

Vocational Choices among Secondary School Students: Issues and Strategies in Nigeria

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Abstract: This study tried to examine the problems that are associated with vocational choices of secondary school student. The research revealed that secondary school students are faced with choosing a vocation right from the colonial master to date in our educational system. The research also represents there are so many factors that are responsible for this, among which are parents, teachers, peer groups and subject study. Conclusion and recommendations were however made such as get information about job descriptions and requirements, Get information about salary and working conditions, Get information about the education and training requirements and source for information about the labor market, including industrial occupational trend. That parent must not force their children to choose a vocation. A student must not choose a vocation because he or she sees his or her friends choosing the vocation. A student must choose a vocation where he or she has intellectual, ability, aptitudes, and interest.

Key words: Vocational, choices, jobs, occupation, career, employment, profession

INTRODUCTION

Meaning of Vocational Choices: Vocational choices are a developmental process and spans almost through person's lifetime. Vocational choices development leads to choice, which processes starts from primary school.

Vocational choices could also be defined as a sequence of positions, jobs or occupation, which a person engages in during his working life. Vocational takes a reasonable amount of years within a particular occupation, for example ten, fifteen and twenty year's duration.

Vocational choices preparation focuses specifically on issues related to the world of work. Experience gained in a variety of work place situations will help you to prepare for transition to a work environment, or to post secondary education or training.

According to Alutu (2001) Career development and choice should be initiated as early as the nursery school years through the primary, secondary and to the tertiary school levels.

In 1980 during the round table conference in United States this definition of career was defined as a patter of decisions, transition, adjustment, related to ones roles in work education, family, community and leisure.

Individual social status, income, life style, choice of friends, mental and physical health is influenced by the type of work he or she does.

In other words, a person's vocational choice plays an important role in his entire life. A vocational choice is a

profession, occupation employment by which one earns his living especially one for which he has a period of training in an institution or through apprenticeship.

Sometimes a vocational choice simply refers to an occupation, which a person has followed for a period of years in which he or she is generally recognized to have become fairly an expert through experience. Note however, that illegal occupations such as armed robbery, prostitution, and 419 etc are excluded because they are sinful in the sight of GOD. According to Holly Bible (1982) which says, "the hand of the diligent will rule but the lazy man be put to forced labor". The choice of work is one of the most important decisions one makes. It determines to a large extent a persons social status, income, life style, choice of friends, mental and physical state are influenced by the type of work he or she does. In other words, a person career plays importance roles in his entire life.

Vocational choice decision-making is not an easy task, yet at one time or the other, individuals are faced with the task of making choice in career, preparing for it, starting it and making progress in it. The choice point is undoubtedly the most critical stage. This is because making a wrong career decision can mar one's happiness in life as this could result to vocational maladjustment. Inappropriate career-decision made may spell doom not only for the individual but also the entire society. In view of the foregoing, the need to equip our students with appropriate career-decision making skills becomes highly imperative. It has been recognized recently that for a

person to make realistic decision his level of self-efficacy can indeed be very influential. It is one thing to demonstrate interest in a particular occupational field; it is another thing to have confidence in one's ability to successfully undertake the task involved.

Okon (2001) stated that vocational development of youths and the preparation and guidance they receive for the world of work should be of interest to all of us. We are convinced that a better job of career guidance in our schools will help to solve some of the problems of alienation and relevance which face the school today.

According to Bandura (1986) it has to do with people's judgment of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designed type of performances.

According to Smith (2007) the questions below can help connect what you are learning in school to the skills and knowledge needed in the work place and society in general. Your answers to these questions will be unique to you and will provide personal insight as you prepare to go to university, or to further training or to the world of world.

How does the 30 h of work experience for grade 12 graduation and the additional work experience hours of career programs, relate to your career, educational and personal goals.

- What do you need to know about job seeking and job-keeping?
- How can you demonstrate, evaluate and document your life and work skills?
- What are the variety of management and organizational structures that exist in the work place of your choice?
- How do you create a personal financial plan to support achievement of your educational goals?

DISCUSSION

Factors Affecting Vocational Decision Making: These factors are;

- Individual differences
- External Factors

Individual Differences: These factors are resident in the individual. They are those personal characteristics of the individual that determine his vocational choice. They include; intellectual ability, aptitudes, interest, his/her value system, low motivation, self-esteem, sex, attitude towards various occupations, his personal, mental and emotional disposition.

External Factors:

Teachers' Influence/Problem: A teacher is the central point of learning in a classroom situation this is because he decides whether the subject will be of interest to the students or not. A student may like a particular subject

very well but because of the poor teaching method of the teacher such a student may lose interest for such subject.

According to ITAA (1998) secondary school educators often have a large influence on students' vocational choices.

A student may like chemistry but the man who stands in front of him is a little eccentric. He tends to trail off the subject matter, which the students are meant to be learning and just go off on a tangent. This makes it hard to keep up with him because he really does not what is relevant to the class and what is not.

In addition, a teacher may be a soft talker so one has to strain his or her ear to hear him. This may be difficult during the first couple of weeks, but once the students discover that if they talk in his class it become difficult to hear him, they will stop talking in his class, lack of adequate teaching methods by the teacher may lead to failure.

Parental Pressure or Influence: Parents generally would wish their children to achieve where they failed. To enable them achieve this, they ensure that they send their children to high-class school, which exposes the children to good vocational choices.

Economic and Political Condition of the Country: Due to economic depression experienced in Nigeria today, most individuals engaged in multiple jobs. Some individuals own part time private business as well as government job. Again, due to our economy that changed from agriculture to oil, most graduates seek for employment in oil companies to earn better pay. This in turn swells the number of students wishing to study Petroleum Engineering.

Peer Groups' Pressure or Influence: According to Obanewa (1994) Peer groups are usually made up of playmates, friends or people within the same age bracket. They serve as confidants to their members. In most cases they belong to same social clubs where they share the same values and ideals. While, Topping (1989) says many educators considered peer groups to be an effective and powerful instructional strategy that can be used to develop academic as well as social skills in peer group.

Piaget (2002) peer tutoring when used as a teaching technique can help children to be more active in the learning process. Through this process, children can easily influence their peers.

Adequate Vocational Choice Information: According to the Pitman Dictionary of English and Shorthand (1994) information is defined as intelligence given, instruction informing or being informed, told, news or knowledge given. You cannot apply for a course unless you have adequate information about it.

Subject Studies/Combination: Since subject studies or subject combination have direct influence or bearing on

ones future academic vocation, it should not be left alone for students. It is necessary to assist the students in guarding the students to choosing the right subjects for future vocation. Students who are left unguarded are prone to choose subjects, which are not directly related to their future career. We are therefore of the opinion that students should be helped right from junior secondary school.

Other factors are;

- Religious affiliation
- Sex stereotype of careers
- Job prospect
- Finance
- Prestige attached to the job by society or society's rating of vocation
- Educational level of individual e.g. school certificate, first degree, masters degree or Ph.D.

21st Century Vocational Prospect: According to the Ministry of Education (2005) in today's world of rapid technological and economic change, uncertainty about skill requirements in the workplace, and abundant learning and vocational paths, vocational planning is more difficult than ever. The following messages are worth keeping in mind as you think about transition and vocational planning.

Change is Constant: Change has become a constant force both at work and in life outside of work. However, change often brings opportunities, flexibility, versatility and adaptability during transitional times, which can be the keys to vocational-building success.

Focus on the Journey: Life is a journey that is made up of experiences, and destinations are merely stopping points along the way. Vocational building requires us to focus on our goals, while also paying attention to everything that occurs as we travel towards those goals.

Learning is Continuous: Learning, in all contexts, is a continuous, lifelong process. Learning, work and skills development are intertwined as we engage in our vocational-building experiences.

Team up with others: We are surrounded by people who can assist us in making vocational decisions and in other ways as we travel the road of life. Family, friends, neighbours, co-workers, and teachers are all potential supporters and mentors. Build networks, of supporters and be part of the networks of others.

Follow your Heart: We do our best when we work at what we love or have a passion for. The pursuit of dreams motivates and directs us, and helps clarify what is important to us. Vocational building makes us consider what we feel in our hearts.

Planning your Vocation: According to the University of Dublin (2005) Soda is how to discover your mission in life and it is a four stages vocational planning process to assist you through college and life.

- S = Self-Knowing Yourself
Assess your interests, strengths, values and abilities, knowing yourself are the key to happy vocational sound decisions.
- O = Opportunities - Knowing your Opportunities
Assess your options from different angles; options that lead from your degree, that suit you, and that the labour market presents.
- D = Decision – Making Decision
Informed by discussions with friends, family, professional, graduates, academics, and a vocational adviser you reach your decisions on the best goal for you, be it work, study or timeout.
- A = Action – Taking Action
The time comes to make your goal a reality. Complete the necessary application forms and curriculum vitae and get to interview stage to get the job or study your aim for.

Subjects Taught In Secondary Schools: In Nigeria, we operate the 6-3-3-4 educational systems. The 6 years is for primary school, the junior secondary school last for three years and the senior secondary school also last for three years while the four years is for the tertiary institutions.

The Core Subjects: They are the compulsory subjects, which must be offered and passed in junior class and during the junior secondary school examination, all students irrespective of the student's attitude, interest or future ambition. These compulsory subjects are English, Mathematics, Social studies and integrated science.

Elective Subjects: These are subject to be taken by all students as a matter of policy out of which three must be passed before such a student can proceed to junior secondary school one. The subjects are Physical and Health Education, CRS/IRK, Nigeria languages (Hausa), Yoruba, Ibo and Edo, Agricultural Science, Music, Arabic or French.

Pre-Vocational Subjects: These are required subjects, which the students must offer at the junior secondary before proceeding to the senior secondary school, the students are expected to pass at least two i.e. Introductory Technology, Business Studies, Home Economics, Food Nutrition, Fine Arts or Local Craft. All students are required to offer all these subjects and must pass at least nine or seven including core subjects, which will determine transition to senior secondary school one and appropriate class to be placed. It is the core courses that determine where they are to be placed.

Since subjects' combinations have direct influence or bearing on ones future academic vocational choice, therefore, it should not be left alone for the student. It is

necessary to assist the students in choosing the right subjects for future vocational choice. Students who are left unguarded are prone to choosing subjects, which are not directly related to their future vocational choices (Table 1).

Literature suggests that a significant number of secondary school students take Vocational choice during their secondary school years. Graves et al. (1993) Nelson & Deines (1995) and that it is often too late to change a person's vocational choice by the time he or she finishes secondary school. Abtan (1993) stated a Gallup poll indicated that secondary school teachers are second only to parents as the most important influence on secondary school students' vocational choice decisions. Dodson & Prince (1991) secondary school students view largely part by the advice and counsel of their secondary school teachers and counselors.

The Apprenticeship System: According to Akinseinde (1996) the apprenticeship system was a means of providing trade training for younger citizens. The system was used during the medieval times to transmit cultural heritage from one generation to the other. It was considered the natural method whereby children learn the occupations of their parents. There were the voluntary apprentices who entered into the agreement of apprenticeship because of their desire to learn trades. The apprentice worker lived with the master and served him faithfully keeps his secrets and commands, and bound out by his parent to the master for up to seven years. The old time apprenticeship was broken down by the development of power machinery and greater demand for cheap labour. Modern apprenticeship trades include barbing, carpentering, painting, printing, seamstress, tailoring weaving and hairdressing, mechanics, electrician, trading in motor spare parts and electricity parts etc. At the onset, the apprentice enters into agreement of apprenticeship, which is an often three to six years agreement. The master craftsmen shall agree to teach and instruct the apprentice in the art and mystery of the trade. Highly skilled occupations such as masonry, plumbing, air-conditioning, construction crafts and the printing industry often utilize the apprenticeship system for effective learning. The role of the apprenticeship system was later taken over by the public vocational schools. That is the reason which today you find courses like melta work, glass blowing, auto mechanics, building, wood work, electric and electronics, block laying, concreting, catering and hotel management are offered in pre-vocational schools.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, after self-assessment, the next step in the vocational choices planning process is to locate information about vocational choice interest, because vocational are rapidly changing, it is important to locate current services of information such as products and

Table 1: Subjects for Traditional Vocational Opportunities

Classes	Subjects Combination	Possible Future Vocational
Science	English Language, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Geography, C.R.K/IRK, Economics, Any Nigeria Language, Further Mathematics, Food Nutrition, Agric Science.	Teacher, Lecturer, Medical Doctor, Pharmacist, Surveyor, Mechanical Engineering, Electrical/Electronics Engineering, Agriculturist, Home Economist, Fashion Designer, Guidance and Counselor etc.
Social Sciences	English Language, Mathematics, Accounts, Economics, Commerce, Biology, CRK/IRK Geography, Literature in English, French, Any Nigeria Language, Food Nutrition and Agric Science	Bursar, Accountant, Banker, Auditor, Computer operator, Teacher/Lecturer, Administrator, Confidential Secretary, Typist, Bilingual Secretary, Guidance and Counselor etc.
Arts	English Language, English Literature, Mathematics, Accounts, Commerce, Biology, Geography, Economics, History, CRK/IRK French, Any Nigeria Language, Food and Nutrition, Agric Science, Fine Arts, Government.	Lawyer, News Caster, Teacher/Lecturer, Public Administrator, Librarian, Journalist, Guidance and Counselor etc.

Source: Classroom Lecture Note: Alutu (2004)

services, including publications, videos, and internet resources, friends, family, teachers, co-workers etc. We must stress here that there is need for both parents and students to take vocational planning very seriously as this will determine whatever the child will become in future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Get information about job descriptions and requirements.
- Get information about the salary and working conditions.
- Get information about the education and training requirements.
- Source for information about the labour market, including industrial occupational trend.
- That parents must not force their children to choose a vocation.
- A student must not choose a vocation because he or she sees his or her friends choosing the vocation.
- A student must choose a vocation where he or she has intellectual, ability, aptitudes, and interest.
- Experts to make appropriate vocational choices e.g. a guidance counselor must guide that student.
- That if you are not opportune to further your education, you must have to learn a trade.
- That the parents or teachers and even the child should detect his or her line of vocation from primary school by knowing his or her subjects of interest.
- Finally, there is no vocation that is not important but it depends on you as an individual to work hard and be able to put your resources together as evidenced in Holy Bible (1982) which says "what so ever they hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest".

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