

ISSUES IN VOCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN OTUKPO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF BENUE STATE

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Abstract

This research work was carried out on the vocational aspirations among senior secondary school students in Otukpo Local Government Area. It was aimed at finding out vocational aspiration consciousness among Secondary School Students in Otukpo Local Government Area in particular and in Benue State in general. Also, it determined how adequately, students have been assisted on vocational aspiration in the Secondary School(s) by assessing the functions of the school counselor, parents and professionals in the field among others. Ten Secondary Schools were randomly selected out of a total of twenty-three Secondary Schools in the Local Government Area in which the students were already being examined by external examination bodies like West African Examination Council (WAEC) and National Examination Council (NECO). One hundred and forty six (146) respondents were randomly selected and issued questionnaires. The result showed that the students had vocational aspirations. Their aspirations were motivated through a variety of sources and affected by some factors like academic ability, parental expectations and societal preferences. The study recommended functional education and government support to school leavers among others.

Introduction

Before the establishment of formal schooling, traditional education was very functional as compared to Western Education that has dominated education today (Fafunwa, 1977: 10). According to him, African traditional or indigenous educational system refers to the system of education that was prevalent in Africa before the advent of colonialism, Islam and Christianity. It is gathered; the two religions of Christianity and Islam coupled with attendant civilization greatly influenced African indigenous education. However, it is important to know that the traditional indigenous African Educational System has since changed drastically like any other culture of man. It has undergone several phenomenal evolutions. Today, great numbers of youths are very distant from their parent's occupation as they seek to survive through their own unskilled occupation. The consequences are diverse, ranging from total unemployment to disguised unemployment after secondary education even spanning to graduates of tertiary institutions. Manpower development is a complex concept, which involves investment in human capital through the processes of education, training, experience and skill acquisition (Izuwa, 1983:4). In a similar manner, learning is that human process by which skill, knowledge, habits and attitudes are acquired and utilized in such a way that behaviour is modified (Beach, 1975:45).

The Western Education among others seek to provide vocational education with the following goals: provide Trained Manpower in the applied sciences, technologies and business particularly art, craft and advanced craft and technical craft; provide the technical knowledge and vocation skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development, and give training and impart the necessary skills for individuals who will be self-reliant economically (National Policy of Education (NPE) 2004:25). It is the popular opinion of most educationists that there should be adequate opportunity for the individual citizen of the nation to develop his personality. Therefore, there should be access to knowledge, security against unemployment, a minimum wage fair to guard against economic slavery (Oklobia, 2001:18). A nation is said to be developed when the human resources are able to exploit the available natural resources in the nation to acquire capital for building a virile, social, economic and political organisations that will ensure personal fulfillment and national development (Izuwa, 1983: 35-36).

Before the coming of the Western Education in Nigeria, traditional education was generally functional and catered for our total needs in those days. With the introduction of Western Education in Nigeria by the Christian Missionaries and the NPE revised through 6-3-3-4 education systems, more students graduate from

secondary school to discover that they cannot fix themselves in any viable vocation. The situation is reported to be getting worse and creating abject poverty on our land (National Poverty Eradication Programme) (NAPEP), 2003:5). For the sake of survival, most of the unemployed graduates of secondary education migrate to neighbouring urban centres and villages where they undertake to unskilled jobs, mainly as farm labourers, cyclists, motor boys etc. Others end up in violent crimes like robbery, prostitution and what fate holds for them.

It is in the light of the above condition that the researcher wishes to survey vocational aspirations of the secondary school students in Otukpo Local Government Area with a view to providing career counseling where necessary.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this study were to:

1. Determine what factors influenced vocational aspirations among secondary schools students in Otukpo Local Government Area.
2. Identify their vocational aspiration sources, and
3. Determine types of vocations preferred by the students.

Research Questions.

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, the following questions were raised.

1. What factors influence vocational aspirations among Secondary Schools Students in Otukpo Local Government Area?
2. What are their vocational aspiration sources?
3. What types of vocations do they aspire for?

Methodology

The study was conducted in the Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State.

Population

The population covered all the Secondary Schools offering West African Schools Certificate Examinations 'WAEC' and the National Examination Council 'NECO' as approved by the Ministry of Education's area office, Otukpo. A total of 23 Secondary Schools with Senior Secondary School III students' population of 3,500.

Sample and Sampling

Ten (10) schools out of the twenty-three (23) Secondary Schools were randomly selected to participate in the study.

The sample for the study was made up of one hundred and forty-six (146) students from the SS III classes of the randomly selected schools.

Instrumentation

For data collection, the instrument used was questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into section 'A' and 'B' Section A was to get personal information about the students such as age, schools, and sex. Section 'B' contained items on vocational aspiration of the students.

Validation of Instrument

The instrument for data collection was subjected to validation. To determine the validity, three (3) copies of the instrument were given to the three valutors who are experts in guidance and counseling, one from Wesley High School, Otukpo, which was one of the schools within the field of study, while the remaining two (2) were lecturers from Education Department at College of Education, Oju. Based on the commendations of the experts necessary modifications were made which reduced the questionnaire from three to two sections only.

Reliability of Instrument

The questionnaire was tested for its consistency using split-half reliability test. The questionnaire was used to take survey on the same population and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient V was found to be 0.85, an indication that the reliability of the instrument was high since a reliability coefficient of 0.53-1.00 is statistically accepted to be adequate.

Pilot Study

The pilot study was undertaken to validate the research design for the main study. It was also meant to bring to light any inherent weaknesses that may be associated with the entire research process and the reliability of the instrument.

The instrument for data collection was subjected to a pilot testing to ascertain the reaction of the subjects. Ten copies of the questionnaire were distributed to SS III students. The subjects were picked from the study population but not within the study sample. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Spearman Brown Prophecy formula, which made use of the correlation between half-test. This was done by comparing the scores of the respondents on the odd items of the questionnaire with the scores of the respondents on the even items of the questionnaire. The value of the correlation coefficient of the two halves was established at 0.85. The instrument therefore had a high level of reliability coefficient.

Method of Data Collection

The instrument was administered to the students by hand to ensure a high rate of return of the questionnaire. One hundred and forty-six (146) copies of questionnaire were administered.

Method of Data Analysis

To answer questions, percentages were used to elicit answers since the study was a survey of opinions of problems of vocational aspiration among Secondary School Students in Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State.

Percentages from 0.49 were classified as 'low' while 50-300 were considered as 'High' in the study. The researcher used the following formula to work out his percentages (%).

Results

Table 1: Percentage Scores of the Factors that Influence Vocational Aspirations of Students

List of First Three Factors	Academic Ability	Parental Expectation	Societal Preference	Order Factors E.G Prestige, Financial Gain	Total
Number of responses	85	42	11	8	146
Percentages	58.22	28.78	7.53	5.47	100

To determine this, the percentage scores of the responses of the SS III students on factors that influenced them on vocational aspirations were computed as in table 1. The finding indicates that, academic ability had the highest number and percentage of 85 and 58.22%, followed by parental expectation with 42 and 28.78% while societal preference was 11 and 7.53% with the remaining 8 and 5.47% for other factors like prestige financial gain, etc. The percentage score for academic ability was more than half i.e. above 50%. This indicates that, academic ability plays a very vital role in the vocational aspirations of students. These findings agree with Okon (1984: 57-60). That a number of internal and external factors within an individual appear to shape an individual's career development e.g. mental ability, interest, parents, etc.

Table 2: The Vocational Aspiration Sources for the Students

Vocational Aspiration Sources	School Counselor	Parents	Professionals in the Field	Others (Friends)	Total
Number of responses	50	40	30	26	146
Percentage	34.25	27.40	20.55	17.80	100.00

The percentage scores of the responses of the SSIII students on sources of vocational aspirations were computed as in table II. Data presented show that, the number and percentage scores for school counselor was 50 and 34.25%, parents 40 and 27.40%, professionals in the field 30 and 20.55% and lastly friends 26 and 17.80% were used as vocational aspiration sources by the students. The school counselor combined with parents was 90 and 61.65% of the vocational aspiration sources for the students. This indicates that, the school counselor and parent were predominantly used as vocational aspiration sources by the students as against professionals in the field and friends representing 30 and 20.55% and 26 and 17.80% respectively.

This finding is supported by Olayinka (1972: 45 - 46), that parents and school counselors are predominantly consulted by students who try to choose their vocations in life.

Table 3: First three Vocations Aspired for by the Students

Types of Vocations Three	Medical	Law	Teaching	Order profession e. g. Trading, Military	Total
Responses	50	45	28	23	146
Percentages	34.25	30.82	19.18	15.75	100

To determine this, the percentage scores of the responses of the SS III students on the first three preferred vocations aspired by the students were computed as in table III.

Data presented show that the number and percentage scores for medical profession was 50 and 34.25%, law, 45 and 30.25% teaching, 28 and 19.18%. The remaining 23 and 15.75% went for other professions e.g piloting, engineering, agriculture, sociology, military etc.

The medical and legal professions together had 95 and 65.07% of the preferred professions or vocations. This indicates that, the students aspired mainly for vocations that are highly rated in the society for science and arts students respectively. It also showed that teaching with 28 and 19.18% has become more popular among secondary school students compared to other professions except medical and law courses. This finding is supported by Denga (1983, pp.101 - 102), that students at a point of their course and concerned about how and what type of work are taken to determine their social and economic status as they run after professions like Engineering, Medicine, Law and University Professor which are highly rated and valued in the society.

Implications for Stake Holders in Education and Conclusion

The study revealed that, the main factors that influenced vocational aspirations of the students, were academic ability, parental expectations and societal preference along with other minor factors like prestige, financial gain and disdain for manual labour. It showed that, even when school counselors, parents, professionals in the field and friends are used as main sources of vocational aspirations, academic ability should be considered as a prime factor among others. There is the need therefore, for stakeholders in our educational system to help students realise their vocational aspirations at the Secondary School level to avoid the misfit situation after their graduation.

It is imperative therefore that the counseling unit of our Secondary Schools be made not only functional but be established in schools yet to operate such unit.

In view of the growing trend of unemployment among our School leavers, the technical and vocational education units in our Secondary Schools be strengthened with the introduction of entrepreneurship curriculum. It is hoped that when these issues are properly taken care of in our Secondary Schools, a drop of unemployment among our youths will be realized in Nigeria.

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