

**The Influences of Career Counseling Programs on Career Decisions of High School
Students at Two Publicly-Funded Special Schools in Kazakhstan**

Assima Rysbergen

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Sincerely,

NUGSE Research Committee

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Abstract

Kazakhstani state mainstream schools do not offer career counselling programs (CCP) to help high school students make informed choices and decisions for their careers. However, publicly-funded special schools (PFSS) started in 2009 have introduced CCP as part of their curricula. Due to the fact that CCP has been implemented in PFSSs quite recently, there is a lack of research on how such program helps students make informed career decisions.

This study adopted qualitative research design to explore how the CCP offered at two PFSSs in Kazakhstan influences career choices of high school students. In this study one-on-one and focus group semi-structured interviews and document analysis were used as primary data-gathering tool to address the central research question “How does the Career Counseling Program at two publicly-funded special schools in Kazakhstan help high school students make their career decisions?” Participants selected through purposeful sampling with maximum variation included current students, graduates, career counsellors, parents, and people from the leadership team. The study has come up with a number of findings about the implementation, benefits and challenges of the CCP. In addition, the findings point out a number of ways in which the CCP helps students make informed decisions about their future careers.

The potential barriers and challenges to establishing and effectively delivering CCP within the PFSSs include shortage of career counseling staff, lack of capital and human resources, and over expectations from the CCP by students and others. Thus, the study may contribute to the existing literature by exploring how the CCP functions in the Kazakhstani context and how students benefit from it. The recommendations made in the study may also be useful for the schools, policy makers, and practitioners for further improvement of the CCP in PFSSs and possible expansion of the program to the mainstream schools in Kazakhstan.

Key words: career counsellor, career decision-making, school career counselling Kazakhstan.

«Влияния профориентационной программы на выбор профессии учащихся старших классов двух специализированных школ в Казахстане, финансируемых из государственного бюджета»

Абстракт

Казахстанские государственные общеобразовательные школы не предлагают программы по профориентации, целью которой является помочь учащимся средних школ сделать осознанный выбор будущей профессии. Однако, специализированные школы, финансируемые из государственного бюджета, открывшиеся в 2009 году, внедрили программу по профориентации (далее ПП) в рамках учебной программы школы. В связи с тем, что ПП была внедрена в специализированных школах недавно, недостаточно информации о том, насколько эффективна данная программа в помощи учащимся принимать обоснованные решения касательно будущей профессии.

В этом исследовании был использован качественный исследовательский метод для изучения того, как ПП, предлагаемая в двух специализированных школах в Казахстане, влияет на выбор профессий старшеклассников. Также были использованы индивидуальные и групповые полуструктурированные интервью и анализ документов в качестве основного инструмента сбора данных, направленных на основной вопрос исследования «Как программа по профориентации в двух специализированных школах Казахстана помогает старшеклассникам при выборе профессии?»

Участники, отобранные с помощью целенаправленной выборки с максимальными вариациями, состояли из нынешних студентов, выпускников, профориентаторов, родителей и людей из руководства. В исследовании были представлены результаты о реализации, преимуществах и проблемах ПП. Кроме того, результаты указывают на ряд аспектов, помогающих учащимся принимать

обоснованные решения касательно своей будущей профессии. Потенциальные барьеры и проблемы для создания и эффективного обеспечения ПП в рамках специализированных школ включают в себя нехватку профориентаторов, человеческих и капитальных ресурсов и высокие ожидания от программы со стороны студентов и других лиц. Таким образом, исследование может способствовать пополнению существующей литературы путем изучения того, как ПП функционирует в казахстанском контексте и как студенты получают от нее пользу. Рекомендации, сделанные в исследовании, также могут быть полезны для школ и практикующих политиков для дальнейшего совершенствования ПП в специализированных школах и возможного расширения программы в общеобразовательных школах Казахстана.

Ключевые слова: профориентатор, принятие решений о профессии, эффективность профориентации в школах, Казахстан.

«Қазақстандағы екі арнайы мемлекеттік мектептерде кәсіптік бағдардың жоғарғы сынып оқушыларына кәсіптік таңдау жасаудағы ықпалы»

Аңдатпа

Қазақстандағы мемлекеттік жалпы орта білім беру мектептерінде жоғарғы сынып оқушыларына саналы түрде таңдау жасауда көмек көрсету үшін кәсіптік бағдар өткізілмейді. Алайда арнайы мемлекеттік мектептерде кәсіптік бағдар 2009 жылдан бастап білім беру жоспарына енгізілген. Арнайы мемлекеттік мектептерде кәсіптік бағдардың жүргізілуі ұзақ уақыт болмағандықтан, бағдарламаның оқушылардың таңдау жасауларына қаншалықты көмек көрсететіні жеткіліксіз зерттелген.

Аталмыш жұмыста Қазақстандағы екі арнайы мемлекеттік мектептердегі кәсіптік бағдардың жоғарғы сынып оқушыларына ықпалын тексеруге сапалы зерттеу жүргізілген. «Қазақстандағы екі арнайы мемлекеттік мектептерде кәсіптік бағдар жоғарғы сынып оқушыларына кәсіптік таңдау жасауға қаншалықты көмегін тигізеді?» деген негізгі зерттеу сұрағына жауап табу үшін бетпе бет және топтық бейресми сұхбаттар мен құжаттарды талдау өткізілді.

Зерттеуге қатысушылар ретінде оқушылар, түлектер, кәсіптік бағдар берушілер, ата аналар, және мектеп әкімшілігінің мүшелері максималды түрлендіру арқылы жүргізілген мақсатты іріктеумен таңдалды. Зерттеу кәсіптік бағдардың енгізілуі, пайдасы мен қиындықтары жайлы бірқатар нәтижелер ұсынады. Сонымен қатар, зерттеу кәсіптік бағдардың оқушыларға болашақ кәсіптерін таңдауға көмектесетін бірнеше жолдарымен таныстырады. Арнайы мемлекеттік мектептерде кәсіптік бағдарды орнатып, жүргізуге кедергі келтіретін жағдайларға кадрлар резервісі мен қаржылық тапшылық пен ата аналар мен оқушылардың кәсіптік бағдарды асыра бағалауы жатады. Сондықтан да аталмыш зерттеуді жұмысы Қазақстандағы кәсіптік бағдардың

атқарылуы жайлы мен оқушыларға көрсететін көмегі жайлы әдебиеттер санына қосуға болады. Зерттеу нәтижелеріндегі ұсыныстар мектептер, білім беру жүйесіндегі басшылар мен кәсіптік бағдарды жүргізушілерге арнайы мектептердегі кәсіптік бағдардың сапасын жақсарту және Қазақстандағы жалпы орта білім беру мектептеріне тарату мақсатында пайдалы бола алады.

Кілт сөздер: кәсіптік бағдар, кәсіптік таңдау жасау, мектептегі кәсіптік бағдардың тиімділігі, Қазақстан.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the background of the study rooted into my personal experience as a student and teacher as well as the importance of the research topic in the local and international contexts. It also discusses the problem statement, the purpose of study, the research questions, and the significance of the study. The chapter ends with a brief introduction and overview of each chapter in the thesis.

1.2 Background of the study

Over the last decade or so the world labour market has experienced growth in the already large amount of career specializations, university majors as a result of rapid evolution of technologies and the world economy. Besides giving rise to new professions and university majors, these constant changes have influenced the functions and requirements of many existing careers, making them difficult to predict (Gati & Levin, 2014, p. 98). Consequently, constant diversification of the higher education field and the job market has resulted in students' confusion and lack of knowledge about the requirements and skills needed for various careers. Gati and Levin (2014) claim that there are a considerable number of factors that influence the difficulties encountered in making a career choice such as having a variety of alternatives from which to choose, social barriers, socio-economic situations, and internal conflicts of having made the wrong choice. These factors – imposed or real – usually limit young adults' career possibilities (p.99). According to Kelly and Lee, of all these existing barriers, lack of information is the main factor preventing high school students from making a career decision independently (as cited in Zhou, Santos, 2007, p. 220). For example, reportedly, many students view the professions of lawyer and economist as modern, high-paid occupations in prominent companies or corporations without considering the idea that people

with diplomas in these professions can also work for small firms and deal with a large amount of routine work. When they experience the real world, students' dreams crash as well as the expectations of parents regarding the dream profession. According to a survey conducted among 22 job representatives, economists were identified as the unhappiest about their choice of occupation (Super Job, 2015). One of the explanations of this issue could be individuals' lack of knowledge about the characteristics of professions and their tendency to fall into the trap of existing occupational stereotypes. However, the major reason is, similarly to Kelly and Lee's statement above, the vague knowledge held by students and parents about the local labour market demands (Mustafina, 2016). Thus, the majority of high school students worldwide find the career decision-making process overwhelming and stressful. To this end, they appear to seek professional guidance that can help them make informed decisions for their future careers.

When I reflect on my adolescence, I remember myself as a student struggling to decide what profession to choose. When the time to make a decision came, the only thing I was sure of was that my future profession would be within human science majors. However, there were quite a few professions that I could pursue within that domain, so I got lost. In search of some guidance, I consulted my parents, relatives, and friends about professions in which I was interested and this made me even more confused as I began to get an increasingly wider range of ideas and suggestions from people who I spoke with. I remember my uncle saying that teaching is an unappreciated profession with a poor salary and that I should not choose to become a teacher. Instead, he as well as others suggested that I choose law or international relations because these professions offer promising career opportunities and a good salary. In a nutshell, even though I sought guidance and credible recommendation, most of the people with whom I talked seemed to provide me with opinions and views on professions that rested

on widespread stereotypes and assumptions. I was experiencing a growing sense of stress as time to make a decision was approaching. Finally, after much confusion, I chose the teaching profession. The decision was not based on a personal interest, but rather on the idea that holding a teacher diploma guarantees a stable job after the university graduation.

Now years later, having been through all the stages of career choice and having become a teacher, I realize how overwhelming and daunting the career decision making process could be for a student. Reflecting on my friends' and my own experiences regarding career choices, I understand that though there are a number of sources that can help students determine their future profession such as internet sources and networks, the students need professional support and guidance to make informed and appropriate career decisions compatible with their skills and interests. This is because decisions based on stereotypes and unquestioned beliefs about professions might have negative consequences on the future of a student and the society's well-being as a whole.

According to information from a career counselor (CC) in one of the PFSSs in Kazakhstan concerning university admissions, of 42 graduates of 2014-2015 academic year, 17 graduates entered overseas universities, 16 got into Nazarbayev University and 9 entered regular Kazakhstani universities (PFSS, 2015). This suggests that for students, career decision-making involves not only choosing an occupation, but also searching for universities, becoming familiar with admission requirements and deadlines, taking necessary international examinations and filling in application forms and applying for scholarship programs. This is a large amount of work that cannot always be done by individual students without accompanying professional guidance. Taking a close look at the information about the graduates of 2015, I wondered how all of them managed to enter top Kazakhstani and overseas

universities, contemplating if it was the CCP's role in helping those students get through the career decision-making process successfully.

Moreover, having had experience in teaching and supervising 11th and 12th grade students at my school over the last two years, I have learnt that many students struggle with career decision-making for different reasons such as lack of knowledge about various professions and how their interests match with certain professions. Thus, my personal experience along with the experience of my students regarding career decision-making, and the recent implementation of the CCP at the PFSSs motivated me to study the role of the CCP in these schools in assisting students to make informed and appropriate career choices.

1.3 Problem Statement

Career decision making involves collecting information about one's occupational inclinations, abilities and different career options as well as the consequent processing of the gathered information. Amalgamating the knowledge about self with the existing and relevant career alternatives is essential, thus overwhelming for a young individual to cope with alone without the guidance of professionals (Phillips & Jome, 2005, p.136). Unlike in many developed countries where schools offer comprehensive career counselling to their students, there is no established CCP in the mainstream schools in Kazakhstan. According to a survey conducted among 9th and 10th grade students in eight regular schools of Almaty, only 5.8% of 10th graders and 15% of 9th grade students made their career-decisions independently and ninety percent of the survey participants stated the importance of having a CCP in schools to help them choose their occupational path; 82% of students highlighted salary as a key factor in making a career choice regardless of their subject preferences (Mustafina, 2016). This suggests that students are inclined to be guided by false ideas and stereotypes about certain professions and do not realize the longstanding consequences of their decisions. Thus, due to the absence of

professional career guidance in regular schools, many students might choose professions that may be prestigious and well-paid, but not in high demand in the local job market in Kazakhstan. This might lead to difficulties in finding a job after graduating from university or poor attitudes to work. In general, an uninformed occupational choice can result in a shortage or excess of specialists in certain areas which, in turn, negatively influences the economy of the country.

Huges and Karp (2004) believe that “giving young people the tools and knowledge to realistically plan for their futures is a primary goal of education” (p.2). Having this and other factors in mind such as successful international practices in anticipating and addressing existing socio-economic issues through effective career guidance services in schools, the government launched CCPs at PFSSs (Watts & Sultana, 2004, p.109). However, in the few years that career counselling in special schools has existed, not much is known about the content of the program, how it functions and assists students in their career decision-making. There are no established evaluation standards or quality control of the work being done. Since the program is relatively new, there is a dearth of research on how the program works, and it is unclear how high school students benefit from the CCP and what the students and parents think about the program’s efficacy. Therefore, this research aims to explore current practices in career counselling through information derived from analysis of the CCP and interviews conducted with students, parents and career counsellors.

1.4 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore and analyze how the CCP offered at PFSSs helps high school students in their career decision-making. It aimed to study the program from the perspectives and experiences of the school leadership, teachers, students and parents to address the following questions.

1.5 Research question

The research question that guides this study is: “How does the Career Counseling Program at two publicly-funded special schools in Kazakhstan help high school students make their career decisions?”

Four sub-questions are created to provide in-depth answers to this question:

1) How is the career counselling program organized and delivered at two publicly-funded special schools in Kazakhstan?

2) What are the expectations of the school leadership, students and parents of the program?

3) What kinds of challenges do career counsellors and students encounter when working together?

4) How satisfied are current students, graduates and parents with the program and its delivery?

1.6 Significance of the study

Due to lack of research on school CCPs in PFSSs, the current study, first, fills the gap in the existing literature in the context of Kazakhstan. Secondly, the results of the study can help foster the development of the CCPs in PFSSs in Kazakhstan by serving as a guideline for further improvement of the program. In addition, the study may also raise educational stakeholders' awareness of CCP through explaining the role, function, and depth of school career counselling and whether the program's content meets the needs of students, the perpetually changing labour market and higher education sector. Thus, based on the findings, the study makes recommendations for policy makers in Kazakhstan to introduce CCPs in mainstream schools. Overall, the study presents information on current practices and lays a foundation for future research on school CCPs in the context of Kazakhstan.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of literature on CCP from both the international and local contexts. The purpose of the review is to provide an overview of the existing literature on the role of CCP in assisting high school students to make informed decisions about their subject majors and careers. I have reviewed literature based on the following main categories. First, I review literature on the history of CCP in the world and its emergence in Kazakhstan in particular. Second, I present information about the organization and delivery of the CCP in schools worldwide and to what extent the program influences students' career choices. Lastly, I focus on issues and challenges that both providers and recipients experience concerning the content and delivery of CCPs.

2.2 The process of career decision making

Career decision making (CDM) is a process individuals experience while for occupational opportunities, explore and compare viable careers, and choose the one most compatible with their interests and capabilities (Gati & Asher, 2001, p.7, 18). Numerous studies show that CDM consists of several phases targeted at helping people determine their academic and occupational objectives such as 1) exploring one's competences, skills, strengths and weaknesses; 2) looking for possible career alternatives and planning a career derived from the self-exploration process (Gore & Metz, 2008). Apparently, CDM is a multistage and dynamic process (Zhou & Santos, 2007, p.219). Therefore, some people go through this process easily, while many others experience difficulties or problems at different stages of CDM. According to Meriläinen, Puhakka, and Sinkkonen (2014), first problem refers to the first stage of the CDM process which is dearth of motivation and indecisiveness, whereas another problem such as lack of self-awareness, functions of various careers. These

difficulties, if unresolved, may result in: “(a) not beginning the career decision-making process, (b) halting the process before reaching a decision, or (c) making a non-optimal decision” (Gati et al., 1996, p. 511).

2.3 Definition and the purpose of the CCP

Because of challenges encountered in the process of career decision-making due to various internal/external factors and, nowadays, ongoing changes in the global educational and labour market, many students considering higher education appear to seek guidance from CCs (Gati, Amir, & Landman, 2010, p. 393). Thus, to help students make informed decisions about their future careers, many schools around the world, especially in developed countries, have established CCP for students. These programs are designed to help individuals make career choices through fostering their competencies and skills in exploring self, analyzing various occupational alternatives and career planning (OCTAE, 2014). According to Sweet and Watts (2004), “Career guidance refers to services and activities intended to assist individuals, of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers” (p.19). These activities can be offered in schools, colleges, institutes, in the workplace and in employment sectors. Career counselling services aim to help individuals to reflect upon their interests, skills and abilities, to gain and/or foster self awareness and to experience activities. In addition, Meriläinen, Puhakka, and Sinkkonen (2014) claim that apart from being aware of skills and competences one possesses, it is also essential to be informed about the educational and occupational possibilities available in the job market to be able choose the most relevant occupation for the future (p. 343). Being competent in both, according to Fort Worth Public Schools (1972), will allow students to inquire into many career alternatives with sufficient scrutiny, thus enabling them to make an informed occupational choice (p.2). It is also important to note that career

guidance in schools does not only aim at assisting students to make an immediate career choice once, but also helps them acquire and enhance career development skills necessary for future sustainable growth (Watts & Sultana, 2004, p.111). Thus, the overall purpose of the CCP “is to ensure that more young people are able to find pathways that lead to sustained employment with decent pay, good working conditions and career potential” (Bell & Bezanson, 2006, p.1). Achieving these goals will, as Forward (n.d.) suggests, positively contribute to labor markets and education systems of a country, leading to sustainable development of the society (p.40). Considering the longstanding role of the program, Zunker (2002) believes that in order to fulfill the promising functions of the program, it is necessary for career counseling practitioners to possess specific career guidance skills, techniques and strategies to provide quality and effective services.

2.4 History of CCP

The meanings of terms vocational guidance, career development and career counselling are time and culture specific as career counselling has a long history of development. Counselling and guidance came into use in the 1920's with purpose to help students with career choice and placement (Campbell & Dahir, 1997, p.21). The terms career counselling and career development, as claimed by Pope (2000), appeared in more common use in the 1950s though the concept of career guidance first occurred in 19th century in the USA as vocational guidance emerged out of the societal revolution, transition and change the USA was going through at that time (p.194). Vocational guidance first came into usage in the U.S. and became a general term at the beginning of the growth of a counselling movement (Pope, 2000, p.195). As for provision of CCP in schools, the importance of offering the program to students within the school curriculum was especially highlighted in the issue of

The Vocational Guidance Magazine in 1930 (Pope, 2000, p.198). Similarly, the American School Counsellor Association (ASCA) determines career guidance as an important program since it serves as “the basis for the acquisition of skills, attitudes, and knowledge enabling students to make a successful transition from school to careers” (as cited in Osborn & Baggerly, 2004, p.46).

2.5 Organization and delivery of the CCP in schools worldwide

All schools that offer CCP on a school level pursue a similar aim, which is to help students make informed occupational choices first and foremost. However, the way the program is delivered varies from schools to schools, countries to countries. For example, in Quebec, Canada, CCP begins functioning as part of a larger guidance-oriented school concept at primary and high school levels. The idea of the program is to ensure that students are conscious about what subjects they are studying and why they are studying them, and to make personal and career planning develop implicitly throughout schooling (OECD, 2004, p.15). Building bridges with the world of work through trips to worksites is what German schools practice as an integral part of career counselling, which involves an element of work experience and enables students to gain understanding about various jobs and their own career preferences (OECD, 2004, p.16). Likewise, in Michigan schools “Developing local networks among schools, community organizations, labour, and employers is critical to the success of school-to-work systems” (Bezanson & Kellett, 2001, p.19). In Finland, delivering career guidance is not the responsibility of a career counsellor alone, rather it is a cross-curricular and joint responsibility of all members of the school staff (OECD, 2004, p.16).

Educational authorities of several countries encourage schools to work collaboratively with stakeholders and to make partnerships in the provision of the CCP in order to make it more effective. “Often such partnerships include calling on significant stakeholders – such as

parents, alumni, and representatives from the business community, trade unions, and non-government organisations – to make an input into the career education programme” (OECD, 2004, p.16). Opportunities for students to obtain exposure to work sites vary significantly. In Canadian schools some provinces actively advocate apprenticeship programs in the secondary school curriculum and the career development component is, in some cases, attached to programs such as exploration of occupational information, occupational guidance before and after a work placement (Bezanson & Kellett, 2001, p.18). For instance, in British Columbia, to graduate from school, students have to fulfill 30-hour-work experience, whereas in Ontario the requirement is more rigorous – 40 hour participation in community services (OECD, 2002, p.6).

2.6 Emergence of the CCP in Kazakhstan and at PFSSs

In 2016, the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan launched a new career guidance project which allows students of ninth, tenth, and eleventh grades to receive consultations about professions from representatives of local universities (Kapital, 2016). Unlike career counseling services offered on a regular and ongoing basis within a school, the present program is organized twice a month where high school students are exposed to two-hour lectures each time led by representatives of different universities (Nauka.kz, 2016). The initial idea of introducing the program was to have students familiarize themselves with the characteristics of various professions, to raise their awareness of modern occupations that are in demand. There are both benefits and drawbacks to the program. The benefit is that students learn about professions without being distracted from the learning process and will have opportunities to visit various worksites. The drawbacks of the program are that students might receive and understand information about professions in the way university representatives want them to understand. Though the intended beneficiaries of the program are students, it

seems to bring more benefit to universities and the government rather than to the students since this project allows educational authorities and universities to promote local universities and majors that are little known to the majority of students. Overall, the given career guidance project has been an attempt of the government authorities to acknowledge students' demands concerning career decision making difficulties (Kapital, 2016). The efficacy of the program is not yet known, but is expected to be explored soon.

Generally, school CCP is a new concept in the Kazakhstani educational field. It first emerged in Kazakhstan with the opening of private international schools Miras in 1999 and Haileybury School in 2008 in Almaty (Miras, Haileybury Almaty, n.d.). However, this can be considered a unique case since the number of students these schools serve is very small due to their high tuition fees. In general, these schools were opened in Kazakhstan to educate a privileged group of students, but not to address existing issues in the educational field through dissemination of their best practice. Thus, issues pertaining to the problem of students facing difficulties in making career decisions remained unresolved. The issue of inappropriate career choice leads to broader consequences such as university dropouts, skills mismatch, a lack or excessive number of specialists in certain spheres. Therefore, offering CCP for students in mainstream schools could be considered essential in anticipating and addressing the existing issues.

“Career counseling is increasingly being seen essential to the future well-being of individuals and nations in the rapidly changing world” (Patton & McMahon, 2006). Considering this sentiment, Kazakhstan, as a country aiming to join the top 30 most developed countries in the world, became aware of the idea that many existing problems could be prevented by addressing them at the school level. Hence, similar to the European context, the Kazakhstani government started adopting the best international educational practices as a

response to continuous development in education and the labour market arising from the country's ambitious goals of making Kazakhstan one of the most 30 most competitive knowledge-based societies in the world by 2030 (OECD, 2004).

As a result, PFSSs were launched as a critical need to meet the accelerated socio-economic progress in the country and world with the aim of implementing innovative educational programs and research projects. Unlike private international schools in the country, PFSSs were opened as an experimental platform for research, approbation and establishment of successful models of quality educational programs with the idea of improving the educational system of the whole country through dissemination of successful practice into regular schools (PFSS, n.d.).

CCP appeared in PFSSs with the implementation of international practice. In the context of PFSS, the CCP functions independently and is not a compulsory part of school curriculum, unlike in many schools in the USA and Europe. The main functions of the CCP at PFSS are to a) study career intentions of students through conducting surveys and interviews; b) introduce students and parents to professions, their content, features, and requirements based on personal characteristics and interests of students; c) organize excursions to worksites of the city and region; d) organize meetings and workshops with representatives of international funds and programs, leading scientists and experts, representatives of universities, companies, business organizations; e) supervise students on university admissions; f) carry out business correspondence with local and overseas universities. g) inform students about dates of submission of documents, registration and delivery of certain international tests and exams (Career Counselor Job Description, PFSS, 2015).

2.7 Issues that refer to organization and delivery of career counseling programs

There is a wide range of issues connected to the appropriate delivery of CCP in schools worldwide. According to OECD (2004), one of the issues many schools worldwide face, regarding the effective delivery of career guidance, is a lack of specialists majored or trained in career counseling. Due to the dearth of career counseling specialists, schools have to recruit individuals who do not have any competence and education in career guidance which negatively affects the quality functioning and delivery of the program. Second, career guidance specialists usually receive no or only a little support from others who consider that career guidance is the sole responsibility of CCs, rather than a shared responsibility of the whole teaching staff members.

Another reason why a school staff does not take part in the process of career guidance is that they have little knowledge about the existence of a teeming number of professions in the job market and their peculiarities. According to Flinter and Aleman (2008), “The school counseling curriculum requires not only the counselor’s responsibility for development, organization and implementation of the curriculum, but the cooperation and support of the entire faculty and staff for its successful implementation” (p.20). The third issue is that the majority of career guidance services have weak links with public employment services and employers. Students are rarely taken to universities and worksites where they could expose themselves to practical knowledge through having conversations with employers, workers and experiencing the work environment. Fourth, school career guidance services are rarely audited: little or no data is gathered on the recipients’ satisfaction with the service. This does not allow a) recipients of the program to signal satisfaction with the quality of the service provided and b) providers to regularly audit the quality delivery of the CCP in order to ensure that needs of students and parents are met to a good extent (p.13).

2.8 Conclusion

To sum up, this chapter presented information about CCP in both the international and local context. In particular, it touched upon literature which presented information on the program history and improvement, the delivery of the program in different countries, the functions of the program, and the challenges CCs face during the delivery of the service.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This Chapter discusses the methodology employed for carrying out this inquiry to answer the central research question “How does the Career Counseling Program at two publicly-funded special schools in Kazakhstan help high school students make their career decisions?” It describes the qualitative research design including research participants and sampling strategies, data collection tools, data analysis, and the rationale for choosing this particular design. It also provides a brief discussion on the ethical considerations taken into account throughout the study to ensure anonymity, confidentiality and privacy of the research site and participants. The Chapter ends with highlighting the limitations of the study.

3.2 Research Design

To find out the role of career counseling program at PFSSs in assisting high school students to make career decisions, a qualitative research design was adopted. There are several reasons that prompted me to employ a qualitative research. First, the characteristics of qualitative research meet the aim that I pursue in conducting this study which is to explore how the CCP in PFSSs influence students’ career choices, and to obtain an in-depth understanding of the program from the experiences and views of those involved in the program (Creswell, 2013, p.48). Second, qualitative research enables the researcher to communicate with people, hear their voices and establish a collaborative relationship with purposefully selected participants in order to get an in-depth understanding of what they say, what they actually mean by what they say, what they do and why they do what they do and the way they do this. These opportunities help the study to be informative, in-depth and valid. Thirdly, qualitative research enables researchers to present the data through descriptive, analytical, reflective and interpretive accounts making sense to all readers (Creswell, 2014).

The fourth reason of my choice to employ a qualitative research design was that in my study I wanted to understand the contexts in which participants would share their experiences and opinions about the role of CCP in PFSSs. As Creswell (2013) claims, “We cannot always separate what people say from the place where they say it – whether this context is their home, family, or work” (p.48). Therefore, I chose qualitative research design in order to be able to generate rich data through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, document analysis and to present the findings in descriptive, analytical and reflective manner.

3.3 Research site

Two PFSSs in Kazakhstan were the site for the study. I call these ‘special’ schools because these are publicly funded schools but different from the mainstream schools. These schools are well-resourced, offer different curriculum, and have different profile of teachers than those in the mainstream schools. There were two main reasons for the choice of these two schools. First, the PFSSs are the first tuition-free schools in the country which have implemented a CCP as part of adoption of international practices. Second, despite the fact that these two schools offer the same CCP, the content and delivery of the program are different. The curriculum of one school is based on the program of the International Baccalaureate, whereas the other PFSS offers the national curriculum. Overall, studying the CCP in these two PFSSs enabled me to understand and analyze the program’s role from a wider perspective.

3.4 Participants

The purposeful sampling method was chosen for this study as it fits well with the small-scale nature of the research, allowing the researcher to purposefully choosing participants and sites that enable the researcher to comprehend the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2014, p. 228). Four types of participants were selected for this study: career counselors, people from the leadership team, former and current students of the PFSSs, and

parents. The total number of participants was fourteen: two vice-principals of academic affairs, three CCs, five current students, two graduates and two parents. All these participants were selected by purposeful sampling. According to Patton (as cited in Creswell, 2014), the standard utilized in selecting participants and sites is if they are “information rich” (p.228). The reason why I selected people from the leadership position was because they are part of the decision-making process regarding the CCP and all other matters in the school such as implementation and monitoring of programs, organization of school-initiated events and professional development courses. CCs are the people who design, plan and implement the program, while students, graduates and parents are beneficiaries of the program. Of total five current 11th and 12th grade students that I interviewed, three were male and other two were female students of ages 15-17. Two participants of the study are the parents of 12th grade students who are also the participants of the study.

3.5 Data collection

Drawing from the qualitative research tradition, I used semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions (Appendix D), and document analysis as the main methods of data collection.

3.5.1 Individual interview. Data for this study was collected through one-on-one semi-structured interviews with eleven people. The aim of interviewing people from different groups on purposeful sampling basis was to explore the role of the CCP from a wide range of perspectives. For example, students and parents were interviewed to explore their views, experiences, and concerns about the relevance, richness, and efficacy of the program, whereas the CCs and vice-principals were asked questions mainly related to the development and delivery of the program, challenges they had, strategic plans and areas for improvement. Importantly, before conducting an interview, I informed the students and graduates about the

purpose of the interview, which was not to judge or evaluate their career choices, but to explore how they feel about their career decisions, what kind of support they received or still need to, how the CCP helped them to go through the decision-making process. Similarly, the CCs and vice-principals were informed that the purpose of the study was not to judge the quality of their work, but to explore their experiences, views, ideas and suggestions related to the CCP at their school. This helped the study in a way that the participants were less hesitant to give honest answers. Regarding the setting for the interviews, three interviews were held in a coffee shop on a reciprocity basis, and the rest were held within the school setting. All interviews were audiotaped with the permission of the participants.

According to Creswell (2012), semi structured interviews are convenient for both interviewers and interviewees as they allow them to ask probing questions and provide answers apart from initially prepared questions (p. 384). These interviews enabled me to gain comprehensive, in-depth qualitative data through probing for clarifications and asking open-ended questions that emerged in the course of interviewing (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Furthermore, semi-structured interviews enable the researcher and respondents to be flexible, which creates opportunities for evolving more in-depth answers to questions raised by the interviewer. Similarly, Robson claims that “conducting and processing data from semi-structured interviews takes a long time, the method provides considerable freedom in the sequencing and wording of questions, as well as in the amount of time and attention given to different topics” (as cited in Jonbekova, 2015, p.172).

3.5.2 Focus group interview. In addition to individual interviews, I conducted one focus group interview with three current 11th grade students of one of the two PFSSs.

There were a number of reasons why I employed this type of interview with students. First, I wanted to gather shared opinion from several students, as well as to receive specific

views of each one of them in the group. Second, 11th grade students were chosen to participate in a focus-group interview because students usually feel intimidated in an individual interview format but they feel more comfortable and secured while in a focus-group interview.

Therefore, the focus-group interview enabled them to build each-other's confidence. This format of interview could also help shy students to share their opinions, ideas and experiences openly. On the other hand, knowing that high school students can be sensitive to a peer opinion, I did not ask them questions related to emotional issues that could evoke any kind of uneasiness. I, instead, asked more open-ended questions allowing the students to have different views, ideas and responses without getting into arguments with each other.

According to Bell (2006), during the focus group interview "participants will interact with each-other, will be willing to listen to all views, perhaps to reach consensus about some aspects of the topic or disagree about others and to give a good airing to the issues which seem to be interesting or important to them" (p.166). The focus group interview that I conducted for my study was efficient in a way that it helped me to explore the role of the program on a deeper level from the perspective of direct beneficiaries. Not less significant factor of having a focus group interview with these students was that they were all 11th grade students of one school. Therefore, finding a convenient venue and getting them together was quite easy. The major disadvantage of that interview was the time limitation: as the students were very busy, they could only dedicate 30 minutes of their lunch time to the interview. At the interview, the participants were asked questions about how they feel about their career decisions, what kind of support they have received or still need to, how the CCP has helped them to go through the decision-making process. Though the interview lasted only half an hour, it was an insightful and informative one.

3.5.3 Document analysis. Document analysis is a regular procedure for examining or evaluating documents and it was used as another valuable data gathering tool in this study. As Corbin and Strauss claim, “Document analysis requires that data be examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge” (as cited in Glenn, 2009, p.27). Documents are considered to be a good source of data as they provide necessary and valuable information for the researcher in exploring and understanding the central phenomenon. The documents I analyzed during this study comprised of CCs’ job description, school records about graduates and a working plan/schedule with current students.

Document analysis provides the advantages of “being in the language and words of the participants” (Creswell, 2014). However, information in some documents may not always be available to the public and in case of availability, it may be incomplete, false and inauthentic (Creswell, 2014, p.245). Furthermore, documents can present information in the context within which the research participants function as well as give background information and historical insight to the central phenomenon (Glenn, 2009, pp.29-30). Such information and insight can help researchers “understand the historical roots of specific issues and can indicate the conditions that impinge upon the phenomena currently under investigation” (Glenn, 2009, p.29). Thus, information drawn from documents can help the researcher, for instance, to contextualize the information gathered during interviews and prompt questions that are to be asked and clarified in further research. Hence, according to Glenn (2009), document analysis and interviews complement each other in an interactive way. Interview data will reveal particular participant observation, views or experiences while document analysis helps to get an institutional perspective. In my study, the document analysis enabled me to compare what is stated in the documents with what the participants said about the career counseling program.

3.6 Procedures

Data collection was carried out in five stages in compliance with ethical principles. First, I identified sites and participants using purposeful sampling. The process of selection was followed up by providing a consent form (Appendix A) to gate keepers for getting permission to access the sites. Once the gate keepers familiarized themselves with the nature and purpose of the study and gave their permission, I started choosing research participants on the basis of purposeful sampling, following the concept of “information rich” participants. All the participants were provided with detailed information about the study and selected based on their willingness and voluntary participation in the study, without any pressure from anyone else.

Before conducting interviews, I presented a consent form (Appendix B) to all participants. Once they carefully went over and signed the form, I then negotiated an approximate time and venue for the interview. When the time approached, I sent messages to the participants and scheduled the time and venue for the interview. Before the interviews, I prepared self-designed interview protocols, a tape-recorder, and materials for taking notes. Each interview lasted in 60 or less than 60 minutes.

Importantly, upon completion of data analysis, all findings underwent the process of member checking to determine whether the interpretation of findings was accurate and complete. Most participants read their interview transcripts and made corrections wherever they deemed necessary. This process helped to ensure that the findings were free of ambiguity and misinterpretation.

Document analysis preceded the interviews and was conducted using the following procedure. First, I identified the types of documents that could contain valuable information for my research. After the necessary document sources were found, I sought permission to use

and analyze the documents from individuals who were responsible for them. Once I got permission, I checked the documents for accuracy, completeness and appropriateness in answering the research question. The next step was recording information from the documents in order to build up an informative text database for the research. Recording was done in a form of note taking and photocopying some documents with the permission of the people in charge (Creswell, 2012, p.223). Both the interviews and document analysis were carried out in two PFS schools of Kazakhstan.

3.7 Data analysis

In a qualitative research study it is important to analyze the data to build up answers to the research questions (Creswell, 2012, p. 247). Qualitative data analysis is a nonlinear, dynamic and iterative process that can be done both during and after data collection. According to Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen and Walker (2013), qualitative analysis aims at understanding the central phenomenon, synthesize the data and explain relationships, make theories based on the new-found knowledge and connect it with what is already known (p. 532). Keeping these in view, I approached my data analysis in the following manner.

The interview analysis was carried out in six steps. First, information collected from individual and focus group interviews was transcribed and carefully read to ensure that all necessary information was present and nothing was missing. I transcribed all 12 interviews manually without utilizing any software for the reason I did not have access to such programs. Upon completion of the transcription, I translated two interviews into English as they were conducted in Russian. This overall process was followed up by a more careful and deeper reading of the data, looking for similarities and differences, and patterns emerging from the data. I then identified text segments and labeled them with different codes. As Stake (2010) claims, coding helps to categorize the data into themes. I analyzed the codes and looked for

similarities, patterns and relationships amongst the codes and thus identified key themes and categories. I created the themes and categories, and described, discussed and interpreted the themes and presented them in form of findings.

3.8 Ethics of the Study

Before collecting data from the participants in the field I received approval to conduct the study from the Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education Research Committee. Participant confidentiality was given much importance in the study. From the very beginning I carried out the research process in accordance with the NUGSE ethical guidelines. Ethical issues in qualitative research comprise of norms such as “informing participants of the purpose of the study, refraining from deceptive practices, sharing information with participants, being respectful of the research site, reciprocity, maintaining confidentiality” (Creswell, 2014, p.4)

Considering this, participants took part in the research on volunteer basis, without receiving any pressure from either me or other authorities. According to the consent form offered for participants in the beginning of the research, all information collected in the research process maintained confidentiality as the names of the sites and participants remained anonymous, that is, were replaced with pseudonyms. As the study involved high school students, the researcher got the consent form signed by the students’ parents and the assent form (Appendix C) signed by the students themselves. Also, I guaranteed that all information received from participants would be safely stored in a password-secured laptop in a locked drawer and deleted from all sources upon completion of the research. The fact that no one except my supervisor and me would have an access to the gathered information had also been promised before the data collection process started. Importantly, upon completion of data analysis, all findings underwent the process of member checking to determine whether the

interpretation of the findings was accurate and complete. This process helped to ensure that the findings were free of ambiguity and misinterpretation.

Ethical standards were introduced and explained to participants in the beginning of data collection. Otherwise, the ignorance of participants of their rights might have resulted in fear of insecurity, which could consequently make the participants give invalid and superficial information.

3.9 Limitations of the study

First, the present study rests on qualitative data and is limited to a small number of participants - that is, two vice-principals of academic affairs of PFSS, three CCs, five current students, two graduates and two parents. Employing qualitative data and involving a small number of participants prevents the researcher from generalizing the findings (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). Therefore, it is suggested for future researchers to involve more “information rich” participants or to back up the qualitative data by quantitative data in order to gain pluralistic and consolidated picture of the issue.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study which explores how the CCP at two PFSSs in Kazakhstan helps high school students in making career-decisions. Particularly, the study explored the delivery of the CCP and its efficacy from the perspective of the program implementers and beneficiaries.

The chapter is organized into four major sections. All sections present information aimed at answering the research question that guided this study “How does the Career Counseling Program at two publicly-funded special schools in Kazakhstan help high school students make their career decisions?” Section one entitled “Program conceptualization and delivery” provides an overall overview of the program, describing the philosophy of the program, career counsellor’s functions and experiences. Section two entitled “The role of stakeholders” identifies the role of the school community and the leadership team in assisting program delivery. Section three “Challenges and areas for improvement” points out issues which are perceived as potential barriers in successful delivery of the CCP.

4.2 Program Conceptualization and Delivery

4.2.1 Description of the program. CCP is unique in the context of PFSSs in Kazakhstan. The program was designed and developed in PFSSs as a result of implementation of an international practice after the opening of these schools at the initiative of the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2008. Particularly, in school A, the program appeared as a result of implementation of the International Baccalaureate (IB) program. Upon successful implementation of IB in 2013, the school launched the CCP in September of that year. Many participants of the study highlighted that the program is new and unique in the context of Kazakhstan’s schools. The CC 1 of school A stated,

Career Counseling is a new position in my school and in the context of Kazakhstan. I think this is really important because we help our students to find their path and try to find suitable universities and institutes and support them during the process of applying documents to universities and help them with questions regarding application process and finding their ways.

Mrs. Renata, a member of the school leadership team, also affirmed the newness of the program within the PFSSs,

This program itself is new for our system in general... as you know our school is still young - we had only 3 years of graduation, and the real career counseling program was done with the last cohort who graduated in 2015, because before that we didn't even have a CC position.

The overall goal of the CCP is to help high-school students make informed career decisions and get them through the university application process successfully through organizing individual meetings, various events such as job fairs, internships, meetings with prominent people who succeeded in their careers, representatives of universities, and visits to worksites. The program functions independently from the school curriculum and is fulfilled by CCs. The CCs' work is managed and audited by a coordinator from the senior management company to whom the CCs regularly report about how the program is being delivered, what universities students have applied to, where they were offered admission, how many students received scholarships and where the graduates work and so on. Career counseling sessions are held according to the plan the CCs prepare at the beginning of a given academic year. The sessions encompass a variety of events such as individual consultations with students and their parents, educational fairs, meetings with prominent people, registering students for websites aimed at aiding students in their preferred university choice.

4.2.2 Experience of the CCs in the program. The CCs in both schools disclosed that they are not trained to become career counseling specialists, but teachers who combine career counseling with teaching other school subjects. However, they have attended various

workshops, seminars and short term internships to upgrade their knowledge and skills as CCs.

CC 2 of school B reflected upon his experience and said,

When I came here as a school counselor four years ago, I was told that my main role is to help them [students] to apply to universities, colleges. That's it. Then maybe after one year, after attending some workshops and internships, after evaluation and developing, I came to the understanding that school counseling is deeper than I thought.

CC 1 of school A echoed this statement,

It was a new position, I didn't have any idea what is this, how to work, how to implement this program. But first year it was like, I had a narrow view, imagination about this work...And then I participated in one workshop about career guidance which gave me some understanding of what career counseling is. We had a lot of workshops. They were really useful because I communicated with other counselors, contacting them and working with them.

CC 2 described his experience of attending workshops as valuable,

2 years ago our management company organized a workshop for PFS schools by South Korean specialists. In September of 2016, it also organized workshop in how to apply to US universities by MIT. Also, I was invited to workshop in Abu Dhabi New York University, in Hong Kong universities, in Cyprus, the U.S. I saw how they work, how the school counseling program works in these countries. And after that I started to implement the experience.

When the CCs began their journey as CCs, none of them had had prior experience in school or university counseling. The lack of their experience in counseling was explained by the fact that they had a degree in teaching and had been working as teachers. However, by participating in workshops and internships on career counseling in different countries and schools with solid experience in career guidance, they were gradually exposed to effective practices of career counseling. Thus, according to the participants, the way the program is delivered now is far better than it used to be in the beginning, as the CCs who got exposure to international best practices were able to enrich the program.

4.2.3 CCP delivery from the perspective of implementers. In each school there is one CC who is solely in charge of the program implementation. However, in school A the school leadership team appointed an international teacher with 27 years of working experience in school counseling, as an assistant CC. This decision was made at the request of the CC whose workload was very heavy. Thus, since January 2016, the assistant of CC 1 has helped the CC 1 in certain areas of university counseling. As CC 1 assistant stated,

The focus of my role ... has been to provide advice, specifically with writing of motivation letters or personal statements for students and that has included not only advice on the quality of language, but also in terms of the structure and the content and sometimes this might have included some advice on asking them to think about the reasons why they have applied for a particular course, which of course, has a relationship with what sort of career they might want to pursue..

CC 1 assistant's function is solely limited to working with 12th grade students on preparing documents for university application. However, the rest of the work regarding career counseling is the responsibility of the CC 1. As she stated,

I help students to determine their future majors and support them during the process of applying documents to universities. I try to find for my students possible scholarships and inform them about all governmental or non-governmental programs. Last year, we [school administration and the CC] signed a contract with Hong Kong Polytechnic University about cooperation in professional orientation fields and they gave us 20 full scholarships to PFSS graduates for each year.

The scope of groups the CC 1 works with includes students from 9 to 12th grades.

Usually in our school we try to work with students regarding their career choices from 9th grade. I am trying to organize several fairs, university fairs, and also we are organizing meetings with people who are really strong in their fields and this helps our students to understand about professions. Also, we are organizing exhibitions or tours to several factories and organizations and it helps them to expand their horizons in this field.

Though career related events are organized from grade 9, students become more interested and engaged in career decision-making as time to make a decision approaches,

presumably starting from the middle of grade 10 when students have to choose subjects for the Diploma Program (DP). Therefore, the effectiveness of career related events such as career fairs, meetings with university representatives and individual consultations also depends on students' readiness and willingness to make a career choice. For instance, CC 1 stated,

It depends on their ages, grades because for example, beginning from 9th till 10th grades they are not really interested in these fairs because they understand that they have [enough] time. But 11th and 12th grades are really interested in these fairs, because they understand that this is really important, they can take information about universities, about education system itself in different countries and they can meet people from a lot of universities.

CC 2 of school B revealed his view of the CCP and pointed out the importance of delivering the program starting from grade 7. He stated,

It [career counseling] should start for example, in our school from 7th grade. It should include working with parents, working with universities, working with manufactures and companies, with staff, with international team and universities. And actually, we've done it. For example, we already do the test of Holland or the test of Klimov on how to identify own skills from 7th grade. We also give full support on how to apply, how to write recommendation letters, essays, what kind of tests should be taken.

The CCs work with students from grade seven. However, they start cooperating with students closely when they reach grade ten, as in school A, for instance, students need to choose subjects for the DP in grade ten, which somehow determines the students' future careers. As a member of the leadership team of school A reported,

According to our International Baccalaureate Program, students in 10th grade have to choose their subjects – what they are going to study in Diploma Program. That's why career guidance in 10th grade is crucial. And in that period, CC meets not only with students in general meetings, but she has individual meetings with student and parent together.

The CCs' work is not limited solely to career and university counseling, but also they constantly work on the development of the program in terms of finding local and overseas universities to establish partnerships. CC 1 reported,

Starting from this year our students should pass Kazakhstan National Test which is

really difficult after IB exams. I am trying to make connections of local universities with IB school. I made agreement with Kazakh-British Technical University and this year they will provide us with 10 full scholarships just for IB school. Almaty Management University will give us 5 full scholarships.

Table 1 below shows the number of students graduated from PFSSs A and B, who got admissions to universities in and outside Kazakhstan. These statistics confirm the CCs' words:

Table 1

Statistics about graduates of PFSS A

Year of graduation	Number of Graduates	Local Universities			
		Local Universities	Nazarbayev University	Scholarship	Self-funded
2012	44	30	10	1	3
2014	41	16	13	4	8
2015	42	9	16	8	9
2016	This academic year the school had no graduates.				

Table 2

Statistics about graduates of PFSS B

Year of graduation	Number of Graduates	Local Universities			Foreign Universities
		Local Universities	Nazarbayev University	Foreign Universities	
2012	45	12	17	16	
2014	86	29	42	15	
2015	91	29	44	18	
2016	130	54	52	24	

According to the two tables, after introducing the CCP in 2013, the number of students

enrolling at Nazarbayev University, one of the flagship universities in Kazakhstan, increased every year. The reason why NU is not included in local universities in the table is that unlike in other local universities of the country, the academic process at NU is solely based on international educational and academic standards (Nazarbayev University, 2017). Apparently, NU differs from local universities not only regarding the academic process, but also regarding admission requirements. To be precise, to enter any local university, students have to pass Unified National Test upon completion of school education. However, in order to get into NU, students do not need to pass this national test. Instead, they are required to take certain international and university entrance exams such as SAT and IELTS. Similarly, the number of students enrolling in foreign universities has also increased in both schools. This shows that the CCP is making a positive impact on students' choices of universities. The CCs are confident that they have gradually developed the program as they gained exposure to effective and wider professional development opportunities.

The CCs' willingness to improve the program delivery can be seen in the individual approach they practice with indecisive students, who experience difficulties in career decision making. CC 2 reflected upon such a case and stated,

In 2014 we had an alumnus, Gaziz. He is studying at Nazarbayev University now. In 12th grade I remember him asking what subject to choose. He wanted to choose medicine and economics subjects. To be honest it's not easy as medicine or economics are different fields. And I have a friend who works as an economist at one big national company. I invited him and the physician of our school. They gave him advantages and disadvantages of each field. And finally he chose medicine as he thought there were more advantages.

Overall, the CCs of each school perform a wide range of duties starting from helping students make their career-decisions to getting them through their university application processes. Moreover, they constantly work on the development of the program through

integrating international best practices, making partnerships with organizations, local and international universities.

4.2.4 CCP from the perspective of beneficiaries. Students and graduates shared similar understanding about the CCP. All the participants interviewed understood that the program should be performed only by a CC. None of them considered the delivery of the program as the responsibility of the whole school staff. Lara, a student of school A perceives career counseling as a program that should help students with searching for universities and getting through the application process. She stated,

I understand it when a counselor helps a student to find a good university that it would be easy for students to enter there, that student is aware of every requirement necessary for enrolling. I think they [counselors] should do the official part of the admission, they are responsible for our documents and they have to provide us with the list of required papers that we need to send to universities. They should give us enough information about universities we want to know about. I also think that this is not career counseling, but university counseling. We, students, come and ask them to give us information about a certain university and their requirements, not a profession.

Students in school A are to make their career choices by grade 11, because IB requires students to choose subjects for DP in grade 10, depending on their career aspirations. Thus, choosing subjects during the transition from grade 10 to grade 11 is vital, as the subjects they select for DP somehow determine students' future careers. Therefore, as most high school students have already made informed career decisions by grade 11, during high school they tend to seek CC's guidance mostly regarding university choice, rather than career guidance.

Zhan, another student of school A described his understanding of the program by stating, "I think it's a program which helps you with choosing your profession, with choosing the universities where you can study. We have a lot of things to do. That's why we might need help in applying to universities." Another student of school B also perceived the program as

an opportunity to get good guidance “I think they [counselors] give us a light when we are in the darkness. They show us and give us good, appropriate advice to direct our knowledge to a right way.”

Tim, a graduate of school A considers the program to be useful for those who are indecisive about their career choices, and also who do not know how to find universities and apply their documents to universities they are interested in applying to. He said,

Career counseling...maybe the program is important for some people, for those who don't know how to apply documents themselves, who are not very good with searching universities...maybe it's more of a psychological support. For me, it's the combination of psychological support with some routine activities like collecting documents.

Apart from students, CCs also work with parents to explain to them the functions of the program and to discuss the career and university choices of their children. However, one of the parents interviewed was not aware of the program, stating, “I do not know much about the program. Therefore, it is difficult for me to evaluate its usefulness and effectiveness.” In contrast, parent A was well-informed about the program saying, “Their aim is to help students in getting to a university. Career counseling program tries to advise universities where students can study. In addition, it helps to collect documents and apply to universities.”

The participants' views and expectations of the program matched with what actually occurred, as most of them claimed to have received necessary help regarding career decision-making, university choice and the application process. Zhan, a student of school A stated,

The career counseling program gave me some knowledge about studying in Europe, because I wanted to study in Europe. So they gave me a little list of European universities, medical universities. At the end, I successfully got through the admission process to a Russian university. The opportunity to apply to Russian universities was introduced to me at the meeting with representatives of the Russian Embassy in Kazakhstan which was organized by the CCP.

Parent A of a student from school A affirmed the students' answers stating,

This program helped my son very much. The coordinator of this program invited professionals from the Russian Embassy. They are responsible for testing students and giving them a “road” to universities. My son went to the meeting where they were talking about the program. Then he collected all required documents and applied to the program. He got into first 20 students, who are going to receive a full scholarship from the government.

Lara, another student expressed that the CC helped her look at other important aspects when choosing a university such as the political and economical situation of the target country where the university is located. She said,

They helped me to see which countries I can apply to, which I cannot. Apart from universities, they also showed me the living costs and we discussed the economy – every sphere of the country where the universities were located. This really helped me to compare and decide which country I would like to apply to.

Student 2 of school B echoed the answer above,

But they [counsellors] have organized many meetings with universities, so that we could ask our questions to the representatives of those universities. And also they suggested us to take part in different fairs so that we go there and find more information.

Of seven students interviewed, only two students highlighted that the CCP offers individual support to students and that the guidance received from CCs helps them make informed choices. Student 1 of school B stated,

I want to add something about this person (CC 2), because in previous years, he was my teacher of geography. And we had some conversation with each other. And whenever we had scientists of physics visit us, he'd come to me and say “I know you want to learn from this university something new. Just go” And If I had some other work to do, he'd come to me and take me to that meeting [chuckles].

Tim, a graduate of school A, also expressed,

My main interest was economics, but because this field cannot provide any good job opportunities in Kazakhstan, it was better to study computer science. So I was kind of hesitating between these two professions. When I came to the CC 1, she told me “Tim,

you have very good communication and critical thinking skills. I believe you're going to be a good economist, but I don't see you as an IT guy." Then I came home and really asked myself do I really want to be a computer scientist for the rest of my life... after that conversation with the CC, my final decision fell into economics.

Apart from helping students with career choices and university application processes, the PFSSs provide an opportunity for all students to take IELTS for free as the results of this language proficiency examination are required by all universities with English as a medium of instruction. As student 2 of school B stated, "... students also have such opportunity to take IELTS for free, because not everyone is able to pay this amount of money." Graduates of both PFSS also shared their positive attitudes towards the CCP in their schools. A graduate student of school B stated,

They sent us a lot of emails with scholarship opportunities in overseas universities on different majors, also, the CC provided us with a unique opportunity to have a scholarship at Poly University in Hong Kong and Busan University. Also we had many workshops with representatives of these universities. I was really interested when representatives of PolyU came and presented us their university, campus. They motivated us to study in this university because they have contracts with big companies and you will be for sure, employed.

All beneficiaries within this study expressed positive experiences with the CCP despite their different understanding of the program. Students, graduates and parents shared their stories about how they made their career choices and what the role of the CCP was in their decisions. As was uncovered, most participants' expectations of the program are high.

4.2.5 Satisfaction of students and graduates with the CCP. Beneficiaries of the program were asked to estimate the efficacy of the CCP on a 1 to 100 percent scale. According to students' responses, they have mixed observations about the program – they are happy with the program in certain respects, but they also have some observations or dissatisfaction about the program. In his response, Zhan pointed out the CC's dearth of experience, "They [CCs]

are good, but still, sometimes they don't know about the universities, because they are not too experienced in this area. When I asked them some questions about universities, they could not help me, because they did not know.”

Student 2 of school B was quite dissatisfied with that the CC does not provide any information about scholarship programs at good universities overseas. With frustration in her voice, she said,

Hmmm, well...first, they cannot find for us good universities with scholarships. Before, I have never seen good universities except for PolyU with scholarships or with programs for gifted children. So we should find scholarship programs by ourselves, but it is too hard because when I faced with this problem, I found only master's programs, not bachelor with scholarships. And it's hard. Maybe the CC and teachers know more than us.

All participants of the program stated that the CCP organizes a wide range of activities aimed at helping students with their career decision-making. Despite that, a majority of students' responses regarding their satisfaction with the program mostly derived from the experiences when they could not receive all necessary help and support that they had expected to receive from the CCs. However, there were students who expressed absolute satisfaction with the program. Student 1 of school B candidly expressed,

I want to give 10 out of 10 marks to the CCP because not many schools have opportunities to talk to representatives of different universities. I chose my own profession in this school last year because of my meeting and discussion with some famous people, and people from my field. I am just very glad to have an opportunity to get information about foreign countries' education. I think if I had studied in another school, I wouldn't have much opportunity like I have here.

Lara also expressed satisfaction with the program as she believes that the CC's work is to provide students with needed information and the rest is the responsibility of the student. She stated,

I am satisfied with it [CCP], because they [CCs] give us information and everything they give us is for our own responsibility like [preparing] documents – this is not their

job. Their job is just to say what to collect and give to them. So it satisfies me.

Arman, a graduate of school B was also positive about the CCP delivery in his school as he was in constant contact with the CC throughout his high school. Arman genuinely believes that if a student is interested in his career choice and is aware of the support the career counseling office can offer, there is a lot the student can benefit from the program. He states,

Programs organized by the career counseling centre do not work for all students. If students are interested, CCs provide them with all needed information and help. But students need to be aware of their own responsibility, too. If not, the program would be inefficient.

In general, the participants expressed quite a positive attitude towards the program efficiency having pointed out areas that need to be better organized in the future.

4.3. The Role of Stakeholders in the Delivery of the CCP

The Career Counseling Program is developed and delivered by different stakeholders in the school. The school leadership, CCs, teachers, students and parents have different roles in the program.

4.3.1 School Leadership's Role in CCP. There is a senior staff member in the management company who coordinates the career counseling program in all PFSSs in Kazakhstan. Career counseling is not this coordinator's major focus, but one of the responsibilities that he/she has to fulfill. This person organizes professional development courses for CCs and provides support in the development and implementation of the program in a number of ways. CC 1 claimed,

The management company supports us and it is trying to make some agreements with industries and factories and trying to help schools to organize such kind of events. For example, last year we visited several places as Kazaktelecom, Kazakstan Temir Zholy, and Samruk Kazyna – such kind of places. I think that our students are busy, they are studying full day and it's not so useful to organize such kind of field visits.

When it comes to people in the school administration, due to their heavy workload, they rarely initiate any assistance in the delivery of the program, except for a coordinator of the DP whose specific role is to keep track of high-school students' academic performances and to ensure that all students have passed required exams and applied to universities. CC1 described the situation as,

In our school, school administration or other teachers do not support this work because all of them are very busy. That is why we are trying to make some agreements with factories or other organizations by ourselves. I am working very closely with the coordinator of DP, she really helps me with all information about IB, students' statistics, their results.

Though the school administration do not take an active part in the development and delivery of the CCP, a vice principal for academic affairs together with the DP coordinator play an indirect, yet valuable role in the process of students' subject choice in grade 10. The process of choosing a subject is considered to be important as the subjects that students choose for the DP somehow determine their future profession. The vice principal's role in the CCP is to ensure that middle year program students' choice of subjects for the DP is reasonable in terms of their academic performance and achievement in those subjects. Vice principal 1 described her role in the program,

Right now my role as a vice principal of academic affairs is [to ensure] that students choose right subjects. But I look at it from the perspective of grades, students' achievements and results. There were several cases like that when a student doesn't want to go to a medicine sphere, but parents are insisting and you actually show parents "Look, your kid doesn't really want it; also you can see it from their results from their subjects."

Apart from that, the school administration provides opportunities for the CCs to attend different training programs. Also, it tries to support the CC when asked for any help as with the example of appointing an expat teacher as an assistant CC. The vice principal of school A affirmed,

We are sending our CC to different training programs. When CC gives her ideas and suggestions on how to improve the program, we support it. Also, from the administration side, we also together with CC developed the system in our management system in Outof7. So, it is developing, as an administration we always try to support and try to find solutions together.

CC 1 assistant stated,

They [school administration] have provided some support to the school counselor in terms of training, giving her opportunities to visit other schools and see what school career counseling program is like. I think the difficulty is that, unless you've actually done the work yourself, it is very difficult to appreciate actually how much time is necessary to properly advise students. If you've never been involved in career advice, I think it is difficult to appreciate that to do the job properly you really need a lot of support and a lot of time. So, some efforts have been made with positive results, but I am quite convinced that more could be done.

As program implementers reported, the leadership team is actively supportive in terms of providing the CCs with professional development opportunities for the reason the CCs are not professionally trained to become CCs. Another area which they support the CCP with is organizing large career fairs and making partnerships with universities and organizations. However, as the CCs disclosed, this kind of support is not provided on a regular basis, but quite rarely. Thus, as already revealed, there could be much improvement in the program if the leadership team placed the CCP as priority.

4.3.2 School staff's role in the CCP. Many participants of the study stated that teachers do not take part in the career counseling program. With frustration, the CC of school A described teachers' limited involvement in the program,

I don't know about other schools, but in our school every teacher, every school employee have their own work and they don't want to pay attention to others' work. For example, career counseling is only one person's work and she is responsible and she should work. Last year I suggested "let's make some plan, like every teacher will put in his plan something about careers.

Mrs. Renata, a member of the leadership team of school A exemplifies teacher's low involvement in the program,

...teachers actually can affect students' career decisions when the students are choosing their subjects for DP. So if they see that the student has actually a good grade, they easily sign their paper and say "Yes, I recommend this subject for this kid." But when they see that the kid has a lower grade, they automatically sign "No, I don't recommend." But they don't try to find out what the kid likes ... This is one of the things we need to work on.

Unlike the participants above, students and CC 2 of school B believe that teachers are implicitly involved in the delivery of the program in a number of ways. First, they raise students' interest in subjects through quality and engaging lessons which later can affect the students' career choices. Second, teachers prepare students for subject exams required for university entrance. Third, teachers write recommendation letters to students and proofread their motivation letters if asked. CC 2 of school B stated,

We organize workshops for our students on how to write motivation letters, essays, and recommendation letters by our international teachers. It is designed for 11 and 12 grade students and organized by international teachers. Also, students apply to international universities and they need recommendation letters according to their subjects. They also need to take entrance exams on different subjects such as math, science, critical thinking. And these subject teachers actually prepare them according to the timetable, after school, on the weekends. I think they [teachers] are involved in the process.

Zhan affirmed that opinion, "If you don't know about your future profession, maybe you can ask from the teachers. They will make you interested in some subjects which will help you in choosing your future degree." Arman, a graduate of school B highlighted the role of teachers as very important in his career choice,

In fact, choosing a profession was a really long way. When I moved to the PFSS in grade 7, I had a fabulous teacher of physics. He really motivated me to change my mind about sciences and I started studying physics. In grade 8 we didn't have a good teacher of physics and I directed my attention to math because of a very good math teacher. However, because of high competition in Math, I didn't achieve any great

results, so in grade 9 a very good teacher came to teach Physics and I again moved to Physics.

Some participants recurrently mentioned the role of tutors and psychologists in contributing to the CCP in a number of ways. CC 1 assistant of school A reflected upon his experience in school counseling in Britain,

At the previous schools I have worked at, the responsibilities were spread across a range of people...This role was also fulfilled by teachers and tutors. ...each student would have individual tutor and subject choice, university counseling and career counseling was all part of the job. So for example, the tutor would have often be a teacher, would have to manage the personal statement, they would write the recommendation letter for the student.

He continued by stating,

When students write their motivation letters, it seems to me that the first person who should see it is their tutor. And that they should be the first to provide advice and in sense that the school counselor should only have to intervene when there is need to. Ok, they would not have the skills of the school counselor, but there are many things that they could contribute and which would alleviate the workload of the school counselor.

Two beneficiaries of the program emphasized the role of psychologists in helping them to arrive at a career decision. Arman, a graduate of school A described,

I have consulted school psychologist, because she is professional and she analyzes my choices depending on my behavior and “psychology”. She knows what I am worrying about. And we’ve also discussed many factors with her. And this helped me to make my final decisions.

According to most participants’ responses, it was identified that even though the school staff does not show any interest in being involved in the CCP, they indirectly or directly contribute to the program delivery in a number of ways. For instance, teachers impact students’ subject and career choices through 1) teaching quality lessons, thus raising students’ interest in their subjects; 2) recognizing students’ potentials and helping them to study to the

best of their abilities; 3) suggesting professions to students related to the subjects of their interest. Also, teachers' and tutors' help is necessary in writing quality recommendation letters.

Psychologists help students who are indecisive about their careers through having conversations where they might conduct tests and different techniques aimed at finding out students' inclinations and career preferences. These are all possible areas within the CCP where the school staff's intrinsic involvement would be valuable. Overall, according to the program implementers, involving the school staff in the CCP is an area that needs to be improved within the two schools.

4.3.3 Parents' and 12th grade students' role in CCP. Another group of stakeholders who contribute to the CCP delivery are parents and 12th grade students. All three CCs interviewed highlighted the importance of involving parents in the program. Their contribution mainly deals with participating in job fairs as representatives of their companies or industries, and organizing summer internships for students. CC 2 of school B stated,

Sometimes we ask parents because the sector of their employment is broad. For example, we asked one parent to help us who is in Samruk Kazyna, the national company – to make a guide of this sector. And she helped us to obtain access to go there. Last year our students went to Kazakhstan railway company, “Tulpar Talgo” – Fabric Company, KazPost and KazEnergy, Samruk Kazyna and KEGOC. They know what kinds of specialties exist in our universities, what subjects they have to choose to take exams.

CC 1 assistant of school A affirmed this idea,

I think using parents is a very-very efficient way of doing this, because many parents will be happy to say “yeah, I am happy to have 2 or 3 students coming to my business for a week or whatever.” You don't want too long, because there isn't that much time. They are usually very useful thing for students to do. I mean, the ideal would be to say well, choose at least two, because at least they have something to compare.

It was interesting to find out that students themselves take part in the delivery of the CCP at the request of the CC. According to the counselors, 12th grade students who show outstanding results in international exams and thus, are academically successful participate in the program in the form of organizing seminars for 10th and 11th grade students on how to prepare for both internal and external exams, how to apply to universities they have applied to, how to write successful motivation letters. As CC 1 said, "...this is really good because it is better when a student starts to speak with a student than with a teacher."

Overall, the study showed that parents are not indifferent to the delivery of the program as they make attempts to contribute to the program through organizing summer internships for students and participating in career fairs as representatives of certain careers. Similarly, it is worth highlighting the role 12th grade students take in assisting the program in terms of directing younger students to their professions through sharing their experiences regarding career decision making, university choice, successful completion of international exams and the application processes.

4.4. Areas for Improvement in the CCP

4.4.1 Limited access to information and database. CCs' work is evaluated and audited by the school administration and the Management Company. Twice a year the CC writes reports about how the process is going: what stage the students are in regarding career and university choices, whether the students have passed all necessary exams or not, which students are at risk and what the CC has done to help those students. Thus, the Management Company makes decisions on the efficacy of the program based on the reports and statistics written by the CC. The fact that the quality of the program is evaluated and audited only by the leadership team results in lack of transparency and objectivity. The vice principal of school B revealed,

Right now what our counselor has the entire database kept private, it's not public, it's not open and the only source of information is the CC. For example, when students come up to me with questions like "Where can I go? Which university is good" I cannot give her any information... And no one else can tell and talk about it. Right now, all the information is within our counselor. There is no database of good universities.

The vice principal continued, stating,

Somehow such kind of information should start being more open and spread. That will make the workload of our CC less, because students will already know, students can actually say "Go to our website. So then you can come up with real questions". So openness of information is something that we need to work on.

Apart from making the information available for the public eye, it is also important to have students and maybe parents evaluate the program to determine the quality and efficacy of the program from a wider perspective. This has not been done and therefore the program beneficiaries have no opportunity to signal dissatisfaction or otherwise with the quality of the services offered. Moreover, the fact that no data is collected on the beneficiary satisfaction with the service makes the effectiveness of the CCP in the PFSSs little known.

4.4.2 Scope of events. According to the beneficiaries of the program, both schools regularly organize meetings with guest speakers such as scholars and representatives of local and international universities. However, Zhan, a student whose dream is to pursue Medicine, claimed that he has never attended any of the events due to the fact that the meetings were not related to his career aspirations. He stated,

The school is actually more interested in engineers and technical specialties. But I've never heard of a medical university representative coming to the school. So that's why I am not attending such meetings.

Zhan considered the events to be narrow in terms of scope, "There are many students in the school who want to go to Medicine, but for some reasons, the school has never invited people from this field so that we could talk to them and clarify some doubts". By the time we

had an interview, he had been wavering between two professions within Medicine. Eventually, having read numerous books about the professions he had been considering as an option, he made his choice to become a Surgeon.

4.4.3 No incentives. CC 2 of school B revealed that they receive no incentives or bonuses regardless of the work they do to gain students' acceptance into good or even the world's top universities. According to him, despite the heavy workload, they try hard to make their work effective to show high results. However, not being acknowledged for the successful results of their work appears to demotivate the CCs, "You get exhausted. Also, they don't offer bonus program, for example, it doesn't matter how much percentage of your students apply, won scholarships - you get the same salary, so no bonuses, no motivation."

4.5 Challenges

4.5.1 CC staff shortage. All participants of the study recurrently discussed CC shortage in the PFSSs. Participants of each school described the CC's office as lacking more people as the amount of work and students is too much for one CC to deal with. CC 2 of school B expressed the inadequate ratio of students to the CC, "Our international vice principal from England said that at least six or seven career counselors work at British schools. And he was amazed because he knew that there is only one career counselor at school." He continued stating,

After discussion with our international team, we came to conclusion that school counselling should be a team, not only one person should be in charge of this role, but they should work as a team including school psychologist, school counsellors - two or three people at least.

CC 1 affirmed this idea by backing it up with her experience,

In United States they have a very good work in career counseling and it's also well-organized because they usually have 3 or more people working in this field. Every CC there have their own functions, they have their own area of focus: some work with US

students, some work with international students, they divide students into several groups, as a central Asia, Canada and work with them.

Lara also stated that it is hard for one CC to deal with a large number of students,

...It would be better if we had one more counselor, because there are 93 students who are going to graduate this year. Also there are more than a hundred DP students who want to know about things earlier and one counselor cannot deal with all of us. It is hard. Even if she is doing her job right now, it will be difficult for her, especially at the end of the year.

Considering the increasing number of students who need the CC's guidance and the fact that the services of the CCs are offered largely on one-on-one basis by one CC, it becomes impossible for the CCP services to respond to the needs of all students equally. As Lara describes, "when a student comes earlier, he or she has more time than the second student. And that's the limitation of our counseling program."

4.5.2 Resources. All those who are in charge of the development of the career CCP in the PFSSs expressed the lack of recourses to successfully deliver the program. The required resources included a private office and a space to conduct career related events. CC 1 revealed,

...Sometimes, for example, I have a meeting with one university, but I cannot find a space to organize this work, because we have clubs, we have other stuff, and they just start to explain that these clubs are more important than meeting with universities. I am trying to explain to them that this is really important and that some universities making appointment one month before, some are like 2-3 days before. And in some cases you understood that some people are trying to ignore your work.

With disappointment in her tone she continued, stating that this happens due to the leadership team's poor attitude to the program caused by lack of understanding about the importance of career related events,

I think that, maybe I am mistaken, but our school administration thinks that this part of the job is not so important. And they are trying to ignore a problem or students or me. And if school administration start to understand that this is really important, school members, you know like, and start to change their point of view and this is like.

CC 1 assistant also affirmed a lack of space, “Certainly in terms of the working space of the CC, I think it is good whether the school counselor would need more privacy in terms of not having other teachers present when they see parents.”

As the career counseling staff revealed, they do not have all the resources they need for successful delivery of the program such as a private space to have individual meetings with students and parents; a library of up-to-date career-related resources; a special online database where they can store all information about current students, graduates and universities.

4.5.3 High expectations. According to the CC of school A, parents and students tend to expect miracles from the program and the school in general. They have a belief that once their children enter the PFSS, it will be easy for them to enter any university in the world due to the international recognition of the diploma they receive,

... at the beginning they thought that their children will be in Princeton, Yale... At the end they see that their children do not meet the requirements of those universities. Then they start to blame CCs, the school, teachers about this like “ At the beginning when we entered the school you promised that you are PFSS and when we graduate from the school our children can enter each school for free, but now we are 12th grade students and our scores are not enough to enter Nazarbayev University.” I can’t help them with this issue.

Due to having high-expectations of the program, some students procrastinate until the last moment relying heavily on the CCs’ work which creates a lot of difficulties later on regarding meeting the application requirements and deadlines. As the CCs disclosed, in the event that students fail to take the necessary exams and apply to universities of their choice due to relying on one person and disregarding the importance of the process, no one, but the CCs will be blamed for not fulfilling their duties appropriately which is as was stated by CC 1, “...very frustrating.”

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This study explored the influences of the CCP on career decisions of high school students at two PFSSs in Kazakhstan from the perspectives of students, graduates, parents, and the program implementers. Throughout the investigation, four broad themes were identified: 1) program development and implementation, 2) benefits of the CCP for students and other stakeholders, 3) challenges of the program, and 4) participants' suggestions for further improvement of the program. This chapter discusses the main findings in relation to the relevant literature.

5.2. Program development and implementation

Well-organized and well-delivered career counseling services are significant both to the system of education and to the labor market (OECD, 2002, p.2). In addition, according to the study conducted within 37 countries, quality career counseling services help to reach social equity objectives (Watts & Sultana, 2004, p.109). Despite effective practices of the CCP in other countries, implementation of the program was regarded as important only recently during the visit of the leadership team of the PFSSs to successful international educational institutions abroad, which was part of the plan to internationalizing the educational program of the PFSSs. One of the major reasons behind launching a CCP at the two schools was to receive the Certificate of Accreditation of the Council of International Schools (CIS), and thus become a permanent member. As for school A, it also sought to pursue authorization and receive 'IB World School' status. With these purposes in mind, the schools implemented and officially started the CCP in September 2013 as one of the steps towards becoming members of these elite international educational organizations which guarantee ISO standards for quality management and control.

The CCP is delivered to all students. However, it is increasingly present at the upper middle school and high school levels and is offered as a co-curricular activity that is not tied to the compulsory school curriculum. It offers a wide range of services directed at 1) helping students make well informed and satisfying occupation choices; 2) helping students choose appropriate universities and faculties that conform to the students' preferences and needs. Each PFSS has one CC responsible for program delivery and development, who serves a wide group of middle, upper middle and high school students.

Overall, the program aims to enhance students' knowledge in the aspects of career development, aligning with the organizations' education visions along with the schools' missions and values on systematic and ongoing basis. CCP services are offered to all students and supports the goals of the Management Company that runs all PFSS across Kazakhstan. Unlike in other countries, there is no broad and unique curriculum designed for all CCs within PFSSs. The CCP development and delivery is based on an annual plan created by each CC individually. The plan includes:

- Timeline with events and activities;
- A clear explanation of the scope of the events and activities and their importance;
- Competencies students are expected to achieve by the end of each grade level;
- Expected outcomes.

Once the plan is approved by the coordinator in the Management Company, the CCs work according to it throughout the whole academic year, with opportunities to amend it when needed. Having an individual plan rather than an imposed curriculum is considered more effective as it is more personalized to conform to the peculiarities and needs of the school program and community.

In this research it is apparent that the CCs in the two PFSSs are not professionally trained to become CCs, but teachers (OECD, 2004, p.13). Neither CC had had any background experience in career counseling when appointed to this position. Thus, in the beginning of their jobs as CCs, they could not provide relatively quality services as they were hardly familiar with the program concept themselves. However, the quality of the program has gradually improved as the leadership team invested in the CCs' training and professional development by providing them with opportunities to undergo internships, workshops, conferences where they were introduced to successful practices of career counseling. Thus, with time, with the improvement of the program, the number of graduates entering prestigious local and foreign universities increased as shown in Table 1 and Table 2 in the Findings section. The program implementers genuinely believe that this would not have been possible without the leadership team's perpetual support in terms of financing the workshops and internships.

However, at the same time, the CCs mentioned the unfriendly attitudes of the leadership team towards the CCP throughout the interviews. Thus, two contradictory viewpoints emerged from the findings: 1) The leadership team invests significantly into the CCs' professional development which means they understand the importance and the role of the program; 2) They rarely initiate any support and assistance in the development and implementation of the program unless the CCs do so. The reason for this is because the leadership team is too busy with many other activities and do not have time to support the day to day implementation of the CCP. The leadership team invests in the professional development of the CCs so that the counselors can successfully implement the CCP without depending on the leadership.

5.3 Benefits of the CCP for Students and Other Stakeholders

5.3.1 Benefits of the CCP for Students. The findings of the study showed that the CCP is effective in helping students make their career decisions. In particular, the program is targeted to help two groups of students: 1) those who are indecisive about their career choice and later, university choice, too; 2) those who are certain about their career choice, but unsure about where to apply and how to apply.

As the main function of the program is to assist students to make occupational choices (OECD, 2014, p.11), the program specialists begin working with students regarding their future professions starting from grade nine. Thus, through organizing various career-related events and activities such as individual meetings, visits to worksites, and meetings with prominent people from middle year to high school, the program enables students, especially those who are indecisive about their future profession or wavering between certain choices to:

- find out about the relationship between personal qualities, subjects and the world of professions;
- explore the world of professions in relation to understanding oneself which is vital in making an informed career decision;
- anticipate future career success and satisfaction;

Of seven direct beneficiaries of the program, two students emphasized the role of the CC in helping them make their final choice. These students highlighted an individual approach of the CCs, candidly expressing that the CCs recognized their hidden potential that they themselves had not paid attention to. The CC's help was not limited to guiding these students towards their career decisions and was followed by the next step which dealt with university counseling.

Help concerning career choice was not the case of approaching the CC for the second group of five students as they claimed to have made their career decisions without the CC's

involvement. These students' responses regarding the efficacy of the program were based not on how the program helped them make their career choices, but on how helpful the program was in terms of guiding and accompanying them through the later process, which is choosing universities, finding scholarships, and getting them through the application processes. Thus, this group of participants acknowledged that the program was especially helpful in finding and contacting universities and applying documents to universities and for scholarships which they consider, is more university counseling rather than career counseling.

The CCP at two PFSSs proves the statement of Patton and McMahon (2006) about the notion that "career counseling is no longer conceived as a process principally focused on ensuring that adolescents make a wise choice of an initial job" (p.156). The findings of this study showed that the CCP deals with two areas. First, it enables students to learn about and understand the world of different professions, thus providing them with the fundamental background information to help them with later career decisions" (Watts, 2009). Second, on the example of PFSS, the CCP deals with university counseling, and this encompasses assistance regarding university search, scholarship search, and guidance throughout application procedures. Both types of assistance increase the chances of students being successful in their further university studies and workplaces. Besides, in school A, the early career counseling in grade nine and ten helps students understand the weight of the subjects they are studying based on what they want to pursue as a career, thus direct their focus on these subjects (humanities, sciences, languages, arts etc.). This is important as the subjects students choose for Higher Level within DP in school A have a significant impact on students' future careers (King's College, n.d.). For instance, if a student has not chosen Biology and Chemistry for the DP, he/she cannot choose professions related to these subjects later on.

Hence, wrong choice of subjects during transition from Middle Year Program to DP can unduly limit students' chances in the future regarding a profession choice.

5.3.2 Benefits of the CCP for other stakeholders. The emergence of, implementation, and development of the CCP is in indirect response to addressing a range of issues such as university dropouts, skills mismatch, a lack or excessive number of specialists in certain spheres (Patton & McMahon, 2006). Consequently, a number of stakeholders are likely to benefit from students' informed career choices who are indirect beneficiaries of the CCP: parents, universities, future employers, and the government.

Parents are the first indirect beneficiaries of the program. Because parents are not always aware of their children's interests and career inclinations, they might not always be able to offer adequate guidance for their children's occupational decisions (Long & Billups, 1999). Also, considering that parents are inclined to be influenced by the status and financial aspects of professions, they can sometimes force or influence their children towards certain professions that they are enchanted by, but not so their children. Thus, parents' subjective opinions and attitudes towards certain professions can negatively influence their children's career decisions (Tillman, 2015, p.11). In contrast, the CC's suggestions consider students' subject preferences, personal interests and potential, thus, they tend to be more objective and reasoned. Through conversations with subject teachers and tutors, the CCs would know what a student is particularly good at, what skills the student possesses that are required in a specific career. Having all this knowledge about the student, the CCs can guide students accordingly. These are aspects that parents may not know about and the CCP can fill this gap.

The next group of stakeholders who benefit from the CCP is educational institutions. The graduates' performances on final and university exams and the status of universities the students have entered are one of the major criteria the school rankings are based on. (How We

Rate, 2017). Considering that all schools strive to be in the top list of quality and effective schools, they obviously benefit from the effective practices of the CCP. Similarly, higher education institutions are another group of stakeholders who benefit from the program, as their rankings are based on the entrance exam results and academic backgrounds of their students as the more prestigious a university is the more high-performing students would apply there. This makes the selection process rigorous, allowing only the best students to get into the university. Above all, the employment rate of graduates is one of the major criteria for assessing the work of universities in the world (IAC, 2016). Therefore, it is important that students make well-informed career decisions during high school.

When students “actively engage in choosing their careers they are more satisfied with their careers, thus employers’ costs decrease, and employees’ efficiency increases” (Brown, 2002, p.4). Students’ tendency of being guided by false ideas and stereotypes when making a career decision can later lead to poor attitudes to work thus impacting long term profit (Hotchkiss & Vetter, 1987, p.5). As a result, an uninformed occupational choice can result in a shortage or excess of specialists in certain areas which, in turn, negatively influences the economy of the country. Moreover, as stated in the OECD report, the CCP helps students gain important skills such as career-planning/search, undergoing interviews, writing resumes and other career-management skills required in the current labor market. To this end, effective practices of the CCP can have a substantial influence on the development of human capital and the economy of a country (as cited in Watts & Sultana, 2004, p.110).

5.4 Challenges

As the study showed, there is a gap between how the program is delivered in PFSSs and how the CCs would like it to be delivered. The study identified and highlighted two major challenges regarding CCP delivery in both PFSSs: 1) career counseling staff shortage; 2)

insufficient a) capital resources within the school which could assist effective delivery of the CCP such as lack of space to conduct career related events, absence of online database available for public-eye; b) human resources in terms of collaboration and involvement of relevant stakeholders in the program.

The CCP has enormous potential to offer more quality services as the program implementers are attempting to mitigate the challenges which hinder successful delivery of the program through professional and self development, initiating new partnership and ideas on the improvement of the program, and negotiations with the leadership team. As was discussed in this chapter, the major challenges of the CCP are CC staff shortage, program beneficiaries' over expectations, and the lack of capital and human resources.

The study showed that the capacity of career counseling staff in the PFSSs is not sufficient to conform to student need and demand. Career counseling shortage has been a major problem since the implementation of the program and is going to become worse in the future if the problem is not resolved, as the number of students entering the schools is increasing over time. As was reported by the CCP implementers, in developed societies such as USA, Great Britain, Canada and Singapore, career counseling staff consists of three or more specialists, where each has their specific role and a target group of students to work with. For instance, in some countries the career counseling personnel comprises CCs, career advisors, peer advisors, and a receptionist (Post, et. al., 2002, p.13). Having several CCs, each responsible for certain functions within the CCP, ensures all-round development and delivery of the program, enabling each student to get an equal amount of guidance and support. Unlike in these countries, each PFSS in Kazakhstan has one CC to serve middle and high school students, which includes approximately 700 students. Despite this inadequate ratio of students

to CC, it is expected that the CC perform a wide range of activities targeted at students' career development, university counseling and program development. Though the CCs are attempting to handle all these responsibilities, more could be done in a more highly productive way in terms of program development and delivery if there were more CCs.

Apart from career counseling personnel shortage, the program lacks stakeholders' support. As stated in the OECD report (2004), educating students about occupations and guiding them through the decision-making process are expected to be the sole duty of the career counseling personnel, rather than the shared responsibility of school community and the teaching staff in particular (p.13). Fort Worth Public Schools (1972) emphasize that "Career development is best achieved through a continuing and coherently planned effort by students, teachers, parents and counselors" (p. 1). One possible reason for the lack of active collaboration might be due to the fact that these stakeholders might not have been introduced to the possibility that their contribution to the program delivery could be found helpful. To prevent tackling issues in isolation within the career counseling staff, some countries are promoting the idea of developing partnerships for effective implementation of career counseling. "Often such partnerships include calling on significant stakeholders – such as parents, alumni, and representatives from the business community, trade unions, and non-government organizations – to make an input into the career education programme" (OECD, 2004, p.16). The role of stakeholders, especially of industry representatives becomes more apparent and needed when looking for jobs within the summer internship programs required to be undertaken by the schools. Due to tenuous collaboration with industries, students face difficulties to participate in work experience. Considering the seriousness of the practicum, to fulfill the demands of the school, each student either uses their parents' or familiars' assistance, which can create opportunities for document falsification, or look for places

themselves, creating stress and disappointment for students. Thus, very little collaboration with organizations makes the summer internships/practicum less effective or ineffective both for a) students in terms of gaining real practice, b) the schools in terms of inability to control the quality and effectiveness of such practice.

Lack of capital resources is another challenge that hinders effective delivery of the program. Capital resources encompass a private space to meet with parents and students, space for conducting career-related events, a library of regularly updated information, and an online database with all necessary information about the program content, universities, majors, and graduates. Due to the dearth of these resources, the CCs have to offer their services largely on one-on-one model. “This reduces the capacity of the service to respond to the needs of all learners” (OECD, 2004, p.13).

Insufficient support in terms of capital and human resources pinpoints the leadership team’s lack of appreciation of the program. Thus, by showing an indifferent attitude towards the program, the school leadership team sets up an inappropriate model for its staff, leading them to the idea that the CCP is an area where nobody’s contribution is required. Providing training opportunities for the CCs is great, but is not enough for the job to be done properly. To offer quality and effective career counseling services, CCs need constant human and capital resources such as active collaboration and involvement of stakeholders in the program, provision of more CCs, enough space, library resources, and ICT assistance to create an online database. Overall, though some efforts have been made with positive results, the study findings demonstrated that there is the lack of prioritization and that more could be improved with more support.

High expectations of the CCP were apparent throughout the study. The findings showed that most beneficiaries of the program have high and to some extent false

expectations of the program as they anticipate all the work pertaining to career decision-making process to be mostly done by the CCs. When this does not happen, their expectations crash making them think that the CCs are not fulfilling their responsibilities to the fullest extent. Despite that the CCs conduct individual meetings with both parents and students during which they explain to them the program content, their role and responsibilities within the program, parents and students tend to forget about what has been said in the meeting as time to complete the school and choose a profession approaches. Therefore, in the event of facing any difficulties or failure concerning university application and admission procedures, parents and students tend to put the blame on the CCs.

5.5 Suggestions for the CCs

For effective delivery of the CCP within two PFSSs, it is recommended considering the following suggestions based on the outcomes of the study, the participants' responses and the effective practices of the CCP implementers worldwide.

Evaluation survey. Students and parents should be invited to participate in the CCP either paper-based or online quality evaluation surveys regarding the content, delivery, quality and quantity of the services and the results. It is suggested to conduct this survey on a regular basis at least once a year. This is to be done to ensure transparency and effective delivery of the program and to allow the CC to receive feedback from the beneficiaries for the further improvement of the program.

Tiered system. It is suggested to develop career information largely in electronic form to create opportunities for self-service career guidance which is part of a tiered system. Provision of capital resources would allow the CCs to adopt the system of tiered services, as successfully practised in the public employment services in Austria, and to a lesser extent in Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal, Finland and the United Kingdom (OECD, 2004, p.26).

Tiered system implies step-by-step career guidance through which students a) get first assistance by means of an online database, and resources available in the library; b) have brief individual interviews with the CC; c) arrange other in-depth face-to-face meetings in the event of seeking further career guidance. Adopting this practice would free up the workload of the CC considering both PFSS face career counseling staff shortage (OECD, 2004, p.26).

Student-parent meetings. Due to a busy mode of life and work overload, parents devote little time to the educational and career development of their children (Bezanson & Kellett, 2001). Therefore, CCs should regularly conduct informational meetings with parents and students, at least twice a year, starting from grade nine. The purpose of these meetings should be a clear explanation of the CC's and the students' responsibilities, the students' progress and any news pertaining to the program content. Organizing such meetings on a regular basis can address the issue of over expectation and dissatisfaction, thus making the program more effective.

Well-classified information on careers. According to Post, et.al., (2002), a classification system of careers where related professions are grouped together is effective. This type of system enables individuals to expand their options when they are exploring career possibilities (p.8).

Links with the community. Developing partnerships and enhancing collaboration with school staff, parents and organizations through conducting regular panel discussions is recommended. However, it is important to involve not all stakeholders, but a few teachers, parents and job representatives who want to contribute to the delivery of the program on a voluntary basis to ensure quality and effective work.

Enlarging the scope of professions. As the study showed, the scope of professions presented in the career-related events such as meetings with guest speakers, university

representatives is limited to some professions. Therefore, to ensure that all students benefit from the program, the CC should broaden the scope of careers that are represented.

Overall, if the CCs collaborate with the leadership team and share ideas on the improvement of the program having consulted successful practices of other schools, there is a high probability that the CCP in the two PFSSs will achieve the desired results.

5.6 Summary

In this chapter I discussed major findings of the study in light of the data generated in this study and relevant literature. I discussed how the CCP offered at two PFSS in Kazakhstan help high-school students make their career decisions. As the findings and information from the literature demonstrate, the quality of the career counseling services vary from country to country, school to school due to differences in financial opportunities, capital and human resources and the scope of students the program serves. In countries where the program implementation dates back to centuries or decades ago, the career guidance services are much better structured and organized, whereas in countries such as Kazakhstan where the CCP has been recently adopted, there is a long way to go before the schools with CCP can claim to offer quality and effective services. Overall, despite having highlighted quite a few areas to improve, the CCP delivered in the PFSSs enable their students to receive a good amount of help regarding both career and university counseling.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction.

This chapter draws a few conclusions based on the findings discussed in the previous chapter. It also discusses the implications of the findings and conclusions and makes recommendations for further improvement of the CCP at PFSSs in particular and in other schools in Kazakhstan in general. The chapter also highlights limitations of the study and makes suggestions for further studies in this area.

6.2 Conclusions

CCP is a relatively new program in the context of Kazakhstan. As the findings demonstrated, the program was introduced in the PFSSs mainly due to a necessity to realize the strategic plan of the country to join elite educational organizations outside Kazakhstan. In other words, the CCP was implemented in the PFSSs more to fulfill the requirements of accreditation and affiliations with elite educational organizations around the globe than to make it an integral part of school curriculum which can address students' needs for career counseling. In addition, unlike in other schools in the world, the CCP in PFSSs has a twofold purpose where the primary and significant focus has been on university guidance, rather than career counseling. There are clear expectations from the CCs to help students find out 'good' universities and get admissions. This shift from career counseling to university counseling is because of the priorities set by educational authorities and school management who want as many students as possible to get admissions to top universities. As Bell and Bezanson claim (2006) "Until counselors are accountable for success in our schools, they will not be viewed as critical leaders in the system" (p. 9). To this end, the CCs are pushed to focus on university counseling since by focusing on university counseling, the authorities can see the results of the CCP immediately and explicitly, whereas the effects of career counseling are though

longstanding - implicit. For instance, an increasing number of students entering the world's top universities can highlight the status of the school and the country, in general, in the local and global educational arena. Overall, shift from career counseling to university counseling is not what the participants of the study are mindful of and concerned about. However, the CCs and teachers who participated in this study feel that there is a need to create greater awareness about the CCP and its relevance and importance for students.

In view of newness of the program in the educational field of the country, there are numerous issues that prevent a higher quality and more effective delivery of the program. The major issues hindering the successful delivery of the program are identified as 1) shortage of career guidance staff as there is only one CC in each school to deal with around 700 students; 2) lack of capital resources such as lack of space for conducting meetings and events, lack of data about universities and graduates; 3) over expectations of students and parents as they tend to consider the CC as the person solely responsible for students' successful admission to universities on a scholarship basis. When this does not happen, they blame the CCs for not fulfilling their jobs appropriately. In the study it also became apparent that career counseling offered at PFSSs lacks acknowledgement and support from the leadership team, educational authorities and the school community. It is believed that many issues present in the program could have been mitigated or eliminated if stakeholders had been aware of the weight of the program in affecting and determining students' academic and life successes. Thus, the study concludes that the range of CCP services offered at PFSSs is to be strengthened in terms of expanding career guidance personnel, providing career counseling training for school staff, and promoting stronger links with the local community.

The next conclusion is that despite the prevailing challenges present in the program implementation, the CCs at the two PFSSs manage to offer effective and quality services to

the best of their abilities, making maximum use of the available resources. This can be proven by a) the increasing number of graduates entering top local and overseas universities (see Table 1, 2); b) participants' considerably positive responses about the program efficacy. As the program implementers claimed, this was possible due to professional development opportunities offered to them on a regular basis. Overall, the program beneficiaries showed considerable satisfaction with the program pointing out the areas that need to be further improved.

In addition, the findings show that there is an acute shortage of CC professionals in Kazakhstan – therefore the PFSSs had to hire teachers without any qualifications and training in CC. The implications of not having well-qualified and trained CCs can have a negative impact on the overall implementation and quality of the CCP. To this end, the education policy makers in Kazakhstan need to encourage and invest in producing a pool of well-qualified and trained CCs. Moreover, the CC in the long run will be beneficial for the country in developing good pools of professionals in different fields. If the government can invest in developing viable and effective CC programs in schools and colleges, it will have positive results for building human resource capacity for the country.

In conclusion, a research question “How does the Career Counseling Program at two publicly-funded special schools in Kazakhstan help high school students make their career decisions?” and other four subsidiary questions along with the purpose of the study and review of relevant literature set the framework within which I explored and analyzed how the CCP offered at PFSSs helps students in their career decision-making. Thus, the findings and conclusions focused on how the CCP is developed and implemented in the school from the perspectives of the implementers (CCs, teachers and school management) and beneficiaries (students and parents); what challenges are faced in implementing the program; and how the

CCP could be further improved. While the study provides useful insights and evidence for how the CCP helps students make informed decisions about their careers, I make the following recommendations for further improvement of the program and future research.

6.3. Recommendations

Based on the study's findings and conclusions, I make a few recommendations for the stakeholders in the Kazakhstani education system to resolve issues related to career counseling as revealed in this study.

1. It is necessary to raise the awareness of policy makers regarding the importance of CCP and direct their attention to creating effective policies targeting the implementation and development of CCP in the PFSSs as well as in secondary schools within the country. The authorities of Kazakhstan need to acknowledge the growing necessity for students to undertake CCP in this skills-and knowledge-driven world. Thus, there is a strong need to implement policies and practices that would address the existing issues which have occurred as a result of students' poor career decisions and the lack of career-management skills.

2. The unequal educational opportunities for high school students across mainstream schools in Kazakhstan regarding access to career guidance services are apparent. This is what those in educational authority should acknowledge and address. Based on the example of Quebec schools and other developed societies, the policy makers of Kazakhstan are to encourage the establishment of the concept of a 'guidance-oriented school' in secondary schools across the country (OECD, 2002 p.6). This concept suggests incorporating CCP into the curriculum throughout schooling with the involvement of all related stakeholders, of whom teachers and CC play the major role. Doing so will help the government address many economic issues, as discussed above.

3. Counselors play an important role in forming students' occupational goals (Mau, Hitchcock & Calvert, 1998). Considering the longstanding effects of counselors 'work, career counseling should be considered a profession that requires solid knowledge and exposure to training programs just like other professions that are studied in higher educational institutions. However, Kazakhstani higher educational institutions do not offer career counseling specialties or courses. If the government authorities decide to implement the program to mainstream schools across the country, there is high possibility that there will be no qualified people for this position. To this end, the Ministry of Education of Kazakhstan need to introduce career counseling courses or specialties in VETs and universities to provide qualified specialists, thus anticipate the upcoming difficulties of the CCP implementation process in secondary schools across the country.

4. The next recommendation is aimed at addressing the issue of CC workload at PFSS. In this study it is apparent that teachers have insufficient competence and skills in career development, economic development and labor market (Bezanson & Kellett, 2001, p.23). To address the issue of heavy workload of the career guidance personnel, it is recommended that all subject teachers undergo training programs on career guidance and pass exams to ensure efficacy of the courses. To accomplish this, the PFSSs should hire well-qualified, trained and experienced CCs who can then work with teachers to help them develop better understanding of CC. They can introduce various courses for teachers on career counseling.

5. The study showed that PFSS in Kazakhstan have a tenuous collaboration with the world of work. To address this issue, it is suggested for government sectors to provide opportunities to bridge schools with industries and organizations. This can be achieved through a) providing opportunities for high-school students to undergo short-term work placements. Bezanson and Kellett (2001) emphasized that "Apprenticeship and work

experience programs are broader initiatives that should, and usually do, have an important career information and guidance component” (p. 19); b) integrating work experience into some applied and humanitarian subjects such as Computer Science, History or school wide community projects. For instance, each teacher picks a job and familiarizes herself/himself with the essential skills and knowledge that the particular job requires. Then based on the information, they create lesson activities with elements directed at introducing or fostering these skills (OECD, 2002, p.6).

6.4 Suggestions for further studies

One of the limitations of this research is that it was conducted in two PFSSs in one region only, thus the findings may not represent the voices and perspectives of other schools in other cities of Kazakhstan, due to differences in career counsellors’ experiences, financial resources, school capacities, time allocation of career counsellors for teaching and career counselling. Second, due to time constraints, this study did not obtain the views and perspectives of key policy makers at the Ministry of Education and Science about their vision and understanding of CCP. The findings presented here were obtained from the key implementers of the CCP at the two schools. A more comprehensive study involving more PFSSs and policy makers would give an in-depth understanding of the present status and future prospects of CCPs in Kazakhstan.

Also, conducting a quantitative or mixed-method research involving a large sample of schools and participants may be worth-considering. Such a study would be very insightful to make recommendations for parents, leadership team members and industry representatives as they also play a valuable role in the organization and delivery of CCP. Overall, these recommendations aim to allow researchers to explore/examine a broader and consolidated picture of the CCP efficacy in the context of Kazakhstan and PFSSs, in particular.

6.5 Researcher's reflection

Conducting a study on the topic of career counselling was of much interest to me because as a teacher I once had difficulties and uncertainties regarding a career choice. I saw many of my high school students experience similar issues over the last two years of my work at school. Therefore, knowing that there is a CCP functioning at PFSSs, I was determined to undertake research on this topic from the very beginning. Thus, studying the CCP at two PFSSs enabled me to understand the functions and the role of the program, in general, and in the context of Kazakhstan – that is, how the program is organized and delivered, why the program is important and who benefits from effective services of the program, and what challenges and barriers exist in the program implementation. The study provided answers to research questions from the perspectives of program implementers and beneficiaries. However, due to lack of opportunities and time constraints to conduct interviews with all relevant stakeholders, the study could not provide viewpoints of those in the educational authority about whether they are aware of the program, and if yes, how they understand the program and to what extent they consider it to be important. To this end, knowing that Kazakhstan attempts to keep abreast with the international education, I could not understand why CCP is overlooked and not implemented throughout mainstream schools of Kazakhstan. Thus, there are still questions left unanswered and I am much interested in finding answers to these questions through further studies.

Having found out that the CCP at PFSS lacks support from the school community, I want to make my contribution to the program delivery through collaborative work with the CC at the school. In addition, I want to suggest organizing a group of teachers who will be voluntarily assisting the CC in certain areas of career guidance such as teaching and guiding

students in writing motivation letters, suggesting occupations pertaining to each teacher's subject area.

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Appendices

Appendix A:

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR GATE KEEPERS

Title: “The Influences of Career Counselling Programs on Career Decisions of High School Students at Two Publicly Funded Special Schools in Kazakhstan”

Dear Principal,

DESCRIPTION:

First of all, let me introduce myself. My name is Assima Rysbergen and I am a Master student at Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education in Kazakhstan. As part of my Master Program, I am conducting a study on career counselling program offered at two Special Schools in Kazakhstan. The purpose of my research study is to explore and analyze how the career counselling program offered at this school enables high school students to make informed decisions about their career choices.

I would like to request you to assist me to conduct my research study. Before you decide whether to assist or not, please be informed about the purpose of the research and what is expected from you and the participants. Please read the information carefully and let me know if you come up with any questions or concerns. Having familiarized yourself with the characteristics of the study, please take time to decide whether or not to facilitate the present research project. It is important to note that the researcher does not pursue an aim to evaluate or judge the work of the leadership team or career counsellors, the only purpose the researcher pursues is to gain in-depth knowledge about how the career counselling program is implemented and functioning in the context of your school.

TIME INVOLVEMENT:

For the present research I need to interview a vice principal of academic affairs, a career counselor and two 12th grade students in order to gain in-depth understanding of the role of career counseling program offered at your school in enabling high school students to make informed decisions about their career choices. The interview will be held in one-on-one manner and will last for about 60 minutes. There might be a follow up interview of 30 minutes, if needed. The researcher needs one quiet classroom so that it is possible to conduct an interview and record answers without being distracted by others.

RISKS AND BENEFITS:

There is no known risk for the participants. However, since most of the participants work and study at these special schools they may be vulnerable to criticism, penalty and psychological pressure in case the information they provide is identified. In order to prevent such risks, the researcher will fully comply with the NUGSE ethical guidelines to ensure anonymity, privacy and confidentiality of information received from the participants. Anonymity and privacy of the participants and confidentiality of the information / data received from them will be ensured by using pseudonyms in all soft and hard files, documents,

presentations, and publications coming out of the study. Moreover, the soft data received from the participants will be secured in password protected files in the researcher's personal computer which no one else will ever have access to. Similarly, the hard data will be kept in locked cabinets in a room accessible to the researcher only. All the audio tapes, computer files and hard data will be destroyed after completion of the study.

Importantly, consent forms will be signed by all the participants during one-on-one meeting. As the study involves high school students, the researcher will get the consent form signed by the students' parents and the assent form signed by the students themselves. The participants will have full knowledge about their rights that their decision to quit the study will not have any negative implications or penalty for them. The researcher will give pseudonyms to the participants and thus, will guarantee anonymity of participants' names and their responses.

The findings of the study can help foster the realization of the career counselling program in the selected schools and serve as a guideline for further improvement of the program. Overall, the selected school and the participants may first, benefit from the study in terms of further improving the career counselling program's content and its delivery. Second, the participants of the study might benefit from the improvement of counsellors' practices in the schools. However, I cannot guarantee that participants will receive any particular benefits from taking part in this research project.

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS:

If you have read this form and have decided to assist in this project, please, understand **participation of participants is voluntary** and they have the **right to withdraw the consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty**. Additionally, their responses will not influence the relationship with Nazarbayev University in the future in case if they decide to apply for Bachelor's/Master's Degree, or Ph.D. **The alternative is not to participate**. Participants have the right to refuse to answer particular questions. The results of this research study may be presented at scientific or professional meetings or published in scientific journals.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Questions: If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this research, its procedures, risks and benefits, contact the Master's Thesis Supervisor for this student work, professor Mir Afzal Tajik, afzal.mir@nu.edu.kz

Independent Contact: If you are not satisfied with how this study is being conducted, or if you have any concerns, complaints, or general questions about the research or your rights as a participant, please contact the NUGSE Research Committee to speak to someone independent of the research team at +7 7172 709359. You can also write an email to the NUGSE Research Committee at gse_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz

Please sign this consent form if you agree to participate in this study.

RE: "The Influences of Career Counseling Programs on Career Decisions of High School Students at Two Publicly Funded Special Schools in Kazakhstan"

- I have carefully read the information provided;

- I have been given full information regarding the purpose and procedures of the study;
- I am aware that participants' interviews will be recorded;
- I understand how the data collected will be used, and that any confidential information will be seen only by the researcher and research supervisor and will not be revealed to anyone else;
- I understand that participants are free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason;
- With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to assist in this study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's signature: _____ Date: _____

The extra copy of this signed and dated consent form is for you to keep.

Appendix B:**INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS****Title: “The Influences of Career Counselling Programs on Career Decisions of High School Students at Two Publicly Funded Special Schools in Kazakhstan”**

Dear Participant,

My name is Assima Rysbergen and I am a Master student at Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education in Kazakhstan. As part of my Master Program, I am conducting a study on career counseling program offered at two publicly-funded special schools in Kazakhstan.

You are invited to participate in this study which aims to explore and analyze how the career counseling program helps high school students in their career decision-making at two publicly-funded special schools in Kazakhstan. Furthermore, the study aims to contribute to the literature on career counseling in general, and the career counseling programs in the selected schools in particular. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because your participation might potentially contribute to in-depth understanding of the role of career counseling program in assisting students of two publicly-funded special schools to make informed career decision-making.

You are invited to read the information below, and ask questions about anything unclear before making your decision whether or not to participate in the study.

- Your participation in the study is voluntary. Upon your consent to participate in the study, you will participate in a semi-structured interview lasting for about 60 minutes. There might be a follow up interview of 30 minutes, if needed. You have the right not to answer any question, and to stop the interview at any time or for any reason.
- All information you will provide will be confidential – the name of the school and participants will not be mentioned in any part of the study.
- A Dictaphone will be used to record this interview for referring to it back while proceeding with the study. However, the interview will not be recorded without your permission. If you give permission for the interview to be recorded, you have the right to revoke recording permission and/or end the conversation at any time.

This project will be completed by July, 2017. All interview recordings will be stored in a secure work space until that date. The tapes will be destroyed after the research is over.

RISKS AND BENEFITS:

Your participation in the study entails no known risk for you. However, since you work at the school, you may be vulnerable to criticism, penalty and psychological pressure in

case the information you provide is identified. In order to prevent such risks, the researcher will fully comply with the NUGSE ethical guidelines to ensure anonymity, privacy and confidentiality of information received from you. Anonymity and privacy of your participation and confidentiality of the information / data received from you will be ensured by using pseudonyms in all soft and hard files, documents, presentations, and publications coming out of the study. Moreover, the soft data received from you will be secured in password protected files in the researcher's personal computer which no one else will ever have access to. Similarly, the hard data will be kept in locked cabinets in a room accessible to the researcher only. All the audio tapes, computer files and hard data will be destroyed after completion of the study.

Your participation will contribute to the study in terms of further improving the career counseling program. However, I cannot guarantee that you will receive any particular benefits from taking part in this research project.

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this research, its procedures, risks and benefits, contact the Master's Thesis Supervisor for this student work, professor Mir Afzal Tajik, afzal.mir@nu.edu.kz

If you are not satisfied with how this study is being conducted, or if you have any concerns, complaints, or general questions about the research or your rights as a participant, please contact the NUGSE Research Committee to speak to someone independent of the research team at +7 7172 709359.

You can also write an email to the NUGSE Research Committee at gse_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz

Please check all that apply and sign this consent form if you agree to participate in this study.

RE: "The Influences of Career Counseling Programs on Career Decisions of High School Students at Two Publicly Funded Special Schools in Kazakhstan"

I have carefully read the information provided.

I give permission for the interview to be recorded.

I give permission for the following information to be included in publications resulting from this study:

my name my title direct quotes from this interview

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and with full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

The extra copy of this signed and dated consent form is for you to keep.

According to the law of the Republic of Kazakhstan an individual under the age of 18 is considered a child. Any participant falling into that category should be given the Parental Consent Form and have it signed by at least one of his/her parent(s) or guardian(s).

Appendix C:**INFORMED ASSENT FORM FOR STUDENTS****Title: “The Influences of Career Counselling Programs on Career Decisions of High School Students at Two Publicly Funded Special Schools in Kazakhstan”**

Dear Participant,

My name is Assima Rysbergen and I am a Master student at Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education in Kazakhstan. As part of my Master Program, I am conducting a study on career counseling program offered at two publicly-funded special schools in Kazakhstan.

You are invited to participate in this study which aims to explore and analyze how the career counseling program helps high school students in their career decision-making at two publicly-funded special schools in Kazakhstan. Furthermore, the study aims to contribute to the literature on career counseling in general, and the career counseling programs in the selected schools in particular. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because your participation might potentially contribute to in-depth understanding of the role of career counseling program in assisting students of two publicly-funded special schools to make informed career decision-making.

You are invited to read the information below, and ask questions about anything unclear before making your decision whether or not to participate in the study.

- Your participation in the study is voluntary. Upon your consent to participate in the study, you will participate in a semi-structured interview lasting for about 60 minutes. There might be a follow up interview of 30 minutes, if needed. You have the right not to answer any question, and to stop the interview at any time or for any reason.
- All information you will provide will be confidential – the name of the school and participants will not be mentioned in any part of the study.
- A Dictaphone will be used to record this interview for referring to it back while proceeding with the study. However, the interview will not be recorded without your permission. If you give permission for the interview to be recorded, you have the right to revoke recording permission and/or end the conversation at any time.

This project will be completed by July, 2017. All interview recordings will be stored in a secure work space until that date. The tapes will be destroyed after the research is over.

RISKS AND BENEFITS:

Your participation in the study will have no known risk for you. However, since you study at the school, you may be vulnerable to criticism, penalty and psychological pressure in

case the information you provide is identified. In order to prevent such risks, the researcher will fully comply with the NUGSE ethical guidelines to guarantee anonymity, privacy and confidentiality of information received from you. Anonymity and privacy of your participation and confidentiality of the information / data received from you will be guaranteed by using pseudonyms in all soft and hard files, documents, presentations, and publications coming out of the study. Moreover, the soft data received from you will be secured in password protected files in the researcher's personal computer which no one else will ever have access to. Similarly, the hard data will be kept in locked cabinets in a room accessible to the researcher only. All the audio tapes, computer files and hard data will be destroyed after completion of the study.

Your participation will contribute to the study in terms of further improving the career counseling program. However, I cannot guarantee that you will receive any particular benefits from taking part in this research project.

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this research, its procedures, risks and benefits, contact the Master's Thesis Supervisor for this student work, professor Mir Afzal Tajik, afzal.mir@nu.edu.kz

If you are not satisfied with how this study is being conducted, or if you have any concerns, complaints, or general questions about the research or your rights as a participant, please contact the NUGSE Research Committee to speak to someone independent of the research team at +7 7172 709359.

You can also write an email to the NUGSE Research Committee at gse_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz

Please check all that apply and sign this consent form if you agree to participate in this study.

RE: "The Influences of Career Counseling Programs on Career Decisions of High School Students at Two Publicly Funded Special Schools in Kazakhstan"

I have carefully read the information provided.

I give permission for the interview to be recorded.

I give permission for the following information to be included in publications resulting from this study:

my name my title direct quotes from this interview

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and with full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

According to the law of the Republic of Kazakhstan an individual under the age of 18 is considered a child. Any participant falling into that category should be given the Parental Consent Form and have it signed by at least one of his/her parent(s) or guardian(s).

Appendix D:

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Script:

My name is Assima Rysbergen and I am a Master student at Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education in Kazakhstan. As part of my Master Program, I am conducting a study on career counseling program offered at two Special Schools in Kazakhstan. I am glad to have you as an interviewee and to see you eager to contribute to the research. To remind, the aim of the research is to explore and analyze how the career counseling program offered at the special schools enables high school students to make informed decisions about their career choices. Thank you for dedicating your time and coming to the interview. The interview will last for about 60 minutes. There might be a follow up interview of 30 minutes, if needed. Please, feel free to answer my questions openly without any hesitation and concern about the anonymity of the information you provide as all of your responses will be secured and your name will be anonymous. If you feel uncomfortable with any question or feel pressure, please, do not hesitate to stop at any time.

Questions to a Career Counselor

1. How long have you been working as a career counselor?
2. How do you see the importance of career counseling for high school students in making career decisions?
3. How would you describe the career counseling program at this school? (how has the program been developed; how is it implemented; what are the strengths and shortcomings in the program...)
4. Does school leadership team help make links with public employment services and organize trips to worksites?
5. Tell me, please, about the role of administration in assisting you with career guidance.
 - a. What kind of support administration has to assist you to successfully deliver the program?
 - b. What concerns do you still have regarding implementation of the program?
6. What challenges have you faced regarding THE delivery of the program?
7. Does school staff take part in the delivery of career counseling program? If yes, to what extent?
8. How well is career guidance staff equipped with all necessary resources for effective work: (a private space where students can be interviewed; a library of up-to-date career information; a computer; access to a telephone; secretarial assistance)

9. Please share with your ideas and suggestions for the further improvement of the implementation or delivery process.
 - a. The role of teachers
 - b. The role of administration
 - c. Personal professional development courses
 - d. If you were to make changes in the career counseling program, its content and delivery, or school policy on career counseling, what changes you would make and why?

Questions to a Vice Principal of Academic Affairs of the PFSS

1. How would you describe the career counseling program at this school? (how has the program been developed; how is it implemented; what are the strengths and shortcomings in the program...)
2. What is your role in, and contributions to, the career counseling program at this school?
3. How does school administration contribute to the delivery of the career counseling program?
4. To what extent does school administration promote active participation of the school staff in the delivery of career counseling program if it does so?
5. What challenges have you faced regarding the implementation and delivery of the program?
6. Is the work of career counselors audited? If yes, how?
7. How well is career guidance staff equipped with all necessary resources for effective work: (a private space where students can be interviewed; a library of up-to-date career information; a computer; access to a telephone; secretarial assistance)
8. Please share with your ideas and suggestions for the further improvement of the implementation or delivery process.
 - a. The role of teachers
 - b. The role of administration
 - c. Personal professional development courses

Questions to Students

1. You are at the stage of making a very important decision in your life which choosing a career. Have you made your career choice?
 - 1.1. What profession have you chosen?
 - 1.2. What made you choose this particular profession?
 - 1.3. What factors influenced your career decision?
2. Have you consulted anyone for career guidance? If yes, who and why?
3. What challenges have you faced or are facing regarding a career decision?

4. Tell me, please, about the role of school staff/teachers in assisting you with career decision-making.
 - 4.1 What kinds of support would you want to receive from the school staff with career decision-making?
5. Please explain what does career counseling program mean to you?
6. What role has career counseling program at your school played in making a career choice?
7. Please share your point of view on the efficacy of career counseling program in assisting you to make a career decision?
8. How satisfied are you with the delivery of the career counseling program?
9. Please share your opinion about any aspects of the career counseling service which can be done in a better way.

Questions to Graduates

1. How did you make your career decision?
 - 1.1. What profession did you choose?
 - 1.2 What made you choose this particular profession?
 - 1.3 What factors influenced your career decision?
2. Did you consult anyone for career guidance? If yes, who and why?
3. What challenges did you face regarding a career decision?
4. Tell me, please, about the role of school staff/teachers in assisting you with career decision-making.
 - 4.1 What kinds of support would have you wanted to receive from the school staff with career decision-making?
5. Please explain what does career counseling program mean to you?
6. What role did career counseling program at your school play in making a career choice?
7. Please share your point of view on the efficacy of career counseling program in assisting you to make a career decision?
8. How satisfied were/are you with the delivery of the career counseling program?
9. Please share your opinion about any aspects of the career counseling service which can be done in a better way.

Questions to Parents

1. What is your name?
2. Your child is now at the stage of making his/her career choice which is a lifetime decision. What do you know about your child's career interests/decision?
 - 2.1 Has your child made his/her career decision?

3. Have you had conversations with your child about his/her career choice?
 - 3.1 Has your child consulted you about issues related to career decision making?
 - 3.2 Did they consult you because they felt they needed your help?
 - 3.3 What questions did you receive from your child?
4. Did you advise your child to make his /her career choice? If yes, to what extent?
 - 4.1 What do you base your advice/suggestions on?
5. What do you know about career counseling program offered at your child's school?
6. In your opinion, how effective is the program in assisting your child to make informed career decision?
7. Please share your opinion about any aspects of the career counseling program which can be done in a better way.

Interview Script:

Thank you again for spending these 60 minutes with me. Your contribution is highly appreciated. Please, be informed that I will send you my transcript with your responses where you may do any changes in case there has been any misinterpretation.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

The extra copy of this signed and dated consent form is for you to keep.