

## Vocational Guidance and School Guidance Counsellors: The Pressing Challenges

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### **Abstract**

*Vocational guidance is an important factor in career decision making. Its primary goal is to provide students with vocational information and make them to have adequate knowledge and understanding about their abilities, limitations, aptitude and personality traits that can be directed towards a particular career so as to enjoy job satisfaction.*

*However, the school can only provide adequate vocational guidance to students when there is resident professional Guidance Counsellor with well – Equipped functioning Guidance and Counselling unit. Unfortunately most secondary and primary schools in Nigeria are without resident Guidance Counsellors, there is no provision for well-equipped Guidance and Counselling office. Academic staff with Guidance and Counselling qualification most times are used as Class-Room Teachers, instead of allowing them to practice their counselling profession. It is indeed a pathetic situation.*

*Thus in view of this context, this paper x-ray the concept of vocational guidance, importance of vocational guidance in the school system and the pressing challenges. Among others, the paper recommended that, The Federal and State Government should ensure that, all primary and secondary schools have a resident professional Guidance Counsellors, Guidance Counsellors in schools should not be used as class-room teachers rather they should allow them to practice their Counselling Profession.*

**Key words: Vocational Guidance, Guidance Counsellors, Pressing Challenges**

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### **Introduction:**

Vocational guidance is an important factor to consider if one must make realistic choice of career. Its primary goal is to provide students with occupational information and make them to have good understanding about their personal characteristics that can be directed towards a particular occupational choice.

Therefore it is very important to have professional Guidance Counsellors in our primary and secondary schools because they are professionally trained to provide educational, personal-social and vocational guidance to students. Daniel (2001), opined that, the Guidance Counsellor is an individual who is happy to help people resolve their vocational, educational, personal-social and

psychological problems. This implies that, the services of Guidance Counsellors are very important in the school system.

However some primary and secondary schools do not have Guidance Counsellors thus students depend on their parents, peers, relatives and classmate to make their choice of career which in most cases do not match their personal attributes.

Olayinka as cited in Dabibi (2010), asserted that, lack of vocational guidance in schools have made many students choose careers that do not match their potentials and interest.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

#### **Concept of Vocational Guidance**

Vocational Guidance is an essential tool that determines an individual's ability of making right career choice that can be suitable with his abilities, aptitude, interest, personality traits etc. In time past some researchers have investigated the relationship between vocational guidance and career choice and the result proves that, there is a significant relationship.

This implies that, when people are given adequate vocational guidance, they are in better position to make right career preference than those that lack these provision.

Therefore vocational guidance plays a vital role in the educational system. Its services are very essential in the career development and choice of the individual. Ojo and Rotimi (2006), affirm to the fact that, vocational guidance provides individuals with the needed support to enable them discover their calling or careers that can be of a perfect match with their potentials so that, they can put it into useful means and enjoy happiness in their job. Also Nwamuo (2001) upholds the view that, vocational guidance helps individuals to make occupational decision that can enable them to adequately prepare and progress in their chosen profession. In other words, individuals are given the full support or assistance in terms of planning, preparation and adjustment so as to record great job success.

In the same vein, Uzoeshi (2013), opined that, vocational guidance is specially designed to provide students with the necessary support that can enable them to make career preference that can match their potentials. Thus no matter the type of guidance that must have been given to an individual, his sense of satisfaction and progress greatly depends on his choice of career. Hence the provision of adequate vocational guidance must be made available to all students especially while in school. Bark as cited in Oku (2012), support the view that, guidance is the assistance given to individuals to help them develop their own decision.

Also Bruce (2013), asserted that, vocational guidance has a primary goal of assisting individuals to make decisions and choice involved in planning a future and building a career.

Thus, vocational guidance plays an important role in helping students to make career decisions that can match their personal characteristics in order to have job satisfaction.

### **Importance of Vocational Guidance in the School System**

- Vocational guidance plays an essential role in career decision making of students, it is the light that makes student to see and understand the right pathway to follow in terms of their career.
- Vocational guidance help students to have better understanding of their abilities and limitations and this awareness makes them to choose careers that can be suitable to their personal attributes
- Vocational guidance provides students with current and valid occupational information about existing careers in the world of work.
- When students are provided with adequate vocational guidance, it enables them to make realistic career preference which in return brings happiness and job satisfaction.
- Vocational guidance makes students to make right subject combination towards their chosen career.
- Through vocational guidance, students are aware of careers and their specific academic requirement, place of training, and the nature of job.

### The Pressing Challenges

School Guidance Counsellors are faced with a lot of pressing challenges. Some of these pressing challenges include the following:

- **Lack of Recognition:** Guidance Counsellors in schools are not well recognized in some state. They are not given all the needed support and encouragement by the state government, Ministry of Education, Primary and Post Primary schools Board to practice their counselling profession. There are situations where individuals with Guidance and Counselling qualifications are employed to teach school subjects. The state government use them as “CLASSROOM TEACHERS”. For instance, during employment exercise, no special employment Letter is prepared to address the position of a “School Guidance Counsellor”, rather the same employment letter bearing “Classroom teacher” is given to both those with teaching qualification and those with Guidance and Counselling qualification. They failed to acknowledge the fact that, teachers and school Guidance Counsellors carry out different functions in the school system. This situation is one of the reason why most primary and secondary schools in Nigeria are without resident Guidance Counsellors because at the point of employment there was no provision to accommodate that office. This situation indeed calls for urgent attention. State Governments must understand that, school Guidance counsellors are professionally trained to carry out specific functions in the school system and these functions enables students to overcome their vocational problems, educational and personal-social problems. Thus the importance of school Guidance Counsellors cannot be neglected.
- **Lack of well-equipped Guidance and Counselling Office:** Most of our primary and secondary schools are without well-equipped Guidance and counselling offices. In some schools, Guidance Counsellors don’t even have counselling office, they carry out their counselling in the staff room. This situation is one of the weapon that is killing the practice of confidentiality in Guidance and Counselling in the school system.

- **Lack of Funding:** Guidance and Counselling programmes in both primary and secondary schools needs a lot of funding. Guidance Counsellors need money to establish a career library, buy psychological test and other materials, organize career day, field trip and construct bulletin boards unfortunately, most public schools lack adequate fund to organize guidance and counselling programmes
- **Allocation of Guidance and Counselling Period in the School Timetable:** Most primary and secondary schools do not allocate time for guidance and counselling programmes in the school timetable. This retard the awareness of Guidance and Counselling Services in School.

## Conclusion

This paper have once again revealed the importance of vocational guidance in the educational system as an essential tool that determines an individual's ability of making right career preference that can be suitable with his abilities, aptitude interest, personality etc. its services are very essential in the career development and choice.

However, this can only be achieved when there are resident school Guidance Counsellors. Therefore the Federal and State Government should adopt a positive approach towards Guidance Counsellors in the School system by providing the right support, motivation, provision and encouragement so that, the pressing challenges facing Guidance counsellors in schools can be drastically eradicated.

## Suggestions

Vocational Guidance and School Guidance Counsellors plays an important role in the career decision making of students in the educational system therefore, the following suggestions should be adhered to. They are as follows:

- The Federal and State Government should ensure that, all primary and secondary schools have resident professional Guidance Counsellors
- Guidance Counsellors in schools should not be used as classroom teachers but they should be given the opportunity to practice their profession.
- The ministry of education, primary and post primary schools board in each state should make adequate provision of the inclusion of Guidance and Counselling programmes in the school timetable
- The Federal and State Government should allocate special fund to sponsor Guidance and Counselling programmes in schools and also establish well-equipped Guidance and Counselling offices in schools.
- Guidance Counsellors should provide adequate vocational Guidance to students before they make their career preference.
- The Counselling Association of Nigeria in each state should create awareness about the importance of Guidance and Counselling services in Schools and make the government to

see the reason why they must recognize the importance of Professional Guidance Counsellors in the educational system.

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