

THE ROLE OF VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This paper was on the role of vocational guidance in national development, **firstly** the paper gave a brief meaning to vocational guidance. This was followed by the **roles** vocational guidance could play in national development. They include information on knowledge of self, reduction of unemployment syndrome, emphasising national and social values, assistance to teachers and knowledge of educational institutions. The paper concluded that if vocational guidance is properly carried out, it will nurture the individual into a mature and satisfied citizen that could contribute maximally to national development.

Introduction

In the days when only few people, for various reasons could go to school and when jobs were there waiting for individuals to qualify and take them, there was probably little need for planning. This was either in terms of what course(s) to take or in terms of what future jobs. Today, the story is different. The educational system whereby every student in a given school studied virtually the same subject without options or electives have now given way to a multi-track where students have a galaxy of subjects from which to choose and combine.

The old educational system led to what Ipaye (1986) called educational mono-track, which equally led to vocational mono-track. This was a situation where graduates of primary schools went directly into teaching, starting as catechist teachers and often ending up as head masters or clergy. Secondary school leavers then entered into teaching at higher levels or went into the civil service as clerks, executive officers, clerks in companies etc. At that time, there was little or no orientation in employment. There were very few alternative employment opportunities.

These days, the educational system and the world of work have become very complex, each with many routes. It is also becoming clearer that education and vocation are fundamental and have powerful influence on an individual's life. It therefore requires that right from the beginning, an individual needs to know how a careful and well guided planning of his or her educational choices can influence his vocational choice and how any appropriate decision will help one function effectively in the world of today. For a society like ours in Nigeria, vocational guidance is of great importance for national growth and development.

In this paper, vocation will be used synonymously with career, occupation and profession. Vocation thus is a sequence of occupations, jobs and positions occupied during a person's working life. For national development, vocational guidance is very necessary.

What Then Is Vocational Guidance?

Various definitions and meanings have been given by authorities in the field on the meaning of vocational guidance. Super (1982) came up with a comprehensive definition of vocational guidance when he stated that it is the process of helping the individual to ascertain, accept, understand and apply the relevant facts about the occupational world which are ascertained through incidental and planned explanation activities.

Napier (1986) also came up with a definition that vocational guidance may be viewed as the process by which all the various factors affecting individual occupational choices - are sorted out, weighed and brought into focus and by which the young person is helped to make his choice in the full knowledge of the facts about his own potential.

Whatever definition that may be given, the important issue is that the primary concern of vocational guidance is the assistance offered to individuals in making decisions and choices necessary in planning a future and building a career. The decisions and choices are necessary to effect satisfactory vocational adjustment. It is the assistance given to the school child to help him make a wise choice to prevent his being vocationally maladjusted in the society later.

Vocational Guidance And National Development

Vocational guidance has a great role to play in national development through various means:-

1. Information On Knowledge Of Self

Many individuals in our society choose vocations vicariously. They may choose a particular career because the person he identified with is in that field. The individuals may even be attracted to an occupation because of the occupational status, fringe benefits attached, hours of work that appear suitable. Those individuals lose sight of the fact that no two persons are alike, even identical twins.

They do not have good projections of themselves and little knowledge of the occupation in view. A particular type of occupation may require its workers personality traits quite different from those demanded by another occupation. For example, some individuals may like careers that do not involve interacting with many people a laboratory attendant, a statistician, or scientist may feel comfortable to be left alone at an office for hours. In this regard, therefore, vocational guidance will help provide information on these issues with regards to knowledge of oneself. To this effect, Olayinka (1982) stated that knowing one-self and what suits one as an individual in the choice of a career is a prerequisite to job satisfaction without which a person cannot make a success at a chosen career. Without job satisfaction, out-put will be poor and this will lead to low productivity thereby affecting national development.

2. The Unemployment Syndrome

Unemployment, under employment in certain occupational areas are among the problems hampering national development especially in developing countries.

In a study by Shaikh (1986) it was found that as high as 60% unemployment exists in most Nigerian villages. Equally Napie, (1988) stated that real unemployment particularly in the form of urban unemployment, exist among the young Nigerians who have left rural areas at the completion of their secondary school education. Today, Nigerian university graduates in almost all fields of study no longer have the assistance of being absorbed by the nation's employment market.

A research by Okon (1982) has revealed major sources of these unemployment problems. In general it has been noted that young "Nigerian school leavers encounter difficulty in making the necessary transition from school to work because they lack relevant information about activities involved in different occupations. More specifically, the major problems of these school leavers arise from lack of information on job-seeking, scarcity and mal-distribution of job opportunities, discrimination and the problem of statism.

The catalogue of problems would seem to suggest a faulty educational system. This is particularly true in the nation's secondary schools where many teachers are said to be incapable of assisting students to perceive clearly a picture of the world of work (Bqjuwoye, 1987). It is in this areas that vocational guidance becomes necessary. The students will be helped to know the relationship of the subjects they are being taught to the various vocational opportunities on the job-market. A school programme of vocational guidance will be of benefit to the teacher who can be equipped with the necessary skills on how to collect, analyse, interpret and present relevant information about occupations to students. In this way, the student can be helped to make the necessary transition from school to work and help in nation building.

3. National And Social Values

National and social values change. The change occurs according to the needs of the society at a particular point in time. At a time when the nation needed indigenous teachers to take over from the expatriates, there was a great emphasis on teacher education. Education students paid no fees in the nation's higher institutions. When the nation thought of going technical, they felt that what was needed was more science teachers. The teachers teaching sciences were motivated by car loans and science allowances. There was also when the emphasis was on agriculture and how to produce much food for the increasing population.

Vocational guidance would help in forecasting the future labour market so as to guide the students correctly. Accurate information based on vocational forecast will help reduce youth vocational maladjustment. Some of the social vices today facing the 'nation are due to maladjustment among the youths. When the youths are maladjusted, they engage in armed robbery, riots of all sorts, demonstrations, and many other forms of anti social behaviour. Vocational guidance would help re-direct the youths towards a better future and towards the nation's social values. This will in turn aid national development.

4. Assistance To Teachers

A school guidance programme is of value to the teacher who can be equipped with the

necessary knowledge and skills on how to help students make a realistic choice. Through a school's vocational guidance, teachers can be helped to understand (their students and in turn help the latter develop better understanding about themselves, the entire school education programmes and the world of work as well as the relationship between these. The school counsellor who operates the guidance programme would make the teachers emphasise the relationship between their different subjects and various vocations from secondary school to university or from school to work.

Thus, with vocational guidance information made available to teachers to help them assist students during the course of their teaching, the students will be exposed better on what it takes to choose a particular career.

Appropriate career knowledge right from the beginning will help aid national development as the drop-out syndrome will be reduced.

5. Knowledge of Educational Institutions

School is believed to exert a powerful influence upon an individual's career development. It has a very large effect on occupational status and choice. There are various categories of educational institutions in this country. They include special science schools, technical schools, vocational schools and the conventional secondary schools.

The National Policy on Education (1998) stated that secondary education shall be to prepare the individual for:

- (a) useful living within the society; and
- (b) higher education.

This is to be achieved through the provision of both pre-vocational and academic subjects. The streaming of the junior secondary school shall be as follows:-

The senior secondary school	60%
The technical college	20%
vocational training centre	0%
apprenticeship	10%

The streaming as shown above is one of the areas the vocational guidance counsellor comes into play. With appropriate placement of the junior secondary school graduate using the ratio above the students can then be channelled into areas where they would be best fitted for. This type of streaming according to ability and vocational interest would help reduce examination malpractice which according to Denga and Denga (1998) is one form of educational malpractice, Examination malpractice has pervaded the whole educational system in recent years and is fast trying to cause the real meaning of educational standards to be drained away. The elimination of examination malpractice through vocational guidance would aid national development.

Conclusion

The Nigerian school child must be helped to arrive at a realistic choice of vocational interest. The need to make a good and right choice of career is paramount if one is to find happiness and satisfaction in the world of work. Certainly, occupational knowledge and self knowledge could increase the adequacy and accuracy of one's occupational choice. His knowledge of self and environment will be broadened. This points to the fact that vocational guidance is a process that spans over a long time and requires the nurturing of the individual student into a matured, satisfied citizen who can contribute to the development of this, great nation.

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