

Roles of School Counsellors as Career Developers and Learning motivators in Nigerian Secondary Schools

Abstract

This paper explores the important roles of school counselors in Nigerian secondary schools as career developers and learning motivators. School counselors are critical stakeholders in the educational system, providing guidance and support to students as they navigate the complexities of academic and career choices. As career developers, counselors help students identify their interests and strengths, explore various career options, and make informed decisions about their future paths. In addition, they work with students to develop the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in their chosen careers. As learning motivators, counselors create a positive and supportive environment that promotes academic success and fosters students' personal growth. They assist students in setting academic goals, developing study skills, and managing stress and other challenges that may arise during their academic journey. By providing this guidance and support, school counselors play a critical role in helping Nigerian students achieve their full potential and prepare for successful futures.

Keywords: School Counsellors, Career Developers, Learning Motivation, Career Development

Introduction

School counselors are professionals who provide guidance, support, and resources to students, parents, and teachers in various areas such as career development, academic achievement, and social-emotional well-being. In Nigerian secondary schools, school counselors play a critical role in assisting students with career development and learning motivation. According to the National Policy on Education (2004), the primary objective of secondary education in Nigeria is to prepare students for higher education and the world of work. Therefore, the roles of school counselors as career developers and learning motivators are crucial in achieving this objective. This paper aims to review the literature on the roles of school counselors as career developers and learning motivators in Nigerian secondary schools' educational system.

The Nigerian educational system comprises six years of primary education, three years of junior secondary education, three years of senior secondary education, and tertiary education (National Policy on Education, 2004). The primary objective of secondary education is to prepare students for higher education and the world of work. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2021), Nigeria has a youth population of about sixty million, and about 42% of them are unemployed. Therefore, it is crucial to provide students with the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in their future careers.

“Career can be conceptualized more broadly in terms of individual development in learning and work through life and this include voluntary work and other life experiences” (Torrington et al., 2008). Popoola (2004) refers to “career as a job or profession for which one undergoes regulated education and training over a period of time and which one intent to follow for the whole of one’s life. It is thus a chosen pursuit, life work and success in one’s profession. A career is now broadly defined as the unfolding sequence of a person’s working experience over a period”. (Arthur et al., 2005). Dawn (2013) defined career as the individual vocation or trade or how she/he makes living.

The term career was traditionally associated with paid employment and referred to a single occupation. In today’s world, the term career is seen as a continuous process of learning and development. Super (1976) defined “career as the course of events which constitute a life, the sequence of occupations and other life roles which combined to express one’s commitment to work in his/her total pattern of self-development”.

School counselors play a significant role in assisting students with career development. They provide guidance, resources, and support to help students make informed decisions about their career paths. According to Akomolafe (2018), career development is a process that involves self-assessment, exploration of career options, decision-making, and implementation of career plans.

School counselors use various methods to provide career guidance, such as assessments, career counseling, and job shadowing programs.

“Career development 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).

Review of related Literature

Holland maintains that “in developing 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 behaviour” (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. Career Assessments: Career assessments are tools that school counselors use to help students identify their strengths, interests, values, and personality traits. There are several types of career assessments, including interest inventories, personality assessments, and skills assessments. For example, the Strong Interest Inventory is a widely used assessment tool that helps students identify their career interests (Hackett & Watkins, 2014). School counselors use career assessments to help students gain a better understanding of their career options and make informed decisions about their future.

Determinants of Career Development

Okon (2001) identified the following as determinants of career development:

Role models: “In a student’s life this is a great determinant in career choices. They include a parent, teacher, career counsellor, recent employer, celebrities, and religious leaders. The importance of parental influence upon their children’s career choice is consistently important,

even across gender and racial lines. Although schools, peers, and the student's community all have an impact on the young adult's career choice, the parent's expectations, and perceptions of vocational fit for their children have been found to be the key roles in shaping their career choices" (Ferry, 2006). In one study (Creamer & Laughlin, 2005), "this influence has been so strong as to override the influence of teachers, faculty, and career counselors, who likely know more about the career field in question but were not as well-known and/or trusted as the student's parents for this type of decision". Some of the ways in which parents influence their children's career decisions are:

- a. The expectations parents have for their children's education and career
- b. The example they set for their children
- c. The values they show to their family, friends and to society.
- d. The opportunities they offer their children to learn and develop.
- e. The type of parent-child relationship they develop.

"According to a survey of over 1,500 parents of prospective students, more than two-thirds say they either direct or act as 50-50 partners in their child's college search process. College still struggles to effectively engage parents through their website and communication plan. Coaches and teachers also can have a significant impact on a student's life" (Wildman and Torres, 2002) "Academic or athletic coaches are role models for students and also play a big part in molding future generations. Coaches help prepare young men and women for the challenges outside of high school by exposing them to challenges including situations in and out of the classroom" (Blum, 1995).

Peer Group Influence: Prospective students are most influenced by those who are living the experience, rather than guidance counselor, admissions officers, or other traditional experts. In a study conducted by Porter (2006), it was shown that most of the students seeking for admission value peer opinions above admission and guidance counselors.

Financial Consideration: "This is an aspect that students consider include high earning potential, benefits, opportunities for advancement" (Beggs et al., 2008). "Along with stability during their career, some students are looking ahead to retirement. Students want to make sure

they are secure for the rest of their lives and may look into careers that have benefits to help them in the long run” (Wildman & Torres, 2002). The salary and benefits jobs offer play a role in their career choice.

Aptitude and Academic Ability: This also is a determinant factor for career choice (Beggs et al., 2008). “Some students lack the ability or the work habits to succeed in some majors. These students may find a better fit in a major that requires fewer difficult classes which affects the career options available to them. Other students have the ability to handle majors with greater workloads and choose the career path that will lead to a job requiring more education, e.g., engineers, doctors, and lawyers. Some high school students join the armed forces after graduating. The armed forces can help students who struggle with structure and motivation” (Gilroy, 2007).

“Other students will go to trade schools instead of attending college. Trade schools can provide training in fields such as mechanics, welding, electricity, or plumbing” (Stamps, 1998). “The short school year allows students to go to work more quickly after graduating from high school instead of having to stay in school for four or more years. Trade schools also allow students to work in a field of interest while going to school” (Stamps, 1998).

Personality: “This is another determine in career choice. Studies have shown that students will choose a major that they think will fit their personality type” (Mihyeon, 2009). “The confidence that a student has can determine how far they will go with their education. Students who believe in themselves have more confidence and are more likely to go for what they want instead of settling for something that is comfortable. Personality can also play a role in choosing a major. For example, students who have an investigative personality are more likely to major in science fields. Students with an artistic personality are more likely to major in arts and in interdisciplinary fields. Students who are very social people are more likely to major in the social science” (Porter & Umbach, 2006).

Gender: “Whether one is male, or female has to some extent influenced some of the career choices that you have made, as well as some of the choices your parents made for you. For example, gender might have influenced the high school you attended, whether you were encouraged to take risk or not, and more so, the choice of academic major” (Hooley, 2012). “Often gender related messages are subtle and their influence is difficult to discern. Example

would be, if four generations of men in your family had been doctors and you are a man considering a less career professional, for instance, catering your beliefs and attitudes about men who work outside the home may produce conflict in your career choice” (Sears & Gordon, 2008).

Previous Experiences: Having positive experiences and role models working in specific careers may be a determinant of career we consider as options for ourselves. One aspect of Social Cognitive Career Theory addresses the fact that we are likely to consider continuing a particular task if we have had a positive experience doing it. We tend to focus on areas in which we have had proven success and achieved positive self-esteem.

Culture and Environment: The environment in which a student grows up plays a vital role in their choice of career path. Regional culture, local community expectations, and extended family, may impact career decisions. Multicultural career counseling has emerged as a specialized field to take these influences into consideration when working with students. We can't attribute the predominant characteristics of a culture to any specific person, but an awareness of the values and expectations of the culture may help understand how we make our career choices.

Socio-Economic Status: One's social and economic background has some bearing on family's resources. According to Bolles (2011), at one point, an individual inherits from his/her parents certain financial and other resources that, to some extent, influence his/her career choices. Your family financial status determines things like where you live and which school you attend. In turn, these can affect your values, occupational expectations, opportunities, and gender role expectations, usually, social status is passed down from generation to generation, you may not benefit by being exposed to many opportunities or on the other hand you may not have the opportunity to recognize all the career options open to you (Hooley, 2012). Even though your socio-economic status may have affected your career decision so far, many career-related decisions lie ahead. High aspiration and motivation to achieve will help you to reach your goals.

Learning motivation refers to the psychological and behavioral processes that initiate and maintain learning behavior. It is essential for achieving academic success and personal growth. Here are some key concepts of learning motivation with citations:

Intrinsic Motivation: Intrinsic motivation refers to the desire to engage in an activity for its inherent enjoyment or interest. It is a powerful motivator for learning and has been associated with better academic performance, creativity, and self-esteem (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Extrinsic Motivation: Extrinsic motivation refers to the desire to engage in an activity for external rewards or to avoid punishment. While extrinsic motivation can be effective in initiating behavior, it has been shown to have a negative impact on creativity, intrinsic motivation, and long-term learning (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999).

Self-Determination Theory: Self-determination theory is a framework that explains human motivation and behavior based on three basic needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. According to this theory, individuals are more likely to be motivated and engaged in activities when they feel they have control over their actions, feel competent in the task, and feel a sense of connection with others (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Goal Orientation Theory: Goal orientation theory suggests that individuals have different motivational orientations when pursuing a goal. There are two main types of goal orientations: mastery orientation, where individuals are motivated by the desire to learn and improve their skills, and performance orientation, where individuals are motivated by the desire to demonstrate their abilities and outperform others. Mastery orientation has been associated with better academic performance and a greater love of learning, while performance orientation has been associated with higher anxiety and a lower desire to learn (Elliot & Dweck, 2005).

Self-Efficacy: Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to perform a task successfully. It is a powerful predictor of motivation and behavior, with individuals who have high self-efficacy more likely to be motivated and persist in the face of challenges (Bandura, 1997).

Vocational Needs of Secondary School Students

Denga (1986), surveyed the vocational need of Nigeria secondary school youth and identified the following crucial notes:

1. Need to choose an occupation of interest.
2. To relate academic preparation to a job

3. To develop effective job-hunting skill
4. To obtain vocational information
5. Need to understand self-potentials
6. To consult somebody about career plans
7. To develop skills for job of interest
8. To choose an occupation that is acceptable to parents and “significance to other” in the society.
9. To choose a career that has bright future.
10. To choose a career that is important in the society.

The need vocational guidance in school in Nigeria thus cannot be contested. Occupational choice is one of the most difficult decisions in a person’s life. It involves a person’s total life because it determines his income, his choice of friend, his pattern of dress, his influence in the society and very often the amount of risk in which he is exposed to.

Results and Discussion

In Nigeria today, looking for a job itself is a problem. There are a large number of youths moving in and out of offices looking for jobs or educational opportunities. After moving through a number of factors such as an unstable economy and a quick changing unpredictable job market and training options and our culture belief that a person self-worth is primarily defined by his means of livelihood, the counselor is then left in a vacuum where to give help for the client (Ode,2001).

The counselor does not possess a crystal ball that can reveal instantaneous answers, but he must try to live up to the confidence reposed in him by the client.

There are some occupational life skills that students need which the counselor should not hesitate to give them. According to Denga (1986) such skill includes the following: -

1. Knowledge of personal strength and weakness (assets and liabilities)
2. Ability to use exploratory resources to reality test personal characteristics.

3. Knowledge of educational, occupational social lifestyle options
4. Ability to choose among options.
5. Skills inter-personal relations which can be used in the job.
6. Employability skills such as writing, applications and interviewing.
7. Time management
8. Understanding the link between educational qualification and job requirement.

The above skills are essential for preparing youth to choose appropriate and realistic occupations and effecting a satisfactory vocational adjustment. The important area of vocational guidance we should lay emphasis on in Nigeria today are: -

Awareness of or sensitive to work: This includes the dignity of labour and value of decent work.

Orientation: - There should be proper orientation to gainful employment. The Nigeria bureau of employment service, National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) programme is a good forum for promoting orientation and opening the eye of people to vocational opportunities and employment available throughout Nigeria.

Exploration: - There is the need for young people to carry out field trips and excursion to places of work as the first step to research possible jobs.

Preparation and placement: - This will include history of occupations, their relevance to society, number of workers, training facility including entry requirements, length of training, funding, bonding, travelling and after training opportunities such as grants, overseas experience, earning, trade union.

Advancement: - This includes opportunities for regarding promotion and moving from the lowest to the highest in the establishment. The counselor has a crucial role to play not only in teaching work values, work habits, work ethics and concepts, but also in motivating individuals from skill acquisition and a smooth transition from school to work.

The counsellor may also help the individual in suggesting feasible employment openings and appropriate way of applying for work. Occasionally the counsellor may contact employers, but

student must be prepared to face job interview alone. Vocational guidance provides the individual with vocational information about the world of work and job opportunities to enable them to gain an insight into choosing realistically. It helps remove the nefarious 'long leg' favouritism, ethnicism, and nepotism rampant in the Nigeria work setting (Ode, 2001).

Assessments are tools that school counsellors use to help students identify their strengths, interests, and goals. For example, the Strong Interest Inventory is a widely used assessment tool that helps students identify their career interests (Hackett & Watkins, 2014). Career counseling is a process in which school counsellors work with students to explore different career options and make informed decisions about their career paths. Job shadowing programs are another method that school counselors use to expose students to different careers. For example, in Nigeria, the National Directorate of Employment organizes job shadowing programs for students to learn about different careers and the skills required for each (Adeoye, 2020).

In addition to providing career guidance, school counselors also assist students in developing career plans. According to the National Policy on Education (2004), career planning is a process that involves identifying career goals, acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge, and implementing career plans. School counselors work with students to develop career plans that align with their interests and skills. For example, they may provide information about college or vocational training programs that are relevant to the student's career goals.

Learning Motivation: School counselors also play a critical role in learning motivation. According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy is the belief in one's ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish particular tasks. School counselors work with students to develop self-efficacy by providing support, encouragement, and resources. They help students set realistic goals and develop action plans to achieve them. They also provide emotional support to students and encourage them to seek help when needed.

Furthermore, school counselors collaborate with teachers and parents to create a supportive learning environment for students. For example, they may provide resources and strategies to teachers to help students who may be struggling academically or emotionally. They may also collaborate with parents to provide them with the tools they need to support their children's academic and emotional needs.

school counselors play vital roles as career developers and learning motivators in Nigerian secondary schools. They provide guidance to students in identifying their strengths and interests, exploring career options, and making informed decisions about their future. Additionally, they help students to develop effective study habits, manage their time, and set academic goals, thus promoting academic success.

However, there are challenges that school counselors face in performing their roles effectively, including limited resources and workload. Therefore, there is a need for the Nigerian education system to provide adequate support for school counselors in terms of resources, training, and workload management to ensure that they can perform their roles effectively.

Based on the findings of previous research, it is recommended that school counselors in Nigerian secondary schools receive specialized training in career development and counseling to enhance their knowledge and skills in these areas. Additionally, there is a need for increased collaboration between school counselors, teachers, and parents to create a supportive learning environment that fosters students' academic and personal growth.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the roles of school counselors as career developers and learning motivators in Nigerian secondary schools are crucial to the success of students. By providing students with guidance, support, and resources, school counselors help to promote their academic and personal growth, preparing them for success in their chosen career paths and in life.

School counselors play a critical role in career development and learning motivation in Nigerian secondary schools' educational system. They provide guidance and support to students as they navigate the challenges of growing up and preparing for their future careers. School counselors are a vital resource for students, teachers, and parents, and their contributions are crucial to the success of the educational system. Further research is needed to investigate the effectiveness of school counseling programs in Nigerian secondary schools and to identify best practices for career development and learning motivation.

Recommendations

The paper recommended that:

1. Career intervention should be given regularly to students.
2. More research should be carried out to tackle unemployment and underemployment to secondary school students after the left school.
3. Career intervention should start at an early age of our secondary school students so that will be more informed when they come to choosing a vocation.
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