

Roles of Guidance and Counselling in Vocational and Technology Education (VTE)

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ABSTRACT

Career guidance and counselling processes need permeate teacher education in post primary, tertiary and adult education settings, in order to encourage learners to consider the broadest possible range of options. At a philosophical level, people need to realize that guidance and counselling must become integral parts of the VTE system and of the lifelong learning process. In view of this, this study tries to explain the rationale for guidance and counselling in VTE. The aim is to bring to light the need for guidance and counselling in VTE. The study shall further discuss among the many others the objectives of guidance and counselling in VTE. Findings of the study indicate that guidance and counseling in VTE is perceived in Nigeria to be the greatest weapons that can be used to achieve peace stability, tranquility and economic development. Therefore, it is recommended that the federal, state and local governments should provide a clear vision and mission for guidance and counselling and Vocational and Technology Education for a more vibrant Nigeria.

Keywords: *Guidance and Counselling, Vocational and Technology Education*

INTRODUCTION

The term education often has diverse definitions, which usually depends on the perception of the person defining it. Ndubusi (1981) in Abdurrazak (2012) describes it as a way of life, which goes on all the time in different societies, be it formal or informal, planned or unplanned, noticed or unnoticed, but always influenced by external and internal stimuli in which guidance and counselling is an indispensable factor. Today the economic development of a country depends on the skills of its workers, and the skills and competencies of the workforce, in turn, are dependent upon the quality of the country's education and training systems (Denga, 2005 and Akinboye, 2004). Aina (2006) recognises education as the bedrock of any meaningful development, while guidance and counselling in vocational and technology education (VTE) is the basis for any sustainable technological development programme. Thus, guidance and Counselling in vocational education is regarded globally as the basis to socioeconomic and technological development (Comfort, 2013). Guidance

and counselling in VTE in Nigeria is perceived to be the greatest weapons that can be used to achieve peace, stability, tranquillity and economic development of the nation (Comfort, 2013). It is in line with this that Nigeria emphasized on guidance and counselling and vocational education as launching pad of the country into technology age. According to Bryan and William (2012), VTE is often seen as a poor alternative to university or college courses, and the career paths resulting from VTE programmes are often seen as less desirable as far as the career success of young people is concerned.

There is an advocate reshaping the perceived status of VTE so that it is viewed as a viable, even preferred, option. Thus this will only be possible through guidance and counselling so that it will be viewed as legitimate and valued alternatives since there is a need for education systems to be flexible and tailored to the needs of learners, and for individuals to think of themselves in the broader, changing contexts of their societies. This requires a re-thinking of the relationship between different components of education. If education is to be for all, and if it is going to be accessible throughout life. Based on this premise, the study examines the role of guidance and counseling in vocational and technological education with the major aim of bringing to light the need for guidance and counseling in the area of VTE.

Rationale for Guidance and Counselling in VTE

The socio-economic changes currently taking place worldwide pose challenges to many nations. This trend has given rise to economic, political and social crises that are threatening the political and economic stability of some nations. In this regard, Giroux (1991) in Comfort (2013) stated that the rising unemployment, lack of skilled workers, high dropout rates and the changing demographic nature of the workforce have placed the issue of VTE on the educational reform agenda of many nations. Okolocha (2006) in support of this assertion, expresses that the increase rate of unemployment and the changing face of the economic, social, and political and labour market worldwide have led to new education reforms/policies with emphasis on guidance and counselling and Vocational and Technology Education geared towards helping people to be self-reliant.

The kind of education advocated is the type which is provided by qualified teachers, who, apart from the academic qualifications also have amenable personality disposition capable of radiating love, care, understanding and genuine concern not only for themselves but more importantly for their students (Borgen 2001). This presupposes that teaching VTE can only be done by teachers, who understand themselves, their pupils or students and the society. Guidance and counselling, as a helping relationship, is an avenue for individuals to achieve greater awareness for both teachers and students, not only of what they are but more importantly of what they can become (career). This is because through guidance and counselling, an individual is assisted to understand him/herself, his/her world, and the people with whom he/she has to interact. This awareness, according to Stasny (2001), will enable such an individual to live a more functional and happier life capable of ensuring personal harmony and national development.

The Need for Career Guidance and Counselling in VTE

A full-time employment of professional guidance counsellors in college of education and universities, are needed nationwide, to provide full-scale guidance and counselling programmes to teacher-trainees. This should cut across the educational, social and vocational needs in order to assist the students to grasp the realities of living and coping with the challenges of the modern time. In view of the apparent ignorance of many people about career prospects and in view of the personality maladjustment among school children, career officers and counsellors will be appointed in post-primary institutions. Since qualified personnel in this category are scarce, government will continue to make provision for training of interested teachers in guidance and counselling. Guidance and counselling will also feature in teachers' education programmes specifically VTE an indispensable for National development but is neglected in Nigeria.

Apart from the policy statement by the Federal Government of Nigeria on the need for guidance and counselling, there are a number of other circumstances that jointly or separately demand the role of guidance and counselling. According to Okon (1984) in Abdurrazak (2012), some of these needs are:

- (a) Educational changes and expansion in enrolment in primary and post-primary institutions.
- (b) Economic and technological changes.
- (c) Understanding personal potentials and limitations.
- (d) Problem of national integration.

In fact, it is our contention that guidance and counselling are essential for the goals of VTE to be fully realized and that they should for that reason be fully integrated with all and Vocational Technical Education and training programming. The need for advisory, guidance and counselling services is apparent. Some countries have no services to advise students what courses to take; there seems to be an assumption that they know what they want to do and how to do it. But in Nigeria is different, it is also important to remember who needs to be considered in decision-making processes. And what role are expected of them to play for successful career or profession in VTE

The Objectives of Guidance and Counselling in VTE

According to Ezeji (2005) in Comfort (2013), Nigeria's National Master-plan (Blue print) for guidance and counselling and vocational education explained the objectives of formal guidance and counselling and vocational education to include:

- 1) Pre-vocational education in primary and secondary schools for general technological awareness, acquisition of technical literacy and general technical versatility;
- 2) Vocational education in job specific vocational schools for the production of craftsmen level manpower;
- 3) Vocational education in polytechnic institutions for the production of technician/technologist level; and professional education in university level for the production of manpower at professional level.

- 4) Professional education in university level institutions for the production of manpower at professional level.

There are formal and informal types of guidance and Counselling in vocational and technology education besides the formal type in Nigeria. The informal type is conducted outside the school system and their students and teachers are not considered in this study.

The General Role of Guidance and Counselling in VTE

Guidance and Counselling in Vocational and Technology Education therefore, has an important role to play in raising the quality of work and quality of its graduates, increasing job satisfaction and motivating workers as well as enhancing productivity (Manfred and Jennifer, 2004). In the new economic development therefore, Guidance and Counselling and Vocational and Technology Education is expected to produce an educated, skilled and motivated workforce for sustainable development and nation's growth.

Vocational and Technology Education (VTE) is about the development of individuals and that of the economy. In this regard, Guidance and Counselling and Vocational and Technology Education is viewed as an indispensable instrument for economic development because Guidance and Counselling and Vocational and Technology Education empowerment improves a nation's economy, provides job opportunities, reduces crime rates and encourages creativity and competitiveness that enhances nation building. Guidance and Counselling and Vocational and Technology Education facilitate the adjustment of the skills and knowledge of man to the changing demands within society. Skill and knowledge as well as social values acquired through Guidance and Counselling and Vocational and Technology Education allow an individual to manipulate the natural and physical environment, making life more useful and improving sustainable scientific, technological and economic development (Kennedy and Hains 2008).

Through Guidance and Counselling and Vocational and Technology Education, goods and services are easily available thus, giving rise to high standard of living among the citizens of a nation. No doubt, Guidance and Counselling and Vocational and Technology Education is a veritable tool that cannot be ignored as it equips individuals with necessary skills for self-employment and ability to employ others for the development of a nation. It is in recognition of the changing role of Guidance and Counselling and Vocational and Technology Education in the world's economic order that different countries have come up with different frameworks towards repositioning their Guidance and Counselling and Vocational Education programmes. According to Alexandrou (2009), the French National Assembly enacted a law on social modernization which contains important measures concerning Guidance and Counselling and Vocational and Technology Education and the right to employment and reported that the government of Denmark made efforts to increase the number of training places with emphasis on social and practical skills development. In Germany, use of the objectives of the country's education reform is to promote the vocational education of gifted young people and to raise the standard of Guidance and Counselling and Vocational and Technology Educations. The role of guidance and counselling to teacher trainees can be classified into two. In the first instance, the provision of a broad based and functional guidance and counselling will assist the teacher-trainees to explore

and understand themselves so that they can become self-directing and reliant individuals. Secondly, it will afford their students the opportunity to learn VTE from a teacher who properly understands himself and his environment. This self-understanding is essential and imperative because individuals who understand themselves and their world are usually more effective, more productive, happier and healthier human beings. This is because through guidance and counselling programme individuals would achieve greater awareness of themselves. It could thus be said that provision of guidance and counselling services along with other pedagogical programmes in VTE will help among others to:

- (1) Develop in teacher-trainees an awareness of opportunities in their personal, social, educational and vocational areas by providing them with appropriate useful and usable information.
- (2) Help the under-achievers to use their potentials to the maximum.
- (3) Help teacher-trainees to acquire useful knowledge and skills necessary for survival.
- (4) Work with the parents/guardians with a view to assisting them to understand the needs and problems of their children/wards in acquiring VTE (Ipaye, 1983).

The Common Elements to be adopted for Considering the Role of Guidance and Counselling in VTE:

The role of guidance and counselling can adopt five elements from that proposed for the “Learning for Jobs” review (Watts, 2009). The first is the definition of career guidance. The definition adopted from the OECD career guidance policy review was that it described “services intended to assist people, of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make educational training and occupational choices and to manage their careers” (OECD, 2002). This was broken down in the “Learning for Jobs” review into three main components:

- i. Career counselling*, conducted on a one-to-one basis or in small groups, in which attention is focused on the distinctive career issues in VTE faced by individuals.
- ii. Career education*, as part of the curriculum, in which attention is paid to helping groups of individuals to develop the interest and competences for managing their career development. This includes exploring the world of work, partly through work experience, work shadowing, work visits, and work simulations such as mini-enterprises; it also includes self-awareness and the development of skills for making decisions and managing transitions, both present and in the future (OECD, 2002).
- iii. Career information*, provided in various formats (increasingly, web-based), concerned with information on courses, occupations and career paths. This includes labour market information (domestic and international).

The second is the policy rationale for attention to guidance and counselling in VTE as a public as well as a private good. This falls into three main categories:

- i. Learning goals*, including improving the efficiency of the education and training system and managing its interface with the labour market. If individuals make decisions about what they are to learn in a well-informed and well-thought-through way, linked to their interests, their capacities and their aspirations, investments in education and training systems are likely to yield higher returns.

- ii. *Labour market goals*, including improving the match between supply and demand and managing adjustments to change. If people find jobs which utilise their potential and meet their own goals, they are likely to be more motivated and therefore more productive.
- iii. *Social equity goals*, including supporting equal opportunities and promoting social inclusion. Career guidance services can raise the yearning and aspirations of disadvantaged groups and support them in gaining access to opportunities that might otherwise have been denied to them.

In the case of VTE, the first of these is particularly important. In seeking closer articulation between VTE programmes and labour markets, it is increasingly recognised that planning approaches based on the relation and consultation with employers is rarely effective in itself, but needs to be replaced or at least supplemented by an approach based on sensitivity to student demand. The efficacy of this approach can be significantly enhanced by effective guidance and counselling, which can help to ensure that students' decision-making is soundly based. The third is the role of career guidance prior to entering a VTE programme. Two principles are important here:

- i) All students who could benefit from such programmes should be made aware, within career education programmes or in other ways of VTE options besides the other options available to them.
- ii) Those fascinated in VTE options should have access to career counselling, to support the quality of their decision-making.

The fourth is the important role of guidance and counselling and labour market information within such pre-entry provision. In order for guidance and counselling to perform its role in supporting informed student demand, it needs to be supported by high-quality information. In relation to those considering entering Vocational and Technology Education programmes, this should include information on:

- i) The available VTE options
- ii) The qualifications to which they lead, and the further qualifications to which these give access.
- iii) The occupations to which these qualifications provide access, and the extent to which the qualifications are sufficient for entry.
- iv) The salary/wage levels offered by these occupations.
- v) The projected demand for these occupations.
- vi) The labour market outcomes achieved by those successfully completing the programmes, including the nature of their jobs, their salary/wage levels, whether or not the jobs are in an occupational sector directly related to their VTE programme, and the extent to which they are using the skills and competences acquired in the programme.

The fifth is the role of career guidance within VTE programmes themselves. Two noticeable principles are (both need to be built as core strategies into curriculum design):

- 1) That career guidance should be available at all relevant decision points, and on exit.

- 2) That career education programmes have an important role to play both in preparing students for future career decisions and in supporting the transferability of their learning.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Bryan and William (2012) specify how to play the role in which the wishes of parents, the broader family and the individual all need to be considered. When working with parents and other family members, it is important to inform them of the value of VTE programmes in terms of job and career opportunities and to point out that these programmes have more value and status than in the past decades. In order to do this effectively, counsellors and other personnel need to get out of their offices, visit remote areas, interact with members of the community and inform them of the VTE-related opportunities that exist and that are emerging. However, in some countries, Nigeria inclusive, counsellors and guidance workers have low status, which makes it difficult for them to offer an effective service. Guidance and counselling personnel may need to recruit assistants in order to convince others of the value and utility of VTE programmes. They may also need to publicize the value-added benefits of guidance and counselling services for VTE programmes in order to obtain the support of clients and decision-makers.

Effective counselling, guidance and advisory services can often help to maximize the return on investment of money spent on VTE programmes. For example, in Nigeria, money is wasted because students lack commitment to the programme being offered: they drop out of the programme before they finish or having finished it they then seek employment in an unrelated field (Levine 2000). The range of service-providers would thus include counsellors, guidance workers, career advisers, teachers, counter staff, managers and supervisors and policy-makers. Training should also cover a wide range of formats, giving students first-hand experience of the multitude of delivery formats they would be using with clients, which would include: face-to-face classroom instruction, CD-ROMs, the Internet, video conferencing, and hands-on learning through experience. Based on the foregoing, the following recommendations are made:

- 1) The federal, state and local governments should provide a clear vision and mission for Guidance and Counselling and Vocational and Technology Education in Nigeria.
- 2) They should also increase funding of Guidance and Counselling and Vocational Education programmes at all levels.
- 3) Government should partner with the private sector to maintain and expand Guidance and Counselling and Vocational and Technology Education programmes in Nigeria.
- 4) Youths should be encouraged through scholarship to enrol into Guidance and Counselling and Vocational and Technology Education programmes and a balanced approach should be emphasized in the integration of technical applicability and entrepreneurial skills in Guidance and Counselling and Vocational and Technology Education.

- 5) The training of career service providers needed to have a broad scope, to take in a wide range of people and to give them the tools needed to reach a broad audience.
- 6) The curriculum should include training for students on how to market their services to potential clients and how to convince administrators and managers of the skills and competency they possessed
- 7) The training should incorporate a mentoring component, and to be cost-effective, it should be delivered through a Train the Trainer format with comprehensive manuals for both participants and trainers.
- 8) The training approach would also need to provide a model of the desired attitude to clients, one of respect and collaboration, fostering a relationship of trust.

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