

VOCATIONAL COUNSELLING AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT: THE ROLE OF THE COUNSELLOR.

ALHAJI THOMAS (PhD)

Medium Security and Custodial Centre, Makurdi Benue State

Alhajithomas1969@gmail.com

+2348055836728; +2349082446384

Abstract

Vocational counseling is an important aspect of counselling that cannot be neglected. Developing nations like Nigeria need to provide this counselling service to her teeming youth to make them useful to themselves and the society. This study stresses the importance of vocational guidance for career development and the role of the counsellor. The study relied on secondary sources and is descriptive in nature. It was found in the study that, the importance of vocational counseling and career development is very crucial in developing countries like Nigeria where unemployment is on the increase. This is because, vocational counseling enable children and youth to choose and develop careers that are not only sellable but can also make them to be self-employed. Vocational guidance comprises the provision of advice and information about the choice of a career, specifics on individual careers and career requirements, ways of funding vocational education and training, important trends in the world of work, information on the situation and development of the labour market, and advice on how to find employment or a training place. The vocational guidance counsellor work together with interested adolescents and young adults to ascertain goals and objectives, and identify vocational opportunities and alternatives. The study recommends among other things that: the services of vocational counseling be made available for students at all levels of learning to enable obtain the help they need in choosing and developing their careers in Nigeria. Guidance and counseling services must reflect the psychology of vocational counseling to make counseling result oriented. Children at elementary levels be guided on their choices of vocations and careers to enable them grow up to be useful to themselves and the society. And government in Nigeria can use vocational counseling as a way of fighting unemployment and making the teeming youth to be self-reliant and job worthy.

Keywords: Guidance-Counsellor, Role, Vocational Counselling, Career Development, Nigerian Youths.

Introduction

There is a growing realization that counselling is an important profession as society becomes more modern and urbanized. Over the last decade, interest in counselling has grown in many countries including Nigeria. This is reflected in the importance given to counselling in workplaces, in homes, in health care and of course, in schools. Realizing the importance of counselling services, the Ministry of Education Nigeria has placed counsellors in most secondary schools to provide professional help for students. Indeed, vocational counseling is

an important aspect of counselling that cannot be neglected. This study stresses the importance of vocational guidance for career development and the role of the counsellor.

The Concept of Counseling

It is difficult to think of a single definition of counselling. This is because definitions of counselling depend on theoretical orientation. Counselling is a learning-oriented process, which occurs usually in an interactive relationship, with the aim of helping a person learn more about the self, and to use such understanding to enable the person to become an effective member of society. Counselling is a process by means of which the helper expresses care and concern towards the person with a problem, and facilitates that person's personal growth and brings about change through self-knowledge (Denga 1986).

Counselling is a relationship between a concerned person and a person with a need. This relationship is usually person-to-person, although sometimes it may involve more than two people. It is designed to help people to understand and clarify their views, and learn how to reach their self-determined goals through meaningful, well-informed choices, and through the resolution of emotional or interpersonal problems. It can be seen from these definitions that counselling can have different meanings.

Counselling is provided under a variety of labels. For example, there are instances where counselling is offered when a relationship is primarily focused on other, non-counselling concerns. A student may use a teacher as a person with whom it is safe to share worries. In such a situation, the teacher uses counselling skills, but does not engage in an actual counselling relationship. The teacher counsels but is not a counselor (Ali, 2008).

The Federal Employment Agency plays a key role in integrating young people into the workplace and training system, as it offers vocational guidance and career counselling to youth and adults. The Agency compiles information on the supply and demand of training places and jobs in a variety of ways, including job and employment listings on the Internet; advertisements in printed media; and the job and training placement services of employment offices. The Employment Agency can also assign the placement task to private labour market service providers. The authorities providing basic income support for jobseekers support young people eligible for benefits in being placed in work and training.

Counsellor- refers to a Professional with skills of helping people deal with challenges in their lives by creating a relationship with them.

Vocational Guidance

Vocational guidance is geared towards young people and adults. In particular, vocational guidance comprises the provision of advice and information about the choice of a career, specifics on individual careers and career requirements, ways of funding vocational education and training, important trends in the world of work, information on the situation and development of the labour market, and advice on how to find employment or a training place (Egbochuku, 2008). The vocational guidance counsellors work together with interested adolescents and young adults to ascertain goals and objectives, and identify vocational opportunities and alternatives.

Young people wishing to study can avail of special study advisory services at their local employment offices. One-on-one meetings can be arranged with vocational guidance counsellors at the employment offices to discuss the choice of study programme, entry requirements and other requirements of the degree courses, employment prospects and financing schemes.

Labour Market Advice

Labour market advisory services provided by the Employment Agency focus on employers, and aim to support and assist employers fill vacant jobs and training places. This is achieved by providing advice and information particularly with regard to the current situation and trends in professions and the labour market, job structures, working conditions and work time, in-company initial and continuing training, and the integration of employees and trainees in need of assistance.

Career Counselling

Systematic career counselling seeks to have a positive influence on the choice of career and thus the future personal and professional life of youth and young adults. Comprehensive information on vocational training, the responsibilities, requirements and prospects associated with various professions, as well as information on employers, ways of accessing and funding vocational training, and developments and trends in the training and labour market help young people to choose their future career path (Alika & Audu, 2011). Identifying people's individual interests, skills, competencies and talents is central to making a reliable choice of career. In this context, information is also provided on job application processes and closing dates for applications.

Talks held in schools with senior-year pupils, career counselling events at career information centers (BIZ), as well as a wide range of digital and printed media, provide a framework for encouraging young people and adults to specifically discuss and examine these issues. Furthermore, the Employment Agency can also support pupils at general schools by providing career counseling programmes so pupils are better prepared to choose their future career.

Career entry Support Programme

Career entry mentors seek to assist lower-attaining pupils at schools offering general education. The mentors provide individual, ongoing support from the penultimate school year through to the first half of the vocational training year to help pupils transition from school to vocational training. This service can be provided for a maximum period of 24 months on completion of schooling if the pupil does not manage to make the transition to training immediately. Initially tested as a pilot project at 1,000 schools for a limited period, the positive results of the programme evaluation prompted the government to introduce the Act to Improve Integration Opportunities in the Labour Market to help as many young people as possible cope better with the transition. This Act lifted the time restriction on the career entry support programme on 1 April 2012, introducing it – in modified format – as a new permanent regulation into the Employment Promotion Act. From now on, the programme can be implemented at all lower secondary schools and special schools (Agbobu & Akoroda, 2004). This is a case in developed nations but in Nigeria, no specific policy has been made to address this need.

Placement

Training and employment are key to ensuring individuals can safeguard their livelihoods. For this reason, free public training and job placement services are an important part of the vital services provided by the state. The placement of people in jobs and training is the task of local employment offices, authorities providing basic income support for jobseekers, and of labour market service providers mandated by the former two to perform such tasks.

The sooner placement efforts can commence, the more successful the possible outcome. Therefore, it is advisable to contact the local employment office in good time. Individuals whose period of training or employment is coming to a close are even obliged to report to their local employment office at least three months in advance (in-company vocational training excluded).

Placement services in local employment offices are generally based on the systematic compilation of a career biography and the resulting professional knowledge, skills and talents. Job opportunities are then identified based on this profile. An integration agreement is concluded between the client and job officer. This agreement is binding for the jobseekers/ training-seekers and the career advisors/job placement officers, and defines the desired integration objective, planned course of action, steps required towards professional integration and the next scheduled meeting. The integration agreement is revised and adapted where necessary throughout the course of the placement process.

Jobseekers and training-seekers can browse the online employment listings of the Employment Agency for information on vacancies, and can also use this platform to publish their application profile. The profile may also be published anonymously if the candidate so desires.

Vocational guidance, career counselling and placement services for employable individuals in need are of assistance. All employable needy individuals, regardless of their employment officer, are legally entitled to vocational guidance and career counselling from an employment office. In addition, vocational guidance and career counselling can be provided as discretionary benefits by the authorities providing basic income support for jobseekers (Agbonigiasede, 2007). The authorities providing basic income support for jobseekers are responsible for the placement of recipients of long-term unemployment benefit. Nigerian government has done nothing or a little in this area.

The authorities providing basic income support for jobseekers can assign the Federal Employment Agency centers that are responsible for the promotion of employment the task of placing in training training-seekers who are entitled to benefits.

Justification for the Inclusion of Psychology Vocational Counselling in Counselling Courses

The place of psychology of vocational counseling in training for counselors is so central that it cannot be neglected. According to Parsons (2004), an ideal career choice should be based on matching personal traits such as abilities and personality, with job characteristics such as wages, requirements, prospects and so forth, through true reasoning. This is more likely to ensure vocational success. His framework later became the popular Trait-Factor Theory in

career guidance (which is still used today). Parsons created procedures to help his clients learn more about themselves and the world of work. He designed an extensive questionnaire that asked about clients' experiences, preferences and moral values. The idea of having vocational counsellors was implemented in many primary and secondary schools in the Boston area and it gradually spread to other major cities in the United States. By 1910, 35 cities had followed Boston's lead. According to Samuel Gladding (2019), President of the American Counselling Association, besides his theory, Parsons might best be remembered for emphasising that in life we have choices. If we wish, we may cower and resign ourselves to fate. An approach of this type might be justified given the world in which we live.

However, Parsons not only highlighted the importance of choice, but called attention to the significance of meaningfulness in life. It was Parsons who stressed that it is better to find something to do that is meaningful than to entrust your life to the whims of chance and the will of others.

Vocational counseling services play a tremendous role in the educational, vocational and personal-social areas of students. The service induces students to acceptable social norms, values, and attitudes. The classroom teacher regards the counselor as one providing only "ancillary services" and could be expended without causing any harm or disjoint in the educational system (Patterson, 1962). The counselor is perceived just like any ordinary teacher and does not possess unique skills in helping students solve their problems. The principal regards the counselor "as a professional rival" as far as popularity among the students is concerned. They are often accused by the principal of infringing on the traditional duties. The principal views the counselor as a disciplinarian and assigned him as a member of the disciplinary committee of the school.

Makinde (1984) says: "Counselors should not be known as disciplinarian" of the school or they all lose their counseling relationship with pupils". Students too initially regarded the counselor as a spy for the principal as he tried to counsel them. Some see him as a threatening adult. Some students dread the fact that by taking their problems to the counselor they would be regarded as students with crises or psychosis. The counselor himself is confused amidst the conflicting expectations of his various publics and does not know which way to go.

The school guidance counselor, Nwachukwu (2007) says: "the counselor is all of the following:

A helping professional, a specialized problem developer, a professional re-enforcer of achievements, a psychological clinician, a counselor, a student advocates, a facilitator and an encourager" she summarizes the multiple responsibilities of the school counselor as that of "a trained helping professional who works in the school alongside with the teachers to give a steady planned, designed help with techniques and skills of helping profession to assist the learner make the optimum use of his education and life. The practices cover all school activities within and beyond the school walls to enforce adequate learning with functional relevance and development of help to weaken and dislodge the goal achievement hindrances.

There are however difficulties in making career choices among students today. These problems may be due to the fact that, many students are naturally handicap and therefore cannot go for certain careers of their choices, environment could also play a role to many students and the absence of guidance and career services could also be a factor to yet many other students. Guidance and career services therefore become not only important but also necessary.

For instance, referral services could be offered to a student which has been identified by a counselor to have possessed competencies in a particular field of human endeavor in order to help such a student to develop his potentials to maturity in the area that he or she can be more effective. Akume et al (2008) assert that, referral services is the act of directing, recommending, or transferring a client (student) to another professional or colleague of higher reputability based on above, the researcher wants to come out with empirical based rationale for explaining the observed social maladjustment problems of students in the secondary schools in Gboko local government Area (Akume et al, 2008).

Similarly, follow-up services could be given to a student by keeping track of his development in a particular area. This could be in form of providing them with current information in the area of his interest and potentials to help the student to properly and successfully navigate into his future. According to Mutie, & Ndambuki, (1999) follow-up services implies having knowledge of one's movement, activities or behavior. Keeping track of what is happening or what one is doing probably after undergoing some training or experience.

In another development, the information services have a great impact on student's career choices. This helps the students to have adequate, time appropriate and undistorted information to the student or client by the counselor to help him or her to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow in his career development commenting on this Lannap (qtd in Akume et al, 2008) said that, information services helps the youth to meet the challenges of today, and tomorrow in spite of the growing complicity and technical advancement.

More so, orientation services can help the students to overcome the challenging factor of environment in career choice of students. Deliberating on this (Akume et al, 2008) submitted that, transition to a new environment affects the social and psychological or emotional status of an individual. Orientation service is therefore, relevant for student entering secondary school or even tertiary institution to help the student properly adjust and focus on his or her career development.

Recommendations

The study recommends among other things that:

- i. The services of vocational counseling be made available for students at all levels of learning to enable obtain the help they need in choosing and developing their careers in Nigeria.
- ii. Guidance and counseling services must reflect the psychology of vocational counseling to make counseling result oriented.
- iii. Children at elementary levels be guided on their choices of vocations and careers to enable them grow up to be useful to themselves and the society.

- iv. Government in Nigeria can use vocational counseling as a way of fighting unemployment and making the teaming youth to be self-reliant and job worthy.

Conclusion

The importance of vocational counseling and career development is very crucial in developing countries like Nigeria where unemployment is on the increase. This is because, vocational counseling enable children and youth to choose and develop careers that are not only sellable but can also make them to be self-employed. A genuine application of vocational counseling in schools has a lot of potentials thus can never be overemphasized in developing nations like Nigeria. It is important that, a vocational counselor is acquainted with the psychology of vocational counseling. This is to enable him or her be able to meet the psychological needs of the clients. Thus, there is every need for the inclusion of psychology of vocational counseling in counseling courses.

References

- Agbobu, D.A & Akoroda, L.O.(2004). Vocational Technical Education Funding, Associations Organisations, Agencies and other related issues. In Agbobu, D.A of Tibi, E.U. (eds). *Introductions to vocational and technical Education*. Agbor: Royal Pace Swluations.
- Agbonigiasede, E.E. (2007).The future of vocational education in the 21stcentury.Journal of Business studies and Technology Development, (JBSD), 3(2), 156-137.
- Ali, H.O., (2008). "Introduction to guidance and counseling".Unpublished Lecture Notes.Imo State University, Owerri -Nigeria.
- Alika, I.H&Audu, I. (2011).Counseling for sustainable career development. The influence of peers and parents on adolescents career choice in Edo State, Nigeria. Journal of the counseling association of Nigeria, 30(2); 21-30.
- Anabe, A.T. (2008). Towards functional qualitative fine Arts Education in the contemporary Nigeria Education System.Journal of Teacher perspective, 1(2), 106-111.
- Anagbogu, M.A., (1988). *Foundations of guidance and counselling for college and university*.Enugu-Nigeria: Academic Publishing Company.
- Borrow, H. (1983). *Career Guidance for New Age*. Boston Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Boute, V. (2002).Career counseling. International Journal of Counseling, 11(2): 70 -80.
- Costello. R. (Ed) et al (1995).Definition of Profession.Random house Webster's college Dictionary New York, NY Random House, Inc. Retrieved 26/6/2013. from [http://www.youngessay.com/paper/definition of – a – profession –180713. Htm](http://www.youngessay.com/paper/definition%20of%20a%20profession%20180713.htm).
- Denga, D.I. (1986). *Guidance and counselling in school and non-school settings*.Calabar: Centaur Press Ltd.
- Egbochuku, E.O., (2008). Assessment of the guidance and counselling services to student adjustment in secondary schools in Edo State of Nigeria. *Research Journal of International Studies*, (8).
- Federal Government of Nigeria, 2004.National policy on education. Nigeria: Federal Printing Press.
- Makinde, O. (1984). *Fundamentals of guidance and* . London: Macmillan Education Limited.
- Makinde, Olu. (1977). Current Trends and Future Perspectives on Counselling in Nigeria. Paper presented at the thirty-fifth Annual Convention of the International Council of Psychologists, San Francisco.

- Mutie, E. K. &Ndambuki, P. (1999). *Guidance and for Secondary School and Colleges*. Nairobi: Oxford University Press.
- Oketch, E. &Ngumba, W. (1999). *Guidance and for Schools and Colleges*. East Africa: Oxford University Press.
- Patterson, G. (1962). *Vocational Guidance and Career Development*. New York: Macmillan Press. Psychological Forms.