the Gestalt psychologists. They believed that perception in psychology is a mental organization and interpretation of sensory information. They argued that our perceptions are influenced by a variety of factors, including the intensity and physical dimensions of the stimulus; such activities of the sense organs as effects of preceding stimulation; the individual's past experience, attention factors such as readiness to respond to a stimulus and motivation and emotional state of the individual.

The Gestalists believed that a response to a situation is a whole response to the whole situation. According to them, the whole is more than the sum of its parts. They disagree that behaviour consists of separate responses to a combination of separate stimuli. They view the human personality as whole due to the co-ordination of all the parts and not merely a summative of parts (Wortman & Loftus, 1998).

To the Gestalists, things are affected by where they are and by what surround them, so that things are better described as more than the sum of their parts. They believe that context is very important in perception; images are perceived as a pattern or a whole rather than merely as a sum of distinct component parts.

The purpose of the gestalt theory in counselling is to foster individual and personal growth. In the Gestalt psychology the conscious experience must be considered globally (by taking into account all the physical, social, emotional and mental aspects of the individual simultaneously) because the nature of the self demands that each component be considered as part of a system of dynamic relationship. The individual is therefore guided to understand the self and this leads to a better understanding and acceptance of self and others.

Perception plays an important role in the guidance and counselling process. Perceptions help counsellors to be in the internal frame of reference of the client. Lots of theories and techniques abound which deals with perception or how the individual perceives the world. These theories assist the counsellor in the discharge of his/her duty. Each approach is unique in its own way. Nevertheless, they go hand in hand and certain basic issues cut across.

These approaches can be grouped as: directive, non- directive and eclectic. Which approach to be used for a particular session depends to a large extent on the counsellor and the issue to be addressed.

Some of the theories that deal with perception of the individual include Carl Rogers' person centred theory. This theory is a form of talk-psychotherapy developed by psychologist Carl Rogers in the 1940s and 1950s. It is one of the most widely used models in mental health and psychotherapy. In this technique, therapists create a comfortable, non-judgemental environment by demonstrating congruence (genuineness), empathy, and unconditional positive regard (UPR) toward their patients while using a non-directive approach. This aids patients in finding their own solutions to their problems. The person centred theory is predominantly used by psychologists and counsellors in psychotherapy. The therapist's role is that of a facilitator and to provide a comfortable environment, rather than to drive and direct the patient toward recovery (Rogers, 1980).

Person-centred theory places great emphasis on the individual's ability to move in positive directions. Practitioners of the theory have a belief in the trustworthiness of individuals and in their innate ability to move toward self-actualization and health when the proper conditions are in place. Tied to these beliefs is the perception that, individuals also have the inner resources to move themselves in positive directions.

A core concept in the theory states that individuals perceive the world in a unique phenomenological way so that no two people's perceptions of the world are the same. The Rogerians believe that there is an internal force (the actualizing tendencies) in each individual which is the motivational force for

change. This force is always constructive and directed towards developing the potentials of the individual. This force is promoted by the counsellor's congruence and by the client's perception of the counsellor's experience of unconditional positive regard (UPR) and empathic understanding of the client's frame of reference. This theory stresses the subjective nature of the individual and therefore helps the individual to strive for enhancement of self by moving in the direction of wholeness, integration, completeness and autonomy (Rogers, 1980).

The perception of clients as competent, trustworthy, and forward-moving people who have their own unique view of the world places great confidence in the individual's ability to control his/her own positive change. This confidence in the client directs the counsellor to provide the conditions for that change. Specifically, there are three basic conditions needed to support an individual's natural inclination for positive growth: a genuine relationship with a relatively congruent individual, acceptance and caring from the counsellor, and an accurate understanding on the part of the counsellor of the client's phenomenological world.

Clients who are provided with these growth conditions will realize their actualizing tendencies for growth. They will explore their difficulties and natural competencies in this productive environment, which will then lead to a clearer picture of themselves and their potential. As clients' pictures of themselves become more accurate, they become better able to act in ways that are most in line with their true self (congruence). This in turn will lead to more self-confidence, self-understanding, and better choices. On the other hand, any experience which is inconsistent with the organization of the structure of the

self may be perceived as a threat and the more of these perceptions there are, the more rigidly the self structure is organized to maintain itself (Rogers, 1970).

The role of the counsellor in person-centred theory is primarily to promote the conditions for change rather than do things to bring about specific changes. Counsellors and therapists are expected to maintain a genuine human relationship in which they provide unconditional positive regard to their clients. This demonstrates their faith in clients and support of the process. Much of the work of the person-centred counsellor revolves around developing an accurate empathic understanding of a client, conveying that understanding to the person and working with him to expand and clarify the understanding and its impact on the client's choices and actions.

Another school of thought is the Rational Emotive behavioural theory (REBT) by Albert Ellis. According to Ellis, an individual may experience activating events (A) everyday that may prompt him/her to look at, interpret, or otherwise think about what is occurring. The interpretation of these events results in specific beliefs (B) about the event, the world and an individual's role in the event. Thus (B) depends on an individual's way of perceiving his or her world and specific event he or she experiences. According to the theory therefore the emotional consequences (C) of an activating effect (A) is not caused by (A) but by (B) which relies on how the individual perceive the activating effect (which could be positive or negative). The counsellor must dispute (D) the beliefs (B) if they are irrational in order for the client to ultimately enjoy the positive psychological effects (E) of rational beliefs.

This theory emphasizes that individuals are thinking beings with the capacity to be rational or irrational. To understand the individuals, it is best to listen to their 'self-talk' which contains how they perceive events especially (negative ones) in their experiences shrouded in belief systems.

More so, Alfred Adler's school of thought, known as Individual Psychology focuses on understanding individuals in relation to their social environment. Adler believed idealistic plans for adulthood are often formed early in life, as a result of powerful positive or negative experiences. The theory assumes that people experience reality as they perceive it and according to their own private logic.

Hence the individual's sense of identity, views of the world, interpretations of the relationship between the individual and the environment remain facets of his lifestyle which influence his behaviour. The theory emphasizes the training of parents, teachers, counsellors, social workers and others in democratic approaches that allow children to exercise their power through reasoned decision making whilst co-operating with others (Slavick & King, 2007).

Adler saw social interest as an important part of a person's intelligent functioning in a given situation. The degree of a person's social interest determines whether his or her intellectual solution of a problem will have general validity, that is, whether it will be reasonable or not. Good intellectual functioning produces solutions to problems which make sense not only to the individual but also to the group. The therapy in Individual Psychology include: understanding the specific style of life of the client, explaining the client to himself or herself and strengthening the social interest in the client.

From the discussions so far, it can be concluded that the way the individual perceives events, objects or his or her world may be positive or negative. In the same vein, people may perceive counselling depending on their past experience. This experience may make them perceive counselling in a negative or positive light.

### **Guidance and Counselling Services in the Secondary School**

The concept of developmental guidance was born early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. From its inception through the 1950s, the focal point of guidance in a school setting was vocational education and training. Heavily influenced by the industrial revolution and World War II, the concern of counsellors and teachers alike was to prepare students for life after high school (Muro & Kottman, 1995). From a guidance perspective specifically, that meant steering students to careers that best fit their abilities and goals. By the 1950s, developmental guidance had grown to incorporate the moulding of students' attitudes and behaviours. More emphasis was placed on the mental health and emotional well being of children.

Most influential in this area were leaders like E.G. Williamson and Carl Rogers. Due to threats brought forward by the Cold War, the early 1960s saw further emphasis placed on the role of guidance counsellors. In the USA for instance, legislation was passed (The National Defense Education Act) that provided funds for training counsellors for the middle and high school levels (Muro & Kottman, 1995). The new legislation also assisted individual states to develop better testing programmes, better counselling, and more guidance related programmes. By the late 1960s, the role of the school counsellor began

to take its current shape. In its contemporary state, guidance has grown to include counselling, planning, placement, referral, and consultation (Schmidt, 1990).

At the same time, guidance at the elementary school was being developed and implemented. Along with the development of elementary guidance came the emphasis on prevention, intervention, and coordination (Muro & Kottman, 1995). As the field of developmental guidance grew, so did the emphasis educators placed on coordination and cooperation. In a well functioning school environment, co-operation should exist between all school staff members; this is to say that, for a comprehensive guidance programme to flourish co-operation between school counsellors and teachers is paramount.

In Ghana the need for guidance and counselling continues to feature prominently. Educationists and psychologists emphasize the need to include guidance and counselling in the educational programme. It has been realized that the choices students have to make within a complex and a changing world due to advances in science and technology and the competitive labour market makes it imperative to provide knowledge and skills to students to help them think through important issues, and such knowledge and skills can be provided only through guidance and counselling programmes (Kankam, 2009).

The guidance and counselling services in the SHS proposed by different authors may differ but generally they do cover the pertinent services. Poggi and Associates (1982) describe the school guidance and counselling programme as providing services such as individual counselling, group counselling, group guidance, educational counselling, appraisal, consultation, coordination, liaison and referral; evaluation; research; public relation among

others. Makinde (1984) also presented five basic aspects of guidance and counselling for the schools. They are psychological or personal counselling; educational guidance; vocational and career guidance; information-gathering and dissemination; and tests and testing.

Wallace (1990) also presented eight principles of guidance and counselling in the secondary schools. The guidance and counselling programmes are: (a) for all students; (b) developmental; (c) preventive; (d) concerned with remediation; (e) concerned with crisis counselling; (f) concerned with individuals and benefits society as a whole; (g) concerned with career development; and (h) a functional and integral part of the total educational process. Besides being an independent component of the total educational programmes, the guidance and counselling programmes are also an integral part of the total educational programmes (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001).

In an integrative programme, guidance is infused into all areas of the traditional curriculum. The counsellor, school teachers, and students participate in the programmes. Effective guidance and counselling programmes are clearly based on human development theories, such as Piaget's cognitive theory (1954), Erikson's psychosocial theory (1968), Loevinger's ego theory (1976), Kohlberg's moral theory (1981), and Selmans' social-cognitive theory (1980). The developmental programmes are proactive and preventive, helping students acquire the knowledge, skills, self-awareness and attitudes necessary for successful mastery of normal developmental tasks. Development concepts are translated into specific outcomes for students,

leading to programme planning (curriculum) and intervention strategies (Myrick, 1993).

There is general consensus among professionals concerning the implementation of comprehensive developmental school guidance and/or counselling programmes (Wittmer, 1993; Myrick, 1993). The programmes are developmental and comprehensive – it focuses on the developmental needs of the students and provides comprehensive activities such as assessment, information, consultation, counselling, referral, placement, follow-up, and follow-through.

Borders and Drury (1992) grouped the activities into direct and indirect services. The direct services provide counselling and classroom guidance, and the indirect services provide consultation and coordination. The counselling service includes individual counselling, educational and career counselling, group counselling, peer counselling, and crisis counselling. Classroom guidance infuses the guidance curriculum into regular academic courses.

Consultation with school staff or parents and coordinating the services offered are indirect services to students. In consultation, the counsellor works together with teachers, parents and other agencies to resolve the problems of students. This means the counsellor seeks the help of an individual or small group to gather useful information and suggestions to assist in decision making. The purpose of this service is to offer the counsellor the opportunity to collect useful information and suggestions from parents, teachers, peers and other significant others in the community to assist students (Taylor & Buku, 2003).

The fifth important service is programme evaluation. This is essential for establishing and maintaining an effective school counselling programmes. Evaluation could take the form of participant evaluation, direct observation, case study, pretest-post test comparisons, participant-non participant comparisons, goal attainment scaling, and follow-up studies.

It should be mentioned that guidance and counselling has undergone about a century of reforms and experiences in the United States, which has resulted in so much writings in this field. This has made United States a source of reference for many developing countries including Ghana. From the above discussions, it is realized that guidance, counselling and career development are basically the three services found in schools.

The school counsellors therefore have the responsibility of carrying out these services. This, when expressed in terms of duties or functions of the counsellor becomes a role description. Therefore in this section, focus is given to the functions of school counsellors and the role of the SHS counselors.

### **Functions of School Counsellors**

School counsellors have traditionally been expected to fill diverse and often conflicting roles. They have been called to act in the capacity of confidant, disciplinarian, consultant, scheduler, politician, administrator, psychologist and academic helper. The ambiguity about counsellors' roles and expectations has created confusion among teachers, support staff, parents, and students. Ettinger, Lambert and Rudolf (1994) note "in some schools, counsellors are told to focus much of their time on record keeping, administrative responsibilities, or crisis interventions with students. There is

little time for comprehensive career exploration and planning for life after graduation” (p. 25).

In addition, facilities and resources for planning and implementing career guidance and counselling programmes are sadly lacking. The student-to-counsellor ratio in most schools limits the services that counsellors can deliver. The aforementioned list of tasks is limited, yet typical. When schools fail to clearly define the counsellor’s role, school administrators, parents with special interests, teachers, or others may feel their agenda ought to be the guidance programmers’ priority. The results often lead to confusion and criticism. Also, the changing terminology concerning the guidance programmes compounds the situation (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001).

Traditionally, the guidance programme was considered to be an ancillary student service that remained isolated from the instructional programmes and designed mainly to encourage students to attend college. Furthermore, counsellor’s work was reactionary and crisis-oriented in assisting students with everyday life occurrences. Adding to the confusion is the perception that school counsellors place students in classes based on their personal biases. Some teachers feel that counsellors reserve classroom space or counselling time for students they favour (Maddy-Bernstein, 1994).

In fact, professional school counsellors examine their own biases and stereotypes and understand that they are ethically bound to avoid preferential student treatment. Ultimately, school counsellors are aware that students are to be held responsible for all their decisions. In turn, students must be aware of and understand all their options if they are to make informed decisions.

Today there is a general agreement among counsellor educators that the guidance programmes refer to a comprehensive, developmental programmes designed to benefit all students in their journey through school. The programmes are designed to address the developmental needs of students appropriate to their age group. In that light, the function of a guidance counsellor is not easily defined. Myrick (2003) suggested that function definition was dependent upon the group of people creating the definition. For example, students may see the function of guidance counsellors much differently than teachers.

In turn, teachers may perceive the function of counsellors much differently than administrators, who may view their function much differently than counsellors themselves. Other variables come into play when trying to determine the function of school counsellors. For instance, the functions a counsellor performs at the high school level may differ greatly from the functions of an elementary school counsellor.

Gibson and Mitchell (1990) defined counsellor functions as guidance activities, and compiled a list of ten activities that serve as a guideline for the overall function of guidance counsellors. These are: Individual assessment; group counselling and guidance; career assistance; placement and follow-ups; referral; consultation; evaluation and accountability and prevention (p. 23). Stone and Bradley (1994) stated that the function of guidance counsellors varied, depending on the grade and emotional level of the students involved.

They asserted further that, the functions of primary school counsellors were perceived to be activity driven with students, teachers and parents and functions of secondary school counsellors were thought to be less activity

driven and more cognitively directed. Secondary school counsellors' functions focused more intently on educational, career, and personal information and development.

ASCA (1994) views the primary goal of a school counselling programme to enhance student learning through student development. Student development comprises of three areas that encompass a variety of student learning competencies. The competencies form the foundation of a developmental guidance programmes.

The three areas of student development are: Academic development, Career development and Personal/social development.

### **The Role of the Secondary School Counsellor**

The effectiveness of school counselling as a profession is dependent on accurate definition of the counsellor's role (Day & Saporcio, 1980). One of the early issues faced by school counsellors was the matter of counsellor's role. Gysbers and Henderson (2001) stated that the role definition issue of the counsellors cannot be predetermined. They argued that a consensus in defining the school counsellor's professional role can only be achieved if the American School Counsellor Association (ASCA) provided leadership in this direction.

Specifically, ASCA stresses that school counsellors should provide counselling, consulting, and coordinating functions in the helping process. The Association also stresses the role of being responsible to the profession, that is, school counsellors should be committed to continued professional growth and personal development (ASCA, 1990). In short, the school

counsellor's role is to help and organize these programmes, as well as provide appropriate counsellor interventions.

Corey (1982) also believed school counsellors are professionally responsible for defining their roles and to educate their administrators regarding those roles. In addition, Wilgus and Shelly (1988) indicated that school counsellors should be responsible to establish, define, and clearly communicate their roles. Lastly, Remley and Albright (1988) noted that the effectiveness of school counsellors as professionals is inherent in their ability to clearly define their professional role.

Hunh and Zimpher (1984) recommended that school counsellors and counsellor educators should be responsible for defining the school counsellor's professional role. In order for a counsellor to perform the needed duties, a clear description of his/her professional role and the data base to support it will help minimize the variations and discrepancies between counsellors' perceptions of what they do and should do and the perceptions of administrators (Chiles and Eiben, 1983).

Bailey and Associates (1989) described school counsellors as credentialed professionals who work in school settings with students, parents, educators and others within the community. They design and manage comprehensive developmental guidance programmes to help students acquire skills in the social, personal, educational, and career areas necessary for living in a multicultural society. Das and Bright (1988) suggested that school counsellors should provide meaningful and challenging educational experiences that focus on student development. Student development would be a major focus of the counsellor and of the school. Pate (1980) emphasized

developmental guidance by school counsellors because it enhances students' understanding of their potential.

Furthermore, Mills and Brunner (1988) described counsellors as those who "understand and mediate the learning contexts of students" (p. 284). Cole (1991) suggested that the role of school counsellors should include coordinating, instructing, counselling, and consulting. According to Olson and Dilley (1988) student counselling provides the basis for the school counsellor's professional role in a contemporary society. Olson and Dilley (1988) concurred that the "cornerstone" of the school counsellor's profession is counselling and should be recognized as the most important role of school counsellors (p. 197).

In the interest of effective use of counsellor time and in efforts to be responsive to the total school population, group work has received support as a method for counsellors to employ. Childers and Podemski (1987) advocated group work for confronting social trends that have caused problems for secondary students and for implementing programmes of preventive counselling. Hackney (1990) recommended shifts in the counsellor role from extensive individual counselling to methods that are more inclusive for the entire school population, such as group work and consultation.

General consensus supports consultation as the primary focus for counsellors, allowing for work with a wide variety of people such as students, parents, teachers, administrators, community members and professional and service organizations. Counsellor positions in schools demand that counsellor's function as consultants to teachers, administrators, students and parents. Bundy and Poppen (1986) summarized that consultation had been

used as a treatment mode and outcomes had been evaluated quantitatively. They concluded that consultation was effective, both for purposes of prevention and intervention.

Other research studies have supported consultation for the enhancement of school achievement (Robinson & Wilson, 1987). In addition, consultation has been advanced as an appropriate counsellor role for purposes of improving student self-concept, implementing programmes of stress intervention teaching, counselling, communication and classroom management skills and facilitating value and moral growth of students (Robinson & Wilson, 1987).

O'Bryant (1991) proposed that in a comprehensive developmental counselling programme, school counsellors have the task of organizing their work schedules around given fundamental interventions such as individual counselling group counselling, group guidance, consultation and coordination.

Sears (1993) in her collaborative efforts with practicing school counsellors presented this vision of school counselling in 1995. She identified the scope of practice of school counsellors in the developmental school counselling programmes as: (a) individual and small group counselling for students in personal-social, educational, and career needs; (b) intervening with parents, informing them of child development and parenting skills; (c) referring, consulting and collaborating with community agencies to assist students and their families; (d) coordinating mental health programming in schools; (e) developing, delivering, managing and evaluating the counselling programme which focuses on students outcomes; (f) facilitating personal and professional development of school staff through regular in-service; and (g)

supervising para-professionals in activities supporting counsellor interventions with students.

ASCA (1994) proposed the school counsellor role for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the nine emerging roles identified are case manager for learning plans, transition facilitator for learning, placement, interpersonal skill development facilitator, crises management consultant, peer support provider for other educators, staff development coordinator, community liaison coordinator, child and youth community services coordinator, and personal growth planner.

School counsellors have the task of being the organizational change agents to promote learning environments that are productive, to promote organizational change, and to provide effective counselling services to students, parents and the community (Podemski & Childers, 1980).

Some problems in counsellor role definition have been identified. Ancheta (1983) attributed the counsellor role definition problem to the different perceptions upheld by others regarding the counsellor's role, the type of training counsellors received, organizational impact on the counsellor's role, and the career aspirations of school counsellors. Many authors have agreed that the diverse perceptions of the school counsellor's role contributed to the counsellor role definition problem (Ancheta, 1983; Kahn, 1988).

Regarding the nature of counsellor training, Ancheta (1983) again noted that school counsellor training emphasizes "theory, ideas, personal philosophy and self-understanding at the expense of professional identity and role definition" (p. 9). Bonebrake and Borgers (1984) proposed that counsellor educators should examine studies which investigate the school counsellor's

role in order to determine if congruency exists between the theories taught to counsellor trainees and the actual role performed by practicing counsellors.

There is a view that career aspirations contribute to the incorrect perception that characterizes the school counsellor role definition problem. Hancock (1982) believed that counsellors who aspired to be administrators were “wearing many hats” (p. 58). He further stated that counsellors who aspire to administrative positions are perceived as disciplinarians and individuals would not confide. Similar argument to Hancock’s (1982) view was presented earlier by Mencher (1968), who strongly opposed the practice of school counsellors assuming administrative role while they are functioning as counsellors, because they would be feared by students.

Day and Sparacio (1980) suggested six solutions to amend the incorrect perceptions of the counsellor’s professional role. First, counsellors should clearly communicate their role in understandable terms to school personnel and students. Second, counsellors should participate in formulating their job descriptions to ensure that the written requirements would include activities that are compatible with the school counsellor’s professional role. Third, counsellors should develop and implement effective counselling programmes. Fourth, counsellors should be effective in performing their professional role. Fifth, counsellors should continue their professional improvement beyond scholastic training. Last, counsellors should participate in professional activities that would contribute to their effectiveness as school counsellors

## **Empirical Frame work**

### **Introduction**

In this section, focus is given to the perceptions of students, and other significant others of the secondary school counsellor's role in line with available research and scientific evidence. Each sub topic will be discussed separately.

Although the Ghana Education Service (GES) has provided criteria to be followed for the implementation of guidance services in senior high schools, it appears as asserted by Tennyson, Miller, Skovholt and Williams, (1989), that school systems continue to experience tremendous difficulty when attempting to define the school counsellor's role, and as a result, school counsellors have a difficult time understanding and interpreting what their role should be at different levels of the developmental processes. But ideally, an understanding of what the roles were in a previous decade and what the current roles are would enhance a greater understanding for the practicing school counsellors.

There seems to be an increasing awareness of the necessity to obtain a clearer understanding of the role and functions of school counsellors and their existence in education in Ghana. A concentrated effort by professionals in the field of education has produced research specific for the secondary level school counsellor with regard to expected functions and or roles within their school setting (Weiss, Gerstein & Impara, 1993; Peer, 1985). However, due to the many transformations in the role of the secondary school counsellor throughout the years, there is much confusion surrounding the duties specific to secondary schools. Because of the uncertainty in the perceptions of the role

and functions of secondary school counsellors, and the multiple challenges facing them, there is a tremendous need to facilitate and acknowledge an understanding of the functions involved in a secondary setting (Sears, 1993).

### **Administrators' perceptions of the SHS Counsellors' Role**

Principals' perceptions and support of the counsellors' professional role is vital to the success of school counselling (Harris, 1986). According to Cole (1991), administrators establishing conditions for the operations of the school programmes and their active support for the counselling programmes is imperative for its success.

Remley and Albright (1988) in a research conducted in USA used 140-item-questionnaire to determine how elementary school principals view counsellors in the state of Florida. In the study, 500 elementary school principals perceived their counsellors primarily as administrators or expressed satisfaction with a job description for counsellors that included administrative responsibilities. The researchers reported that most of the administrators they surveyed agreed that counsellors should counsel students with personal problems.

A study by Harris (1986) indicated that most of the principals surveyed believed that 36 to 56 percent of the counsellor's time should be spent counselling individual students. Administrators surveyed by Orhungur (1985) perceived the counsellor's professional role to include drug counselling and individual counselling. Contrary to these findings, Lewis (1978) reported that in his study, administrators ranked personal counselling very low on the counsellor role importance scale.

Frank (1986) found that elementary administrators placed high priority for elementary counsellors to perform planned interventions and classroom developmental guidance. The middle school administrators viewed the prime role of counsellors as facilitating student adjustment for learning and less for the classroom developmental guidance. Junior high administrators perceived educational advising, scheduling and placement as high priority activities for counsellors. Senior high administrators perceived those same roles as high on priority list along with career guidance, planned sequential interventions, and scheduled testing.

A study in Anambra state of Nigeria by Ogi, Ononogbo, Agu and Okoro (1986) on the perception of principals and teachers towards school counsellors also had a different story to tell. Their result showed that above 60% of the respondents had a positive perception of the counsellor. The study also revealed that there was no significant difference between the positive perception of counsellors and that of principals. Positive perceptions between teachers on one part and principals and counsellors on the other had a significant difference.

It should be mentioned that, perceptions of administrators and counsellors are not always interpreted the same way; therefore, it is valuable to understand how administrators view the counsellors' role. According to Murray (1995a), much of the conflict and misperception between counsellors and administrators could be avoided if both counsellor and principal would remain current on statutes, regulations proposed by the Department of Education, and policies developed by the local School Board.

The literature stresses the administrators' influence on the counsellor's role and the supervision of the school guidance and counselling programme. Therefore, by allowing school counsellors to follow national guidelines a comprehensive school guidance and counselling programme will be successfully implemented in the senior high schools.

### **Teachers' Perceptions of the Roles of SHS Counsellors**

The role of school counsellors may be perceived differently from one school to another. Perceived functions may also vary among staff members within a certain school. It is important for counsellors to understand the perceived functions of school personnel so that effective interaction can take place. For guidance programmes to be truly effective, teachers, counsellors and administrators must work together with a common goal in mind.

Valine, Higgins and Hatcher (1982) studied teacher attitudes toward counsellors functioning in 1972 and again in 1980. In the 1972 study, researchers found that 12% of teachers sampled felt that counsellors had an easier job than they. In 1980, 37% of the sample held this view. Thirty-five percent of both samples were "undecided" in understanding the role of counsellors. In 1980, a significant number of teachers viewed counsellors as ineffective; 26% stated this feeling and 32% were "undecided" (Valine, Higgins & Hatcher, 1982).

Wilgus and Shelley (1988) asked both teachers and counsellors to participate in a role analysis of school counsellors. Fifteen specific counsellor duties were listed by the authors: parent education, guidance and counselling-oriented meetings, individual counselling, group counselling, classroom

programmes, recognition programmes, staff consultation, individual testing, group testing, staff development, referrals, classroom observations, parent contacts and others. Teachers and counsellors rank-ordered their perceptions of how counsellors spend their time. Counsellors then kept a log of how they actually spent their time.

The research showed that teachers perceived counsellors as spending the majority of their time on individual counselling, group counselling, and parent contact, respectively. The counsellor log showed that counsellors spent most of their time on individual counselling, other and staff consultation, respectively. Teachers ranked other the lowest as a counsellor function. In reality, other was second only to individual counselling. The researchers found that teachers thought of counsellors as consultants (Wilgus & Shelley, 1988).

In research conducted by Morris and Hueschen (1990), questionnaire was sent to one teacher and one counsellor at each of 117 schools that had participated in a seminar held at the University of Wisconsin in Platteville. Responses were obtained from teachers and counsellors and were analyzed in terms of counsellor roles proposed in the Wisconsin Developmental Guidance Model. Both teachers and counsellors completed identical forms, rating the extent of involvement of the counsellor in each of the proposed 14 roles.

The counsellor role that ranked highest by teachers and counsellors was “Consultation with teachers about individual student concerns.” The second ranked role according to teachers was “Consultation with parents.” Teachers saw counsellors as being more involved in their activity than counsellors ranked themselves. The third ranked role according to teachers was “Individual counselling with students.” The fourth ranked role according

to teachers was “Consultation with administrators.” Teachers and counsellors were in close agreement in their ratings of consultation with teachers about individual student concerns and individual counselling with students.

There were significant differences in the average ratings of only four roles: consultation with parents, referral of students to community agencies, consultation with teachers about classroom activity development, and consultation with teachers about professional concerns of the teacher (Morris & Hueschen, 1990).

Hughey, Gysbers and Starr (1993) surveyed students, parents and teachers in Missouri. The researchers found that teachers perceived counsellors as facilitators of individual and small group planning for personal education, and career goals. Teachers also believed that counsellors performed staff and parent consultation, test interpretation, public relation activities for staff and the community, classroom guidance activities, small group counselling, and student referrals.

In another study, Oyaziwo and Imonikhe (2002) investigated how teachers view the role of the school counsellor at the secondary level. The researchers found that teachers believed school counsellors should co-ordinate guidance services in the school, provide career information to students and assist them in their choice of career. Teachers also felt that counsellors should act as advisors to students on disciplinary matters, deal with common juvenile problems such as truancy and stealing, and assist with administrative duties other than those of the guidance programmes. It was felt that counsellors should also provide individual and group counselling to students, help students

develop appropriate social skills, and refer students to outside sources for additional assistance.

The sampled teachers indicated that school counsellors should not be responsible for collecting information about opportunities open to students or for keeping students' cumulative records. It was felt that counsellors should not administer psychological tests. Finally, the study showed that teachers believed secondary school counsellors should deal with the following types of situations, listed in order of importance: educational problems, personal-social problems, career or vocational problems, and psychological problems (Oyaziwo & Imonike, 2002).

Examining the perceptions of senior secondary school teachers and heads on the role of guidance co-ordinators, a study by Ocansey (2001) on the perception of the guidance co-ordinators in the Central Region of Ghana also indicated that generally the staff had a positive attitude towards the counsellor's roles. However the findings showed that the counsellors were incapable of helping staff deal with their problems. They believed that the functions of the counsellor could be performed by any teacher who had no training in guidance and counselling. To Ocansey (2001), this low perception of teachers towards counsellors in Ghana could be due to the existence of many guidance coordinators in the schools, most of whom are untrained.

Generally, the relationship between school counsellors and teachers are just as important as the relationships between school counsellors and administrators. Real teamwork among school staff cannot take place when members do not understand the roles each play. Therefore, it is paramount that roles and expectations are clearly defined for each group. This is especially

true of teachers, as they spend most of the time with students in the school environment.

According to Wittmer (1993), teachers must be considered an integral part of the guidance team. Understanding teachers' perception will assist in developing collaborative relationships between school counsellors and teachers, ultimately helping school counsellors and teachers gain a better understanding of each other's roles. When teachers have varying expectations of the function of counsellors, and expectations are unclear, the teacher-counsellor relationship is sure to suffer. The result is a guidance programme that is rendered ineffective.

### **Parents Perceptions of School Counsellors Roles**

Many parents view the school counsellor as a main source of assistance, with knowledge in multiple areas. The perceptions of parents regarding a school counselling programmes can be a powerful tool in initiating change. Parents, especially single parents, have the desire to improve their communication and parenting skills; therefore, there is a need for school counsellors to offer a variety of programmes to promote parent participation (Sears, 1993)

Helms and Ibrahim (1985) identified the need to clarify parent perceptions in an effort to solidify the school counsellor's identity. In an attempt to identify parent perceptions of the school counsellor, they conducted a study to determine the viewpoint of several of ASCA's noted counsellor functions. Personal and educational counselling and public relations were

viewed as more important to the counsellor than to the parent; however, there was agreement regarding the career counselling needs.

According to Chapman, DeMasi and O'Brien (1991), parents perceived college advising as significantly more important than other counsellor functions. Parents sometimes have difficulty hearing news about less positive behaviour of their children, although it is a common practice in some schools for school counsellors to be the professionals who contact the parents (either by way of letters or telephone) about a children's inappropriate behaviour. Parents sometimes perceive the counsellor as not doing their job and express intense anger toward the counsellor once this less positive information has been released. Counsellors may be able to influence parent perceptions and maintain a positive viewpoint by engaging in proactive activities such as seeking input as to the needs of the population, listening carefully to what parents are saying, initiating a parent advisory group, and educating both parents and the public as to their role and function (Helms & Ibrahim, 1985; Schmidt, 1995; Kaplan, 1997).

Some parents want counsellors removed from the school setting because they see counselling programmes as a nonacademic, detraction from traditional education and the guidance curriculum as a deflection from the critical time needed with academic preparation (Kaplan, 1997). These same parents perceive counsellors as a threat to what is taught in the home regarding morals and values.

Reflecting on the absence of religion in schools, parents have in fact considered counselling to be a practice of a form of religion known as "secular humanism" (Peterson & Poppen, 1992). Kaplan (1997) reviewed letters

submitted by parents to the Virginia State Board of Education regarding school counselling programmes and practices. Forty-seven of the letters were positive and 57 were negative. Some of the primary concerns included notification and consent prior to counselling, use of mind-altering techniques, and self-esteem activities.

Further, a survey by Peterson and Poppen (1992) found that parents felt strongly that guidance materials on issues related to self-esteem should be censored. They indicated a desire to have children excused from activities related to self-esteem. Parents argued that schools should teach academic subjects only, and cited evidence from the professional literature to make strong cases against the presence of counsellors in schools today.

From the discussions, it is realized that some parents are not aware of the true objectives of developmental guidance. For guidance to be effective, a sense of teamwork and cooperation must exist between parents and counsellors. Therefore, it is imperative that parents and counsellors be aware of, and comprehend the perceptions that each holds for the other. Through that awareness and understanding, the goals of guidance can be met. It is imperative for parents to appreciate the origin of school counselling in order for them to develop an understanding of the functions of today's guidance programmes.

### **Counsellors and Counsellor Educators: What Are They Saying?**

According to Day and Sparacio (1980) both school counsellors and counsellor educators have voiced their dissatisfaction about the counsellor's actual role and intended role. "Quasi-administrative" is a familiar term used by

some administrators to describe counsellor functions and or roles, and many counsellors have borrowed this same description to reflect their opinion of their non-counsellor duties. Research has revealed that counsellors do have considerable conflict with what they actually do and what they believe they should do. Counsellors' perceptions of how their time was spent and how they would prefer to spend time depicted a preference for more time in group counselling, individual counselling, and professional development activities, such as seminars or training sessions (Carroll, 1993).

According to Carroll (1993), although there is a preference for group counselling, counsellors have expressed concern that they are not sufficiently trained in conducting group counselling sessions and would like more training for group work. Counsellors have also suggested that assessment methods and programme evaluation are desirable areas to be trained in. Perceptions of inadequate training in assessment coexist with the acknowledgement that they generally did not interact with these tests, and further implied that the school psychologist administered most tests. Even so, more training was desired for purposes of becoming a part of a multidisciplinary team. The perception that counsellors contribute to developmental assessment and are capable of providing a holistic view of each student has made significant the value placed on the training school counsellors receive.

House and Martin (1998) elaborated on the need for school counsellors to maintain the belief that they must be proactive leaders and advocates for the success of all students. Counsellors may tend to feel overwhelmed when expected functions in the work place are increased, and perceptions

counsellors have of their role may limit their attempts to work with every student by rationalizing their efforts.

Since students, parents, and teachers are those frequently surveyed for opinions regarding the quality of school programmes, evaluations of these findings, especially the outcome of information pertaining directly to guidance related services, will facilitate the counsellors understanding of how others perceive their role and functions (Schmidt, 1990). Thus, Bonebrake and Borgers (1984) urged counsellor educators to collect and examine results from studies that attempt to determine what counsellors do and how they are viewed.

To conclude it should be mentioned that, the importance of the school counsellors' role being defined is to be able to institutionalize the position in all schools. Defining the school counsellors' role will also eliminate role ambiguity and increase job effectiveness. Heads of schools are usually responsible for defining the school counsellor's role. This often leads to school counsellors being responsible for testing, scheduling, enrolling new students among others. Currently school counsellors have a position that is multifaceted. School counsellors are often expected to act as administrators, teachers, community liaisons, mediators, and mentors. Heads of institutions therefore need to be more knowledgeable about the abilities and training of school counsellors in order to use these professionals more effectively.

### **Students' Perceptions of School Counsellors' Roles**

Over the past three decades students' perceptions of school counsellors has changed minimally. From the researches that exist, students often view

counsellors in a very general perspective that often times place them in an administrative role rather than a counselling role. On some occasions, students have perceived the school counsellor as the primary source of assistance when discipline issues exist. As such, students are more inclined to seek help when school related administrative situations exist rather than personal situations. The differences in opinions or perceptions based on the gender of the student or the counsellor have attributed to yet even more limited research within the literature (West, Kayser, Overton & Saltmarsh, 1991).

Nelson, Nazario, and Andreoli-Mathie (1996) analyzed data from a study conducted with undergraduate students to determine student perceptions of counsellors (not specific to school counsellors) based on the gender of the counsellor and the nature of the presented issue. The authors alluded to the impact that gender of the counsellor could have had when working with high school students in a vocational capacity. Although the concern existed, students identified no preference with regard to gender of the counsellor when vocational issues were presented. However, gender preference correlated with the understanding and knowledge of both personal and social problems. Although some students view school counsellors as specialists in many areas, personal issues are often not viewed as appropriate topics of conversation within the school setting.

In another study Ostwald (1989) compared the perception of students and teachers, that of students by gender at different grade levels and the perceptions of teachers with different years of teaching experience. The result of the study revealed that there was no significant difference between teachers and students perception regarding the role of the counsellor. However,

students' perception differed significantly at various grade levels and by gender on the importance of the counsellor's roles and functions.

In a post-secondary study conducted by Rowe (1989), 126 freshmen disclosed their perceptions of guidance they received from their high school counsellor regarding options after graduation. This study suggested that students who visited their high school counsellor perceived their counsellor primarily as a college advisor. By comparison, Wells and Ritter (1979) also conducted a study in a high school setting to communicate how students viewed their school counsellor. This study was conducted in a large school with approximately eight counsellors serving the student population.

The content of the questionnaire, which was derived from Leviton's 1977 study (as cited in Wells & Ritter, 1979), consisted of fifteen modified statements regarding the types of problems students may encounter, where they go for help, and how they rated the importance of various guidance functions. Some of the functions included; choosing a college, changing a class, conflict with a teacher, problems with a friend, financial aid questions, graduation requirements, questions about sex, deciding on a college major, personal problems, and planning a school programme.

These functions were then compared to eight sources of assistance a student may seek help from or have a discussion with, such as: the counsellor, dean, teacher, principal, relative or friend, parent, or other individual. Percentages were provided to describe the results of the survey and where students were most likely to go when help was needed. The researcher concluded that, student perceptions may be strongly influenced by the individual experiences they have actually had with their counsellor. If their

school counsellor worked predominantly from an academic perspective, then the counsellors' role was viewed only as academic (Wells & Ritter, 1979).

Tennyson, et al. (1989b) prepared a survey instrument that evaluated the roles and functions of Minnesota secondary school counsellors to examine specific aspects of their positions and some of their counsellor related functions. Fifty-eight counsellor functions were developed by translating specified counsellor competencies into identifiable counsellor functions that were classified under six broad categories of services, which may be found in a guidance department.

The categories were: developmental/career guidance (8 items); consulting (11 items); counselling (10 items); evaluation and assessment (7 items); guidance programme development, coordination, and management (8 items); and administrative support services (14 items). Some of the functions included; assisting students explore career information, assisting families to resolve student's problems, helping a parent understand their child, providing groups to assist with career or work information, helping teachers individualize class instruction, and making referrals to other professionals (Tennyson et al., 1989b). The frequency of the performance of each function and the importance of each function was examined using the items on the questionnaire as dependent variables. Multivariate analysis (MANOVA) and univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to analyze the data.

This study appeared to be one of the most comprehensive studies conducted with a sample of secondary students. A significant amount of responses, 163 from the 165 instruments sent out, were returned to the researcher. The study concluded that on the whole students' responses to the

role of the counsellor were positive (Tennyson, et al., 1989b). The researcher further noted a decline in parental involvement and a subsequent effect on the academic success of some high school students in USA.

Hall (1998) also collected data during an informal study from secondary school counsellors throughout the state of Virginia to determine the areas of concern and interest at the secondary level. In both research, primary identified areas of concern included: counsellor workloads, the role of the school counsellor, standards of learning (SOL), crisis counselling, and career counselling. Returned surveys also suggested other subjects such as; the law and special education, Internet resources, alternative education, and how the law works with student records and confidentiality.

Ackom (1992), using one hundred and eighty two (182) students from the Western region of Ghana, studied secondary school students' perception of the guidance coordinators' roles in senior high schools. The study revealed that students had what he termed as 'low perception' of the guidance coordinator's role and this he attributed to the fact that students did not feel much of the coordinators impact (p. vi). The study also revealed that despite students' awareness of the existence of the guidance coordinator in their schools, students hardly consulted the counsellors on the selection of their courses. These attitudes of students could probably be attributed to the fact that generally students' perception of the counsellor was negative.

Salami's (1989) study on attitudes towards counselling using two hundred and eighty (280) students from the college of Education, Oro, Nigeria indicated that students have positive attitudes towards counselling. The study again stated that students' perceptions on counselling were largely influenced

by level of education, gender and place of residence. This study confirms other research done by Adamelokun (1981) on students' positive attitudes towards counselling.

According to Essuman (cited by Unachukwu and Igborgbor, 1991, p.337) "there is a problem of narrow perception of the role and functions of the counsellor held by many Nigerians. Such a narrow perception drastically reduces the chances of having a good number of secondary school students seeking counselling because they do not perceive him as capable of solving their problems."

In sum, it is realized that despite several attempts to define the professional role of school counsellors, the literature showed that incorrect perceptions of the counsellor's professional role still exist. This inaccurate perception is influenced by the different perceptions held by administrators, teachers, students and some counsellors. Therefore, counsellors are encouraged to eliminate the incorrect perceptions others have of the counsellor's professional role by articulating to school personnel what constitutes the school counsellor's professional role. The literature also suggested that counsellors, administrators, teachers, students, and others should co-operatively define the school counsellor's professional role.

### **Summary**

From the review of literature, it is evident that the guidance and counselling movement in Ghana is at its early stage. The focus is still on the development of the guidance and counselling services in the schools and counsellor education programmes. There are indications that the guidance and

counselling programmes in the secondary schools and the counsellor education programmes model what one sees in the United States. Some examples include the types of guidance and counselling services offered in schools and the curriculum used in the counsellor education programmes in the universities.

The literature suggest that there are six major role categories of school counsellors and they are related to: (a) counselling (b) developmental, educational, and career guidance; (c) assessment and appraisal; (d) consultation; (e) coordination and management of a developmental and comprehensive programmes; and (f) professional ethics, personal growth and development. The roles specified above are instrumental to implementing comprehensive developmental school guidance and/or counselling programmes. The effectiveness of school counselling depends on the clear definition of the counsellor's role (Day & Sparcio, 1980).

Some of the problems in counsellor role definition and some suggestions to amend the incorrect perceptions of the counsellor's role were cited in the literature. There is also some literature on the perceptions of the role of the secondary school counsellor by some stakeholders -they include administrators, counsellors, teacher, parents and students. It revealed evidence of incorrect perception of the counsellor's professional role and also differences in perception among students and some significant others.

From the review of literature, the following school guidance and counselling services which aided in the formulation of the hypotheses and the development of the instrument are identified and discussed below:

1. Counselling: The counselling services may be provided on an individual basis or conducted in group counselling sessions. Gibson and Mitchel (1995) point out that counselling is a one-to-one relationship that focuses on a person's growth and adjustment, problem solving and decision making needs. It is a client centred process that demands confidentiality. Corey (1982) also stated that counselling helps students "to move from environmental support to self-support", so that they can cope more effectively with present and future problems (p. 115).

Individual counselling in school is an outcome of the concern for the individual in society. Gibson and Mitchell (1990) divided individual counselling into three subtypes: educational counselling, career counselling, and personal counselling. Gibson, Mitchell, and Higgins (1983) articulated that individual counselling is central to school counselling programmes, and school counsellors who are not involved with individual counselling cannot be rightly called school counsellors.

2. Developmental, Educational, and Career Guidance: According to Myrick, 1993 small and/or large group guidance is perhaps the most visible and parsimonious approach to programmes implementation, allowing counsellors to address the general developmental needs of all students. Group guidance is preventive in nature, where the group members are directly concerned with acquiring information, becoming oriented to new problems, planning and implementing student activities, and collecting data for occupational and educational decisions (Shertzer & Stone, 1981).

Some of the most common uses of group guidance include providing information relative to educational planning, course selection, motivating

achievement, and improving study skills; career guidance for developing career awareness, stimulating career exploration, and assisting with career planning and decision-making; and dissemination of information regarding college planning, college entrance testing, college application process, scholarships, and financial aid (Naumer & Grill, 1983).

With the many changes in the society, guidance has become a service that requires team effort with other members of the organization, such as teachers and counsellors working together in the classroom to assist students in career development (e.g. career awareness, career planning); self-development (e.g. self-awareness, decision-making, problem solving, self-esteem); and academic development (e.g. study skills, time management).

3. Assessment and Appraisal: This is a process of gathering information, confirming subjective impressions and evaluating change in the students. The counsellor has the responsibility of selecting, administering and interpreting the results to the appropriate persons involved.

4. Referral: This is also is a function of coordination and consultation between the counsellor with other agencies or specialists who have the expertise which the student may need. Ritchie and Partin (1994) are of the view that referring students and their families for treatment outside of the school is an important function of counsellors. They studied referral patterns of school counsellors and found the average number of referrals to other professionals during a year to be 30 or 6.5% of the students they served. It would be hoped the counsellor would assist in making the appropriate referrals when a student or student's family needs counselling services beyond the realm of the school counsellor's expertise.

5. Coordination and Management of a Developmental and Comprehensive programmes: The counsellor has the task of coordinating and managing the guidance and counselling programmes in the school. Coordinating is a process of managing procedures and activities of the programmes. It involves collecting data and information, allocating materials and resources, arranging and organizing meetings, developing and operating special programmes, supervising and monitoring others, and providing leadership (Myrick, 1993).

The basic goal of the programme is to have the greatest impact on professionals involved in the educational, career and personal development of students, and also to meet the changing needs of the students. The school system is part of the community, thus, the counsellor being a facilitator of that community needs public relations skills. Public relations can provide opportunities to build resource and referral networks, job opportunities, and other support for students.

6. Professional Ethics, Personal Growth, and Development: The renewal and growth of the guidance and counselling programmes in schools depend on the professional development of school counsellors. Walz and Benjamin (1978) described professional renewal and growth as containing two components – the updating of existing knowledge and skills, and the acquisition of new ideas and competencies (cited in Chiles & Eiben, 1983).

School counsellors need access to a variety of professional development activities (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001; ASCA, 1994). Some of these activities should include programme evaluation data, self-assessment, supervisory feedback, in-service training workshops, and on-going supervision. Collaborative relationships with counsellor education

programmes in the area, including working with school counselling interns, also promote professional development. Finally, counsellors should be current through being actively involved in local, state, and national organizations, attending conventions and workshops, and reading counselling and educational journals.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

Research methodology is a system of explicit rules and procedures upon which research is based and against which claims for knowledge are evaluated (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996, p. 13). The primary purpose of this study was to investigate SHS student's perception of the role of the SHS counsellor. In this chapter therefore, the methods for the study on the role of the counsellor as perceived by students are discussed. The chapter spells out how the study was conducted. The chapter specifically looks at the research design, the population, sampling and sampling procedures, research instrument, the pilot testing, the data collection procedure and the data analysis.

#### **Research Design**

A descriptive survey design was used to collect data for this study, so that inferences could be made about characteristics, attitudes and behaviour of the population with respect to the sample size. Osuala (2001) notes that, descriptive surveys are versatile and practical, especially to the researcher in that they identify present needs. He further noted that descriptive research is basic for all types of research in assessing the situation as a pre-requisite for conclusions and generalizations. In supporting this view, Fraenkel and Wallen (2000) observed that the purpose of descriptive research is to observe, describe

and document aspects of a phenomenon as it naturally occurs. Again, they noted that in descriptive research, the events or conditions either already exist or have occurred and the researcher merely selects the relevant variables for analysis of their relationship.

According to Best and Kahn (1989), descriptive survey is concerned with the conditions or relationships that exist, such as determining the nature of prevailing conditions, practices and attitudes, opinions that are held, processes that are going on or trends that are developed. Fraenkel and Wallen (2000) also maintain that in descriptive research, accurate description of activities, objects, processes and persons is the main objective.

Descriptive survey deals with interpreting the relationship among variables and describing their relationships (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000). In addition, the descriptive survey affords the opportunity to select a sample from the population being studied and then generalizes from the sample of the study (Best & Kahn, 1989).

Descriptive research design is highly regarded by policy makers in the social sciences where large populations are dealt with using questionnaires, which are widely used in educational research since data gathered by way of descriptive survey represents field conditions (Osuala, 2001).

Nevertheless, there are difficulties involved in a descriptive survey, in that it is not in itself comprehensive enough to provide answers to questions and cannot establish causes and effect relationship (Osuala, 2001). Furthermore, according to Leedy (1985), “one of the most subtly and ineradicable shortcomings of descriptive survey is the presence of bias” (p. 132) and especially when one uses questionnaires.

Despite the shortcomings identified, the descriptive survey design was used because according to Fraenkel and Wallen (2000) the big advantage of the design is the potential to provide a lot of information obtained from quite a large sample of individuals. It would therefore be expedient to use the descriptive survey to find out the perceptions of students of the role of senior high schools in the Kumasi Metropolis in the Ashanti Region of Ghana.

### **Population**

The target population of the study was all the SHS 2 and 3 students in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The accessible population was made up of all the 27113 students in the Kumasi Metropolis (Kumasi Metropolitan Education office, 2009).

The researcher chose SHS 2 and 3 students for various reasons. SHS 2 students were chosen because they have experienced life in SHS for a year and it is assumed that they have experienced some form of counselling. SHS 3 students were also chosen because they are at the terminal point of one level of the educational ladder and some may enter the world of work so they would be in a better position to tell whether or not they benefitted from the counsellor. For these reasons their perception of the role of the counsellor would be fairly pronounced.

### **Sample and Sampling Procedure**

Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were employed in selecting the single and mixed sex schools for the study. The schools were put into two strata, that is, those made of single sex and mixed sex. Eight (8)

schools were selected from the eighteen (18) public SHS in the Kumasi Metropolis, using the simple random sampling technique. A list of schools in the region was collected from the Ashanti regional office. The names of the schools were coded so that the sampling process will be devoid of bias. The codes were then written on pieces of papers and were put in an urn. The slips of paper were picked one after the other without the selector looking into the pool. Once a name was selected, it was recorded and put back before a new one was picked.

The urn was then turned to reshuffle the slips of papers and another name picked, recorded and put back. This was continually done until all the 8 schools were selected. From each school, fifty students (50) were selected through the same procedure used in selecting the schools. In using the quota sampling technique to select the students, the researcher found the percentage representation of each group (i.e., boys and girls) in the total school population and then used the percentage to determine what number each group will get in the sample. The distribution is as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Distribution of Students in Mixed Sex Schools**

	Population		Total	Sample		Total
	Boys	Girls	Boys/Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys/Girls
Senior High School						
Adventist	1371	494	1865	37	13	50
Armed Forces	1341	498	1839	37	13	50
Asanteman	1194	338	1532	39	11	50
Kumasi Anglican	1612	271	1883	43	7	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>5518</b>	<b>1601</b>	<b>7119</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>200</b>

The single sex schools were further put into two strata, thus girls only and boys only. Two schools each were selected randomly from the four boys only and five girls' only high schools respectively. Fifty students each were selected randomly from the four schools and the distribution is as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Distribution of Students in Single Sex Schools**

	Population		Total	Sample		Total
	Boys	Girls	Boys/Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys/Girls
Senior High School						
Kumasi Wesley Girls	-	1194	1194	-	50	50
Serwaa Nyarko Girls	-	1162	1162	-	50	50
Opoku Ware	1571	-	1571	50		50
Prempeh College	1839	-	1839	50		50
Total	3410	3410	5766	100	100	200

In all, four hundred (400) Senior high school students made up of 144 girls and 256 boys were used for the study.

### **Research Instrument**

The instrument used in the study was the questionnaire. Leedy (1985) and Amedahe (2000) typified that the questionnaire is widely used for collection of data in educational research since it is developed to answer research questions; it is very effective for securing factual information about practices, enquiring into opinions and attitude of the subject. The questionnaire was developed based on the research questions, which were

derived from the related literature. The questions were the Likert type of scales.

The questionnaire was in two parts. Section A of the questionnaire, was a demographic survey, was administered to obtain information on biographic variables (i.e. gender, form, programme). This section was used to provide background information about the kind of respondents whose views are being sought during the study. The second part of the questionnaire, which was Section B, was made up of thirty eight items. This section tried to investigate the perception of the students on the role of SHS counsellors.

The researcher's supervisors, experts in the field of guidance and counselling read through the questionnaire to check the validity of the instrument. The internal consistency reliability of the main study was determined using the Cronbach co-efficient alpha. This gave reliability co-efficient of 0.913.

### **Pilot Testing**

The questionnaire was tested at Nkawie Senior High School. The testing was important because its purpose was to enhance the content validity and reliability of the instrument. It was also to improve the item format and the scales after careful analysis of the items based on comments that were passed by respondents concerning the weaknesses, clarity and ambiguity on all aspects of the questionnaire. Nkawie Senior High School was chosen because the school is part of schools in the Ashanti Region and thus has attributes similar to that of schools in the Kumasi Metropolis. The teaching staff of

Nkawie Senior High School and the eighteen (18) schools, which form the target population of the study, has similar qualifications and experiences.

The questionnaires were personally administered to fifty (50) students in order to reach the right students selected for the study and to enhance the return rate. The entire questionnaires administered were received giving a return rate of hundred (100) percent. Item analyses were conducted and items that needed revision such as item number 3 which sought to find whether students had had any interaction with their counsellors, appeared to be ambiguous. The item was then revised to: “have you had a personal experience with the coordinator?” The internal consistency reliability of 0.913 was achieved using the SPSS v 15 for the computation.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

The researcher personally administered the questionnaire to the 400 respondents in the eight (8) Senior high schools. The researcher obtained an introductory letter from the Head of Department of Educational Foundations. The introductory letter helped the researcher to get the needed assistance and co-operation from the respondents in question. A copy of the letter was delivered to each head of the institution the researcher visited.

In each of the institutions, the researcher explained the purpose of the study and encouraged participation. This enabled the researcher to establish the needed rapport with the respondents and as well seek their co-operation.

After that, copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents and the instructions to the questionnaire and the items were carefully explained to them. There was questioning time, during which

respondents were allowed to ask questions pertaining to the completion of the items in the questionnaires. The students were asked to fill the questionnaire at a sitting and it was collected immediately.

### **Data Analysis**

All questions were the closed-ended type and respondents were expected to respond to all the items. Research question 1 was analysed using mean and standard deviation to find the perceptions of the students on the role of the SHS counsellor. Research question 2 was also analysed using mean and standard deviation to find out how often students accessed the counselling services

**Hypothesis 1** was analysed using an independent t-sample test to test for the significant difference between male and female students' perception regarding the role of the senior high school counsellor at an alpha level of 0.05.

**Hypothesis 2** was analyzed using the independent t- test to test the significant difference between the perception of students in the humanities and students in the sciences.

**Hypothesis 3** was also analyzed using the t-independent test to determine whether there was significant difference between the perceptions of students in the final year and those in the second year.

The t-independent test was used to compare the statistical differences between the mean- perceptions because variables such as: male and female students; students in humanities and sciences and final year and the second year students are independent of each other.

**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Introduction**

This chapter is devoted to the results of the study from the analysis of the data collected from the respondents and the discussions of findings for research questions and hypothesis. Frequency distribution tables with percentages, means and standard deviations based on a Likert scale were constructed. The presentations of results were done in the order in which the research questions and the hypotheses were presented in chapter 1.

**Background Information**

The study was conducted in eight (8) public Senior High Schools in the Kumasi Metropolis of the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The sample for the study was four hundred (400) students from all the eight schools.

**Gender of Respondents**

Table 3, shows the gender distribution of participants (students) in the study.

**Table 3: Gender of Respondents**

Gender	Frequency	Percent (%)
Male	256	64
Female	144	36
Total	400	100

Table 3 shows that 64% students forming the majority of the respondents were males and 36% respondents were females.

#### Ages of Respondents

Table 4 represents the ages of the students in the study.

**Table 4: Distribution of Age-range of Respondents**

Age	Frequency	Percent (%)
16- 17 years	203	50.8
18- 19 years	189	47.3
20-21years	8	2.0
Total	400	100

As shown in Table 4, 50.8% of the respondents were between the ages of 16 and 17 years, 47.3% were between the ages of 18 and 19 and 2.0% were also between 20 and 21years. This indicates that majority of the respondents were between ages 16 and 17 years.

#### Forms of Respondents

Table 5 shows the forms of the respondents in the study.

**Table 5: Forms of the Respondents**

Form	Frequency	Percent
Form 2	199	49.8
Form 3	201	50.3
Total	400	100.0

As Table 5 depicts, 49.8% of the students were in form 2 and 50.3% were in form 3. Results as shown in Table 5, gives a fair representation of both groups.

#### Academic Programmes of Respondents

Table 6 represents the programmes of the respondents in the study.

**Tables 6: Academic Programmes of Respondents**

Programmes	Frequency	Percent
Science	97	24.3
Business	93	23.3
Visual Arts	64	16.0
General Arts	128	32.0
Home Economics	18	4.5
Total	400	100.0

As shown in Table 6, 4.5% of the respondents studied Home Economics, 16.0% studied visual Arts, 23.3% offered Business, 24.3% offered Science and the majority, and 32.0% also studied General Arts. This indicates that majority of the respondents were General Arts students. In all students who offered humanities related courses form about 71% of the distribution of respondents.

## **Analyses of Research questions and Hypotheses**

### **Research Question 1**

What is the perception of students on the role of SHS counsellors?

This question sought to find out how students perceive the roles of the SHS counsellors under the following scales:

1. Individual and Group counselling;
2. Developmental, educational and career guidance;
3. Assessment and Appraisal;
4. Consultation, Orientation and Referral;
5. Co-ordination and management of a developmental and comprehensive programme and
6. Professional ethics, personal growth and development.

The question was assessed on a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from 1-5) For the interpretation of the means, the following cut-off-points were used (1-1.5 = not at all important, 1.5<sup>+</sup>-2.5 = not important, 2.5<sup>+</sup>-3.5 = somewhat important, 3.5<sup>+</sup>-4.5 = important and 4.5<sup>+</sup>-5 = very important).

The question was answered using responses from items 5 to 38 on the questionnaire and results are as shown in Table 6.

Table 6 shows the various roles of the counsellor as perceived by students.

**Table 6: Students' Perception of the Roles of the Counsellor**

Scales	Counsellors' Roles	Mean	Std. Deviation
1.	Individual and Group counselling	4.27	.534
2.	Developmental, Educational and Career Guidance	4.11	.674
3.	Assessment and appraisal	3.42	.928
4.	Consultation, Referral and Orientation	4.17	.679
5.	Co-ordination and Management of a developmental and Comprehensive programme	4.00	.642
6.	Professional ethics, personal growth and development	4.30	.647
	overall Perception	4.04	.487

As revealed in Table 6, scales 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6 showed that the respondents seem to have had a positive perception about these as roles of the counsellor. However, under scale 3: assessment and appraisal, students perceived this role of the counsellor as somewhat important.

For instance, under the scale individual and group counselling, students perceived the counsellor's role of helping an individual student to resolve or remediate a problem such as drugs and interpersonal relationships as very important ( $M = 4.63$ ,  $SD = 0.797$ ). Also students in the study perceived the counsellor meeting with group of students to discuss academic matters as important ( $M = 4.45$ ,  $SD = 0.836$ ).

Again, under the scale developmental, educational and career guidance the students viewed the counsellor's role of conducting special programmes to meet the specific needs of students, for example, absenteeism, truancy and drug abuse as important ( $M=4.22$ ,  $SD=0.983$ ). They also believed it was important for the SHS counsellor to provide students with educational and career information ( $M= 4.20$ ,  $SD=0.981$ ).

Concerning assessment and appraisal, students in the study generally perceived this role of the counsellor as somewhat important ( $M = 3.42$ ,  $SD = 0.928$ ). With regards to specific items, the counsellor's role of interpreting and communicating assessment results to administrators, teachers, parents and guardians and the counsellor gathering information on all students who were having personal problems to make sure they get the help they needed were all viewed as somewhat important ( $M=3.4$ ,  $SD=1.234$ ,  $M=3.02$ ,  $SD=1.127$ ) respectively. However, the respondents were of the opinion that it was important for the counsellor to interpret and communicate assessment results to students ( $M=3.65$ ,  $SD=1.207$ ) and to give to an individual or group of students some test to assess students' interest areas ( $M = 3.66$ ,  $SD = 1.226$ ).

With the counsellor's role of consultation, referral and orientation, the respondents saw the following roles of the counsellor as important. The counsellor planning and providing orientation programme for new students to help them adjust to new school environment ( $M =4.42$ ,  $SD = 0.985$ ), the counsellor talking to parents or guardians about the needs and concerns of students ( $M = 4.27$ ,  $SD = 0.957$ ) and the counsellor talking with teachers about the needs or concerns of students ( $M = 4.27$ ,  $SD = 0.957$ ).

Under the scale co-ordination and management of a developmental and comprehensive programme the students in the study believed it was important for the SHS counsellor to organize talks for students. Example, talks on careers. The respondents also perceived the counsellors role of making guidance and counselling goals and objectives for the good of the school and students as important (M =4.34, SD = 0.920, M = 4.33, SD = 0.875) respectively.

Finally, the mean analysis on how students perceived the counsellor's role under the scale: professional ethics, personal growth and development, the result shows that the students had a positive perception on this scale. The mean analysis of items under this scale also revealed that students perceived the counsellor's role of showing respect to all students as very important (M = 4.53, SD = 0.775.). With a mean of 4.44 and standard deviation of 0.902, students believed it was important that the counsellor served as a role model for students. The respondents were also of the view that it was important for counsellors to demonstrate positive co-operative relationships with teachers (M = 4.37, SD = 0.913). In general, the counsellor's role under the scale was perceived by respondents as important, M = 4.30, SD = 0.647.

On the whole, the analysis of the responses to research question 1 shows that the respondents had positive perception on the roles of the SHS counsellor. All the roles of the counsellor were considered important, except the scale on assessment and appraisal where students perceived the role as somewhat important. This probably indicates that this role is lacking in the schools.

## Research Question 2

To what extent do students access the services of the counsellors?

This question was intended to find out whether students made use of the school counsellor. It was meant to find out whether students have had a personal encounter with their counsellors. Item 2 of the questionnaire was used to solicit for responses. The responses were scored dichotomously as Yes = 1 and No = 2. A cross tabulation analysis was conducted and the result is as shown in Table 7.

**Table 7: Cross tabulation of Students' Personal Experience with the Coordinator by Form**

	Category		Form		Total
			Form 2	Form 3	
Have you had a personal experience with the Coordinator	Yes	Frequency	39	48	87
		Percentage	19.6%	23.9%	21.8%
	No	Frequency	160	153	313
		Percentage	80.4%	76.1%	78.3%
<b>Total</b>		199(49.8%)	201(50.2%)	400(100%)	

Table 7 indicates that 19.6% out of 49.8% form 2 students have had a personal encounter with the counsellor, 80.4% students have not had any personal encounter with the counsellor. Again, 23.9% form 3 students out of 201 indicated having had a personal experience with the counsellor, on the other hand 76.1% stated otherwise. From the analysis, on the whole 21.8% of

the respondents stated having had an encounter with the counsellor and the majority of the respondents 78.3% have had no personal experience with the counsellor.

There is a clear indication from the analysis that although students have counsellors in their schools they do not consult them. This seems to suggest that the activities of the SHS counsellors in the schools might not be pronounced hence this situation.

### **Hypothesis 1**

**H<sub>0</sub>**: There is statistically no significant difference between the perceptions of male students and female students on the role of SHS counsellors.

**H<sub>1</sub>**: There is statistically significant difference between the perceptions of male students and female students on the role of SHS counsellor

This hypothesis sought to find out whether there was statistically significant difference between male and female students on their perception on the role of the SHS counsellor. The mean difference was tested by computing the average scores of all the scales of the roles of the counsellor. The t-independent test was used for the analysis. For the interpretation of the results, the following cut-off-point was also used (1-1.5 = not at all important, 1.5<sup>+</sup>-2.5 = not important, 2.5<sup>+</sup>-3.5 = somewhat important, 3.5<sup>+</sup>-4.5 = important and 4.5<sup>+</sup>-5 = very important) A t-independent test was conducted and the result is as shown in Table 8.

**Table 8: An Independent t-test to show the Differences between the Perceptions of Male and Female Students on the Role of SHS Counsellors**

Scale	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p
Individual and Group counselling	Male	256	4.26	.505	-380	398	.704
	Female	144	4.28	.585			
Developmental, Educational and Career Guidance	Male	256	4.08	.934	-1.364	398	.173
	Female	144	4.17	.913			
Assessment and appraisal	Male	256	3.41	.680	-1.510	398	.132
	Female	144	3.42	.676			
Consultation, Referral and Orientation	Male	256	4.14	.639	-1.177	398	.240
	Female	144	4.23	.641			
Co-ordination and Management of a developmental and Comprehensive program	Male	256	3.96	.639	-1.1915	398	.056
	Female	144	4.08	.641			
Professional ethics, personal growth and development	Male	256	4.25	.642	-1.858	398	.064
	Female	144	4.38	.649			

An independent t-test conducted revealed that there was statistically no significant difference between males and females on their perception on the individual and group counselling as a role of the SHS counsellor ( $t(398) = -$

0.380,  $p > 0.05$ ). Thus, both males and females had overall positive perception on this role of the counsellor. Notwithstanding this, students' opinions differed on the item 'the counsellor helps an individual student in selecting courses or programmes' within this scale,  $t(398) = -2.168$ ,  $p = 0.031$ ,  $\alpha = 0.05$ . Male students perceived this role as important; the female students on the other hand perceived the role as very important. This is an item within this scale with  $M = 3.53$ ,  $SD = 1.158$ ,  $M = 4.53$ ,  $SD = 0.975$  respectively.

Again, with the counsellor's role of developmental, educational and career guidance, the results revealed that there was no significant difference between the perception of male and female students,  $t(398) = -1.364$ ,  $p > 0.05$ . This indicates that the opinions of both male and female students were quite similar. However, specifically, with a mean of 4.06 and standard deviation of 1.044 male students perceived the counsellor's role of conducting seminars for students as important while their female counterparts perceived the role as very important ( $M = 4.53$ ,  $SD = 0.975$ ).

In addition, concerning the counsellor's role on assessment and appraisal, the results revealed that statistically, there was no significant difference in the perception of students,  $t(398) = -1.510$ ,  $p > 0.05$ . Both male and female students perceived the role as somewhat important.

Again, the result showed that there was statistically no significant difference in the perception of both male and female students concerning the counsellor's role of consultation, referral and orientation,  $t(398) = -1.177$ ,  $p > 0.05$ . Both male and female students perceived the role as very important. The counsellor's role of co-ordination and management of a developmental and comprehensive programme also revealed that there was statistically no

significant difference in the perception of both male and female students regarding this scale of the counsellor's role,  $t(398) = -1.915$ ,  $p > 0.05$ . Both male and female students perceived the role as important. However, with the item on counsellor organizing talks for students, it was revealed that the male students perceived this role as important, ( $M = 4.26$ ,  $SD = 0.932$ ) while the female students perceived this role as very important ( $M = 4.50$ ,  $SD = 0.885$ ).

Finally, with regards to the counsellor's role on professional ethics and personal growth, the result showed that there was no significant difference in the perception of both the male and female students,  $t(398) = -1.858$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . Although students perception generally on this scale showed that they perceived this role on the scale as important, specifically, students' ideas differed in relation to certain items.

The male students ( $M = 4.49$ ,  $SD = 0.772$ ) perceived the counsellor's role of showing respect to all students as important compared to the perception of the female respondents who saw the role as very important, ( $M = 4.60$ ,  $SD = 0.777$ ). Again, with a mean of 4.36 and a standard deviation of 0.960 the male respondents perceived the counsellor's role of serving as a role model for students as important while the female respondents perceived the role as very important. ( $M = 4.58$ ,  $SD = 0.772$ )

To conclude it should be said that, although there was statistically no significant difference between the perceptions of male and female students regarding the role of SHS counsellors, the analysis conducted revealed that the female students' opinions concerning the counsellor's role on specific items were highly positive as compared to their male counterparts.

## Hypothesis 2

**H<sub>0</sub>**: Students' perception of counsellor roles does not depend on the programme they offer.

**H<sub>1</sub>** Students' perception of counsellor roles depend on the programme they offer

This hypothesis sought to find out whether students' perceptions of counsellor roles depend on the programme they offer. The differences were tested by computing the average scores of all the scales of the roles of the counsellor. To test whether differences among the perception of students in the humanities and the sciences were significant, the t-independent test was used for the analysis. For the interpretation of the means, the following cut-off point was used (1-1.5 = not at all important, 1.5<sup>+</sup>-2.5 = not important, 2.5<sup>+</sup>-3.5 = somewhat important, 3.5<sup>+</sup>-4.5 = important and 4.5<sup>+</sup>-5 = very important).

An t-independent test was conducted and the result is as shown in

Table 9.

**Table 9: An Independent t-test to show whether Students' Perception of Counsellor Roles depend on the Programme they Offer**

Scale	Programme	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p
Individual and Group counselling	Sciences	115	4.28	.554	.240	398	.810
	Humanities	285	4.27	.527			
Developmental, Educational and Career Guidance	Sciences	115	4.15	.744	.662	398	.508
	Humanities	285	4.10	.644			
Assessment and appraisal	Sciences	115	3.33	.966	-1.249	398	.212
	Humanities	285	3.41	.911			
Consultation, Referral and Orientation	Sciences	115	4.19	.745	.314	398	.754
	Humanities	285	4.17	.652			
Co-ordination and Management of a developmental and Comprehensive program	Sciences	115	4.04	.646	.684	398	.495
	Humanities	285	3.99	.641			
Professional ethics, personal growth and development	Sciences	115	4.40	.674	2.006	398	.46
	Humanities	285	4.26	.632			

The result revealed that there was statistically no significant difference between students in the sciences and students in the humanities' perception on individual and group counselling as a role of the counsellor,  $t(398) = 0.240$ ,  $p > 0.05$ . This indicates that both groups held quite similar views on this scale.

On the counsellor's role of developmental, educational and career guidance scale, the statistical result again showed that there was no significant difference in both groups perception on this scale,  $t(398) = 0.662$ ,  $p > 0.05$ . This is an indication that both students in the sciences and the humanities held similar views on this aspect of the counsellor's role. Again, the result showed that assessment and appraisal as a role of the counsellor, the students held similar views, hence there was statistically no significant difference in the perception of both groups in relation to this scale  $t(398) = 1.249$ ,  $p > 0.05$ .

The counsellor's role of consultation, referral and orientation showed that both group held similar views on this role of the counsellor  $t(398) = 0.314$ ,  $p > 0.05$ . However with regards to specific items, students in the sciences perceived the counsellor's role of planning and providing orientation for students as very important. Students in the humanities perceived this specific role as important ( $M = 4.50$ ,  $SD = 0.882$ ,  $M = 4.38$ ,  $SD = 1.023$ ) respectively. On the whole, both groups perceived this role of the counsellor as important ( $M = 4.19$ ,  $SD = 0.745$ ) for students in the sciences and ( $M = 4.17$ ,  $SD = 0.652$ ) for students in the humanities). This is an indication that both groups held quite similar perception on the counsellor's role of consultation, referral and orientation.

Further, the t-independent test revealed that there was statistically no significant difference between the perceptions of both students in the sciences

and the humanities on the co-ordination and management of a developmental and comprehensive programme as a role of the counsellor,  $t(398) = 0.684$ ,  $p > 0.05$ . The overall perception showed that both groups saw this role of the counsellor as important ( $M = 4.04$ ,  $SD = 0.646$  for students in the sciences and  $M = 3.99$ ,  $SD = 0.646$  for students in the humanities). However, with one specific item the groups had different opinions. With a mean of 4.69 and standard deviation of 0.776 students in the sciences perceived the counsellor's role of organizing talks for students as very important, students in the humanities viewed this role of the counsellor as important ( $M = 4.28$ ,  $SD = 0.966$ ).

On the scale of professional ethics, personal growth and development, the results indicated that generally students in the sciences and students in the humanities all viewed this role as important ( $M = 4.40$ ,  $SD = 0.674$ ,  $M = 4.26$ ,  $SD = 0.632$ ) respectively. The results of the t-independent test also revealed there was statistically no significant difference between how both groups perceived the counsellor's role under the scale of professional ethics, personal growth and development,  $t(398) = 2.006$ ,  $p > 0.05$ . However, with the item 'the counsellor serves as a role model for students' the groups expressed different views. While students in the sciences perceived the counsellor's role of serving as a role model to students as very important ( $M = 4.58$ ,  $SD = 0.783$ ) students in the humanities perceived this role of the counsellor as important ( $M = 4.38$ ,  $SD = 0.941$ ).

On the whole, the t-independent test conducted showed that students' perception of counsellor roles does not depend on the programme they offer. It is worth mentioning that, students in the sciences perceived certain specific

roles of the counsellor as very important as against students in the humanities who considered those roles as important.

### **Hypothesis 3**

**H<sub>0</sub>** There is statistically no significant difference between the perceptions of final and second year students on the role of the SHS counsellor.

**H<sub>1</sub>**: There is statistically significant difference between the perceptions of final and second year students on the role of the SHS counsellor.

This hypothesis was intended to find out whether students in the final year had a positive attitude towards the role of the counsellor than students in the second year. The mean difference was tested by computing the average scores of all the scales of the roles of the counsellor. To find the differences in the perception among the levels, the t-independent test was used for the analysis. For the interpretation of the means, the following cut-off point was used (1-1.5 = not at all important, 1.5<sup>+</sup>-2.5 = not important, 2.5<sup>+</sup>-3.5 = somewhat important, 3.5<sup>+</sup>-4.5 = important and 4.5<sup>+</sup>-5 = very important).

**Table 10: An Independent t-test to find out whether there is Significant Difference between the Perceptions of Final and Second Year Students on the Role of the SHS Counsellor**

Scale	Forms	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p
Individual and	2	199	4.26	.516	-.265	398	.810
Group counselling	3	201	4.28	.554			
Developmental,	2	199	4.03	.668	-2.435	398	.508
Educational and	3	201	4.19	.672			
Career Guidance							
Assessment and	2	199	3.37	.882	-1.092	398	.212
appraisal	3	201	3.44	.970			
Consultation,	2	199	4.15	.641	-.843	398	.754
Referral and	3	201	4.20	.715			
Orientation							
Co-ordination and	2	199	3.96	.644	-1.351	398	.495
Management of a	3	201	4.04	.639			
developmental and							
Comprehensive							
program							
Professional ethics,	2	199	4.28	.639	-.526	398	.460
personal growth	3	201	4.28	.655			
and development							

As shown in Table 10, t-independent test conducted showed that for individual and group counselling as a role of the counsellor, there was

statistically no significant difference in the perception of both forms 2 and 3 ( $t(398) = 0.265, p = 0.05$ ). This shows that both students held similar views on this role of the counsellor.

With developmental, educational and career guidance, the result showed that there was statistically significant difference between forms 2 and 3 on their perception of this role of the SHS counsellor,  $t(398) = -2.435, p < 0.05$ . This indicates that students held different views about the counsellor's role under this particular scale. With a mean of 3.81 and a standard deviation of 1.078 students in form 2 perceived the counsellor's role of conducting workshops for students as important, on the other hand, with a mean of 4.57 and standard deviation of 0.852 students in form 3 perceived this role as very important.

Again, both forms 2 and 3 believed that it was important for the counsellor to conduct seminars to help students develop academic skills ( $M = 4.33, SD = 0.902, M = 3.98, SD = 1.114$ ) respectively. Generally, both groups perceived the counsellor's role of developmental, educational and career guidance as important ( $M = 4.03, SD = 0.668$  for form 2 and  $M = 4.19, SD = 0.672$  for form 3).

Furthermore, the results showed that there was statistically no significant difference for both forms 2 and 3 students on the counsellor's role of assessment and appraisal  $t(398) = 1.092, p > 0.05$ . This is an indication that both students in forms 2 and 3 held a similar perception in relation to the counsellor's role under this scale. Interestingly, with the same mean of 3.69 both forms 2 and 3 students were of the view that it was important for the

counsellor to interpret and communicate assessment results to parents and guardians.

More so, the result of the t- independent test revealed that statistically there was no significant difference between students perception on the counsellor's role of consultation, referral and orientation  $t(398) = -0.843$ ,  $p > 0.05$ . This shows that perception held by both group of students are similar. Under this scale, both forms 2 and 3 students perceived this role of the counsellor as important (M = 4.15, SD = 0.641, M = 4.20, SD = 0.715) respectively.

In addition, the result again revealed that statistically there was no significant difference between both groups on their perception of co-ordination and management of a developmental and comprehensive programme as a role of the SHS counsellor,  $t(398) = -1.351$ ,  $p > 0.05$ . This again shows that under this scale, both forms 2 and 3 held similar views on this role.

Finally, the results revealed that there was statistically no significant difference in the perception of both forms 2 and 3 students on the counsellor's role of professional ethics, personal growth and development  $t(398) = -0.740$ ,  $p > 0.05$ . This is an indication that both forms 2 and 3 held similar views concerning the counsellor's role under this scale. Regarding specific items, both groups perceived the counsellor's role of serving as a role model to students as important (M = 4.46, SD = 0.916, M = 4.42, SD = 0.889) respectively. With a mean of 4.28 both group were of the view that the counsellor's role of professional ethics, personal growth and development was important.

In sum, the result conducted revealed that there was statistically no significant difference between the perceptions of final and second year students on the role of the SHS counsellor. However, with developmental, educational and career guidance, the result showed that there was statistically significant difference between forms 2 and 3 on their perception of this role of the SHS counsellor. This indicates that students held different views about the counsellor's role under this particular scale.

### **Discussion of Findings**

This section discusses the research findings in relation to the six specified

Counsellors' role under the following headings:

1. Individual and group counselling
1. Developmental, educational and career guidance,
2. Assessment and appraisal
3. Consultation, referral and orientation
4. Co-ordination and management of a developmental and comprehensive programme
5. Professional ethics, personal growth and development

The frequencies were counted on a five point scale, that is, from not at all important to very important. The following rating system was used to interpret the mean score (1-1.5 = not at all important, 1.5<sup>+</sup>-2.5 = not important, 2.5<sup>+</sup>-3.5 = somewhat important, 3.5<sup>+</sup>-4.5 = important and 4.5<sup>+</sup>-5 = very important).

### **Students' Perception on the Counsellors' Role**

Research question one sought to find out students perception on the counsellors' role. From the analysis of responses, the results indicated that, overall, students in the study held a positive perception on the role of the SHS counsellor. Thus, they viewed the roles of the counsellor as important. The result corroborates with research findings as postulated by Tennyson, Miller, Skovholt and Williams (1989). The researchers reported that students they surveyed in USA ranked the counsellor's role of developmental, career guidance, consulting, counselling, guidance programme development, co-ordination and management as important.

However, the results contradicted their findings on evaluation and assessment, as the students in this study perceived it as somewhat important. This contradiction in opinions may be due to geographical difference of the respondents and also probably due to the fact that, in the Ghanaian schools the counsellor's role of evaluation and assessment is lacking. Again, a study in Nigeria on students' attitude towards counselling by Salami (1989) revealed that students had a positive attitude towards counselling. The study also confirms other earlier studies by Adamelokun (1981), Haruna (1971) on students' positive attitude towards counselling.

However, the findings contradict other findings (Ackom, 1992; Unachukwu and Igborgbor, 1991). In a research conducted in the western region of Ghana by Ackom (1992), the study revealed that generally students had what he termed as low perception of the guidance co-ordinator. Essuman as cited by (Unachukwu & Igborgbor, 1991) noted that there is a problem of narrow perception of the role and functions of the counsellor held by many

Nigerians. Due to this, the chances of having a good number of secondary school students seeking counselling might be highly minimal because they do not perceive the counsellor as capable of solving their problems.

These differences in findings might be due to time elapse of the research works by Ackom (1992); Unachukwu and Igborgbor (1991). It is worth noting that Guidance and Counselling, as an educational service and academic discipline, has received much more public attention in Ghana these past decades. Speeches have been made by various public officers in education and private individuals alike, and all have addressed the need to revamp Ghana's educational system with a more productive and functional type that incorporates guidance and counselling. Due to this, it has become mandatory for every SHS to have counsellors. These reasons probably may account for students' positive perception on the role of the SHS counsellor.

### **The Extent to which Students Access the Counsellor**

The Ghana Education Service in 1976 mandated every secondary school in Ghana to have guidance and counselling programmes in their schools. This therefore implies that every school is expected to have a counsellor or a guidance co-ordinator who will see to the academic, personal and social needs of the students. But whether students access or make adequate use of the counsellor is another story. That is why research question two was intended to find out the extent to which students have had personal encounter with their school counsellors.

The results from the analysis indicated that although most students were aware of the existence of the school counsellors, they hardly consulted

them. The analyses showed that majority (78.3%) of the respondents have not had any personal encounter with the school counsellor. This research finding is in line with other earlier studies by Acquah (2003) and Ackom (1992).

Acquah (2003) using 404 students to investigate the perceptions among inhabitants of Cape Coast Metropolis towards counselling, the study showed that to a higher extent respondents were aware of counselling services but would not want to solicit for help from such services.

In another research, a study by Ackom (1992) revealed that despite students' awareness of the existence of the guidance coordinator in their schools, students hardly consulted the counsellors on the selection of their courses. These attitudes of students he explained could probably be attributed to the fact that, generally, students' perception of the counsellor was negative. However, this is not the case in this study as generally students in the study perceived the role of the counsellor as positive but still they did not access the school counsellor.

One possible explanation might be that participants in the study sought assistance from other individuals such as their peers, the notion being that counsellors are not the only individuals when help is needed in the domains of academic, career or personal/ social and most often students believe that people who visit the counsellor have problems. Again, the reason may probably be due to the fact that the role of the SHS counsellor is not very much pronounced in the schools.

## **The differences in Perception between Male students and Female Students on the Role of SHS Counsellors**

The responses to the hypothesis showed that there was statistically no significant difference between males and females on their perception on the individual and group counselling as a role of the SHS counsellor. Thus, both male and female students had overall positive perception on this role of the counsellor. Notwithstanding this, students' opinions differed on the specific role such as 'the counsellor helping an individual student in selecting courses or programmes under the scale individual and group counselling. Male students perceived this role as important; the female students on the other hand perceived the role as very important.

Again, with the counsellor's role of developmental, educational and career guidance, the results revealed that there was no significant difference between the perception of male and female students. This indicates that the opinions of both male and female students were quite similar. However, specifically, male students perceived the counsellor's role of conducting seminars for students as important while their female counterparts perceived the role as very important.

In addition, concerning the counsellor's role on assessment and appraisal, the results revealed that statistically, there was no significant difference in the perception of students. Both male and female students perceived the role as somewhat important.

Again, the result showed that there was statistically no significant difference in the perception of both male and female students concerning the counsellor's role of consultation referral and orientation, both male and female students perceived the role as very important. The counsellor's role of coordination and management of a developmental and comprehensive programme also revealed that there was statistically no significant difference in the perception of both male and female students regarding this scale of the counsellor's role: both male and female students perceived the role as important. However, with specific items in the scale, it was revealed that while the male students perceived the counsellor's role of organizing talks for students as important, the female students on the other hand, perceived the role as very important.

Finally, with regards to the counsellor's role of professional ethics and personal growth, the result showed that there was no significant difference in the perception of both the male and female students. Although students' perception generally under this scale showed that they perceived this role of the counsellor as important, specifically, students' ideas differed in relation to certain items. The male students perceived the counsellor's role of showing respect to all students as important as compared to the perception of the female respondents who saw the role as very important. Again, the male respondents perceived the counsellor's role of serving as a role model for students as important while the female respondents perceived the role as very important.

The finding supports a research by Stower (2003). Investigating post secondary students' perceptions on the roles and functions of their high school

counsellors, one hundred and seventy three (173) students attending community college in a suburban of a large metropolitan city participated in the study. The results of the findings indicated that although there were some differences in both male and female students' perceptions of the roles of the counsellor, the result revealed that generally, there was no significant difference between male and female students on how they perceived the counsellor's role and functions.

The finding however disagrees with the study conducted by Ostwald (1989). In this study, the researcher compared the perception of students and teachers, that of students by gender at different grade levels and the perceptions of teachers with different years of teaching experience. The result of the study revealed that students' perception differed significantly by gender on the importance of the counsellor's roles and functions.

From the discussions, it is clear that even though there were no significant differences in the perception of male and female students on the counsellor's role, it was revealed that for some specific items, the female students' views of the role of the SHS counsellor were more pronounced as compared to their male counterparts. The high perceptions of certain roles of the counsellor expressed by the female students may be because females seem more comfortable sharing their problems and seeking assistance from the counsellor than males.

In the Ghanaian society, male children are taught to handle stress better than female children. It would therefore be unlikely for male students to rank the roles of counsellors highly because they do not as it were 'consume' the services of the counsellor. This view is related to Van Der and Knoetze's

(2004) opinion that male students are normally socialized to be strong and cope with their own problems (p. 237). This could explain an earlier finding by Alexitch and Page (1997) who established that 'in Canada, more female students than male sought for university and career information from their school counsellors. Female students were also found to be more positive about the guidance and counselling they received than male students' (p. 215).

Again, female students' high perception of the counsellor might be due to the fact that female students are perceived as more socially competent or better adjusted to schools than males (Mpfu, Thomas & Chan, 2004) hence these characteristics may have influenced them to be more positive in their perception on the counsellor's roles (p. 169).

### **Whether Students' Perception of Counsellor Roles depend on the Programme they Offer**

This hypothesis sought to find out whether students' perceptions of counsellor roles depend on the programme they offer. The differences were tested by computing the average scores of all the scales of the roles of the counsellor and a t-independent test conducted.

The result revealed that there was statistically no significant difference between students in the sciences and students in the humanities on their perception of the role of the counsellor. Thus, students' perception of counsellor roles does not depend on the programme they offer.

For the scales: individual and group counselling, developmental, educational and career guidance, assessment and appraisal the result revealed that there was statistically no significant difference between students in the

sciences and students in the humanities perception on these scales as a role of the counsellor. This therefore is an indication that both students in the sciences and the humanities held quite similar views on these roles of the counsellor.

Concerning, the counsellor's role of consultation, referral and orientation, the results showed that both group again held similar views which were positive on this role of the counsellor. However, with regards to specific items, for instance, students in the sciences perceived the counsellor's role of planning and providing orientation as very important but students in the humanities expressed this same view as important.

Further, the analysis revealed that there was statistically no significant difference between the perceptions of both students in the sciences and the humanities on the co-ordination and management of a developmental and comprehensive programme as a role of the counsellor. However, with specific items the groups had different opinions, students in the sciences perceived the counsellor's role of organizing talks for students as very important; students in the humanities however viewed this role of the counsellor as important.

With the scale : professional ethics, personal growth and development, the results of the analysis also revealed that there was statistically no significant difference between how both groups perceived the counsellor's role under this scale. The result indicated that generally, students in the sciences and students in the humanities all viewed this role as important. With specific items, students in the sciences perceived the counsellor's role of serving as a role model to students as very important. However, students in the humanities perceived this role of the counsellor as important.

Generally, there was an indication that both groups held positive views on the roles of the counsellor. This positive perception held by both groups suggests that probably the counsellor treats students equally without any prejudices or biases. Another reason again may be that, the counsellors have cultivated in the students an awareness of the roles of the SHS counsellor and probably the counsellor is contributing to students' welfare without regard to their programmes.

There is an indication that although both groups held quite similar positive perception on the counsellor's roles, the intensity in their perception regarding certain specific items differed. It was evident in the results that students in the sciences had more positive perception on certain roles of the counsellor as compared to students in the humanities. One reason that may account for the difference is that, students' perception of the role of the counsellor may be strongly influenced by the individual experience they have actually had with their counsellor.

The assumption probably is that, students in the sciences may have participated more in the services provided by the SHS counsellors than students in the humanities and therefore, have perceived the counsellor's role as the primary source of assistance when the need arises. As such, students in the sciences are more inclined to view some of the counsellor's role as very important.

It is worth mentioning that although many authors from the literature review acknowledged the different perceptions held by students generally, they did not compare students' views in terms of programme offered. Most

authors were concerned about the views of all students; others looked at other variables like gender, class and age.

In conclusion, it should be said that, even though, the perception of students in the sciences were pronounced on a few items, generally, both groups showed positive perception on the counsellor's role.

### **The differences in Perception of Final Year Students as against Second Year Students on the Role of SHS Counsellors**

This hypothesis was intended to find out whether students in the final year had a positive attitude towards the role of the counsellor than students in the second year. The result of the analysis showed that for individual and group counselling, co-ordination and management of a developmental and comprehensive programme, consultation, referral and orientation as roles of the counsellor, there was statistically no significant difference in the perception of both groups. The result showed that both groups held positive views on these roles of the counsellor.

However, with developmental, educational and career guidance, the result showed that there was statistically significant difference between forms 2 and 3 on their perception of this role of the SHS counsellor. This implies that students held different perception about the counsellor's role under the scale. Whereas students in form 2 perceived the counsellor's role of conducting workshops for students as important, students in form 3 perceived this same role as very important.

Again, both forms 2 (M = 3.98, SD = 1.114) and 3 (M = 4.33, SD = .902) believed that it was important for the counsellor to conduct seminars to

help students develop academic skills. Generally, both groups perceived the counsellor's role of developmental, educational and career guidance as important.

Furthermore, the results showed that there was statistically no significant difference for both forms 2 and 3 students on the counsellor's role of assessment and appraisal. This is an indication that both students in forms 2 and 3 held a similar perception in relation to the counsellor's role under this scale. Interestingly, with the same mean of 3.69 both forms 2 and 3 students were of the view that it was important for the counsellor to interpret and communicate assessment results to parents and guardians.

Finally, the results showed that there was statistically no significant difference in the perception of both forms 2 and 3 students on the counsellor's role of professional ethics, personal growth and development. This is an indication that both forms 2 and 3 held similar views concerning the counsellor's role under this scale. Regarding specific items, both groups perceived the counsellor's role of serving as a role model to students as important. Again with the same mean of 4.28, both groups were of the view that the counsellor's role of professional ethics, personal growth and development was important. On the whole, both group viewed the counsellor's role generally as important.

The finding supports Ostwald (1989) research. The result of the study revealed that students' perception differed significantly at various grade levels on the importance of the counsellor's roles and functions. According to Ostwald (1989), the higher the grade level of the student, the more positive their perceptions of the roles and functions of the counsellor. Stone and

Bradley (1994) also noted that the function of guidance counsellors varied, depending on the grade level and emotional level of the students involved and so therefore students perception may also vary depending on the aforementioned variables.

It is imperative to note that other variables come into play when one tries to determine the roles of the school counsellors. The literature has shown that for instance, the roles a counsellor performs at the high school level may differ greatly from the roles of an elementary school counsellor; the same can be said of final year and second year students. It is an assumption that since final year students have lots of tasks to attend to: preparing for examinations that will lead to certification and preparing to enter the world of work, it is supposed that their interactions with the counsellor will be more pronounced as the counsellor may take students through series of activities hence the highly positive perceptions expressed on certain roles of the counsellor by final year students.

### **Summary**

The descriptive statistics (means), t-independent test and a cross tabulation analysis were employed in analyzing the two research questions and three hypotheses. The findings are presented as follows: Respondents indicated a higher mean in their perception on the SHS counsellor role under the five scales of: individual and group counselling, developmental, educational and career guidance, consultation, referral and orientation, co-ordination and management of a developmental and comprehensive programme and professional ethics, personal growth and development.

However, although statistically there was no significant difference in students' perception of the counsellor role of assessment and appraisal, students perceived these roles as somewhat important.

The t-independent test conducted indicated that there was statistically no significant difference in students' perception under the six specified roles of the counsellor. The only difference was seen in hypotheses 3, scale with developmental, educational and career guidance. The result revealed that there was statistically significant difference between forms 2 and 3 students on their perception on the developmental, educational and career guidance as a role of the SHS counsellor.

In conclusion, the results indicated that generally there was agreement between the students on their perception on the six specified roles of the counsellor. There was an indication that SHS students perceived in a positive light the roles of the counsellor.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Overview of research problem and methodology**

The rationale for this study was based on the need to investigate the perceptions of students regarding the role of the SHS counsellors in the Kumasi metropolis of the Ashanti Region of Ghana. Eight (8) public Senior High Schools were selected from the eighteen (18) public SHS in the Kumasi metropolis for the study. In all, 400 students, consisting of 256 males and 144 females made up the sample for the study.

#### **Summary of Key Findings**

The data for the study was based on a self report of 400 Senior High School students (n = 400). The respondents were made up of 144 females and 256 males. Most of them were between the ages of 16-17 (n = 203). In terms of class, the respondents were made up of 201 form 3 students and 199 form 2 students.

The findings from the study suggested that the students in the study perceived the SHS counsellor's role as important under the following scales: individual and group counselling, developmental, educational and career guidance, consultation, referral and orientation, co-ordination and management of a developmental and comprehensive programme, professional ethics, personal growth and development. The students in the study, however,

perceived the counsellor's role of assessment and appraisal as somewhat important. Within this scale, however, two items were perceived by the respondents as important. These are: 'the counsellor's role of interpreting and communicating assessment results to students' and 'counsellor giving some test to assess students' interest areas.

Again, the cross tabulation analysis revealed that the two groups (forms 2 and 3) hardly made use of their counsellors. Comparatively, it was revealed that form 3 students had had more personal contact with their counsellor as against their counterparts in form 2.

In using the t- independent test for the three variables, that is, gender, programme and class of respondents; significant differences were tested between the categories for each variable. However, some specific items were also looked at where some of them within some scales showed differences in their responses with regard to "important" or "very important. In such situations, the t-test was not applied to test for significant differences.

The results of the t-independent test conducted indicated that for hypothesis 1, there was statistically no significant difference between males and females on their perception of the role of the SHS counsellor. In other words, both male and female students had a positive perception on the role of the counsellor. However, the result showed that both groups, male and female students found the counsellor's role of assessment and appraisal as somewhat important.

Notwithstanding this, differences were found among some specific items under some of the scales of the counsellor's role. For instance, under individual and group counselling, both groups differed in opinion. Whiles the

male students perceived the counsellor's role of helping an individual student in selecting courses as important, their female counterparts saw the role as very important.

Furthermore, under the scale, 'developmental, educational and career guidance', students held quite similar perception. However, with regard to specific items under this scale, male students perceived the counsellor's role of conducting seminars for students as important while the female students perceived the role as very important.

Under the scale, 'co-ordination and management of a developmental and comprehensive programme', generally, students perceived the role as important. Specific items under this scale revealed that male students perceived the counsellor's role of organizing talks for students as important but the female students on the other hand perceived the role as very important.

Lastly, for the scale, 'professional ethics, personal growth and development' both male and female respondents perceived this role of the counsellor as important but specifically, students' ideas differed in relation to certain items. For example, the male students perceived 'the counsellor's role of showing respect to all students' and the 'counsellor serving as a role model to students' as important but the female students saw these roles as very important though the difference was not significant.

In addition, the results of the t-independent test conducted indicated that students in the sciences and humanities held quite similar views about the counsellor's role. In other words, there was no significant difference in the perception of both groups on the counsellor's role. There were however, different opinions regarding specific items under some scales. For instance,

under the scale: ‘consultation, referral and orientation’ students in the sciences perceived the counsellor’s role of planning and providing orientation for students as very important. However, students in the humanities perceived this role as important.

Again, under the scale, ‘co-ordination, management of a developmental and comprehensive programme’, students in the sciences perceived the item, ‘the counsellor’s role of organizing talks for students’ as very important. However, students in the humanities viewed this role of the counsellor as important. Lastly, under the scale, ‘ professional ethics, personal growth and development’, students in the sciences perceived the item ‘ the counsellor role of serving as a role model to students’ as very important whiles their colleagues perceived it as important.

The result of the t-test also showed that there was no significant difference in the perception of both forms 2 and 3 students on the role of the counsellor. The result indicated that for individual and group counselling as a role of the counsellor, there was a positive perception of both the second and final year students. However, for developmental, educational, career guidance the results showed that opinions of both group differed. Whereas students in form 2 viewed the counsellor’s role of conducting workshops for students as important, students in form 3 perceived the role as very important.

Again, under the same scale, responses to the item ‘ the counsellor’s role of conducting seminars to develop academic skills’, revealed that although both groups perceived this role of the counsellor as important, it was realized from the analysis that the opinions of students in form 3 were more pronounced as compared to the students in form 2.

More so, the result showed that with the same mean of ( $M = 3.69$ ), under the scale: assessment and appraisal, both forms 2 and 3 were of the view that, it was important for the counsellor to interpret and communicate assessment results to parents and guardians; however they viewed the counsellor's role of assessment and appraisal generally as somewhat important. Finally, under the scale, 'professional ethics, personal growth and development', both groups found the counsellor's role of serving as a role model to students as important.

The primary findings regarding the counsellor's roles reflected that participants saw five major roles out of the six specified roles as important. The sixth role namely 'assessment and appraisal' was on the whole perceived by students as somewhat important. It was also revealed that students' perceptions differed under some specific roles of the counsellor. It is hoped that these differences in perception may provide valuable feedback that could be used to enhance any school counselling programme.

## **Conclusions**

The SHS counsellor's position in the SHS in Ghana is a requirement by the Ghana Education Service (GES) and the head of the school is most often given the responsibility to appoint a teacher who may or may not have some form of training in guidance and counselling to hold this position. The study indicated that the role of the secondary school counsellors was perceived to be important. Students in the study held quite similar perceptions on the counsellors' role.

It was evident in the analysis that although students perceived the roles of the counsellor as important, there was an exception to the counsellor's role of assessment and appraisal. Throughout the analysis, students perceived the role generally as somewhat important, although some specific items were perceived as important by respondents. The possible explanation to this new finding in terms of students' perception on the counsellor's assessment and appraisal role could be that, SHS counsellor's rarely performed this role, which might have stemmed from the fact that, they received limited training in this area.

In conclusion, based on the results of the study, there is evidence that students are aware of the importance of most of the roles of the SHS counsellor in the Kumasi metropolis of the Ashanti region of Ghana. As to whether SHS counsellors perform all these roles to the maximum and to the benefit of SHS students is another story.

### **Implications for Counselling and Recommendations**

The findings in this study have implications for guidance and counselling training programmes and for counsellors.

### **General Perception of the Roles of the SHS Counsellor**

The general perception derived from the study suggested that five out of the six specified roles of the counsellor were perceived by the respondents as important. These roles include: individual and group counselling, developmental, educational and career guidance, consultation, referral and orientation, co-ordination and management of a developmental and

comprehensive programme, professional ethics, personal growth and development. Results on the perception of male and female students, students in the sciences and the humanities, forms 2 and 3 on the roles of the SHS counsellor showed no significant differences. Students' knowledge on the specified roles of the counsellor showed a positive perception about counselling and this is a good sign for the counselling profession in Ghana. Senior Secondary school counsellors should therefore work towards maintaining this positive perception of the counselling profession.

This positive perception is commendable. This implies that there is awareness among the students on the importance of the roles of the counsellor. Since students are aware of these roles, it is a good opportunity for the SHS counsellor to utilize this positive perception to intensify his or her services and to provide other services that may be lacking. Again, since students are aware of the counsellor's roles they may expect the counsellor to be performing these roles. The contrary may promote negative perception of the school counsellors' roles.

### **Students' Perception on the Counsellor's role of Assessment and Appraisal**

The findings showed that students perceived the counsellor's role of 'assessment and appraisal' generally as somewhat important. The possible explanation could be that, this role is lacking in the senior high schools (SHS) and that there is limited training in this area for the student counsellor. Respondents' perception on the counsellor's role of assessment and appraisal need to be noted in the training of counsellors. The counsellor educators or

trainers should include in their counsellor training curriculum an aspect on assessment and appraisal instruments and skills so that counsellor- trainees will have the skill to perform this role.

It is also important for counsellor educators to be aware of the perception SHS students hold concerning this role of the counsellor so as to enable him/her educate the counsellor trainees on the importance of assessment and appraisal. More education needs to be done to change the limited scope given to this area of counselling. In addition, the perceptions of SHS students on the counsellor's role of assessment and appraisal need to be corrected.

To do away with this erroneous impression, the heads of institution may need to make sure that counsellors they appoint in the schools have adequate training to handle the guidance and counselling programme. The Ghana Education Service (G.E.S) in consultation with counsellor educators in the universities should also join forces in planning and implementing the curriculum for school counsellor training.

### **Students Accessing the School Counsellor**

The results from the analysis indicated that although most students were aware of the existence of the school counsellors, they did not make adequate use of them. The analyses showed that majority 78.3% of the respondents have not had any personal encounter with the school counsellor. This percentage is very significant and could be alarming. The implication is very clear and simple.

School counsellors should promote a positive perception of their roles through educating students on the counsellor's roles and most importantly work positively with students. Counsellors should as much as possible remove all barriers that may prevent students from accessing their services. The counselling Association of Ghana can help in this aspect by stipulating a minimum qualification for one to become a school counsellor and the type of personality characteristics required of the would-be counsellor. This when done, will safeguard the counselling profession in Ghana.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

The following are recommended for future research:

1. The participants of this study were SHS students. Replication of this study could include heads of SHS, teachers and counsellors to better understand how they perceive the SHS counsellors' role.
2. The study should be conducted in the other remaining regions of Ghana so as to have a nationwide representation.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A

#### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

This questionnaire is about the perception of students on the role of Senior High School counsellors in the Kumasi Metropolis of the Ashanti Region of Ghana. It is solely for academic purposes and you are assured of confidentiality.

Please tick or circle the response that best describes you or your opinions.

#### SECTION A –**BIO DATA**

A .Name of school:

B. Sex: Male/ Female

C. Age

D. Form

Form 2

Form 3

E.

Programme:.....

1. Do you have Guidance Co-ordinator in your school?

Yes  No

2. If yes for how long have you known that the guidance and counselling co-ordinator is present in your school?

Less than 1 year  1-2 years  Over 2 years

3. Have you had a personal experience with the co-ordinator? Yes   
NO

4. Do you think that the guidance co-ordinator can help you resolve your problems?

Yes  No  Not sure

**SECTION B: How important is each function to the role of the school counselor?**

Statements	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Not at all important
5. Counsellor meets with an individual student to address developmental needs (e.g. Social skills, decision making skills)					

<p>6. Counsellor counsels an individual student to resolve or remediate a problem, for instance drugs and interpersonal relationships.</p>					
<p>7. Counsellor meets with group of students to discuss academic matters.</p>					
<p>8. Counsellor meets with a group of students to discuss career information/and or helps a student in career planning.</p>					
<p>9. Counsellor</p>					

counsels an individual student who is facing disciplinary action.					
10. Cousellor helps an individual student in selecting courses or programmes.					
11. Counsellor meets with a group of students to address developmental needs (e.g. Social skills, decision making skills)					

Statements	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Not at all important
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<p>12. Counsellor gives talk to a group of students to help them understand themselves.</p>					
<p>13. Counsellor conducts workshops for students on topics of developmental needs. Example, decision making and problem solving skills.</p>					
<p>14. Counsellor conducts special programmes to meet the specific needs of students. For example, absenteeism,</p>					

truancy, drug abuse.					
15. Counsellor conducts seminars for students to help them develop academic skills.					
16. Counsellor provides students with educational and career information.					
17. Counsellor helps students to plan steps to take in furthering their education or help them in looking for jobs.					

Statements	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Not at all important
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<p>18. Counsellor gathers information on all students who are having personal problems to make sure they get the help they need.</p>					
<p>19. Counsellor interprets and communicates assessment results to administrators and teachers.</p>					
<p>20. Counsellor interprets and communicates assessment results to parents and guardians.</p>					
<p>21. Counsellor</p>					

interprets and communicates assessment results to students.					
22. Counsellor gives to an individual or group of students some test to assess students' interest areas.					

Statements	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Not at all important
23. Counsellor talks with teachers about the needs or concerns of students.					
24 Counsellor talks to parents					

or guardians about the needs and concerns of students.					
25. Counsellor refers students with special needs to other professionals for the needed assistance.					
26. Counsellor talks with administrators and teachers in the development of guidance and counselling programmes for students.					
27. Counsellor plans and provides orientation					

programme for new students to help them adjust to new school environment.					
28. Counsellor makes guidance and counselling goals and objectives for the good of the school and students.					
29. Counsellor designs and provides intervention services for students.					
30. Counsellor explains guidance and counselling programme to parents.					

Statements	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Not at all important
31. Counsellor explains guidance and counselling programme to teachers					
32. Counsellor presents and discusses guidance and counselling services and issues during staff meetings.					
33. Counsellor organizes					

talks for students. Example, talks on careers.					
34. Your secrets are safe with the counsellor.					
35. Counsellor shows respect to all students.					

<p>36.</p> <p>Counsellor demonstrate s positive co-operative relationship s with teachers.</p>					
<p>37.</p> <p>Counsellor serves as a role model for students.</p>					
<p>38.</p> <p>Counsellor evaluates the effectiveness of the guidance and counselling programme.</p>					

APPENDIX B

RELIABILITY OF INSTRUMENT

**Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.914	.913	38

**APPENDIX C**

**INTRODUCTORY LETTER**

**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST**

**FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS

Telephone: 042-3607

TELEX: 2552, UCC, GH

Telegrams & cables: University, Cape Coast.

University Post Office

Cape Coast, Ghana.

**THESIS WORK**

**LETTER OF INTRODUCTION**

We introduce to you Ms. Juliana Audria Assabieh, a student from University of Cape Coast, Department of Educational Foundations. She is pursuing a master of Philosophy (M.Phil) degree in Guidance and Counselling. As part of her requirements, she is expected to work on a thesis entitled: **“SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS’ PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROLE OF THEIR COUNSELLORS IN THE KUMASI METROPOLIS OF ASHANTI REGION OF GHANA”**.

She has opted to make a study at your institution/establishment for the thesis. We would be most grateful if you could afford her the opportunity to make the study.

Any information provided will be treated as strictly confidential.

Thank you.

Signed for : Dr. Y. K. Estey

**Head**