

THE NIGERIAN CHILD'S DILEMMA IN SUBJECT SELECTION AND CAREER CHOICE IN THE CHANGING WORLD: IMPLICATION FOR COUNSELLING

**¹Ibrahim Bello, ²Mustapha Bala Tsakuwa & ³Ahmad, Abdullahi
Abdallah**

¹Department of Education, Gombe State University, Gombe State- Nigeria
College of International Studies, Southwest University, Chongqing400715, China

³Department of Adult Education and Extension Services, Usmanu Danfodiyo
University, Sokoto, Nigeria

Email: bellogundumaibrahim@gmail.com, education2214@gmail.com,
abuushayba@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Choosing the right career path is becoming more important for secondary school students today. Students struggle hard when choosing a career and subject of study that will fit their interest and ability. Many factors influence the students' decision in this course; these include parenting style, coaching, interest, academic ability of the students and religious teaching among others. This paper explains the concepts of career choice, types of career and factors affecting career choice of the secondary school students. The paper suggests strategies/ways school counsellors/teachers would adopt to provide appropriate career choice to the students.

Keywords: Nigerian Child, Subject Selection, Career Choice

INTRODUCTION

The choice of career is one of the most important decisions in the lives of individuals. Individual will have the opportunity to progress in the profession more easily. In the choice of a career that is well suited with the values, job satisfaction, motivation can simply enhance better performance and commitment of individuals. In doing any job an individual's wants will enhance

higher creativity and adaption will become more easily to innovations. In general, giving a decision especially in adolescence that will affect their entire life can bring about anxiety and error. That situation comes to the forefront even more for secondary school students in the career planning stage that receive a certain level of education (Kaygin and Gulluce, 2013).

It is obvious that Nigeria as a country is suffering from poor state of education. This condition leads to poor academic performance of students, particularly secondary school students in their senior secondary school certificate examination (S.S.C.E.) such as WAEC, NECO and JAMB. To support this view, Dike (2007) posits that students' performance in the West African Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations (WASSCE) from 2001 and 2005 has declined with mass failure recorded in two subjects (English and Mathematics) that from the foundation for good academic achievement in tertiary institutions. However, this massive failure has attracted the attention of the society and community at large. However, the major factors behind the poor performance of students' is wrong selection of subjects and career due to the absence of qualified counsellors at the secondary level. The personnel that need to guide and assist the students on the appropriate subject selection and career choice is inadequate. Therefore, this study aims to examine the Nigerian child's dilemma in subject selection and career choice in the changing world as it relates to counselling.

THE CONCEPT OF NIGERIAN CHILD AND CAREER CHOICE

The phrase Nigerian child in the context of this paper refers to any secondary school learner who engages in pursuit of secondary of secondary school education in Nigeria. The word career has been used differently by writers and authorities. Career is defined as a developmental process that covers all the roles

before, during and after a profession (Kaygin and Gulluce, 2013). Career is also seen as a series of individual perceived attitudes and behaviors and integrated work-related activities during the life experiences of a person. Each individual either a babysitter, a physicist, an academics or a manager automatically has a career. Similarly, career is a sequence and variety of occupation which one undertakes throughout a life time. More broadly career includes life role leisure activities, learning and work. It is also a series of job that a person has in a particular area of work usually involving more responsibility as time passes, such as in medicine, in politics, and teaching among others (Onu, 2013).

According to Alutu (2016) career refers to a persons' professional course or an occupation which he/she has to follow over a number of years, affording him/her the opportunity for progress as well as serving as his principal means of earning a living, and in which he/she is generally recognized to have become fairly expert in, through experience. Analysis of career-related definitions in common showed that the concept career is based on the degree of success in one's work, symbol of the advancement of work-related positions and the growth of taking up stages with the organization.

The career of a person is composed not only in the duties but also the trainings in order to perform the expected goals, feelings and desires on the role of a business and promote the knowledge, skill, ability and desired work (Gabriel and Domenico, 2005). For the secondary school students to achieve their career goals they need to be knowledgeable about career choices and opportunities (Jim and Robert, 2005). Career selection process is the result of the interaction among the elements of attitudes, values and social support that the individuals have. Adoption of such a behavior pattern like choosing any career by an individual

is the product of a holistic assessment towards these behaviour (Gabriel and Melanie, 2007).

The Career choice of any individual depends on many situational and organizational factors. Making the choice of a profession means a lot for individuals in terms of guiding and shaping their lives. This is because the choice of profession for an individual is the preference of the means of income-generating, job satisfaction, providing security, having respect and success in life (Price, 2009). Career choice is a developmental process that starts from childhood in the form of fantasy to reality, that is you need to start the preparation for your career choice on a solid realistic foundation (Onu, 2013).

FACTORS INFLUENCING CHOICE OF CAREER

To many young people, especially secondary school students, selecting a career is one of the most difficult decisions to make in their life time. A variety of factors can influence the choice of a career path such as interest in a field, academic ability, familiarity and economic stability among others.

Interest in Field

Interest is the self-moving factor that makes one to stay long and achieve better on a job. Individual students will always choose the occupation that they like, enjoy doing, and derive job satisfaction in. The interest and love which a person displays for a career enables him/her to persevere and persist in the face of hazards and problems on the job (Onu, 2013). Some students grow up knowing what they want to do in life. Such students go to the extra mile to reach their dream job. Students will research their chosen career path and explore everything about it (Rice, 2006). Most students today are more concerned with the amount of money they can earn without considering their interest and ability

for the job. However, there are few students who pursue their dreams (Gabriel and Melanie, 2007).

Therefore, Interests play an important role in one's life because they determine to a large extent, what they will do and how well they will do it. Interest served as a motive which drives a person to occupy himself with activity when he is free to choose what he will do. Interests are important because they serve as a source of strong motivation to learn (Upadhyaya&Sisodiya, 2016). It is very imperative for any student to choose the subject carefully from various subjects according to their interest. Therefore, Career counsellor in the school need to assesses the students' interests, personality, values and skills, and helps them to explore career options that will suit their interest.

Academic Ability and Aptitude

Many students choose their career based on their academic ability. While, some students do not have the ability or work habits to succeed in some careers that may require more study than other fields of studies. This affects the career paths of these students (Beggs, 2008). Therefore, the intellectual capability of an individual determines how far he or she could go in a particular career. Some occupations require a wide range of intelligence while some jobs require above average intelligence. Students with high intellectual ability may like to take jobs that demand high intellectual ability. In this case, a counselor need to play a vital role in helping the students particularly those with low intellectual capability to select a career that will fit their capability and knowledge. He (counsellor) also need to provides one-on-one or group professional assistance in exploring some of the decision making tasks to the students to enable them transit into the world of work.

Personality and interest type

Personality and interest type is also another important factor in career choice. Studies have shown that students will choose a career that they think will fit their personality type (Price, 2009). The confidence that a student has can determine how far the student will go with their education. Students who believe in themselves have more confidence and are more likely to go for what they want instead of settling for something that is comfortable.

Hence, there is a need of guidance in the selection of subject so that students can choose the subject according to their interest and ability at the secondary level. Students can choose subject according to their interest, but mostly it is seen that students are in a dilemma in deciding their career. There are wide options in subjects; therefore, they are confused about the subject they should choose as their future career. The school counsellor should also organize a career education programme, administer psychological test instrument on career to ascertain the individual students area of interest so as to guide them on the appropriate subject they should choose as their future career.

Influential People

Influential people and friends some time served as role models to students when choosing a career. There are many people in students' lives that influence their career decisions. Most of the time, role models and friends play a big role, through coaches and teachers can also have a huge impact on a student's life (Dehghani and Hamideh, 2011). Teachers and coaches can help students to do better in school, to get into college or to get on a better path. Academic or athletic coaches as well as school counsellors are role models for students and also play a big part in molding future generations. Coaches help prepare young men and women for the challenges outside of high school by exposing

them to challenges on the job including situations in and out of the classroom (Jim and Robert, 2005). A bad role model or coach can have negative influence leading to bad life choices, while a good role model or coach can have positive influence leading to good decisions with regard to right choice of a career. Since school counsellor served as a role model to students in the choice of any career path. He (counsellor) needs to guide them correctly on how to choose a suitable future career.

Family Business

The family is also considered to be an influential party in students' choice of career. Most of the time, parents play an important role in students' lives. A child whose parents own and operate small businesses may want or feel obligated to follow in the parents' footsteps (James and Robert, 2007). Students may consider the ease of life that a family is available to them because the job would be available to them on graduation from school and they could hold a high position within the business, and that they might own and operate the business one day. These students often work in the family business, experiencing all of what their parents go through in the day to day operation of the business and this can have a positive or negative effect on the students (Osa-edoh and Alutu, 2011). In choosing a career path, the counsellors are in better position to help students choose effectively. Hence parents should leave the sensitive assignment of career guidance to the school guidance counsellor who is a professional.

Economic Stability

Many students believe that to live a comfortable lifestyle they need to be economically stable. When these students look into a career path, they seek out the higher salary jobs or they look for career that involves the most job security (Dehghani and Hamideh, 2011). The financial aspects that students consider

include high earning potential, benefits, and opportunities for advancement (Beggs, 2008). Many students think they need a high paying job to make it in society. Along with stability during their career, some students may even look ahead to retirement. Students want to make sure they are secured for the rest of their lives, and may look into careers that have benefits to help them in the long run (Rogers and Glendon, 2008). The school counsellor needs to expose the career path that has job security to the students particularly, senior secondary students. Since, most of them need to be economically stable.

Gender

Both men and women do experience career-related stereotypes. Gender is a factor included in multiple career development theories and approaches which include social learning and multicultural career counselling. The way students view themselves as individuals may influence both the opportunities and barriers they perceive as they make career decisions (Omrod, 2004). Studies have shown that young men and women have different styles when it comes to choosing a career (Price, 2009). Price opine that men have a more liberal and progressive style of thinking. While women prefer a hierarchical style of thinking. The school counsellor is expected to give a multicultural career counselling to the students to enable them adjust to some of their perception especially, when it comes to choice of a career path between men and women.

Culture

Racial, ethnic and religious background, as well as the culture of an individual's regional area, local community, and extended family, may impact career decisions. According to Denga, (1990), students' culture often shapes their values and expectations as they relate to many parts of their lives, including jobs and careers. Multicultural career counselling has emerged as a specialized field

to take these influences into consideration when counselling clients and students. Having awareness of the values and expectations of culture may help the students to understand how they make their career choices.

Choice of subject combination

This has to do with relating one's chosen subjects to his future career ambitions. Subjects offered in schools have career implication. Many students are not aware of the subjects they are to offer at the senior secondary school level. Right subject combinations and proper placement in to classes have direct influence in determining one's choice of career. However, wrong subject selection by the students leads to lack of self-actualization as well bring about academic failure and career dropouts which are threat to the society (Onu, 2013). The school counsellor need to guide the students on appropriate career choice and subject combinations for proper placement.

DILEMMA IN SUBJECT SELECTION AND CARRER CHOICE

Career is a very important aspect in one's life. Choosing a career in a particular stream or profession has a long lasting impact on students' future. It is very imperative for any student to choose the subject carefully from various subjects according to their interest. The choice of right subject is one of the most vital decisions. Most students on completing their secondary school education are confused about deciding on right career path. Hence selecting the right subject/course of study, which can serve as their career after secondary school is not an easy task.

COUNSELLING IMPLICATIONS

Counsellors, parents, as well as school administrators should know that each student has his/her own needs at different stage in life. The problems of the students can be solved when counsellors and parents begin to work with the natural tendencies

possessed by the child rather than working against them by providing a secured environment that will make the child use his/her senses they should not hinder the curiosity of the child on the available career he chooses to partake at any given time. In this order parents/counsellors should be made aware that each child has his/her own needs, interest, aptitude and readiness at a giving stage and these conceptions are subject to change based on interactive situations. Therefore, counsellors and parents have greater role to play in shaping the behaviour of students with regard to the issue of subject selection and career choice. They need to apply adequate counselling techniques that will reinforce and regulate the dilemma in students' subject selection and career choice especially at the secondary school level.

Students should be guided on matters relating their chosen subjects for future career ambitions. This is because subjects offered in schools have career implications. Many students are not always aware of the subjects they should offer at the senior secondary school level but only choose a subject/career for the mere reason that their friends are doing that course or subjects. A right subject combination and proper placement in to classes have direct influence in determining one's choice of career. Counsellors are capable of providing educational, persona-social and vocational counselling and guidance that would assist students in choosing the right career. Therefore, if an individual explores his abilities, capabilities, personality traits, interest, aptitude and other characteristics and utilizes them in making a choice, there would be minimal dissatisfaction.

The Way Forward

There is the need for secondary schools to employ professional counsellors. It is pertinent that the counsellors be equipped with the right skills and techniques for effective discharge of their duties.

There is urgent need for every secondary school in Nigeria to engage qualified school counsellors that will employ their expertise knowledge and skills through the administration of psychological tests and instruments to determine the aptitude and interest of students that would help them make the right career decisions.

Career talk/awareness should be organized in schools from time to time by school counsellors/teachers on appropriate career choice to the students. School administrators in collaboration with school counsellors as well as parents should help the students in selecting subject combinations suitable for their interest and academic ability.

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