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VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE AS A TOOL FOR ACHIEVING WHOLISTIC EDUCATION IN NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims at examining the nature of general education (or literacy education), compared with wholistic education; the concepts of vocational education, vocational guidance and the relationships between vocational education and wholistic education. It explores the areas of use of vocational guidance services in elevating learners' interests in vocational education, to make a success of the skill-acquisition component of the 6-3-3-4 system of education. The paper also assesses to what extent such vocational guidance programmes would serve as a tool for providing wholistic or self-fulfilling education at the secondary school levels. It attempts to answer questions raised about secondary level education for life and sustainability.

INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria of today, educational opportunities have spread to the different nooks and crannies of the society, to prepare people to adjust positively in the society. Thus many individuals have acquired education, many are acquiring education and yet many more are aspiring to acquire education. All these are aimed at preparing these people to fit into one desirable niche of the other in society, for positive living. Education is understood to mean the aggregate of the various processes by which individuals acquire knowledge, attitudes, skills and abilities that are positive in nature in the societies in which such individuals live. (Fafunwa,1976) thus education is expected to prepare people to be “complete” or “whole” persons in society. Education is the process of successful learning of knowledge, skills and attitude where what is learned in such a way can make the learner express his individuality, through what he learns and subsequently applies it, and adapts its flexibility to situations and problems other than those considered in learning it (Rowntree,1981). While education is expected to prepare individuals as indicated above, it is obvious that not all types of education are capable of providing such outcomes. In Nigeria, we have been practicing the formal system of British education which at its rudimentary level (primary school) trains pupils in the three (3) R's - reading, writing and arithmetic. This type of education was extended to the secondary school and tertiary institutions, basically to serve the needs of the British colonial masters as messengers, house keepers, cooks,

interpreters etc. at higher levels the education prepared them to be clerks, typists, overseers, teachers and the police, army etc. Tertiary education at that time prepared people to serve as distinct officers, teachers, religious leaders etc. For people who received these brands of education, they were not prepared to fit into any other work situations outside what they were trained for, or engage in private industry or business. Fafunwa (1996) stated that the Nigerian educational system before the introduction of continuous assessment (CA) had problems. It was introduced because of the criticisms from teachers, counsellors and school administrators about the loopholes in the British type of government waiting till end of the academic year before examining learners, with the obvious defect of learners not being able to apply the substance of their learning in solving everyday problems (Denga,1983).To a large extent, the education was more cognitive in nature, than affective and skill-based, also because it was not guidance oriented. In recognition of these obvious defects, the 6-3-3-4 system of education was introduced in to cater for the cognitive, affective and psychomotor development of learners to prepare them as “wholly educated” persons. In translation of policy into action, even thus 6-3-3-4 system of education has equally failed to provide wholistic education to Nigerians. Wholistic education is the educational system that provides an all-round development of the learner-the mental, emotional, economic, physical and social development of the learner to enable him fit into society. Vocational education is the type of education that prepares the learner for employment as well as for self-engagement in an occupation to earn a living and fit usefully into society. It is a modification of wholistic education and derives its effective implementation from vocational guidance. Vocational guidance is the process of helping a person to develop and accept an integrated and adequate picture of himself and of his role in the world work; to test this concept against reality and to convert it into reality, with satisfaction to himself, and benefit to the society (Super,1964).

It is necessary in helping a student to choose or select an occupation, proper for it, enter into it and progress in it. In effect, to what extent can vocational guidance help learners in acquiring wholistic education in the typical educational setting in Nigeria of today?

GENERAL EDUCATION VERSUS VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

From an occupational point of view, education is either general or vocational. General education is the type of education received for the overall cultural development of the individual and while it may be useful in several occupations, it is not normally a vital part of any particular occupation. This type of education expose the learner to the different facets of teaching and learning, without really

preparing the individual for any specialized occupation. The product of such a general education is the proverbial "jack of all trades and master of none". Secondary education is particularly typical of this characteristic in Nigeria, because it is directed essentially towards literary attainment, to the detriment of technical, vocational or functional skills. According to Denga (1986) the conventional school in Nigeria is a one-way lane, leading to an external examination in academic subject which in turn leads to university entrance preparation for the tertiary institutions. On the other hand, vocational education is the type that provides an individual with the knowledge, skills and attitudes required for fitting into an occupation (Tibi,1998). Vocational education started in the 19th century in Europe, with the emergence of industrialization which called for the training of skilled and employable man-power, especially in Germany. Nigeria adopted the British system of education which derogated on vocational education as something meant for the poor, unenlightened and underprivileged. But vocational education is very functional, because it prepares those who acquire it, for the world of work. Fafunwa (1996) observed that functional educational; curriculum, guidance oriented, efficiently organized and administered by well-trained teachers and counselors, will go a long way, in solving most of the Nigerian educational problems. Thus, vocational education accompanied by appropriate vocational guidance, should redirect education towards the realization of a wholistic status in Nigeria.

THE CONCEPT OF WHOLISTIC EDUCATION

"Whole" means "complete", including everything or everyone, not broken into pieces; the entire thing or altogether. (The Chambers Universal Learners Dictionary). The concept of wholistic education therefore refers to an educational system that encompasses the total or complete development of the learner involving the mental, physical, emotional, economic and social development of the individual. The beneficiary of wholistic education (the learner) obtains basic literacy and numeracy skills, some levels of vocational or technical skills, acquires values, attitudes and self esteem for self fulfillment as well as all the necessary wiles and wisdom for positive adjustment in the society. For such a wholistic education to be got, teachers, counselors, parents, government, school administrators, industry or skills acquisitions centers as well as the open society must be involved. Guidance services that are vocational in nature must necessarily be provided in the course of the development of the learner.

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE AND WHOLISTIC EDUCATION

Egbule (1995), defined vocational guidance as a process or programme of assistance designed to aid the individual in choosing and adjusting to a vocation. It aids students in choosing and entering occupation or vocations that suit their

interests, values, abilities, skills, talents or aptitudes and personality characteristics. While vocational education is expected to prepare the students for the world of work as enshrined in the New National Policy on Education (NPE, 1981) and imbue them with the “dignity of labor and work value” as stated by Tibi (1997), most Nigerians, including the elite have consistently looked down on vocational education. Hence the need for vocational guidance for our future society leaders.

For instance, Mkpa (1986) reported that, parents with:

(i). high academic qualifications, and (ii). high income levels, showed a significantly greater negative attitude towards their children taking up careers in the vocational trades, than parents of lower academic qualifications and those of lower income levels”

According to Tibi (1997) this attitude of the elites, who incidentally had the opportunity to plan and implement vocational education programmes hindered its early and effective development. Since it has been established earlier on that wholistic education concerns an all round educational development of the learner for positive adjustment in society and for attainment of self-esteem, then effective vocational guidance is sine qua none, for the attainment of such an educational goal. Since the “whole person” is the one who is educationally prepared to be independent of others, vocational guidance aids him or her in occupational choices, and this determines the person's income, choice of friends, dress pattern, influence in society and even the risks he takes.

Denga (1986) defined the vocational needs of secondary school students in Nigeria as comprising of

- (i) Need to choose an occupation of interest.
- (ii) To relate academic preparation to a job.
- (iii) To develop effective job-hunting skills.
- (iv) To obtain vocational information.

Need to understand self-potentials.

(v)

(vi) To consult somebody about career plans.

(vii) To develop skills for job of interest.

(viii) To choose an occupation that is acceptable to parents and "significant to others" in the society.

- (ix) To choose a career that has a bright future.
- (x) To choose a career that is important in the society.

Students need to be properly guided in making vocational choices that will reflect on their adjustment to societal demands when they leave school. This includes vocational guidance that follow the constraints stated above. The expectations of wholistic education are in line with the aims of education in Africa as stated by Fafunwa(1976) as follows:

- (i) To acquire vocational skills
- (ii) To develop ethical character
- (iii) To understand the world outside one's environment
- (iv) To play one's part as a useful member of one's home and family.
- (v) To develop economic efficiency both as a consumer and as a producer of goods.
- (vi) To develop a scientific approach towards problems.
- (vii) To live and act as a well integrated individual with a healthy mind and body.
- (viii) To mobilize all the available resources for the satisfaction of the psychological, vocational and educational needs of individuals and
- (ix) To assist the student as early as possible to develop positive image of self, through self-understanding and skill in problem-solving and decision making.

An effective helping service provide to students with these aims in view will go a long way in making such student be equipped with the needs of wholistic education. A vital tool for achieving this goal is vocational guidance.

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE TECHNIQUES FOR ACHIEVING WHOLISTIC EDUCATION

Techniques of vocational guidance are ways of acquiring and developing some special skills that will prepare the individual to be well adjusted psychologically, physically, socially, culturally etc.though his aptitudes, abilities,interests, physical qualities, personal relationships, adaptability etc. these techniques according to Oladele(1987),describe both the role of occupational information in career work and the way in which it can be used. He went further to define occupational information as “facts about a job for use in vocational guidance” description of work and it's related conditions" and information about the world of work".

Egbule(1955) noted that in the Nigerian secondary school system any technique that will be used is usually meant to:

- (1) Expose students to various occupational types.
- (2) Outline the variable and theoretical constructs relating to occupational choice or development.
- (3) Provide information on the entry requirement and preparation for each.
- (4) Assist students to choose from a variety of occupation types,help them acquire the necessary preparation,engage in it, get adjusted to it and progress in it.

Guidance is the process of helping individuals to understand themselves and their world (Shertzer & Stone,1976). This is what the school system offers learners through guidance services Smith (1974) proffered the objective (or purpose) of the helping relationship when he stated that helping professionals should provide facilitative experiences-compassion continuum”.He further explained,inter alia.

"Those positive experiences are designed to facilitate the development of persons who are passionate with themselves (accept, enjoy,understand and disclose the self); productive in relating to their external world (efficient,fully functioning,vocationally adjusted intelligent, creative, socially poised and attractive,and truly effective) and compassionate toward others (altruistic,loving,caring,sensitive,genuinely helpful and effective facilitators of growth)".

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Vocational Guidance As A Tool For Achieving Wholistic Education In Nigerian Secondary Schools

As can be seen above guidance has the purpose of making the "complete person through wholistic education,which in the Nigerian context of today, can only be effectively provided via guidance services that are vocational in nature. Guidance services are the formalized actions taken by the school to make guidance operational and available to students.Such guidance services consist of the following;

- (a) An appraisal service to assess data about helpees.
- (b) An informational service to provide students with knowledge about opportunities available to them.
- (c) A counseling service aimed at facilitating self-understanding/ development of individuals or groups.
- (d) A planning, placement and follow-up service for students development through choice of opportunities in the school and the work place.

Vocational guidance services that adopt such strategies would provide students with facilitative experiences on a “passionate-productive-compassion continuum”. This kind of service is best provided to students at the secondary school level and this is the level in Nigeria,when career choices are actually made. Studies carried out at various times have shown that in U.S.A., the ninth and twelfth grades (equivalents of J.S. III and SS III in Nigeria) are most favoured for occupation courses (Sinick, Gorman and Hoppock,1971, Hoppock and Stevens, 1954). According to them, inclusion in the ninth grade curriculum enables students to have information helpful in planning future courses,while placement in the twelfth-grade course of study is valuable because senior students are more ready to utilize such information since they are more aware of the immediacy of leaving school. At the secondary educational level there are specific techniques that are employed by

helpers to provide vocational guidance services which are beneficial to learners or helpees, in Nigerian school. These techniques include career conferences, field trips or excursions, industrial training (or work experience programme), parents conferences, Old Students' Association Day Conference, individual vocational counseling etc.

CAREER CONFERENCES:

These are organized to provide vocational guidance information of a supplementary or preliminary nature (Shertzer and Stone, 1974). During such career conventions (Page, 19) students are exposed to the purposes, contents and impressions as well as the merits and demerits of various occupations by their practitioners or the field. Egbule (2002) described it as a forum for professionals to deliberate on what the advantages, and disadvantages of their occupation, requirements and qualification for entry, method of entry, remuneration and the likes, are. Students get information about such occupations first hand from practitioners.

FIELD TRIPS AND EXCURSION:

Field trips comprise of visits by students to specific occupational or vocational situations for on-the-spot assessment and appreciation of the occupations, with a view to acquiring more information about such occupation, as part of their learning packages about such occupations. Field trips to plants, industries, and businesses can be useful to students at any grade level if students are briefed before the trips and discussions are held following them (Shertzer and Stone, 1974). Examples include visits to feed mills, sewing institutes, geological sites, industrial or servicing installations. In field trips students observe systems or situations in their time forms and may even partake in such operations. On the other hand, excursions involve students being taken out by teachers or counselors to various places/sites that have educational relevance, for the sole purpose of making such learners familiar with such situations. Excursions are organized, and different activities may be combined at a time, while field trips are specific for specific subject matter areas.

WORK EXPERIENCE OR INDUSTRIAL TRAINING

This is a comprehensive programme that is organized to expose learners to the world of work, in which they actively participate as part of their training for the occupation in future. In Nigeria, this is called students' industrial works experience scheme (SIWES). During the period of work experience, students have the opportunity of interacting with people who are engaged in the job and ask relevant questions relating to job security, hazards and financial benefits (Egbule, 2002). The Industrial Training Fund (I.T.F.) is maximally involved in operating this scheme at tertiary levels of education in Nigeria. Students works experience scheme is

engaged in at the secondary school level only by secondary technical students in technical Colleges.

PARENTS' CONFERENCE

These are meetings that are organized involving parents or guardians, teachers and counselors, during which the future educational and occupational programmes of students/wards are planned.

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It is to be noted that through this medium, parents are aided in familiarizing themselves with the various curricular and extra-curricular offerings of the school and the occupations which are available to the students, thereby providing them with the school's curricular offerings.

OLD STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION DAY CONFERENCE

On such occasions, previous graduates (old students) of the school are invited to the school to meet with, and

advise the current students about preparations for future vocations and the opportunities in such occupations,

as well as how to get into such occupations. Speakers on such occasions are usually drawn from such

occupations that were entered into from the school system. According to Egbule (2002), this provides

opportunities for the present students to gain inspiration from the past students.

INDIVIDUAL VOCATIONAL COUNSELLING:

This usually involves a one-to-one counseling relations between the students and the counselor, during which vocational information are provided first-hand to the single student by the helper under confidential conditions. During the process, the student's vocational problem is identified, analysed and evaluated with relevant course of action outlined to enhance decision making and choices (Egbule, 1993).

This is a very personalized service and it is quite detailed and beneficial for the student who is making a vocational choice, to enter an occupation that is self-fulfilling. These techniques discussed above, among others, have been very useful in preparing vocational students for the world of work and for living the "complete life".

FACTORS IMPENDING PROVISION OF WHOLISTIC EDUCATION THROUGH VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE

Guidance services vary from one school to another; from one situation to another. Thus vocational guidance is not provided uniformly in all secondary schools and in all situations at the same levels, all the time. Factors responsible for these irregularities in effective vocational guidance delivery include:

I. Poor counsellor- Student ratio: A standard situation should be one full-time counselor for 250 to 300 students. But in Nigerian secondary schools, most schools do not have a single counselor for students of at times 2000 to 4000 students. Where a few counselors are employed they are not allowed to practice, more often.

II. Inadequate training of counsellors: Only few universities in Nigeria, have full-fledged academic programmes for training professional counselors. More often than not, they are exposed to continued training to teach subject matter areas with guidance and counseling as a minor.

III. No adequate records kept for reference or as guide for future guidance service and as information source.

IV. No appropriate data to help students with individual problems that are related to planning, adjustment and development.

V. Non-generalization of guidance programmes at all levels in the secondary school, and in all schools in the state or country. Only a few schools offer such services and more likely as one short affairs.

VI. There are usually no physical facilities like, offices, space, privacy, accessibility and time provide for vocational guidance services.

VII. Funds, i.e., financial support are usually not made available to helpers in schools to carry out their jobs in the guidance relationship.

VIII. Denigration of guidance as a profession worthy of entry into, by youths. Most people are not willing to study guidance and counseling as a course.

All these factors in addition to others have gravely hampered the establishment and effective implementation of vocational guidance programmes in Nigerian school systems.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of wholistic education has been stated through its definition as the educational system that provides an all-round development of the learner-the mental, emotional, economic, physical and social development of the learner to enable him fit effectively into society.

Vocational guidance is perceived as a tool for achieving this wholistic education in the Nigerian school systems, especially through vocational education with effective guidance services. Vocational guidance techniques for attaining wholistic education have been listed, while factors impeding effective vocational guidance service delivery were also elucidated.

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Vocational Guidance As A Tool For Achieving Wholistic Education In Nigerian Secondary Schools

It is therefore recommended that some or all of the following steps should be taken to implement vocational guidance programmes in schools in order to effectively impart complete or wholistic education to learners.

- I. All secondary schools should employ professional counselors who should be allowed and encouraged to practice their training.
- II. A good ratio of one full-time counsellor to 300 students should be adopted.
- III. Records of past guidance services should be kept and repidated.
- IV. Adequate guidance information should always be available in the school for practitioners.
- V. Vocational guidance services should be provided at all levels in all school at the secondary level of education.
- VI. All the necessary physical facilities for effective guidance service delivery should be provided in schools,including financial support and encouragement to trainees in the helping profession.All these will go along way in putting in place effective vocational guidance programmes that will make our secondary level education wholistic for our students to enable them effectively adjust in our world.

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