

THE EFFECT OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION ON SKILLED WORKFORCE AND MANPOWER DEVELOPMENT: A STUDY OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN TARABA STATE OF NIGERIA.

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Abstract: The study examines the effect of vocational education on skilled workforce and manpower development with focus on secondary schools in Taraba State of Nigeria. It argues that the impact of technology on occupations, the tendency of employers to set higher educational requirements, and the need for employees with specialized training have made vocational education imperative. Thus, the high rate of imbalance and shortage of skilled personnel in the essential sectors of the state can be balanced through proper vocational education right from the secondary school level. The study adopted survey research design. It employed both quantitative and qualitative methods of obtaining data. The target population of the study was the secondary schools in Taraba State. Equally, to ensure reliability, results were determined using percentage, mean and standard deviation. The findings of the study shows that vocational education or career guidance and counseling can rightly develop skilled workforce in the state while lack of it in schools can significantly affect career choice among students and in the long-term affecting the availability of skilled manpower in the critical sectors of the state.

Keywords: *Vocational, education, skilled workforce, manpower, development*

INTRODUCTION

Meaningful development in any society depends largely on skilled workforce, which among other things is a function of educational

process and the availability of vocational information services. Gengwa (2004) maintained that the primary requirement for the desired technological development and for self-sustenance is the availability of human resources that has passed through series of sound vocational education programmes. Vocational education or career counseling is today recognized as being important for all persons. If several alternative course of action can be made visible to a person, he will be in better position to choose wisely than would be without his awareness (Tyler, 1969). The interplay role of guidance and counseling focuses on the total development of individuals and the maximization of the individual's potentials. In the educational context, guidance and counseling is an assistance offered to an individual for him/her achieve self-understanding and self-direction necessary for adjustment to school, home and society. The programme is to make the individual student grow into maturity through enhancement of his/her personal development efforts (Okpo, 2005).

Over the years, the Nigerian government has been spending huge amount of money on education in order to create adequate opportunities for all citizens and to develop and conserve human resources for national development. Despite all these, it is a known fact that major national development efforts are limited by the acute shortage of skilled workforce in almost all the major occupational categories. A cursory look at many of our youths in secondary schools shows that they lack sense of direction; some are neither goal oriented nor ambitious. Thus, their choice of future career is by chance rather than by design. Equally, a situation where graduates and other categories of school leavers are seen roaming the streets unemployed calls for the reassessment of the educational system. There are employers who want to hire with the increasing diversity and a complex nature of their workplaces, but can't find people with the right skill sets they need. Many view this trend as the resultant effect of global economic recession; but others attribute it to some inherent defects in the educational system. For instance, some

institutions could rightly be referred to as job creators, whereas others are job seekers oriented which equip students with no suitable skills in the labor market. The educational system has to show some marked flexibility, if it has to be valued by the recipients and the total society (Gengwa, 2004).

In spite of the abundant human and material resources of the state, Taraba is still poor and agrarian (African Institute for Applied Economics Report, 2007, Nigeria exchange event, 2012). There is a high rate of imbalance and shortage of skilled personnel distributed across the various sectors of the state. For instance, there is acute shortage of medical personnel in many hospitals, clinics and dispensaries across the state while we have surplus of those who read administration or related courses. The same thing is obtained in other sectors. It is in view of the above that the Federal Government has inserted the need for guidance and counseling courses in our schools in its National Policy on Education. This has helped to make all state governments to establish guidance and counseling units in their ministries of education. Some schools in the state also have counseling units some of which are virtually non-existent. In the light of the above, this study examined the effect of vocational education in helping individuals develop appropriate skills and talents for their own use and the development of the state. It is based on the argument that guidance and counseling can be used within educational setting to develop the potentials and capabilities of learners, channeling or pooling it for a proper career development to be optimally utilize for the progress of Taraba state.

Hypothesis

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H₀₁: School guidance and counseling can enhance skilled workforce and manpower development.

H₀₂: School guidance and counseling cannot enhance skilled workforce and manpower development.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study adopted survey design and relied on both quantitative and qualitative methods of obtaining data. The population of the study was all the senior secondary school students in Taraba state, Nigeria with the enrolment figure of 73,641 and 1541 teachers in 171 schools averagely 23 secondary schools per the seven educational zones (according to *Taraba state teaching service board; 12may, 2015*). The (senior secondary) schools in Taraba state were divided into seven educational zones. Thus, using simple random sampling technique, 12 schools was selected from each educational zone totaling 84 schools. 20 respondents were sampled from each selected school making 1680 respondents. Questionnaire was randomly distributed to the selected schools with the aid of field assistants. In the study, 1680 students and 140 teachers have been sampled from 12 schools each in the seven educational zones (20-questionnaire per school for students and 20 randomly distributed to teachers per zone) the zones are: 1. Jalingo zone, 2. Wukari zone, 3. Takum zone, 4. Karim Lamido zone, 5. Zing zone, 6. Bali zone, 7. Sardauna zone. Of the 1,680 questionnaire distributed to the students sampled population, 15 copies were not returned, 17 copies were wrongly filled and 10 copies were returned blank thus, rendering 42 questionnaires invalid. To ensure reliability, results were determined using percentage, mean and standard deviation.

Theoretical framework

Holland (1959) in his theory of vocational choice emphasizes the importance of human needs and personality types in career fitness. The main assumption of this theory is that vocational choice is a manifestation of personality type which suggests that individuals in a particular occupation have fairly similar needs, personality characteristics and historical background. He further opine that by choosing a particular occupation, an individual projects onto one of the titles (lifestyle) he preferred as a result of his view and the view of the world of work. One is therefore required to adjust to each of the environment and develop certain skills with reference to the work

setting. The congruence between an individual's personality and the environment in which he works then becomes a determiner of vocational satisfaction, stability and achievement. The implication of the above theory is that individual's personality characteristics such as the interiors, imaginations, competence, experiences, and their overall suitability for various kinds of occupation requiring different skills be explored. In the same vein, trait/factor theory seems to be the combination of the two propositions stated above. It is sometimes called directive counseling. Williamson (1972) explains personality as a system of interdependent traits of factors including abilities, interest, attitudes and temperament. It is said that the development of the individual progresses from the infancy to adulthood as the above factors are energized and brought to maturity.

In Williamson's (1972) opinion, the purpose of counseling is to facilitate the development of excellence in all aspect of human life. He further asserts that:

The task of the trait-factor type of Counseling is to aid the individual in successive approximations of self-understanding and self-management by means of helping to assess assets and liabilities in relation to the requirements of progressively changing life goals and vocational career. (stefflre and Grant, eds. 1972)

The scientific study of the individual in this direction therefore includes:

- a. Assessing his traits with the use of psychological test and other means.
- b. Defining or portraying him in a unique way
- c. Helping him to know and understand his environment and
- d. Predicting probable success in certain ventures

Fundamental to trait and factor approach is the assumption that man seeks to use self-understanding as a means of developing potential. The achievement of self-discovery results in intrinsic satisfaction and reinforces effort to become all that one is able to become. Thus, instruments capable of assessing individuals objectively have been

developed for counseling them on educational and vocational decisions.

The implication of the above postulations is that counselors, teachers and other stakeholders should appreciate the importance of human needs and personality types in career fitness and help the students to understand their selves, their potentials, areas of strengths and weaknesses before choosing a career. Channeling student's potentials in the areas of strengths will result into skilled workforce.

The Need for Guidance and Counseling in Schools

The rapid technological developments we are witnessing in the early years of the twenty-first century, together with the forces of globalization, are likely to lead to radical changes in the world of work. In fact, the changing nature of work is already perceptible in both urban centers and in rural communities. It follows therefore that human development, of which education is such a vital part, must keep in step with these societal changes if people are to lead productive, peaceful and satisfying lives. During the past several decades a mismatch has been evident in many countries between the skills imparted by the national education system and those demanded by the workplace. This mismatch has been exacerbated in recent years with the integration of new technologies in almost every sphere of professional activity (Daniel 2006).

The impact of technology on occupations, the tendency of employers to set higher educational requirements, and the need for employees with specialized training have made vocational preparation imperative. Part-time programs are essential in order to provide occupational mobility among workers and to overcome the effects of job obsolescence (Brickman, 2009). Productive nations are those characterized by a flexible and well-qualified labor force, one with a rich and diverse mix of skills that are developed and updated throughout life (Power, 1999), a process for which individuals, organizations and government bodies share responsibility. Infrastructures are needed and mechanisms are required to help to

create a sense of commitment and purposefulness on the part of workers and organizations. This may be most effectively accomplished through the development of guidance and counseling services to facilitate a spirit of openness to change, a commitment to continual personal and occupational development, and a corresponding increase in the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to develop a sense of personal empowerment and be successful within a context of rapid change. For example, some countries are utilizing a process of individualization to help each student find his/her own, tailored way through the educational options. A whole new group of career development staff, known as tutors, are now helping each student to do this (Plant, 2000). The outcomes of processes such as these will help ensure that informed decisions are made regarding appropriate educational and training programmes for each individual, thereby meeting the needs of all learners and helping to reduce the chronic problem of high dropout rates (European Training Foundation, 2001.).

Skilled workers are needed for industry, commerce, agriculture etc, which is usually provided at the upper secondary level programmes of vocational education include general studies practical training for development of skills, required in a chosen profession or occupation related theory. Developing or investing in human capital makes the workforce more productive. Better educated people can create new ideas to improve technology that can lead to technological progress etc. Healthy people can work better, faster and more productive than people who are sick. It does not matter if you are talking about business education or educating someone how to use a piece of equipment the result is always a more productive employee. (Brickman, 2009).

Hoxte (2002) maintained that it is generally agreed that in contemporary society children and young adults are in need of guidance and counseling on a very wide range of issues. Too often,

young people find the period of transition from school to work to be a time of crisis. They may perhaps have looked forward to leaving School but frequently find themselves quite unprepared to face the realities of the transition, ignorant of the choice and nature of the occupations available to them and bewildered by the thought of the ordeal that lies ahead of them. In addition, they sometimes find that they have read subjects that are unrelated to the requirements of the occupation they wish to follow. Careful long-term preparation for this challenging phase of their lives could transform adolescence from a time of crisis into a period of planned transition that is fulfilling and exciting. Such a systematic preparation could greatly assist young adults in their task of adapting to a new environment and help to ensure that they find opportunities for personal fulfillment in their future occupations.

Fafunwa (1990) stated that mandatory student guidance and counseling services should be established in all Nigerian institutions of learning and through such services, the true conditions of the Nigerian economy and its ever changing labor market situation and requirements would be exposed to student's choice of fields and skill of study calculating in them the acceptance of the dignity and more superior options of leaving institutions of learning well prepared both as possible paid employees of others and creators of jobs for self and others in both the formal and informal sectors of the economy (p.16)

Ruth (2005) in her words maintained that:

"The role of the counselor becomes vital in addressing the individual physical, emotional, social, educational and vocational needs of the students.....to assist students to achieve their personal aspirations in life".

She further explains that opportunity should be created in the school whereby students and teachers alike can talk things over with a trained counselor. If such atmosphere is created, the counselor can make sense of one's feelings and offer encouragement, offer ideas for

coping with the problems. Assistance can be on one to one basis with personal issues relating to career, social issues among others.

In the light of the above, Oladele (1987) posited that;

"The need for guidance in the school system is to rid the society from brood of disgruntle, frustrated and unrealistic individuals"

He added that secondary schools students should be exposed to available opportunities and social expectations in the country through career guidance and counseling. This will facilitate the emergence of new breed of skilled workforce with the vocational orientation needed for the task of national development.

The roles of school guidance/counseling programme in enhancing skilled workforce

According to United States department of education (2007) career guidance and counseling programs help individuals acquire the knowledge, skills, and experience necessary to identify options, explore alternatives and succeed in society. These programs better prepare individuals for the changing workplace of the 21st century by:

- teaching labor market changes and complexity of the workplace
- broadening knowledge, skills, and abilities
- improving decision making skills
- increasing self-esteem and motivation
- building interpersonal effectiveness
- maximizing career opportunities
- improving employment marketability and opportunities
- promoting effective job placement
- strengthening employer relations

In a democratic society like ours, Oladele (1987) opined that the basic purpose of school is the education and development of all individual students toward individual fulfillment. The function or objectives of the guidance programme therefore, should among other things

centre on providing personal, social, and career counseling to promote students' emotional, health and adjustment in school.

Factors that Affect Career Choice:

In identifying the factors that affect career choice among the youths Asabe (2005) give the following:

External factors affecting career choice;

- School influence
- The mass media
- Peer influence
- Social influence and family pressure.

Internal factors affecting career choice;

- Intellectual capacity and development
- Interest of the individual
- Personality of the individual
- Sex stereotyping
- Personal conviction

According Taraba state ministry of education (2012) the basic factors that affects career choice among other things include:

- Trait factor; which is natural gifts, inborn potentials and talents.
- Resource factor; that is availability of training institution, the trainers, equipments, materials and employment opportunities.
- Self-factor; this entails self-interest and loved area.
- Economic factor; that is the cost of training and establishment, lucrateness and marketability.
- Social factor; this entails the societal value, respect and regards for such career, religious and cultural acceptability.

The above broad factors have either a negative and positive influence on individual's choice of career. However, the counselor's role here is to see that his client is able to know their interests, abilities and weaknesses and what opportunities are open to them in the world of work.

It is believed that individuals who understand themselves and their worth will become more effective, more productive and happier human beings because they will have fewer problems selecting the career of their choice. To reduce or avoid doubts and confusion, students need guidance and counseling in all aspect of education, vocational and personal needs. This is based on the premise that individuals are unique. They have certain interest, abilities, personality traits and other characteristics peculiar to them. If these personal attributes of an individual are known, he/she will be placed into a job where he/she is likely to be happier, perform well and be useful to himself and the society. The youths are leaders of tomorrow and builders of the nation; therefore they need guidance right from the very beginning to avoid under-utilization.

Effect of guidance and counseling on workforce:

Vocational guidance and counseling is widely accepted as a powerful and effective method of helping to bridge the gap between education and the world of work, as well as between school and society (UNESCO:2004).It is imperative because it provides occupational information which is valid and usable data about positions, jobs and occupations. It includes duties, requirements for entrance, conditions of work, reward offered, advancement patterns, existing and predicted supply of and demand for workers and sources for further information. This information helps in channeling all the efforts in one's area of strengths equipping him/her with all the skills required for the future work. Students are encouraged to understand the following according to Shertzer& Stone (1974):

- i. The labor force: size, composition, geographic factors, sex, age distribution, major industrial groups in the country.
- ii. Occupational structure and major occupational groups
- iii. Work trends including labor supply; population changes; public demand for goods; technological changes;
- iv. Labor legislations
- v. Earnings and other rewards of various occupation;

- vi. Duties of certain occupations, nature of work;
- vii. Qualification necessary for employment in various occupations;
- viii. Methods of entering occupation and method of advancement;
- ix. Condition of work in various occupation; etc.

Narrowing the gap between education and the world of work is thus a priority for most governments because of the potential economic and social benefits to be derived from increasing the proportion of the Population that is engaged in productive livelihoods. Vocational guidance and counseling is widely accepted as a powerful and effective method of helping to bridge the gap between education and the world of work, as well as between school and society. It is a means of assisting young people to make appropriate and judicious educational choices that will enable them to develop their potential and to have access to work opportunities that are compatible with their interests and abilities. It can also help to instill confidence and positive attitudes, to derive fulfillment from their chosen areas of learning and work and, most importantly, to inculcate an eagerness for lifelong learning (Daniel, 2006). Therefore it can be said that Career guidance and counseling facilitates the acquisition of skills, interests, beliefs, values, work habits and personal qualities enabling each participant to create a satisfying life in constantly changing cultural, social and work environments.

RESULTS

Question: Do you think vocational education enhances skilled workforce and manpower development?

Students' response

Zone	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Yes	224	214	134	84	98	120	100
No	10	20	100	150	136	114	134

Table 1.1 Showing distribution of Yes/No responses per zones on the effect of vocational education on skilled manpower development. From the above table, the 'Yes' response seems to be higher in most of the zones with 93.3% and 89.2% in the two metropolitan zones while the 'No' response is lower in most of the zones, peaking at 62.5 and 56.7% in zones D and E respectively. Therefore, since the 'Yes' response is higher than the 'No' response, it means that the respondents think having an effective school guidance and counseling can contribute to skilled workforce in the state.

	Zone	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Response	Yes	7	139.1429	56.95445	21.52676
	No	7	94.8571	56.95445	21.52676

Table 1.2 Mean Responses & Standard Deviation on whether effective guidance and counseling can contribute to skilled workforce.

The total mean of 'Yes' response from the zones is 139.1429 (with the standard deviation of 56.95445) is stronger than the mean response of 'No' which is 94.8571(with the standard deviation of 56.95445). Since the mean response of 'Yes' is stronger than that of 'No', it means that majority of the respondents believe that effective guidance and counseling in schools can contribute to skilled workforce in the state.

Teacher's response

Zone		B	C	D	E	F	G
Yes	16	17	18	15	16	17	12
No	4	3	2	5	4	3	8

Table 1.3 showing distribution of Yes/No responses per zones of teachers on the effect of vocational education on skilled manpower development

From the above table, the Yes response is higher in all the zones, it peaks at 18 in zone C representing 90%, and the responses from other zones are almost within the same range. But the No response from all the zones is abysmally low with 8 in zone G representing 40%, responses from the other zones is far below this range. It means therefore that teachers from across the zones think that effective career guidance and counseling can contribute to skilled workforce in the state.

	Zone	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Response	Yes	7	15.8571	1.95180	.73771
	No	7	4.1429	1.95180	.73771

Table 1.4 Teacher's Mean Responses & Standard Deviation on whether effective guidance and counseling can contribute to skilled workforce.

Since the mean response of Yes which is 15.8571 (with the standard deviation of 1.95180) is higher than the mean response of No 4.1429 (with the standard deviation of 1.95180). It means that most of the teachers across the zones think that effective career guidance and counseling can contribute to skilled workforce and manpower development in the state.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

It is glaring that guidance and counseling in school plays a significant role in enhancing skilled workforce, thus the null hypothesis (H_{01}) is hereby accepted and it can be concluded that school guidance and counseling can enhance skilled workforce. This position is consistent with other findings in literature. It therefore implies that guidance and counseling plays a very vital role in developing skilled manpower for development and schools should not take it for granted. But in the course of this study it is discovered that its effectiveness is undermined by a number of factors which are recommended for

further research. However, school career guidance and counseling can be improved, to do this, avalanche of responses have been received from the respondents as follows; employing of trained counselors because most schools have no trained counselors. Similarly, as can be seen from the study, many students don't have idea on guidance and counseling this is because most schools across the zones have no guidance and counseling units and little or no attention is given to vocational education. Thus, the respondents suggested that prompt and proper funding of guidance and counseling related activities including the provision of the needed facilities (materials), time allotment or inclusion of guidance and counseling on the school time table, establishment of guidance and counseling unit in all the schools, career weeks/conferences and other related activities should be encouraged in schools, career guidance and counseling should be offered as a subject and be made compulsory for all students, their exposure to career guidance and counseling will give them the basis for choosing the career of their choice and perform better in life. Also, Parents and other stakeholders should be informed of the importance of counseling. There should be a good welfare package for counselors to encourage them to put more efforts.

Equally, guidance and counseling work in school should not be the exclusive preserve of the counselors alone but other teachers should also assist where possible, as seen in the study many teachers claimed they assist in playing the role of counselors. Conducive environment for guidance and counseling should be created which range from a well-furnished office space with all the materials that will aid guidance and counseling to the mien or qualities of the counselors who are expected to be friendly, soft, loving etc. and even the good working relations between the counselors and the school management. In the same vein, students should be taken on trips/excursion to important sites and guidance should start right from the primary level. Lastly, adequate supervision and evaluation mechanism should be put in place to ensure that schools have functional guidance and counseling unit. This is where political will is required on the part of policy

makers. For instance, schools in the state capital (zone A) and few others performs relatively better than others as far as this topic is concern, this may be attributed to the fact that they are very close to the ministry of education and other policy makers while the rest of the school in other zones probably thinks they are away from their prying eyes.

CONCLUSION

After exploring the state of guidance and counseling in schools across the state vis-a-vis the prevailing condition in the world of work which is increasingly becoming more complex. It is the candid submission of this study that the role of school guidance and counseling in enhancing skilled workforce should not be downplayed. Most respondents believed that career guidance and counseling can enhance skilled workforce in the state while lack of it in school can significantly affect career choice among students affecting the availability of skilled workforce in the state. Thus, counselors, teachers and other stakeholders should appreciate the importance of human needs and personality types in career fitness and help the students to understand their selves, their potentials, areas of strengths and weaknesses before choosing a career. Channeling student's potentials in the areas of strengths will result into skilled workforce when properly harnessed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above discussions, this study recommends the following:

1. Policy makers (especially the ministry of education and Taraba state teaching service board) should be proactive in ensuring strict compliance and proper implementation of policies related to career guidance and counseling in schools across the state through adequate supervision, and ensure that every school have not only a guidance and counseling unit but a functional one.
2. Equally, government (through the ministry of education and teachers service board) should embark on massive

training and retraining of counselors to manage the counseling units in various secondary schools across the state. It should not only stop at that, but guidance and counseling activities should be adequately funded both at the state level and at the school authority level.

3. The schools should expose students to the realities in the world of work by organizing career talks, inviting resource persons who are successful in their various careers to share their experiences with the students, debates, drama should be organized frequently. Guidance and counseling should be included in the school general time-table to be taken at least once every week.
4. Students should be exposed to career guidance and counseling at a very early stage in life, this will greatly help them in choosing the career that best fits them. Thus, career guidance related programmes should be introduced at the primary level so that once a child identifies his/her area of strengths at a very early stage it will be easy for him/her to master same when properly developed. This will enhance skilled workforce.
5. Guidance and counseling unit should be equipped with the needed facilities and be given the attention it deserves. School heads/administrators should adopt a team-approach to guidance programmes where all the major stakeholders; parents, teachers, counselors etc will be involve in the process. Even where there are no trained counselors, career masters can be appointed from the experienced staff, school guidance and counseling committee can be set up to take charge of the career related issues

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