

Career Guidance, Participation of Students and its Implication for Kano, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to examine students' participation in career guidance activities as mechanism through which young adults are developed into productive, responsible personalities well equipped for life and work in today's technology based society. The study focused on career information search, career exploration and assessment aspects of participation. Thus, the findings would help the stakeholders, policy makers and educators in improving the career guidance in schools for effective delivery. Data were collected on 387 participants through 4 Likert scale questionnaires and descriptive statistic, independent t- tests and multiple regression analysis were performed. The results revealed that participation in career guidance activities is generally low and no significant difference existed in the pattern of participation among genders. The predictors were determined and implications of the study are discussed.

Keywords: *Career Guidance, Participation, Career Development, Career information, Exploration, Assessment*

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of education is to explore and develop potentials of individuals and to do so inform career choice must be made in the student's life. Students need career guidance to explore and plan for future career endeavors based on their individual interests, skills and values. Participation in career guidance enhances linkage of academic and career experiences and thus, improves career preparation and management.

Guidance service is assistance given to student in school in order to increase the quality of the individual's potentials. Adolescents in school require what Baker (2000) described as "transition enhancement assistance" aimed at preparing them for further education, training or employment. Therefore, a school guidance programme is to provide an array of services that cater for the developmental and career development needs of these young people. As summarized by Rosemary (2002): "acquiring knowledge self knowledge, developing specific career and educational goal, adjusting to changing conditions, planning career and educational programme to achieve goals, developing problem-solving and decision making skills, coping with the outcome of decisions, and enhancing social, emotional and cognitive skills".

The paper examines the role of participation experience as it helps students become more aware of career options and interests. The analysis was carried out on career information search, career exploration and assessment to match self and ideal environment.

Career Development

Career choice is a portrayal of oneself into the world of work having identified the specific occupation that one could perform best in relation to one's existing personality traits. It involves the person's creation of a career pattern, decision-making style, integration of life roles, values expression, and life-role self concepts (Herr & Cramer, 1996).

Holland's theory maintains that in choosing a career, people search for environments that will let them use their skills and abilities, and express their attitudes and values. Behaviour is determined by an interaction between personality and environment. This approach suggests that people are attracted to a given career that has similar qualities to their peculiar personalities and other background variables (Holland, 1992). Holland's perspective accentuates the accuracy of self-knowledge and career information as necessary prerequisites for career decision making. The individual's interest paves way to the understanding of how individuals differ in personality, interest, and behaviors (Spokane, 1996). Interests are multifarious in nature and express our personality, style, preferences, values and self-efficacy. Hence, people perform better when these variables are consistent with that of the chosen working environment.

Students and Career Guidance Participation

Participation in career guidance activities in school provides students with necessary awareness, knowledge and skills required in the world of work. It is a strategy for providing occupational orientation to students to become aware of what is contained and required in the career of one's choice that match interest and abilities. Occupational orientation is viewed as an important aspect of the career development process; adolescents must identify their interests and abilities, balance them with labour market opportunities and gradually develop an occupational preference (Super, Savickas, & Super 1996). The importance of providing "transition enhancement" assistance has been emphasized in the further education, training or employment of students (Baker 2000). Career guidance participation will help students acquire the knowledge, skills and awareness necessary for effective career development (Herr, Cramer, & Niles, 2004)

The relevance of vocational guidance and counselling programmes in satisfying the vocational needs of the students by helping them to explore the range and structure of occupation in the local, state and national levels cannot be underestimated (Manuel & Asuquo, 2009). Students are involved in career guidance for better self-understanding (Hiebert, Collins, & Robinson 2001). The inclusion of students' responses is a result of recognition that adolescents may be the best source for identifying their own needs and that including the student's perception could increase the accuracy of the assessment results.

Career Information

Success is more likely when individuals make decisions about what they are to learn in a well-informed manner; link what they learned to their interests, capacities, aspirations, and are then informed about the existing opportunities to which the learning can guide. Holland's theory emphasises the accuracy of self-knowledge and career information necessary for career decision making (Zunker, 1994).

Good quality career information is a crucial factor for first-rate career decision making. Career information should include relevant information about education and training opportunities, occupations and their characteristics; labour market supply and demand. Similarly, career information should contain occupational implications of educational decisions, and on the learning pathways that lead to particular occupational destinations. Career information is necessary, but not sufficient for good-quality career decision making unless students have access to the information they need, understand the information, relate it to their personal needs and situation, and then convert it into personal action, with help of professional counselors and participation in career guidance related activities provided in schools.

Exploration

Career exploration has been recognized by the Parson (1908) and Holland (1992) theories in order to match individual qualities and that of the workplace environment. Participation in career guidance enables students to achieve social modeling which Bandura (1995) described as the second domain through which individuals develop self efficacy. Various studies have been conducted in many countries to examine the level of participation in career exploration as an integral part of the career development process.

Rashid et al. (2009) have examined career development invention in high school in Terengganu, Malaysia and found out that there is adequate participation in the career guidance activities provided. Song and Werbel (2007) have examined the role of social networks in the process of career exploration in a longitudinal study among US and Chinese

graduating students. The findings indicate that social networks in job search have greater effects on job search intensity in the USA sample than in the Chinese due to moderation effects.

Assessment

Assessment is a tool of the trait-and-factor approach that began with the three-step career choice process by Frank Parsons (1908). Various assessment tools have been used to assess students aimed at helping them to make better career choice.

The research inventory focused on students' participation in manual and computer assessment in the process of career choice and decision.

METHOD

Participants

Participants were 387 secondary school students (186 boys, 201 girls) from three education zones in Kano metropolis. The sample was good enough to represent secondary school students in the state and they cut across all the levels of senior secondary education (SS1-3) with mean age of 17.73 years and *SD* 1.75. The participants were selected based on convenience sampling from 21 randomly selected schools.

Instrument

A self developed career participation inventory was used to measure students' participation in three areas of career development activities that include career information search, career exploration and assessment. These career participation subscales were selected to measure the degree to which students participate in searching for career information, exploration of the careers and match self personality and that of occupational environment through assessment. The questionnaire contained 15 items with internal consistency of .65. The inventory uses a 4-point Likert type scale (1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, and 4 = always).

Procedure and Data Analysis

All the respondents completed the inventory that has personally been administered in group session in each of the schools. Instructions were clear enough and standard testing procedure was observed. The data collected were then analyzed using descriptive statistics to examine the difference in career participation subscales. A regression analysis was later applied to examine the predictability of gender, level of study, goal selection and exploration on career participation.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 Descriptive statistics for Career Participation Subscales

Subscale	N	Mean	SD
Career information	387	10.47	2.89
Exploration	387	9.24	3.01
Assessment	387	10.80	3.54

The means and standard deviation of the students' participation in the career activities is presented in Table 1. The result depicts that career information seeking ($M = 10.47$; $SD = 2.89$) and participation in assessment exercise ($M = 10.80$; $SD = 3.54$) have high means score over career exploration ($M = 9.24$; $SD = 3.01$) indicating that students' participation in career information search and assessment is high while participation of students in career exploration is low among students.

Table 2 Mean, Standard Deviation, *t*-Values for Gender Participation in Career Guidance Activities' Subscale

Subscale	Gender	N	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Career Information	Male	186	10.06	2.95	-2.68	.547
	Female	201	10.85	2.79		
Exploration	Male	186	9.03	2.91	-1.32	.252
	Female	201	9.43	3.09		
Assessment	Male	186	10.52	4.07	-1.49	.861
	Female	201	11.06	2.96		

N = 387, **p* < .005

The independent *t*-test in Table 2 shows participation in career guidance activities among genders. No significant difference was found ($t(385) = -2.68, p > .05$), ($t(385) = -.32, p > .05$) and ($t(385) = -1.49, p > .05$) indicating that the level of participation in career guidance in terms of career information search, exploration and assessment is the same among different genders.

Regression Analysis for students' participation

Regression analysis was conducted to investigate the contribution of gender, level of study, goal selection and exploration in predicting career participation among students.

In the regression model predicting students' participation in career guidance activities, career exploration and goal selection accounted for 57.9% of the variance explained indicating that career exploration and goal selection are the significant predictors of participation in career guidance activities among students; this also indicates that desire to explore career information based on set goals influence students to participate. This shows that much needs to be done to make career guidance activities more attractive to improve the participation level among students.

Table 2 Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis predicting Students' participation in career guidance

Variable	B	Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>F</i>
Exploration	1.715	.718	20.66	.579	131.593
Goal selection	.387	.146	4.258		

Measured by Career Participation inventory; Durbin Watson =1.48, R=.761, Tolerance 9.11 & .937, ; VIF 1.09 & .06 **p* < .005

DISCUSSION

The findings have contributed to the literature involving career guidance activities among secondary school students particularly from developing countries such as Nigeria. It is clear that the pattern of participation among genders remains the same which is consistent with Rashid et al. (2009). Students' exploration on career opportunities is very much consistent with one of the Donald Super's stages of developmental tasks that characterized the stage as 'Trying out' through classes, work experience, hobbies, tentative choice and related skill development.

Vocationally, the explorative tendency exhibit within the age of 14-25 years is regarded by Super (1990) as a period of developing and planning a tentative vocational goal, and solidifying goals for training and employment.

The implications of poor participation in career guidance activities could have both short and long run effects on

the students' career decision on one hand and on the quality of labor to be produced through the process on the other. In the short run, low participation in career guidance prevents students from making considered career decisions based on personality variables such as skills, values and aptitude and so forth, hence resulting in competency mismatch.

Low participation in school career guidance activities particularly in the assessment aspect indicates the level of inadequate preparedness of students and their incapability to match personality with occupational environment thereby utilizing potentials maximally to attain higher productivity. The 21st century demands for competency and productivity which are obtainable when informed career decision is made through assessment, career information search and exploration.

Career guidance in schools remains the only vehicle that can connect students with right opportunities based on personal assets thereby exploring and putting potentials into judicious use in today's competitive environment.

The implication for the state being under the federal system of government is that it cannot supply adequate labor for federal service as well as to other organizations due to the high demand for competencies and skills in such jobs; hence the state will remain incapable of filling its quota especially at federal government level and its agencies. Similarly, in terms of pursuing higher education, there will be uneven distribution of students across careers, thereby creating unnecessary congestion in some areas and educational institutions. Careers that relate to sciences, mathematics and engineering will continue to have scanty number of students which will not help the state in its efforts towards utilizing its teeming population optimally as well as in fulfilling all its quota in federal government, its agencies and other organizations while careers involving human sciences and languages will continue to absorb large quantity of students beyond the existing capacities, which obviously leads to unemployment problems.

In addition, poor participation in career guidance activities leads to under utilization of potentials and existing opportunities. Reardon, Lenz, Sampson, and Peterson (2000) maintain that "the basic nature of working is changing. Gone are those days when one began his or her life at a company or organisation and remained there as a loyal employee until retirement". The trend of participation depicts that students underutilize the opportunity to identify their skills, values and aptitude adequately; nor do they explore the existing careers relevant to respective personalities, which are fundamental for survival in the 21st century. Identification of skills and their application will certainly reduce heavy dependence on government and promotes economic self reliance among the youth.

However, going by the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), participation in career guidance is likely to reduce the degree to which perceived career barriers affect career development as it limits translation of interests into goals and goals into actions (Brown & Lent, 1996).

CONCLUSION

The level of students' participation in career guidance activities indicates that counselors need to improve the mechanism for providing career guidance in schools to encourage student participation. Teachers, school administrators and policy makers as stakeholders need to improve what is expected towards making school guidance programs successful for the benefit of students, society and the country at large. However, the findings portray that collaboration among the stakeholders needs to be improved. Stakeholders must join hands to improve the service collectively so as to assist students to make use of their potentials accordingly.

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