



## **The Importance of Vocational Guidance in Vocational Education Programmes in Nigeria**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The study looked at the importance of vocational guidance in vocational education programmes in Nigeria. Vocational guidance is important because of its multi-dimensional problems of school-to-work transition and it is believed that individuals have certain interests, abilities, personality traits and other characteristics peculiar to them. If these personal attributes of individuals are detected and utilised to the fullest, it would go a long way in directing them towards a job where they are likely to perform better and useful to themselves and the society in which they live. Besides, vocational education plays a tremendous role in equipping individuals (students) with skills and techniques necessary for the development of the students' potentials. It is therefore recommended that a professionally trained guidance counsellor in the field of vocational education programme that would help individuals realise their dream should be required.

**Keywords:** Vocational Guidance, Vocational Education, Guidance Counsellor, Career Choice and Students

### **INTRODUCTION**

Okifo & Efe (2008) noted that vocational education or vocational education and training and/or technical training or retraining prepares learners for careers that are based in manual or practical activities, traditionally non-academic and totally related to a specific trade, occupation or vocation, hence the term in which the learners participate. It is a programme designed to equip learners with vocational skills for employment in various field of human endeavour. This means that the programme enables an individual to learn about, explore and prepare for trade. It refers to systematic learning experiences which are designed to fit individual for gainful employment in recognised occupations and semi-skilled workers or technicians or sub-professionals. It includes guidance and counselling with the training and other instruction directly related to an occupation. It excludes programmes designed primarily to fit individuals for employment in occupations which are considered professional, require a bachelor's higher degree or are designed primarily as general education (Osuala, 2004; Wordu, Igweagbara, Gorden & Akue, 2013)

There are eight major occupational areas of vocational education. These include the following:

- Vocational Agriculture
- Fine and Applied Arts
- Business and Office Education
- Distributive Education
- Health Occupation
- Home Economic Education
- Technical Education
- Trade and Industrial Education

Vocational education includes preparation for employment in any occupation for which specialised education is required, for which there is a societal need and which can most appropriately be done in

schools. Vocational education is concerned with the whole hierarchy of occupations from those requiring short periods of specialised preparations such as clerk-typists, to occupation requiring two or more years of specialised education, such as paramedics. It includes the whole spectrum of the labour force from semi-skilled workers to technicians and sub-professional whose occupations require less than a bachelor's degree.

Vocational guidance according to Wordu, Igweagbara, Gorden & Akue (2013) is an indispensable segment of vocational technical education programme. Hence Osuala (2004) saw vocational guidance as the foyer and back porch for vocational-technical education programme because there cannot be a vocational-technical education without the beneficiaries of such training being guided into the different vocational or career categories that are available, such as mechanical (automobile and metal work) trades, computer craft practice, woodwork trades, electrical/electronic trades, textile trades, building trades, printing trades among others.

This paper focuses on the importance of vocational guidance in vocational education programmes in Nigeria. Here the paper takes a look at the conceptual frameworks of vocational education and vocational guidance, purpose of vocational guidance, need for vocational guidance in Nigerian schools, techniques of providing vocational guidance in vocational education programmes in Nigeria and the importance of vocational guidance in the educational system. It concludes and makes recommendations.

### **Conceptual Frameworks (Vocational Education and Vocational Guidance)**

Agbonigiasede (2007) defined vocational education as education designed to develop skills, abilities, understanding, attitudes, work habits and appreciation. It involves knowledge needed by workers to enter and make progress in employment on a useful and productive basis. It is an integral part of the total educational programmes which contributes towards the development of good citizenship by developing the physical, social, civic, cultural and economic competencies of the individual.

Vocational education can also be seen as a programme of study designed to enable the learner to be theoretically and practically biased for the acquisition of necessary skills, abilities, knowledge, understanding, values and attitudes through a formal educational system that will integrate the learners into the society in areas such as agricultural education, business education, computer science education, health education, home economics education fine and applied arts education, distributive education, technical education, and trade and industrial education in order to earn a living (Daso, 2012; Efajemue, 2011; Dokubo & Dokubo, 2013; Seyi, 2014).

Osuala (2004) looked at vocational education as education designed to prepare skilled personnel at a lower level of qualification for one or a group of occupations, trades or jobs. Vocational education usually provided at upper secondary level, includes general education, practical training for development of skills required by the chosen occupations and related theory. The proportions of these components may vary considerably but the emphasis is usually on practical training.

The above definition tends to pose problems of classification based on the level of entry of work, proportion of theoretical and scientific studies and emphasis on practical training. To avoid such debate in classification and to improve the development in this type of education, the current trends in education and planning and practices is to use a single term "technology education" to embrace all such education programmes.

The term technology deals with "the application of knowledge in the solution of practical problems of everyday living". Technology education, essentially aims at developing techniques, devices, procedures and the process for doing things. Obviously, theoretical and scientific studies and related skill training are required. These components will vary according to the level of education and the nature of occupation and career being considered. In other words, while science is concerned with "knowing", technology aims at "getting things done and done efficiently" (Seyi, 2014).

Before looking at the concept of vocational guidance, it is pertinent to ascertain the meaning of guidance in general. Guidance in all phases is a form of individual service; its purpose is to provide assistance to individuals in making choices and adjustments in connection with the problems and options in their lives.

Guidance may be conveniently classified into three major categories personal guidance, educational guidance, and vocational guidance. Personal guidance centres on problems of personality, physical and emotional development, interpersonal relations and similar matters.

Educational guidance on the other hand is concerned chiefly with educational problems, choices, and adjustments. Some writers further categorise guidance into health guidance, social guidance, spiritual guidance and financial guidance. Regardless of the scheme of classification, the various types of guidance are inseparably related. Their difference is chiefly a matter of emphasis of the various age levels and stages of development in the life of the individual.

Vocational guidance is a process of assisting an individual towards making a wise choice of occupation/career, which will be beneficial to him and to society. It is the assistance given in choosing, preparing for, entering upon, and making progress in an occupation. Vocational guidance is a continuous means of assisting an individual to understand him/herself better as a basis for occupational decision. The process involves a continuous and careful assessment of an individual's interest, aptitude, and potentials over periods, using various sources of information from home and schools as a reliable basis for guiding the individual towards a satisfactory occupation (Efajemue, 2011)

Etuk (2013) in Akpan (2001) defined vocational guidance as that phase of the educational process in which conscious, organised planning for the future is a primary, rather than a secondary focus. Also, Etuk (2013) in London (1973) viewed vocational guidance as dealing with matters of occupational choice or career planning, preparation, placement, and adjustment on the job. It is a phase of guidance needed most by youth in their later teens and adult.

Ezeji (2001) defined vocational guidance as the process of helping a person develop and accept an integrated and adequate picture of himself and of his role in the world of work, to test this concept against reality and to convert it to reality, with satisfaction to himself and benefit to society,

Vocational guidance does not restrict itself only to occupational adjustments but also embraces the educational aspect of youth and the attitudes, feelings, and anxiety that revolve around the all-important problems of work, occupation status, job satisfaction, security and many other facets of earning a livelihood on which society places a premium.

### **Purpose of Vocational Guidance**

Vocational Guidance has two fundamental purposes:

- To help the individual make a good vocational adjustment and
- To facilitate the smooth functioning of the economy through the effective use of manpower

The above purposes imply that each individual has certain abilities, interests, personality traits and other qualities which, if he realises them and their potential values, will make him a happier person, a more effective worker, and a more useful citizen. Part of an individual's educational development consists of helping him to gain a better understanding of his attitudes for various skills, his adaptability to altered situations and his interest in the numerous activities in which he might become engaged. Although less generally recognised as such, this self-realisation is just as much an objective of education as is the understanding of the world in which the individual lives (Kurya & Hassan, 2007; Ordu, 2012, Igberaharha & Oroka, 2012).

### **Need for Vocational Guidance in Nigerian Schools**

Many youths in Nigeria reach the termination of their high schools careers without having made even a tentative occupational choice. Moreover, the choices, which they do make, are often unrealistic in terms of the students' potentials and opportunities and requirements of the world for work. There is a need therefore to introduce in school system a well-designed vocational guidance programme for the benefit of all students.

According to Dokubo & Dokubo, (2013) sound vocational guidance programmes are needed more than ever because of our changing world. Cultivations of the individual talents of all people remain the inescapable responsibility of education in a democracy. National welfare demands trained talents of every type. Nigeria seems deeply committed to and dependent for its survival upon a programme of education, which offers to all Nigerian youth the opportunity to develop to the highest degree and in a socially beneficial direct, their various aptitudes and abilities. A programme of guidance service, with its emphasis on individual developments, enhances the achievement of such a commitment. The provision of essential vocational guidance services is a major responsibility of secondary education. As an integral part of the educational process, vocational guidance should be made available to every

child upon his entrance into school and throughout his educational career. Professionally trained vocational counsellors should be available at every level from elementary through university to:

- a. Work with students to help them realise their full potentials
- b. Act as consultants to teachers and other members of the school staff on problems relating to the best development of the child.
- c. Act as consultants to parents in interpreting the child's aptitudes and abilities and
- d. Serve as a liaison between the guidance programme and community.

### **Techniques of Providing Vocational Guidance in Vocational Education Programmes in Nigeria**

The following techniques are employed within and outside the school system for aiding/helping men and women in choosing occupation: (Anabe, 2008; Ekwemalor & Awili, 2008; Agbobu & Akoroda, 2004).

- a. *Individual Vocational Counselling:* Individuals are assisted to acquire knowledge of information about themselves. This is mostly in the area of their interests, abilities, needs, ambitions, limitations and their possible causes which will assist them to make better occupational choices.
- b. *Career Conferences:* Career conferences are held for the beneficiary of the programme whereby employers and workers from different establishment are invited to talk to them about vocations in their establishment and the nature of their jobs respectively.
- c. *Field Trip/Excursion:* Beneficiaries of the vocational guidance programme are taken out on visit to factory and industrial set-ups for passing vocational information. During this visits, the beneficiaries of the programme watch the workers at work and so gain more insight into the nature of jobs.
- d. *Career Information Centres:* This is a centre created in the training institutions to give the beneficiaries of the programme information about categories of occupations available and how they could go about it.
- e. *Parents' Conference:* Parents and teachers meet such as the Parents Teachers Association (PTA). During this conference, the parents are properly guided concerning the pros and cons of various disciplines and occupations as well as providing them with occupational and educational information that will help their children in future.
- f. *Old Participants Association Day/Conference:* Apart from the PTA, old participants who have graduated from the institutions, sets a day aside to organise a conference which they invite professional in the field of vocational guidance to deliver a talk about occupational/career choices. The provision of vocational guidance demands a high degree of competence and commitment on the part of the counsellor due to current complexity of the available occupation.

### **The Importance of Vocational Guidance in the Educational System**

Igberaharha & Oroka (2012) noted that the provision of vocational guidance in our institutions has been necessitated by great changes in our society and the world at large, and has become more complex than ever before. Automation and recession, for example, have forced many people into early retirement and retrenchment, resulting in unemployment. The rate of technological change, and the isolation of young people from possibilities for employment, has created problems in occupational choices. Many students are not able to obtain an informal exposure to a variety of occupations, nor can they easily obtain relevant data about them. Students have a limited knowledge of occupations and of the narrow range of alternatives available to them. This ignorance leads to unrealistic career aspirations. There is, therefore, a need to assist students to have more realistic career expectations (Ministry of Education, 2005).

Students do not know the routine features that characterise work. In industry, for instance, the mental health hazards of alienating work include an increase in drug use, alcoholism, absenteeism, on-the-job accidents, depression, withdrawal, and forms of mental disturbance. The students should be assisted to be aware of such hazards as well as of actual working conditions. Our society places values on certain jobs. Some jobs are believed to be exclusively for males, while others are regarded as for 'females' for examples, midwifery is traditionally thought to be for female only while architecture is thought to

be a male's job. Hence there is a need to address gender issues in order to eliminate stereotype from society.

The students should be aware of the options for wage-earning and gainful employment. For example, they should prepare a business plan and make concerted efforts to find self-employment. Moreover, there is a craving in our society for the accumulation of knowledge. Although specialisation can be a blessing to society, the same society may feel that individuals are over-trained, and under-used. Students need to be aware of such problems and how to adjust them.

**Among the functions of vocational guidance are the following:**

- Aid in placing talent where it is needed. The student is assisted to make the best possible vocational choice.
- Strengthen the educational system by providing motivation and meaning to education. This means ensuring that the students' education, curricula and extracurricular activities are useful and will eventually result in something worthwhile. The students are encouraged to make maximum use of all educational opportunities, since these will be beneficial to them during their lives.
- Add a feeling of security to the nation, the schools and the student, so that all face the future with confidence. The student is helped to develop an ability to control his/her future.
- Provide information about occupational opportunities. Students become aware of the world of work and the range of available opportunities that exist.
- Encouraging students in decision making. Decisions on what type of life a student would like to lead depend on his/her interests, values, abilities, skills and motivation to learn.
- Assist students to know themselves and their environment. Each student is helped to understand him/herself in terms of interests, potential skills and abilities, in relation to the world of work.
- Help students to deal with a variety of problems. Since the society in which students live is constantly changing, they have to adjust to change. For example, more emphasis is now given to self-employment and job generation than in earlier years.
- Help students to understand the problems of unemployment and its causes.
- Assist students to understand the process of making choices, and of the possible consequences of their decisions.
- Enable students to acquire knowledge of the practical procedures needed for getting a job and progressing in it.

**CONCLUSION**

Vocational guidance is an indispensable facet of vocational education programmes in Nigeria, as it is elsewhere in the world. Thus, its absence in most of our schools has led to the growing difficulty on the part of the graduates of the institutions of vocational education in securing employment. It is therefore necessary and important to embark on full implementation of vocational guidance in the vocational education training institutions to help coordinate and guide the beneficiaries in order to make appropriate occupation choices.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

In recognition of the needs of vocational guidance in a vocational education programme, the following recommendations are made.

1. The students should have extensive knowledge about him/her and match this information with such things as home background, school progress, work experience, personality, health, values, interests, aptitudes and achievement.
2. The guidance counsellor should assist the student to collect, analyse and use a variety of objectives and social data about him/herself, so that he/she gains a better understanding of him/herself.
3. People who seek vocational guidance should be provided with adequate opportunity for a counselling interview with a vocational guidance officer, who will guide them in the choice of specific vocational courses.

4. The counsellor should give technical assistance to teachers, administrators and parents, and help them to be more effective.
5. The vocational guidance counsellor should determine the impact of the vocational guidance programme on students, schools and society and find out how any deficiencies in the programme can be removed.
6. The methods of interview should be continuously adapted to the social and economic conditions in the society.
7. The counsellor should conduct community occupational surveys and fellow-up studies of school-leavers, and procure data on local training and employment conditions, labour turnover, and job opportunities.

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