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# An Assessment of Agriculture as a Vocation in Senior Secondary Schools. A Case Study of Selected Senior Schools in Bombali District, Northern Sierra Leone

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***Abstract*—** *The quality of a school is normally judged by the professional acumen of the teachers which is very crucial for the cognitive development of the pupils in the school, especially when it comes to agriculture as a vocation in schools. Teachers are not only seen as embodiment of professionalism, integrity and honesty but also paradigms of hope and development for the future of the pupils. When teachers become professionals in the teaching of agriculture institutional prospect and development of the course as a vocation is ensured. Teachers in senior schools have an unflinching role of making sure the learning environment for agriculture is conducive and resource-oriented which is easily achievable when the teacher in question exhibits professional traits to enable him/her do what is deemed as extra-ordinary. Teachers are most effective when their do realize their professional characteristics to do the job with utmost satisfaction. This study assess agriculture as a vocation in senior secondary schools in three selected senior secondary schools in the Bombali shebora Chiefdom. A total sample size of 60 teachers including pupils from the five(5) selected senior schools in Bombali district was collected from the frame out of which 30 teachers and 30 pupils were selected from five(5) schools targeting through a simple random sampling. Analyses of the collected data was done through descriptive statistics, Cross-tabulation. The study proved that all the three schools surveyed had guidance and counseling services. The study also discovered that pupils are not taking agriculture as a vocation in these schools. This is a sad reality the study was able to discover.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Formal education in Sierra Leone is hierarchically structured with chronologically graded educational system running from the primary school to the university. It includes general academic studies a variety of specialized program and institutions for full time professional training. Thus subjects/courses such as Agriculture, Chemistry, Commerce, Biology, Mathematics, Account, History, Physics, Economics, Technology, to name but a few are offered in the curricula.

The importance of Agriculture in both developed and developing countries have been a matter of debate over the past decade (White 1990). These debates have been on the content, methodology and clientele for whom the agriculture program is designed.

In some countries, agriculture is taken as a vocational subject in the sense that after completion of secondary school, the graduate will enter into employment. In other countries however agriculture is taken as a general subject so that after completing secondary school. the student continues into higher education of learning (White 1990)

In Sierra Leone agriculture should serve the needs of both vocational and general education. Agriculture at secondary school level should therefore be broad base so as to meet the needs of both groups of people. It should provide opportunities for acquiring skills for gainful employment since the subject is part of the practical arts, woodwork, technical art, fine art etc. As there are very limited job opportunities for school leavers in Sierra Leone, agriculture as a vocation in the secondary school level will be a very significant subject in the Sierra Leone School curriculum because it will equipped pupils to acquire and develop attitude, skills, knowledge and understanding needed to enhance crop production.

### *1.1 Justification of the Study*

Despite the above advantages agriculture is supposed to offer to the learners of the subject, research has shown that most of the school leavers migrate to the cities and engage in office jobs than those offered by agricultural science (Not vocational agriculture).

Agricultural science at the secondary school level does not provide the learner with the basic skills, attitudes, technique, knowledge and understanding needed to enhance self-empowerment, gainful employment, man power requirement and resourceful being, where as vocational agriculture at the secondary school level will provide the school graduate with skills, knowledge and understanding for employment opportunities in off-farming occupations or labor market in general and be a useful, resourceful and well- being in the society.

According to Hughes (1970) one of the necessitating factors for guidance and counselling is for pupils to make vital choices and decisions. Choices about subjects, schools, career etc. There is need for guidance to help pupils to make informed choices according to their ability, aptitude, interest and motivations. The forces of modern technology have created the need for a change of attitude of young people towards vocational and technical subjects. The advancement in modern world has created new occupational structure offering the young people of today wider field of opportunities in career



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choices. The secondary school leaver therefore needs vocational guidance to be adequately informed about job opportunities and to select wisely.

In Sierra Leone the middle level manpower is in short supply. The few that are available are manned by foreigners. Therefore, there is need for guidance and counseling to:

I. Create awareness in pupils on the realities of the country's economic situation.

II. Impress on pupils the value and dignity of labor.

III. Identify and develop talents and skills of pupils necessary for vocational and technical job.

IV. Ensure that pupils entering the world of work have acquired the skills for the job choosen; this reduces economic wastage. _

V. Appreciate the relationship between blue-collared jobs and the economic development of a country.

Guidance is usually applied to the total school program of activities and services aimed at helping pupils make and carry out adequate plans and achieve satisfactory adjustment in life. According to Perrone and Ryan (1970), guidance is a process, developmental in nature by which an individual is assisted to understand, accept and utilized his abilities, aptitudes, interest and attitudinal patterns in relations to his aspirations, so that he may become increasingly capable of making wise choices and decisions both as an individual and also as a member of a dynamic and expanding society.

Lack of guidance and counseling by agricultural science teachers in secondary schools deprive learners of the benefits of information on the importance of agriculture as it pertains for the purpose of:

I. General education; i.e. school education, technology and the environment, education on how to buy from the market, loan from the bank etc.

II. Vocational education; i.e. education for gainful/self-employment, manpower requirement and resourceful being.

### *1.2 Aim*

The main purpose of this study is to assess the effect of agriculture as a vocation for school pupils in the selected senior schools within Bombali district.

### *1,2.1 Objectives*

1. To assess the effect of guidance and counseling in the selected schools on agriculture as a vocation in Bombali district.
2. To measure the benefits of agriculture as a vocation in the selected secondary schools in Bombali district.
3. To identity the challenges of agricultural guidance counselling in the selected secondary schools in Bombali district

## II. LITERATURER

This literature looked the relevant array of knowledge on the impact agriculture as a vocation in schools. A critical assessment and verification of other academic work was referred to ensure empirical logical conclusion of the study. The rationale behind consulting an exhaustive literature is to have an avalanche of sources related to the study under review and get an in-depth mixture of related evidence to justify the findings of the study.

The work was conducted to catalogue a host researchers whose works are akin to the work. The opinions of different academics in journal articles, and books are sought. The literature is planned in tandem with the research objectivres. The information for the literature review was gathered using combination of the key dependent and independent variable terms for this study.

### *2.1 The Professional role of the teacher as a facilitator of agricultural learning in schools*

The notion of cheering teachers to facilitate learning in their own schools or in their own classrooms is not a new one. There was a strong teacher action research movement in the world today. One of its most influential advocates defines action research as research undertaken by teachers, administrators and others to improve their own practice (Corey,2000). In this context, action research was strongly associated with the commitment to use scientific method, usually conceived in quantitative terms modelled on the experiment, to solve educational problems; and it was inspired in part by the work of Dewey and the progressive movement. Dewey believed that scientific recommendations could only be assessed by being applied in practice, and saw the teacher as a research worker testing out educational theory (Hodgkinson, 2011) It is pertinent that the professional teacher with an apt knowledge of research will surely impact not only the students he teachers but also the school as whole. The commitment of a teacher into research will develop the professional competence of the individual to conduct effective teaching.

In the United Kingdom and other parts of the world the idea of the teacher as a facilitator of agricultural learning seems to have emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, largely independently of the American action research movement. (Elliot, 2012). It arose partly from internally created curriculum reform within schools but also from a shift within the community of curriculum developers and evaluators away from an administrative model in which new curricula were developed centrally by experts, adopted by local authorities, schools and teachers, and assessed by specialized evaluators using quantitative measurement of outcomes. This model was criticized both because it was ineffective In practice and because it was judged to contravene important educational and political values. It was ineffective because often, even when schools and teachers were committed to the curricular proposals, they used them in ways that departed from those intended by the curriculum developers. The result was that although the innovation had effects, perhaps even desirable ones, these were not those that were anticipated and therefore were often not measured. By focusing only on what was intended, evaluators failed to understand what had and had not (and what could have) been achieved.

It goes without saying that teaching and teacher education have never been regarded as classical professions. (Corey, 2000). Teaching, agriculture to make it a vocation for students was once called a semi-profession or sub-profession (Members of semi-professions are less autonomous than those of the classical professions and they work within organizations and institutes like schools, hospitals and libraries that are



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characterized by bureaucracy and hierarchy. The autonomy of teachers and schools is further limited by the influence of governments that have, depending on the rules and regulations in specific countries, more or less influence on the content of the curriculum and the pedagogy of the teachers In addition, the academic levels of the teaching and teacher education professions are limited. It is still relatively rare for teacher educators to be research trained and/or to have carried out postgraduate studies. In particular, this is the case among teacher educators working with pre-school and primary school teacher education.

*2,2 The Professional role of the teacher as a guidance counselor for agriculture as a vocation.*

Guidance counseling came to be seen by some, therefore, as primarily concerned with enhancing the professionalism of teachers (Pinkin, 2010). It was emphasized that the teacher ought to be a skilled practitioner who will contribute significantly to the development of the school, continually reflecting on her or his practice in terms of ideals and knowledge of local situations, and modifying practice In light of these reflections; rather than a technician merely applying scientifically produced curriculum programmes. Given this shift in perspective, the role of the guidance counselor is to help students make informed decisions about their career aspiriations. When the teacher becomes a professional guindance counselor it seeks to impact the quality of learning and education in the school environment.

Michael Marland, a London head teacher and renowned educationist, entered the 'testing debate' about Key Sage 3 English by arguing that the problem is not the tests but the uses to which they are put. He cogently represented the professional perspective when he argued that "Tests should not be seen as full pictures; they are limited devices to assist further consideration of the young person's needs" (The Observer: Schools Report, 17 January 2000). He made a strong plea for a proper analysis of the use of tests for teaching purposes as a basis for an agreed position between the government and teachers. Any such agreement would reinstate the teacher's voice as an integral part of educational assessment and compromise the government project of using assessment as a device for bringing teachers under the control of the educational consumer. In which case the government will have to revise its views of the teaching profession as a conspiracy against society. To what extent is Sir Ron Dearing's Review contributing to such a revision? The rationale behind this is that when teachers become professional curriculum developers the cognitive burden of the principals and other school authorities will be eased as because the teacher tends to bring onboard the professional expertise into play.

Guidance counseling is a fundamental aspect of knowledge for the purpose of teaching and directing students about their careers. They are the languages teachers employ to talk about things and events in the world and as such they imply what (Bruner 2010) a point of view about the use of the mind in relation to these things and events. Guidance and counseling as the language of education not only refers to things in the world, its content, but also marks the stance the teacher is to adopt towards the use of the child's mind in relation to them. (Bruner 2010) Teachers with the professional knowledge of curriculum development are seen as resource persons with the passion for the development of the schools they found themselves in. The stances to knowledge marked down in curricula either invites teachers to express and extend their powers of understanding in the ways they represent knowledge to children or they imprison teachers as transmission devices which represent knowledge as inert information. The Curriculum Reform movement of the 1960s, at least initially, was as much about teacher development as it was about changing the content of education (Printon et al, 2011).

The idea about guidance and counseling by the professional teacher was about changing the ways knowledge was represented in schools to children; not as information to be transmitted but as structures - of ideas, principles and procedures (Marshall, 2012). This supports creative and imaginative thinking about human experience. This of course does not necessarily imply changes in content. Knowledge of the same content can be represented in different ways to children, as Bruner's example illustrates; what his teacher did was to adopt a different stance towards it than he had been led to expect from teachers. Nevertheless, a change in the way knowledge is represented by teachers in classrooms has implications for the selection and organization of content. The 'syllabus' organizes large amounts of content around content categories. It enables teachers to transmit large amounts of information in an efficient and orderly way. But when knowledge is represented as structures which support inquiry the traditional syllabus is a quite inappropriate form of content organization.

Guidance and counseling, when contextualized, it comes alive for students. The role of the professional teachers in the guidance and counseling process is to help students develop their career aspirations. ( Miller, 2013) Active learning will increase the focus and retention of career development, resulting in an exciting learning environment. Teachers build lessons that include simulations, experiments, case studies and activities to deliver curriculum. This interactive approach intertwines curriculum and practical experiences that immerse students in learning. The curriculum process provides opportunity for teachers to be creative and put their unique stamp on the classroom experience. During the curriculum process (Miller, 2013) The professional teacher uses a prescribed curriculum to build lessons that have global impact. For example, teachers integrate examples of diverse people who have made significant contributions in the content area. The intentionality of building inclusion helps dispel stereotypes and to encourage students to look favorably upon diverse groups. If district-issued books or materials do not highlight historically underrepresented groups, teachers can provide supplemental materials during the curriculum process. Finally, the curriculum process enables teachers to consider how they can best deliver lessons that will reach agriculture and other courses. Learners, or other diverse populations.

## III. METHODS

The research employed the Survey methodology to get data from the study population from the five (5) schools in Bombali Shebora Chiefdom. The survey design process incorporated both quantitative and qualitative tactics to get information. A synthesis of data and method triangulation to elicit more information from Principals and teachers and pupils was introduced.

The study was predominantly quantitative; the qualitative factor constituted Key informant interviews or In-depth interviews, case studies and Focus group discussions. The key informant interviews targeted teachers, Principals, pupils and other school authorities. Because of its quantitative style, the survey questionnaire with a planned (close-ended questions) and semi-structured (open-ended questions) approach was considered to collect information on the study attributes. The study also referred to secondary data from the Internet to get a thorough understanding on the topic of study. Primary data collection was separated into 2 phases. Phase one (1) comprised of the use of the survey questionnaire to gather information from the sampled teachers and Principals Phase two (2) contained the collection of qualitative data through in-depth interviews and case studies.

The targeted population of the study was teachers, pupils within the selected schools in Bombali Shebora chiefdom and a population 500 teachers, pupils in the selected schools was recorded. The choice of schools was informed by the honours associated with them as regards values and morals. The targeted population entailed the list of professional teachers and a sample size of sixty (60) was drawn from the frame. In order to guarantee empirical requirements Nineteen (19) teachers and one (1) Principal with a total of 20 respondents from each of the schools with a grand total totalling of (60) was used as the sample size of the study.

A Statistical analysis of the data using EXCEL or SPSS to produce answers for the instructional impact of agriculture as a vocation in the five selected schools. A method comprising of random sampling scheme was embraced to select teachers, pupils and Principals teaching agriculture.

## IV. RESULTS

Demographic characteristics of respodents

Table 1. Sex of Respondent

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | male | 45 | 75.0 | 75.0 | 75.0 |
| | female | 15 | 25.0 | 25.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 60 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Source: Field data, 2021.

From the table above, 45(75%) of the respondents interviewed are male as compared to their female counterparts accounting to 15(25%). This analysis is illustrated in the graph below:

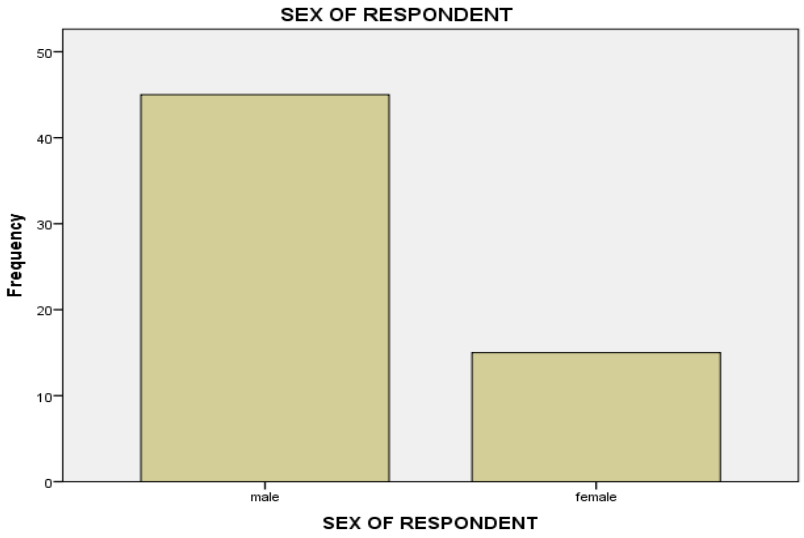


Table 2. Guidance and counselling in the schools

| Do you have guidance and counselling services in your school | | Schools Visited | | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | St. Francis Senior Secondary School | United Methodist Senior Secondary School | Makeni Comprehensive Academy | Binkolo Catholic Senior Secondary School | Paki Masabong Senior Secondary School | |
| | Yes | 19 | 8 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 47 |
| | No | 5 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 13 |
| Total | | 24 | 12 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 60 |

Source: Field Data, 2021.



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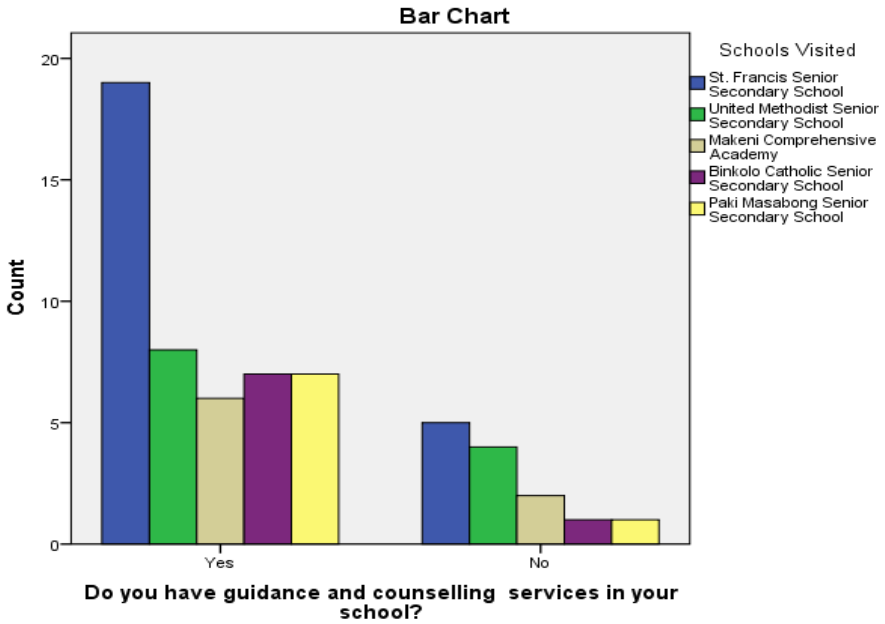
| Table 3. If Yes, In which areas do you have guidance and counseling? | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| If Yes, In which areas do you have guidance and counseling? | | Schools Visited | | | | | Total |
| | | St. Francis Senior Secondary School | United Methodist Senior Secondary School | Makeni Comprehensive Academy | Binkolo Catholic Senior Secondary School | Paki Masabong Senior Secondary School | |
| | Personal guidance | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| | Social guidance | 2 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 5 |
| | Health Guidance | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| | Educational Guidance | 11 | 9 | 6 | 6 | 2 | 34 |
| Total | | 16 | 12 | 8 | 8 | 3 | 47 |




Source: Field Data, 2021.

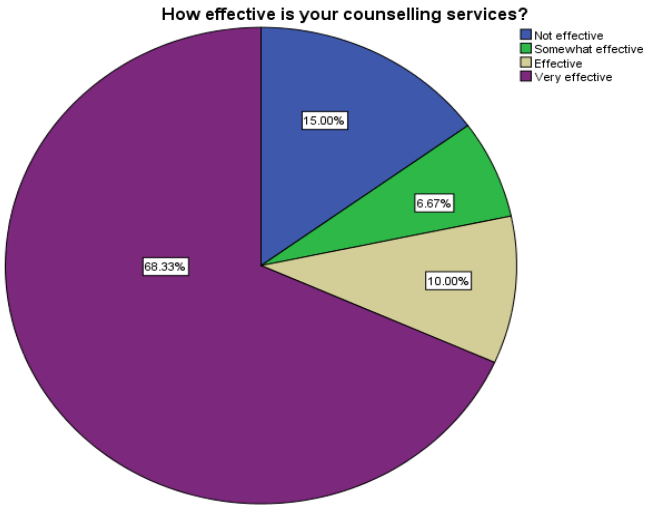
The above analysis shows that 47(78%) of the people interviewed in the schools have guidance and counseling services as compared to 13(22%) of the respondents who said they do not have guidance and counseling services. This is shown in the chart above:

The analysis in table 3 shows that 34(57%) of the schools visited take educational guidance as the main area in the guidance and counseling services. This find is very interesting due to the fact that most of the schools including the ones surveyed focus more attention on guiding pupils on the various streams (Arts, Commercial and science) not necessary on agricultural disciplines.

| Table 4. How effective is your counseling services? | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| | Not effective | 9 | 15.0 | 15.0 | 15.0 |
| | Somewhat effective | 4 | 6.7 | 6.7 | 21.7 |
| | Effective | 6 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 31.7 |
| | Very effective | 41 | 68.3 | 68.3 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 60 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Source: Field Data, 2021

The table above shows that 41(68%) of the respondents have a very effective guidance counseling services as compared to 9(15%) of their counterparts who said their guidance and counseling services is not effective. 4(6.7%) of respondents said their guidance and counseling services is somewhat effective, while 6(10%) said it is effective. This is illustrated in the chart below.



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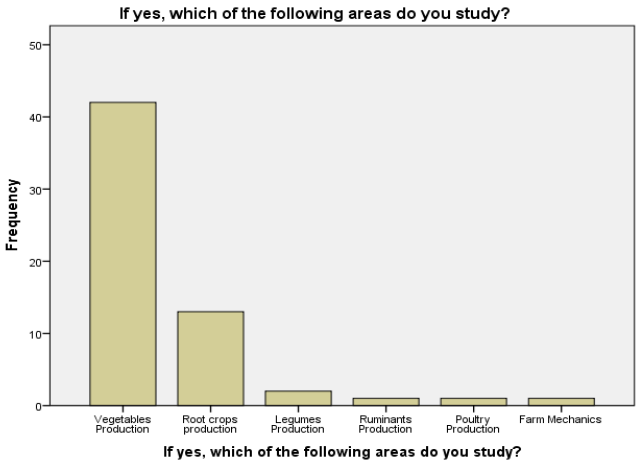
| Table 5. Do you study vocational/Technical agriculture in your school? | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| Valid | Yes | 24 | 40.0 | 40.0 | 40.0 |
| | No | 36 | 60.0 | 60.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 60 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Source: Field Data, 2021.

The table above indicates that only 24(40%) of respondents study vocational/technical agriculture as compared to their 36(60) of their counterparts who said they do not study vocational/technical agriculture in their schools.

| Table 6. If yes, which of the following areas do you study? | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| Vegetables Production | 42 | 70.0 | 70.0 | 70.0 |
| Root crops production | 13 | 21.7 | 21.7 | 91.7 |
| Legumes Production | 2 | 3.3 | 3.3 | 95.0 |
| Ruminants Production | 1 | 1.7 | 1.7 | 96.7 |
| Poultry Production | 1 | 1.7 | 1.7 | 98.3 |
| Farm Mechanics | 1 | 1.7 | 1.7 | 100.0 |
| Total | 60 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Table 6 above indicates that 42(70%) of the respondents involve in vegetable production, 13(21.7%) in root crops production, 2(3%) in legumes, while 1(1.7%) each in ruminants, poultry and farm mechanics production. This is illustrated in the chart below.



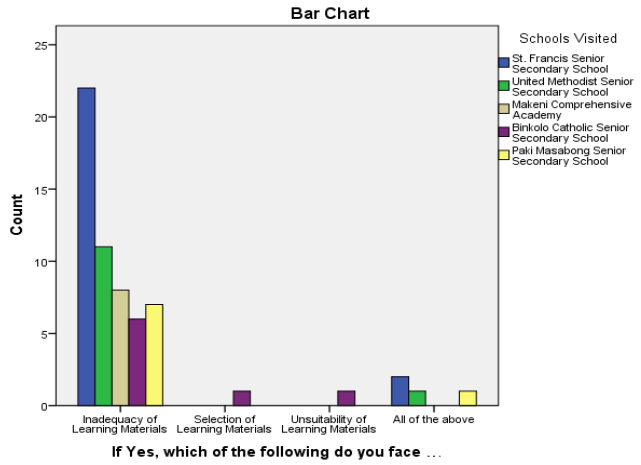

| Do you face challenges/problems in Agricultural guidance counseling in your school? | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| Yes | 53 | 88.3 | 88.3 | 88.3 |
| No | 7 | 11.7 | 11.7 | 100.0 |
| Total | 60 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Source: Field Data, 2021.

The analysis above proved that 83.3% of the respondents interviewed confirmed that that face challenges in agricultural guidance and counseling services in their schools. This is a serious finding compared to other schools in other chiefdoms within Bombali district.

| If Yes, which of the following do you face challenges? | Schools Visited | | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | St. Francis Senior Secondary School | United Methodist Senior Secondary School | Makeni Comprehensive Academy | Binkolo Catholic Senior Secondary School | Paki Masabong Senior Secondary School | |
| Inadequacy of Learning Materials | 22 | 11 | 8 | 6 | 7 | 54 |
| Selection of Learning Materials | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Unsuitability of Learning Materials | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| All of the above | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| Total | 24 | 12 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 60 |

Source: Field Data, 2021.




Results from the analysis shows that 54(90%) of the respondents have problems of inadequacy of learning materials in their schools to effect the learning of agriculture and taking the discipline as a vocation in these schools.

## V. Discussion

It is pragmatic to establish that agriculture is an important vocation in schools, especially those in the study area. It is prudent to state that schools in the study area are trying their best to make agriculture as a career path. Even though there were challenges in the schools when it comes to making agriculture a vocation, however, some are striving to make this happen.

Even though guidance and counseling services are present in the schools under review, yet much has not been done to guide pupils to take agriculture as a career vocation. This should



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be the main responsibility of schools in the country and in Bombali Shebora district in particular.

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