
COUNSELLING FOR PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYMENT

Dr. MALAMI UMAR TAMBAWAL

Department of Education,
Usman Danfodiyo University, Sokoto

ABSTRACT

This paper discussed the meaning of counselling which is aimed at the personal –social, academic and vocational development of an individual. It further discussed the need for counselling individual student in the area of vocational development and planning, bringing to focus the specific practical aspects of vocational developments. Aspects to be emphasized upon for a result oriented education system for productive employment. The paper concluded by suggesting a marriage between the world of education and the world of work. As a way of recommendation, this paper suggested that the curricular of primary and secondary school be fashion out in way that practical skills of local crafts and related trades are incorporated into teaching and learning, also the dignity of labour should be entrenched into the education system and respected.

Introduction

To many youngsters in secondary schools, the future may be perceived as an exceeding, glorious adventure in which they are always successful. In fact, many of them have the notion that they would be able to work as managers in the public and private establishments as soon as they graduate. Many others have plans to become lawyers, engineers, physicians, accountants and even accomplished politicians.

Many youths are worried about what they will do with their lives and what kind of adults they will be. Furthermore, many of them are very much concerned about entry into the occupational world, and finding productive and rewarding places in our rapidly fast changing society. Wage employment is unlikely to be available on a scale sufficient to absorb more than a minute fraction of them, when they do eventually arrive at the labour market.

Many youngster and their parents do not want education principally as end itself but as means of getting employment and improved living condition. They are always pre-occupied with the types of work and activity that may be a vocational or vocational that will give them the significance as a people.

Unfortunately, however many educational policies of various government in Nigeria are unable to help young people prepare sufficiently for the realities of life after school. To address the problem this paper set out to discuss how individuals can be trained for productive employment. To achieve this purpose, it discusses the for counselling in the educational setting, the need for vocational development and planning in education, the specific aspects of vocational development to be emphasized at different tiers of education and most importantly practical strategies to be embarked upon in preparing individuals in vocational development and planning for productive employment.

Counselling Defined

Hahn & MacLean (1955) defined counselling as a process which takes place in a one to one relationship between an individual troubled by problems with which he can not cope alone, and a professional worker whose training and experience have qualified him to help others reach solutions to various types of persons difficulties.

Maslow (1954), according to Mohammad (1999) sees counselling as a systematic exploration of self or environment by a client with aid of a counsellor to clarify self understanding and or environmental alternatives so that decisions or changes can be made on the basis of the clients greater cognitive and affective understanding.

Shertzer & Stones (1976) defined counselling as that specialized activity available within the guidance programme of the school to provide more specialized and more individualized help to a student facing obstacles to his life as he will like to live it.

From the foregoing definitions, it can be deduced that counselling is an education service aimed at assisting the individual to discover his potentialities, strengths and understanding, make an informed decision about his future, which employment is of paramount importance.

Need for counselling in the educational setting

Counselling aid the students development in terms of realizing his strength, weakness and potentialities. An individual is challenged through counselling to increase his self-

understanding and his intellect is sharpened and his emotion properly utilized, a high level of maturity is realized. In line with this, Bulus (1988), saw the need for counselling as follows:

- It helps smoothen the transition of children from home to school. Counselling can help reduce problems unaccounted while in the transition
- The immaturity and inexperience of children and youths require adult guidance and direction. Counselling would aid young people bridge the gaps between their expectations of home school and society and to develop their capabilities for fulfilling expectations well.
- With changing concepts and philosophies, there is need for formal and incidental services structured to stimulate the individual towards greater achievements and aid to him in his development.
- Counselling can be attractive tool in changing behaviour as students counselled can make better grades or are more comfortable with life or have a more accurate perception of themselves.

Since counselling is recognized to assist individual to discover their worth, then it should have aims to achieve in the education setting. In line with this, Yakubu (2000) asserted that, in relationship the counsellor seeks to help the client in the following ways:

- To understand and accept him-self as an individual with the knowledge of potentialities and his point of strength and weakness.
- To understand the part of the world in which he lives and develop the ability and desire to understand the changing world and the future and to make ones, own contribution to its value.
- To be increasingly self-directive in making wise decision
- And plans to be willing to accept responsibilities for them
- To lay the basis for a well balanced life in all respects physically, mentally, emotionally, socially, ethically and psychologically.

The three tiers of education i.e. primary, secondary and tertiary should consider the above aims as general and on specific terms identifying the various developmental stages and needs each individual. For instance at the primary school level, counsellors should identify gifted and talented pupils early enough to plan for their educational progress, the physically challenged physically challenged should also be identified and assisted, and delinquent counselled for behaviour change. Children's various learning abilities should be identified so that appropriate subjects can be taught to them as a predatory to a secondary education which could lead them to productive employment. At secondary

level, counsellors should keep cumulative record about students and should discourage students from taking subjects that are purely for prestige, but rather the subjects their abilities and intellectual capacities allow them to offer.

Counselling in the educational setting also helps at assisting individual to make the most of their educational opportunities. For through the programme, the individual is led into preparing for participating in a life activity, which will be socially useful and personally satisfying. This can be done by configuration of abilities, goals and interest and motivation of the students through remedial and referred programme for students with identifiable problems to be assisted.

The need for vocational development and planning in education

Vocational development is viewed by Okon (1986), as the sequence of positions one holds in life time, the various choices and decision one makes to implement a life style and the ways in which work and leisure fit in with the kind of person one perceives oneself to be. It also includes such task as goals, as gaining self-awareness, occupational and educational information, knowledge about the psycho-social aspect and impact of work environments, employability skills, interpersonal skills and sense of planfulness.

Vocational development can be seen as self-development over one's life span. It is a continuous, lifelong process, conscious and unconscious from pre-school to old age with various developmental stages. It can be conceived of a continuum with definite life stages, which can be defined through their peculiar characteristics. Sharma (2007) has classified the vocational life stages as:

- Growth (birth to 14 years)
- Exploratory (15 to 24 years) with sub – stages of fantasy which may be tentative or realistic with appropriate attitudes toward work and occupation;
- Establishment (24 to 44 years) beginning with trial and progressing into a stable position as the individual begins to make his place in the world of work;
- Maintenance stages (45 to 64 years) characterized by stability in the field in which establishment has taken place earlier in life and
- The decline stage (65 onward) characterized by deceleration during the early part and progressing into one retirement.

Thus, the process of vocational development may be summed up in a series of 5 life stages characterized as those of growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance and decline and these stages may in turn, be sub divide into

- a. The fantasy, tentative and realistic phase of the exploration stage aid
- b. The trial and stable phases of establishment stage

It is very important here to point out that the new policy on education tends to focus more directly on the need for teachers and counsellors to help youths over an extended period of time with problems of career or development, especially with the need to clarify their own goals and to set rational vocational plans consistent with their personal characteristics.

There is an urgent need for counsellors and school administrators to find out on individual basis the career preference of each student that he can be assisted to reach his goal. Okon (2000) observed that studies have shown that an overwhelming majority of students in secondary schools are overly optimistic in the occupational aspiration and they usually aspire to professional and semi-professional careers irrespective of the fact that they lack knowledge about:

- The abilities and qualities needed in different occupations
- What people actually do in different occupations
- The type of and the amount of education or training needed in different occupation
- The need for new people in the occupation
- The steps to take in order to prepare and enter different occupations and
- How to make career decisions.

Findings from studies by (Abiri, 1966, Okon 1977, Okon 1981, Nwezi & Jones 1982 and others) have shown that a vital need exists that a development career guidance and programme pervade the entire primary and secondary school system. Developmental career guidance and counselling programme should be well integrated in the curriculum of each level of education and all pupils and student should be provided with career guidance opportunities to ensure that they develop vocationally relevant behaviours desired for youths. Such behaviours are:

- Appreciation of work as a valued and enduring social institution.
- Acceptance of the responsibility for ones vocational planning. Knowledge of educational and vocational resources
- Understanding and accepting of significant information or data about self.
- Understanding of the kinds of data required for self-appraisal
- Understanding the use of resources to maximize self-potential.

- Understanding interrelatedness of occupation (job family concept)
- Understanding of occupation as a major determinant of life style e.g. occupation as a way of life
- Ability to perceive and accept life experiences as reality & testing.
- Awareness of decision making as a chain process
- Ability to deal selectively with environment by modifying it or adapting to it, as circumstance require (Okon 2000).

Apart from the aforementioned relevant behaviours expected from a vocationally planned educational programme, the curriculum should be fashion in such a way that it prepares the youngsters for productive employment in which self-reliance is the core of learning. In line with this Okon (2000) outlined the following understanding, skills and knowledge to be derived by the individuals from developmental curriculum:

- Knowledge of the nature of career development itself – a process which is psychological, tentative, continuous and changing.
- Knowledge of structure and trends of labour force adolescent jobs, demanded fields, new occupations and others.
- Skills in the process of decision making - understanding of possible, the probable, the desirable, the risks and strength of return of certain options
- Skills in synthesizing of self- appraisal data and a carrier information into a meaningful concept of self developing exploratory hypotheses, testing them out and evaluating things in relation to one's abilities, values and goals.

Youngsters have to be consciously taught Values and social skills that will prepare them for productive employment after living school through the curriculum. Unless they are taught how to make intelligent and informed decisions they are likely to make errors, in assessing their opportunities and deciding among alternatives.

The secondary school as a period of exploration for youths, this is a period in which they explore the society in which they live, the sub-culture into which they are about to move, the role as are congenial to their personalities, interests and aptitude.

In the light of the above, a great need exist for the secondary school curriculum to encourage youngster to choose future work roles and to begin preparing for them. Education must explore a variety of ways to relate youngster to his future vocation and transition to adult status.

Vocational strategies for the levels of Education

There is no doubt that the demand to relate school to work is an expression of pressure by many social forces among which is rapid and profound changes in the whole social life. Denga (1983) therefore opines that, in developing nations no child goes to school merely to become literate. Most parents send their children to acquire sound skills that will enable them get a job and contribute to the development of themselves and the family. The challenge here is that interesting experiments must be carried out in and outside the school to assist in resolving the problem of divorce between education and life. These experiments that would help bridge the gap between the world of work and education. The primary and secondary levels would therefore be the focus in the discourse of vocational strategies which counselling can render to prepare individuals for productive employment.

Primary school level

Considering the fact that career choice is a development process, one can appreciate why career development programme should be offered to primary school pupils.

It is the considered opinion of this writer that career development programmes in the primary school level should make a good use of social studies curriculum to explore people in their work roles. This can be done when pupils are encouraged to learn about workers and their works in schools. Okon (1983) asserted that pupils should examine the job held by their parents and relations. They should be assisted to learn about differences between work and play. Children should be helped to understand their immediate environment, the interdependence of community life, the interdependence of workers, the division of labour and the production of goods and services in the community. They can be guided to study among other things transportation, communication and major industries in local communities, metropolitan areas and big cities.

Secondary school level

The majority of our youth can be found in secondary schools, thus the training, effort towards preparing them for productive employment should be geared towards helping them understand themselves objectively, and thereafter assisting them to explore the range and structure of occupation in the local, state and national level. The requirements for all the pathway towards entering occupations.

The training programme should aim at assisting them become acquainted with sources of educational and occupational information. In fact Denga (1986) observes that looking for a job is a job. The skill for searching for a job has to be acquired by the jobseekers.

Furthermore, Shertzer (1973) posits, that the training programmes should help facilitate the development of wholesome attitude towards work, working and workers. It should help them recognize, plan for and adapt to changes in explorations and a society. A series of vocationally relevant exploration experience or exposure, which have meaning for productive employment to be introduced. Through such occupation, individuals will not only acquire those skills needed in occupation/training, but also career decisions. Experience has buttressed this fact that many youths lack basic information and skills that could prepare them while they are still in school for the world of work.

Conclusion

The educational offerings in the classroom considered living in two separate worlds - the world of education and the world of work. Schools were hitherto planned only to prepare students for the world of education, the productive employment after living school was neglected. In fact after graduation a great number of students discovered that the knowledge and skills they acquired were not the ones needed to participate fully in the economic and social development of their communities. They found that they were ill prepared to cope with problems of modern life. The 6-3-3-4 system and their 9-3-4 Universal Basic Education (UBE) seem to look beyond the walls of the classroom by marrying the two worlds. The implication of this mutual marriage is that teachers and counsellors must plan series vocationally relevant exploratory experiences, which have meaning to career development of individual. One of such is making their subject relevant to jobs and occupational demands in the Nigerian community. Vocational implication of school subjects should also be discussed with students.

Recommendations

As recommendations for counselling to assist individuals for productive employment, this writer submits that:

- The curriculum of both primary and secondary schools should be tailored in such a way that the teaching of practical skills in a local crafts and other relevant trades are given the attention they deserved.
- Qualified counsellors should be assigned to all level of education in the country so that proper vocational guidance could be given to all students.

- The education system should be made in such a way that dignity of labour is entrenched and respected.
- Technically oriented and skilled individuals should be allowed to rise to various positions in government, so that people can be encouraged in vocational oriented courses, such positions should include political offices.
- ✓ Functional Guidance and counselling centres should be provided at all levels of education in the country.
- ✓ Guidance and Counselling should be recognized by the Federal Government of Nigeria as a specialized helping profession, so that practitioners can effectively perform their duties.

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