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VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examines the concept of vocational guidance in the Nigerian educational setting. The paper is focused essentially on the meaning and nature of the concept of vocational guidance in Nigeria, its historical evolution and relevance in the Nigerian school system at all levels. It highlights the various procedures and techniques of providing vocational guidance at different strata or level of the Nigerian educational system.

Introduction

Vocational guidance in schools in Nigeria dates back to the late 1950s. The group of religious sisters of the St. Theresa's college Oke-Ado in Ibadan invited some twenty outsiders to advise them on placing sixty of their girls leaving the school that December. It is concerned with the process of assisting students to make realistic and appropriate vocational decision. By realistic decisions, it refers to those decisions that are not beyond the reach of those that are making them.

The importance of vocational guidance in schools in Nigeria cannot be over-emphasized because of the difficulties people encounter in searching for job. ¹ Therefore vocational guidance is necessary in helping students to make appropriate vocational guidance in the process of assisting the individual to choose or select an occupation, prepare for it, enter into it and progress in it. (Egbule, 1995). However, Super (1963) sees vocational guidance as "the process of helping a person to 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 into reality, with satisfaction to himself, and benefit to the society. On the other hand, Egbule (1995) defined vocational guidance "as a process or

programme of assistance designed to aid the individual in choosing and adjusting to a vocation". These definitions above indicate that vocational guidance is concerned with people's behaviour's in selecting a vocation.

It also means that student should aspire to enter occupation that suit their interest values, abilities, skills, talents or aptitude and personality characteristics. In fact, it is true that most often the job market is such that one has to strike a compromise between personal attributes and the demands of the labour market in order to make a living.

13 The emphasis is laid on preparation for and participation in occupation of economic and social values. Vocational guidance plays its part in providing individuals with the terms 'dignity of labour and work value'.

There is a slight 3 difference between vocational guidance and career guidance. The former cater for few at a specific period but the later provides for all times, Makinde (1987) states that career education is interdisciplinary, providing multivarious professional and academic skills from cradle to grave. Career education, college 3 education and vocational education into an entirely new curriculum permitting the education. It is this kind of educational skill we are promoting through vocational guidance.

Vocational need 1 of Secondary School Students

Denga (1986) surveyed the vocational need of Nigeria secondary school youths and identified the following crucial notes:

- 1) Need to choose an occupation of interest
- 2) To relate academic preparation to a job
- 3) To develop effective job hunting skill
- 4) To obtain vocational information
- 5) Need to understand self-potentials
- 6) To consult somebody about career plans
- 7) To develop skills for job of interest
- 8) To choose an occupation that is acceptable to parents and "significant to others" in the

society.

9) To choose a career that has a bright future

10) To choose a career that is important in the society.

1 The need for vocational guidance in schools in Nigeria thus cannot be contested.

Occupational choice is one of the most difficult decisions in a person's life. It involves a person's 2 total life because it determines his income, his choice of friends, his pattern of dress, his influence in the society and very often the amount of risk in which he is exposed to.

In Nigeria today, 7 looking for a job itself is a problem. There are a large number of youths moving in and out of offices through a number of factor such as an unstable economy and a quick changing unpredictable job market and training options and our culture belief that a persons self-worth is primarily defined by his means of livelihood, the counselor is then left in a vacuum where in to dish help for the client. (Ode, 2001).

The counselor does not 10 possess a crystal ball that can reveal instantaneous answers, but he must try to live up to the confidence reposed in him by the client.

There are some occupational life skills that student's need, which the counselor should not hesitate to give them. According to Denga (1986) such skills include the following:

- 1) Knowledge of personal strength and weakness (assets and liabilities)
- 2) Ability to use exploratory resources to reality-test personal characteristics.
- 3) Knowledge of educational, occupational social life-style options
- 4) Ability to choose among options
- 5) Skills in inter-personal relations, which 1 can be used in the job
- 6) Employability skills such as writing, applications and interviewing
- 7) Time management
- 8) Understanding the link between educational qualification and job requirements

The above skills are essential for preparing youths to choose appropriate and realistic occupations and effecting a satisfactory vocational adjustment. The important area of vocational guidance we should lay emphasis on in Nigeria today are:

1) Awareness or sensitive to work: This includes the need to impress upon them the dignity of labour and value of good work.

2) Orientation:-There should be proper orientation to gainful employment. The Nigeria bureau of employment service, ¹⁴ National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) programme is a good forum for promoting orientation and opening the eye of people to vocational opportunities and employment available throughout Nigeria

3) Exploration:- There is the need for young people to carry out field trips and excursion to ¹ places of work as the first step to research possible jobs.

4) Preparation and placement:- This will include history of occupations, their relevance to society, number of workers training facility including entry requirements, length of training, funding, bonding, traveling and after training opportunities such as grants, overseas experience, earning, trade union etc.

5) Advancement:- This include opportunities for regarding promotion and moving from the lowest to the highest grade in the establishment.

The counselor has a big role to play not only in teaching work values, work habits, work ethics and concepts, but also in motivating individuals from skill acquisition and a smooth transition ¹ from school to work.

The counselor may also help the individual by suggesting feasible employment openings and appropriate way of applying for work. Occasionally the counselor may contact employers but student must be prepared to face job interview alone. Vocational guidance provides the individual with vocational information about ¹ the world of work and job opportunities to enable them gain an insight into choosing realistically and to the public, it helps remove the nefarious 'long leg', favouritism, ethnicism, and nepotism rampant in the Nigeria work setting. (Ode, 2001).

Techniques of vocational guidance in Nigeria

A number of techniques have been used over the years by counselors to facilitate student career development. According to Oladele (1987), these techniques describe both ¹¹ the

role of occupational information in career work and the way in which it can be used. He further states that, ⁶ occupational information is defined as "fact about job for use in vocational guidance" or a "description of work and its related conditions" and information about the world of work". In Nigeria's secondary school system, for example, Egbule (1995) noted that any techniques ¹ that will be used is usually defined 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 requirements and preparation for each occupation
- 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.

Thus, at the end of any vocational activity, the participating students will be in a better position to analyse themselves in form of their abilities, aptitude and other personal characteristics, understand the nature of various jobs in terms of their requirement and condition of services, then make an appropriate occupational choice which harmonises his personal qualities and nature of job performance.

Techniques in vocational guidance like those in educational guidance need alleged parallel to the relevant educational system in operation recently, though they have a genuine application. This relates to vocational guidance to ⁴ the 6-3-3-4 system of education in Nigeria. Denga (1986).

¹² A person who wants to obtain has to obtain information about who he is (personal characteristics) and about the world of work, secondly, he needs to know what he wants to do so that he can obtain relevant information regarding what he wants to do. In order to finally assess the job market, series of cueing, goal setting, information gathering, interview and repositioning priorities, conflicting values in oneself to accommodate less ideal situations for survival purpose is necessary. (Ode, 2001).

The techniques of vocational guidance as it affects school types in Nigerians system of

education are presented below:

Primary school stage

The techniques in vocational guidance include:

- i. Awareness of self and career in the community
- ii. Clarification of self concept
- iii. Development of wholesome attitude towards work and worker in all fields

The primary stage calls for programmes aimed at developing self - awareness as well as career awareness. The techniques to be used here will primarily be autobiographical the children will engage themselves chiefly in the process of self-identification. According to Denga (1986) the session could start with the children saying who they are, the significant part about them, their hobbies, interests, their heroes, and the basis for their charismatic identification with such characters. A significant part of child's self-concept development begins at home as the child observes various kind of workers such as teachers, policemen, mechanics, musicians, and carpenters. As the child hears about pilots, drivers, steamship captains, he compares his behaviour with them and identifies himself with those he admires.

As the child encounters the family attitude towards some of these occupations he is likely to shape or think along with his parents so as to determine which are better, and more fitting films could be shown about workers on the job like a nurse, a pilot, a policeman etc. to make the decision realistic and exciting. Children may be taken to industries, business centers to see occupations in operation. They can thus smell, touch, see, hear and possibly taste occupation (Ode, 2001). His family thus constitutes a high significant group to influence his vocational interest. It is therefore, important for the counselor to consult with the parents if a child indicates that the parents are advisedly influencing him to choose a career.

Children may be divided into a group of 5-9 members to describe their parent types of work roles. A teacher counselor should be very tactful in handling the threatening type of

information about the children's parents. ⁹ He should pay particular attention to the student's attitude towards various categories of work and the tentative career cluster they identify with, so that those categories may be explored in greater depths during the late school years.

The subject like social studies at this level could be consolidated with session of self-awareness, as the child describe the work of a soldier, statesman, politicians and the like are gaining vocational ¹ information as well as revealing the vocational bias which is "fantasy" but could survive as realistic occupations. (Ode,2001).

⁵ The junior secondary school stage

The major skill of this level as Denga (1986) states include:

- 1 Making tentative career choice
- 2 Exploring key occupational areas and assessing self potentials such as interest, aptitude and abilities to relate to occupation types
- 3 Learning to become familiar with occupational clusters
- 4 The use of guest lecturers and career visits to important establishments to facilitate a process of meaningful decision making
- 5 Developing skills to combine what to do with how to do it

This is vocational exploration where students are aware of occupational areas as well as assess their own abilities and interest ⁵ in relation to the occupational clusters. Students at this level are capable of developing awareness of relevant factor to be considered in decision making. The group techniques to be used will chiefly comprise a description of the key type of opportunities engaged by different workers. Reason why people choose certain occupations and not others will be discussed.

Apart from developing tentative occupation plans, students will describe their role participation in civic, church, sports, organizations and indicates their hobbies and other after school activity.

Some of the group techniques ⁸ at the junior secondary level include visits to business

industries and firms so that the children will have an opportunity to see, feel, touch and smell occupations. The author is reminded on his first visit to the food processing company. Making use of film to study various occupations of their choice, which would be followed by a group discussion, is also an important technique at the junior secondary level.

Nobody can choose what he or she knows nothing about. Group counseling activities to be used here will include an examination of academic programme for those furthering education, the study of job titles, the nature of different jobs, duties, activities involved, physical requirements, tools used, and what happens on a typical work day. Students will be provided with opportunities and share their finding in group discussions.

The group discussion will also focus on working conditions for different occupations. The physical aspect such as working with hours of work, the physiological aspect such as working with others or alone, and the nature of work supervision. Thus the exploration stage will deal chiefly with knowledge of key occupational areas and an assessment of the students' abilities, interest and values in relation to the occupational clusters. It must be noted that where there is no smooth flow of interaction, the counselor as a group facilitator should view the groups by giving some illustrations from his own life, making sure however, that he does not dominate the group. (Ode, 2001).

In the present system of education in the country, if counseling is to be economical and appropriate to the current educational and vocational needs of Nigeria, however, it ought to take the form of group counseling. (Denga, 1986).

Senior secondary school stage

This is recent testing stage, emphasis here should be geared towards helping students to see themselves as people with unique needs, interest, aptitude, value and skills who are, to some extent, free to choose careers they think match their abilities and will also enable them make a useful contribution to the society. Children at this stage have entered a period of career preparation and as Denga (1986) puts it, will also engage in activities such as:

- 1) Acquisition of career skill and knowledge for entry-level of employment
- 2) Development of acceptable work aptitude through group counselling
- 3) Apprenticeship in realistic work roles for actual work experience
- 4) Career talks from guest -speakers combine with career visit to gather vocational information for realistic decision making
- 5) Physiological testing and continuous assessment

Counsellors and teachers of all subjects need to establish a cordial and co-operative relationship to ensure that the knowledge of what to do is effectively combined with skills on how to do it. Students should be trained in interpersonal relations with others, as this skill is needed at work.

The tertiary or post secondary stage

This level can be the "career specialization stage". Counselling techniques here should be aimed at developing scientific occupational knowledge and skills for specialized jobs. Students should be taught how to relate to employers. Techniques should be mock-interviews.

The students should be taught how to prepare; resume writing of employment letters; personal visit to prospective employers; evaluating mock interviews, designing job setting programmes for practical purpose and developing a healthy personality for taking their position in work places.

Summarily, an integral aspect of training at this stage should involve communications skill as much of students' life after the post secondary or tertiary level of education will involve interpersonal communication. The concept of inter-personal relation should be encouraged in the students by the counsellor.

Conclusion and Recommendations

So far, this paper has focused attention on the subject matter of vocational guidance with respects to its meaning, nature and conceptional or historical evolution in the Nigeria

educational setting. It highlights the rational and significance **1** of vocational guidance in the Nigerian school setting at all level.

Furthermore, the various techniques of providing vocational guidance in the Nigeria school system from the primary through secondary to tertiary level were discussed. Finally, the paper recommends that guidance and counseling practitioners should be appointed to provide vocational guidance services at various school levels in Nigeria

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