

AN EVALUATION OF THE RELEVANCE OF CAREER CHOICE TO SCHOOL SUBJECT SELECTION AMONG SCHOOL GOING ADOLESCENTS IN ONDO STATE

¹I. A. Durosaro (PhD), ²M. A. Nuhu

¹Department of Guidance and Counselling,
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria &

²Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, NIGERIA.

¹durosaroirene@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

One of the developmental tasks of any individual is the preparation for a career. The study was aimed at investigating the relevance of subject selection of school going adolescents in relation to their career aspiration. It was aimed at examining the influence of age and sex on career choice. One of the hypotheses raised was that there will be no significant difference between career choice and subject selection among the students. Subjects for the study consisted of 515 male and female Senior Secondary 2 students drawn from ten mixed students with ages ranging from 16-21 years. Data were collected through the use of a questionnaire styled Motivation for Career Choice Scale (MCCS). The data were analyzed descriptively using tables and percentages and by statistical method using the Chi-square. The study revealed, among other things that: a) Students were left in the dark as to the type of subject they were to offer if they want to pursue certain career, b) There was no difference between the choices of both male and female students. Based on the finding of the study, the researcher made some recommendations with great implications for both practice and further research.

Keywords: Career, career choice, subject selection, adolescents

INTRODUCTION

In any contemporary society, the heart of the long process of preparing young people for life and work is centered in the educational system (Gesinde (1977)). But it has been observed that in Nigeria generally parental influence and vicarious experiences within one's community in general contributes much to this preparatory process. Though the traditional Nigerian society had the problem of building the youth up, yet most adolescents just pick career based on mere likeness for such jobs simply because it entails the wearing of a uniform or otherwise or may be because their parents or a significant other in their lives are involved in such career. They forget the fact that such jobs might have some basic subject requirement. It has been noted with sadness that most secondary school graduates do come up with the problem of course selection in higher institutions owing to lack of guidance in the selection of subjects at the secondary level. When students have faulty selection, there will be the problem of subject selection for jobs. This category of students ends up doing the jobs that are not in the least related to their interest or aptitude.

Another important point is the idea of parents blindly dictating careers to their children. They do this without studying the aptitude of the children thereby causing a lot of academic frustration for them. Omoegun & Buraimoh (2001) remarked that, "not only were the parents choosing academic courses for their children, they were choosing a whole way of life and standard for

behaviour for them.” Occupational prestige is closely related to socio-economic status hence parents are often too involved in picking jobs for their children. Durosaro (1981) discovered that Nigerian adolescents are not left to take decisions on matters that affect their lives especially career. There is the need for a careful study of the factors motivating career choice in order to play them up to channelize pupil’s interest in areas where they are best suited.

Even though studies conducted by Ogungbemi and Ajayi (2009) had shown that adolescents think and plan their education in relation to their future vocational goals, experience revealed that lack of guidance at the time of selection often shatter the plans for them.

This study is an attempt to examine the relevance of the subjects selected by students at the secondary level for the West African School Certificate Examination (WASCE) in relation to their career aspirations with a view to suggesting ways of assisting teachers, parents and school counselors in guiding the Nigerian students in their subject selection. The study also aimed at examining the influence of both age and sex on career choice of the students. It is hoped that the outcome of the study will serve useful purpose to teachers and school counselors, in particular, in their operation in secondary schools.

BASIC CONCEPTS

For the purpose of clarity, it is necessary to explain the major concepts used.

Adolescents as used in the study refer to male and female children whose ages range between 11 and 21 years. Osarenren (1996) said the adolescent is between childhood and adulthood. She went further to say that the individual must be between 10 and 19 years. Havighurst (1951) in his development task theory on adolescents also talked about those turbulent years of 11 and 21 in the individual’s life span.

Career Choice: refers to the professions that are picked by the adolescents used in the study. It can also be termed as the desire which one has for a relevant and accountable profession which provides an individual the opportunities for job experience and instructions leading to economic and social independence. It is the valid and useful exploration about the world of work, including its structure and organization. The demand that work imposes on the individual, the reward and benefits bestowed, how and where one prepares to enter the field and the educational, personal and experience requirement, one must meet to enter, remain and advance on the job.

METHODOLOGY

The study population consisted of all secondary schools in Ondo State, out of which a sample of 315 males and 200 female students were drawn from ten schools.

A list of the over 2000 secondary schools in the state was collected from the School’s Directory of 2003. The schools were numbered serially and the table of random number was used to select the ones used. All the students in ‘A’ arm of SS 2 in the selected schools were involved in the study. Only one instrument was used. This was the Motivation for Career Choice Scale (MCCS). The questionnaire was designed in three sections visa, (a) identification (b) occupational preference and (c) list of subjects offered at school for West African School Certificate Examination. The questionnaire was administered by the researcher to the students with the assistance of their class teachers and the vice principals of schools used.

Validity and reliability: The instrument was given to some specialists in the area of educational guidance and counseling and research methodology to examine. Based on their comments, the

instrument was modified and a pilot test conducted. The test-retest method was used to determine the reliability. The instrument was administered on one of the schools not included in the sample and after an interval of three weeks it was again administered on the same school. The test-retest reliability co-efficient was found to be 0.92 and this figure was found to be significant at 0.05 level.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The first step in the analysis was the sorting of the questionnaire into two groups by sex. Again, for each of the sexes the questionnaire was grouped into two by age. The first groups were those adolescents below the age of 17 years. This division was based on the age grade for secondary school as proposed in the National Policy on Education 1981. This basis rested on the fact that children will start primary school at the age of 6 years and spend six years. By the 12th year, they will be in the secondary school for another 6 years divided into two (-3-3) for the 6-3-3-4 system of education. The intention of the researcher was to see if the maturity level of those above 17 years would affect their decisions in terms of subject selection and career choice. Their responses in the section for occupational preferences were used to correlate their preferences in the section of subjects offered at school. The brochures of the various higher institutions were consulted in order to determine the subject requirement for entry into the various courses leading to each of the professions chosen.

The following hypotheses were raised to guide the study:

Hypothesis I: There will be no relationship between career choice and subject selection among secondary school students.

Hypothesis II: Age will not have any influence on career choice among secondary school adolescents.

Hypothesis III: Sex will not have any influence on career choice among school going adolescents in Ondo State.

To guide this analysis, the data were treated against each hypothesis as follows:

Hypothesis I

There will be no relationship between career choice and subject selection among secondary school students.

Table 1. The relevant data for tackling this hypothesis are presented

| Age | Relevant | | Irrelevant | | Total | % Rel. | % Irrel. |
|----------------|----------|----|------------|-----|-------|--------|----------|
| | M | F | M | F | | | |
| 17- | 88 | 35 | 142 | 100 | 365 | 33.69 | 66.3 |
| 17+ | 55 | 25 | 30 | 40 | 150 | 53.3 | 46.6 |
| Total | 143 | 60 | 172 | 140 | 515 | | |
| Males | | | | 315 | 45.3 | 54.6 | |
| Females | | | | 200 | 30.3 | 70.0 | |

Percentage distributions of students that picked subjects that are relevant or irrelevant to their chosen career are shown on the table. From the table, it was discovered that out of the 515 students used only 203 which is 93.4 percent chose subjects that were relevant to their career. The hypothesis states that there will be no relationship between subjects offered and career chosen.

Hypothesis II

That age will not have any influence on career choice. The relevant data for treating hypothesis are shown on table 2:

Table 2. Age versus career choice and subject selection

| Age | 17- | 17+ |
|-------------------|-----|-----|
| Relevant | 123 | 80 |
| Irrelevant | 242 | 70 |

X^2 calculated=17.16, df=514, x^2 table value at 90%

Confidence level=16.66.

The result of the Chi-square showed that the difference in age affected the choice of subject and their relevance to career. Pupils of ages above 17 years made better choices of subject to their career preference. 53 percent of them made relevant choice while only 33% of the pupils under 17 years made relevant choice of subject. A test of significant was carried out to validate these findings on age versus relationship of career choice to subject selection. Since the hypothesis stated that age will not have any influence on career choice, we therefore reject this hypothesis because there is an influence of age on the choice of relevant subject to career.

Hypothesis III

That sex will not have any influence on career choice and subject selection of pupils.

Generally, both the males and the females have similar trend of choice. The percentage is less than 50 for both of them.

Table 3. Sex versus Career Choice and Subject Selection

| Sex | Male | Female |
|-------------------|------|--------|
| Relevant | 143 | 60 |
| Irrelevant | 172 | 140 |

X^2 calculated value= 12.14 table value at 90%, confident level= 16.66, df= 514.

From the result, there is no significant difference in the choice made by a female or a male with respect to relevance or irrelevance of subjects to career. Hence, we accept the hypothesis.

DISCUSSION

The general trend revealed by this study is that children are left in the dark as to the type of subject they are to offer if they want to pursue certain careers. It was discovered that there is no significant difference between the choices made by both males and females. Hence, there is the believe that teachers are no longer interested in the types of subject chosen by students. Apart from choosing subjects that are not related to their career choices children picked subjects that are not in any way related to one another, thereby causing problem of subject combination in terms of entry requirements into higher institution. Some students offered Commerce and Biology with Yoruba alongside with the compulsory subject for the WASCE. A typical example of students' admission requirement into Nigeria Certificate of Education courses at Adeyemi College of Education revealed that a student cannot offer English Language without at least a pass grade in English literature. Also, a compulsory requirement for Physical and Health Education is a pass in any of the sciences. But we have seen students offering Physical and Health Education at school without taking any science subject along with it. The same thing goes for English. Students offer English with a view to offering it in the higher institution without English literature as one of the subjects they offered. This affects Home Economics too. A compulsory requirement is a science subject or Mathematics. Students just offer it without these relevant requirements.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

From the discussion, it is quite obvious that there is the need for both the school and the home to play a role in the selection and guidance as regards subjects chosen by students. As one would expect, the study seems to have buttressed the general opinion of the Federal Government in its 1975-80 Development Plan where it stated "the absence of career counseling in our educational and training system in the past must be held responsible for the frustrations observed among many of the nation's young men and women" (P. 250).

The following suggestions may be useful in guiding our youths so as to reduce the incidence of lack of the correct subject combination for career choice.

There should be the introduction of at least a career counseling unit in every school especially now with the introduction of the 6-3-3-4 system of education. The Government should also endeavour to train more guidance counselors thereby removing the manpower shortage that is existing now.

School principals or their assistants should see to it that students do not just pick any subject for the General Certificate Examination. All their subjects should be screened by experts.

Also there is the need for the copy of the brochure into higher institutions to be possessed by schools so as to serve as guide for the career counselor.

Parents should also desist from the idea of dictating career to their children because from the data it was discovered that 362 out of the 515 which is 70.2 percent, indicated that their parents asked them to choose the career they chose. From this, one cannot but agree with Simpson (1962) that parental influence on child career choice is greater than even that of peers.

Career talks should be given at school from time to time especially before the selection of subjects by the students.

As no research work is ever conclusive, it is the view of the researcher that further studies are to be carried out in this area to see the effects of counseling as a co-variance of both age and sex.

On the whole, parents, teachers and guidance counselors should cooperate to assist the students in such a way that their interest would be the determinant of their career since it has been noted that individual's personality is affected by the type of work he or she engages in. A wrong choice of career may lead to social frustration in life.

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