

SUSTAINING OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION FOR CAREER CHOICE AND DEVELOPMENT IN STUDENTS OF TECHNICAL COLLEGES IN ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study takes on the issue of sustaining occupational information for career choice and development in students of technical colleges in Enugu State, Nigeria. The method adopted for this study was the survey design and the population included were all final year students of the three government technical colleges in Enugu State of Nigeria. The technical colleges were sampled as follows: Government Technical College, Enugu (156 students); Government Technical College, Nsukka (148 students); and Government Technical College, Akpugoeze (132 students). Four research questions were raised for the study. A total of 32 structured questionnaire were developed to elicit information from the respondents. The data gathered were analysed using mean and standard deviation. The findings of the study revealed that occupational information helps students make better career choice through exposure and knowledge gained on world of work. Environment, personality of the students, qualities of occupation and opportunities available, influence career choice of technical college students. The career resource library, programmes, seminars, workshops and vocational college counsellor are sources of career information. It is recommended that students should find sources on career information especially from online and vocational college counsellors before making any career choice or occupations to match their personalities and abilities.

Keyword: Sustaining, Occupational information, career choice, development, and students.

1. INTRODUCTION

Choice of career is a lifelong process of decision-making in which the students seek to find the optimal link between their careers preparation, goals and the realities of the world of work. The choice of career is one of the most difficult decisions students are confronted with. Very often the circumstances surrounding the decision-making process are so complex that the individual is almost at the verge of making a mistake. Choice is the willingness to select from possible alternatives. Students tend to make decisions, which they hope will best facilitate their progress, which appear attractive to them. Yet a mistake in choice is often devastating in its psychological consequences on the personality of the individual. There are usually conflicts which prevail on students as they begin to make choices of career. There are conflicts between an individual's choice of a career and the job his academic qualification can carry and permit him to do. A career is the sum total of paid and unpaid work, learning and life roles one undertakes throughout his or her life. The term 'career' was traditionally associated with paid employment and referred to a single occupation. In today's world of work the term 'career' is seen as a continuous process of learning and development. A career is often composed of the jobs held, titles earned and work accomplished over a long period of time, rather than just referring to one position.

According to SBI (2007) Career development involves the acquisition of self-knowledge about interests, abilities, and attributes; educational and occupational exploration; and planning that combines self-knowledge and occupational knowledge in making career choices. Career development involves managing a career either within or between organizations. It also includes learning new skills, and making improvements to help somebody in his or her career. Career development is an ongoing, lifelong process to help somebody learn and achieve more in his or her career. A career development plan is a way to set future goals for progression in a chosen career. The career development plan might be something an employee creates on his or her own, or he might do it with the assistance of a career counsellor, or even a present employer. Creating a list of goals, along with strategies for achieving those goals and a desired completion date, can be a step in the right direction when trying to improve a career (WiseGEEK 2013).The primary purpose of career development according to Erin O. S. (2013), activities is to enhance job performance. Some professionals might opt for a career development exercise that introduces new and innovative skills, and others might choose to participate in an information session. Either way, the point of these activities is to improve job performance.

Ready access to usable career information is a crucial component of successful career decision making (Patton and McCrindle 2001).Occupational choice is the right to choose an occupation liberally without demands from external influences. This means that there should be no government conditions on the occupation one chooses to take. Restrictions can however occur on very narrow limits, such as qualifications of the individual (Richie, 2013). In addition, administrators, teachers, and policymakers use occupational information to make decisions about program offerings, curriculum, and resource allocation and about improving linkages with employers (Sommers 2000). Therefore, there is the need for accessible, accurate, well-organized information sources and the critical role of practitioners in guiding individuals in the interpretation and use of occupational information.

Studies of Johnson (2000) and Toepfer (1999) have shown that many:

- have only a shallow understanding of how school relates to the real world and limited awareness of the skills and knowledge needed for career success, are heavily influenced by the belief that schoolwork must be specifically career related to be relevant, and
- have a limited sense of how to develop skills and knowledge and the usefulness of career information in this process.

Adolescents also need assistance in using career information. Kennedy, Christian, and Bell (1999) concluded that adolescents have unrealistic expectations and inconsistencies in their views for their future. A study of British students Foskett and Hemsley-Brown (1999) found that they base their understanding of careers and work on images from personal contact with a job or work, adults, and the media. In a study of Canadian adolescents Julien (1999), 60% found it difficult to obtain the career information they needed; 40% had to go to too many places; 40% did not know where to go; and 25% did not feel confident asking for information.

Family and friends are sources of useful occupational information and also non-college-bound students rely more on social networks than on school-based information services. In particular, parents have an important influence on career choice. However, although parents seem to understand the usefulness of career information sources for their children's career development, many may not know how to take advantage of these resources (Trusty and Watts 1996). Choice of information sources and perception of their usefulness varies depending on such factors as age, gender, socioeconomic status, family circumstances, and cognitive maturity (Jordan and Pope 2001; National Career Development Association [NCDA] 2000; Patton and McCrindle 2001; Trusty and Watts 1996).

- Explore the At the technical college level the students should be able to educational and training requirements of various work roles.
- Acquire knowledge of classification systems and Career ladders
- Discover how key personnel in selected work roles could become information resources and/ or role models explore how trends and work opportunities in various economic/ work sectors affect the nature and structure of work roles.
- Understand how a variety of factors (e.g. supply and demand for workers , demographic changes, environmental conditions, geographic location) affect work opportunities
- Understand how labour market information (profiles, statistics, etc) should be used when making life and work decisions.
- Explore a variety of work alternatives.

In addition to activities that help individuals acquire these competencies, O'Reilly (2001) suggests that career information can be a valuable asset in career decision making only if it is grounded in meaning for the user. She suggests that practitioners guide individuals in "interrogating" the information, using an additional set of questions beyond the in-depth analysis of personal aptitudes, values, and interests and the study of what job or occupation description best matches those personal interests and aptitudes.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The issue of choice of career among technical college students calls for concern as most do make serious mistakes in making choices. Many graduates of technical colleges have made wrong choices of career and now too late to correct. Career choice is a lifelong process of decision-making in which the students seek to find the optimal link between their careers

preparation, goals and the realities of the world of work. The choice of career is one of the most difficult decisions students are confronted with. Wrong choice of career can lead to unemployment. If a student chooses a career that his or her academic ability cannot permit him or her to carry; he or she may finally be a dropout or unskilled, which leads to unemployment. Consequently, mistake in career choice is often devastating in its psychological consequences on the personality of the individual. Current, accurate occupational information is a crucial component of successful career decision making, and more and more career information should be available for students to access. Occupational information is full range of information about labour market conditions and trends, including employment and unemployment, industry and occupational employment and wages, labour market projections, individual workers or job seekers, and providers of education and training (Sommers 2000). Also included is information about specific industries, occupations, and careers, such as qualifications, job duties, educational requirements, working conditions and work settings, compensation, employers, and current job vacancies (O'Reilly 2001; Sommers 2000).

1.2 Purpose of the study

Specifically this study intends to:

- a) Find out the roles of occupational information on the career choice among students of technical colleges.
- b) Identify the factors affecting career choice of students of technical colleges.
- c) Find the sources of information on career choice for students of technical colleges.
- d) Identify challenges of career choice among students of technical colleges.

1.3 Research questions

- a) What are the roles of occupational information on the career choice among students of technical colleges in Enugu State?
- b) What are the factors affecting career choice of students of technical colleges?
- c) What are the sources of information on career choice for students of technical colleges?
- d) What are the challenges of career choice among students of technical colleges?

2. METHODOLOGY

The design adopted for this study was the survey and the population included all final year students of the three government technical colleges in Enugu State of Nigeria. These technical colleges include: Government Technical College, Enugu (156 students); Government Technical College, Nsukka (148 students); and Government Technical College, Akpugoeze (132 students). The entire population is 436 students cutting across all the trade options.

2.1 Sample and Sampling Technique

Random sampling technique was used to select 109 students as the respondents. Government Technical College, Enugu (39 students); Government Technical College, Nsukka (37 students); and Government Technical College, Akpugoeze (33 students). The sampling was done in their general class, English language. This figure is 25% of the population.

2.2 Instrument for Data Collection

A structured questionnaire containing 32 items were generated for the study based on the research questions. The questionnaire items were divided into three sections. Section 'A' has six Items and sought to elicit information on the roles of occupational information on the career choice among students to answer research question one while 'B' has eleven items and is on the factors affecting career choice and to answer research question two. Section 'C' has seven items to address the issue on the sources of information on career choice while section 'D' addressed challenges of career choice among students of technical colleges in Enugu State to answer research questions three and four respectively.

2.2.1 Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The instrument was face validated by two experts in the department of Science and Technology Education of the University of Lagos. To determine the reliability of the instrument it was administered on 20 lecturers in the Department of Science and Technical Education, Ebonyi, State University of Science and Technology, Abakaliki, Ebonyi State of Nigeria. The instrument was constructed on four point scale, strongly agreed (4), agreed (3), disagreed (2) and strongly disagreed (1). The result of the reliability coefficient showed 0.71

2.3 Procedure for data collection and analysis

The instrument was administered on the respondents and collected by the researcher himself. The mean was the statistical tool used for the analysis. Any mean equal to or above 2.50 was accepted while mean below 2.50 was disagreed with.

3 RESULT

Research Question 1: What are the roles of occupational information on the career choice among students of technical colleges?

Table 1: Responses of the respondents on the roles of occupational information on the career choice of students of technical colleges.

S/NO	ITEMS	SD	MEAN	REMARK
1.	Occupational information helps students make right choice of career.	0.68	3.03	Agreed
2.	Knowledge of occupations exposes the students to the job requirement.	0.73	2.79	Agreed
3.	Inadequate occupational information makes student choose career wrongly.	0.72	2.89	Agreed
4.	Occupational information helps students understand the world of work and the relationship between personal attributes and interests and career choice.	0.58	3.00	Agreed
5.	Occupational information exposes students to choices about education, career paths, and specific jobs.	0.70	2.98	Agreed
6.	Occupational information helps to make decisions on program offerings, curriculum, and resource allocation and about improving linkages with employers.	0.80	2.76	Agreed

Table 1 revealed that all the respondents agreed with all the items on the roles of occupational information on the career choice. This shows that Occupational information helps students

make right choice of career, exposes the students to the job requirement, and understand the world of work.

Based on the result, occupational information helps students to make right choice of career, exposes the students to the job requirement, and understand the world of work and the relationship between personal attributes and interests and career choice.

Research Question 2.What are the factors affecting career choice of technical college students

Table 2. Reponses of the respondents on the factors affecting career choice of technical college students.

S/NO	ITEMS	SD	MEAN	REMARK
7.	Environment affects career choice of technical college students.	0.63	3.67	Agreed
8.	Personality of the students affects their career choices	0.55	3.22	Agreed
9.	Parents' educational background.	0.68	2.68	Agreed
10.	Qualities of occupation.	0.78	2.56	Agreed
11.	Opportunities available.	0.60	3.00	Agreed
12.	Peer group.	0.78	2.61	Agreed
13.	Health of the student.	0.73	2.72	Agreed
14.	Religion of the student	0.81	2.11	Disagreed
15.	Culture of the student.	0.77	2.31	Disagreed
16.	Professional bodies.	0.56	3.02	Agreed
17.	Parent's occupation.	0.69	2.65	Agreed

Table 2, revealed that the respondents agreed that all the items except item numbers 14 and 15 are factors affecting career choice of technical college students. Items numbers 14 and 15 are factors that do not affect career choice of technical college students. Therefore, factors affecting career choice of technical college students include environment, personality, qualities and the availability of opportunity.

Research Question 3: What are the sources of information on career choice for students of technical colleges?

Table 3: Response of the respondents on the sources of information on career choice for students of technical colleges

S/NO	ITEMS	SD	MEAN	REMARK	
18.	The Career Resource Library.	0.54	2.87	Agreed	
19.	Programmes, Seminars and workshops.		0.61	2.77	Agreed
20.	Job search.	0.73	2.61	Agreed	
21.	Professional bodies.	0.66	2.71	Agreed	
22.	Media.	0.71	3.01	Agreed	
23.	College vocational counsellor.	0.80	2.54	Agreed	
24.	The home	0.70	3.01	Agreed	

From the table above it can be inferred that the respondents agreed with all the items as being sources of career choice for technical college students. Item number 23 has a low mean which

means that probably students don't get enough occupational information from the school counsellors. Therefore, the sources of information on career choice for technical college students include the Career Resource Library, Programmes, Seminars and workshops and vocational college counsellor. However, this has a very low mean value which means that probably the students don't get enough occupational information from the school counsellors or that they do not source out information for students.

Research Question 4. What are the challenges of choice of career among students of technical colleges?

Table 4: Responses of the respondents on the challenges of choice of career among students of technical colleges

S/NO	ITEMS	SD	MEAN	REMARK
25.	Inadequate information on available job opportunities	0.71	2.89	Agreed
26.	Environment	0.66	2.78	Agreed
27.	Personality.	0.70	2.55	Agreed
28.	Opportunity.	0.55	3.21	Agreed
29.	Conflicting interest.	0.69	2.68	Agreed
30.	Parents' influence	0.71	2.66	Agreed
31.	Peer group influence	0.73	2.67	Agreed
32.	Government policy on students placement	0.80	2.78	Agreed

Table 4 revealed that all the respondents agreed that all the identified items are challenges of choice of career among students of technical colleges. Among all the items opportunity has the highest mean value of 3.21 with corresponding standard deviation of 0.55 while item 27 has the lowest mean. Personality ranks lower probably because some students who do not understand themselves, in terms of their academically abilities make wrong choices of career. Challenges of choice came from environment, Personality, Opportunity, Conflicting interest, Parents' influence, Peer group influence and Government policy on students' placement are challenges of choice of career among students of technical colleges.

11. DISCUSSION

The findings of the study revealed that occupational information helps students make right choice of career. In other words, "...ready access to usable career information is a crucial component of successful career decision making" as suggested by Patton and McCrindle (2001). Therefore, occupational information exposes the students to the job requirement; understand the world of work and the relationship between personal attributes and interests and career choice. Also included is information about specific industries, occupations, and careers, such as qualifications, job duties, educational requirements, working conditions and work settings, compensation, employers, and current job vacancies (O'Reilly 2001; Sommers 2000). Individual needs for and uses of occupational information vary: elementary school students need it to develop an understanding of the world of work and the relationship between personal attributes and interests and career choice; through secondary and postsecondary education, students need it to make informed choices about education, career paths, and specific jobs. The need for this information is lifelong, as the workplace changes and adults make career choices recurring throughout life.

The issue of inadequate occupational information makes students choose careers wrongly. Wrong choice of career has many negative consequences on the personality of the students. This is especially evident in the adulthood as the workplace changes and adults make career choices recurring throughout life. The result of the study showed that there are many factors that affect career choice of technical college students. These factors as identified inter alia: environment, personality of the students, qualities of occupation and opportunities available. A student who lives in a desert may have different choice of career from the person in island. An Ijaw boy in island has different choice of career from an Hausa boy in the desert, Northern region of Nigeria.

Some careers demand that the student has the personality to match the qualities of the occupation. Opportunity may influence how students have perceived their future in terms of the reasonable probability of a future in particular career fields. The issue of poverty has played an important determining role in the opportunities available to all. The income level of a senior technical school family may determine what career a student chooses during a specific time in the student's life; choices that will determine a large part of that student's future.

Findings highlight the need for accessible, accurate, well-organized information sources and the critical role of practitioners in guiding students of technical colleges in the interpretation and use of this information. Followings are identified as notable sources of career choice among technical college students: the Career Resource Library, Programmes, seminars and workshops and vocational college counsellor. A great deal of career information is available online, raising issues of access and user support. However, for those who cannot assess net can still consult with their vocational college councillors

12. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Career is a lifelong affair; therefore, adequate attention must be given to it to avoid making mistake in choosing it. Wrong choice of career is devastating because it can lead to unemployment and or dropping out of school among technical college students. It is therefore, very important that career information given to a child must be concise and adequate. The vocational college counsellor has to be aware of some intervening variables in making choice of career when advising the students. Also, students must take into consideration their abilities and personalities before making choice of career which match the qualities of the occupation. Vocational college counsellor and online career information remain the most assessable to students.

The following recommendations are made:

- a) Career information should be provided for students especially from online and college vocational councillors before making choice of career.
- b) Students should choose occupations that match their personalities and abilities.
- c) Parents or guardians should not force a particular career on their children.
- d) College authority should be flexible in placing students in course of study.

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