

ISSN 1119 - 636X

The Exceptional Child

The Journal of the National Council for Exceptional Children

Volume 8 Number 1, March 2005

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

ENHANCING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES OF PEOPLE WITH AND WITHOUT SPECIAL NEEDS THROUGH CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Abiodun M. Gesinde (Ph.D)

Federal College of Education (Sp) Oyo.

Abstract

Employment opportunities abound for people with and without special needs. However, many are yet to benefit maximally from these opportunities because of ignorance and or misinformation. Consequently, they are unemployed, underemployed, productive at the barest rate, unproductive and vocationally maladjusted. As a means of get out of these, this paper utilizes one of the vocational guidance and counselling programme, career development principle, to bring about vocationally adjusted individuals. A number of recommendations that would ensure its effectiveness are made.

Introduction

The choice of vocation is one of the fundamental decisions that man has to make at a particular point in time in his life time. Decision on choice of vocation is not expected to be hastily or faultly made. This is because planning career, in the observation of Vorkeh (1990), means lots of decisions. He maintains that:

Decisions about the sort of work you see yourself living in the future; decisions on the sort of work you will like to do, and the sort of work you would be good at. What sort of people are you going to mix with regularly? Where are you going to live, and how much spare time are you going to have? The job you are going to do is very important, but a future career involves much more than what happens during work hours. All these decisions usually have to be made without the opportunity of trying things out first. But the more time you spend finding out about jobs and about yourself, the better the decision become (p5).

Unfortunately, one of the problems of job seekers, in the submission of Okoye, Adejumo and Achebe (1990) is the making of hasty and emotion (irrational) decision in respect of vocational choice. They observe that when decision on choice of vocation is made under uncontrollable emotion, irrational choices are inevitable. Irrational choices, they conclude, would eventually metamorphose into job maladjustment and dissatisfaction. Faulty choice of vocation has also been found to have adverse effects on physical health; lead to continuous job insecurity or unemployment and may mar happiness for life (Gesinde, 1984). Attempts to choose a vocation, therefore, demand for adequate knowledge about the vocation, systematic planning and direction of professional if faulty choice of vocation is to be avoided like a plague. Guidance counsellor is professionally trained to provide services that would enhance the attainment of the most suitable vocation for people with and without special needs. He does this through a number of vocational guidance

and counselling programmes such as career development which is the focus of this paper.

On the premise of the above background this paper intends to:

- attempt a definition of career development;
- highlight some of the basic underlying assumptions of career development programme;
- justify the need for career development in Nigeria;
- develop a model for career development programme and
- recommend the inclusion or removal of factors that may influence the implementation of career development programmes.

What is Career Development?

The term 'Career' is synonymously interpreted to signify job, vocation, work and occupation. It is generally acknowledged to be the totality of work one experiences in a developmental life span. Career development is, therefore, the aspect of one's total development that emphasizes learning about, preparation for, entry into and progression in the world of work (Gibson and Mitchell, 1986).

From the foregoing, career development programme is a life-long learning process which aims at satisfying the vocational aspirations of an individual. Okoye, Adejumo and Achebe (1990) perceive it to be stimulating and motivating instruments which identify the underlying vocational or career potentials of an individual as well as helping the individual make vocational decisions that will produce life-long effects. As such, career development could be said to tend towards self actualization of an individual.

Basic Assumptions of Career Development

The development and usage of career development programme is guided by certain underlying assumptions. These are:

- (i) Vocational choice passes through a number of developmental processes as a result of which the career assistance to be offered should be developmental in nature covering the entire life span of an individual.
- (ii) Since all human beings will be faced with the selection of a particular vocation at a point in time, career development programme caters for all persons with or without special needs;
- (iii) Since choice of vocation should not be by trial and error method because of inherent dangers career development programme provides systematically planned procedures for choosing and retaining vocation.
- (iv) Since wise choice of vocation always involves acquisition of knowledge information collection and dissemination is the orbit through which career development programme rotates.
- (v) Career mistakes of an individual occasioned by ignorance or misinformation hinders vocational development. Hence, there is the need to make

RATIONALE FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Career development programme is one of the major aspects of vocational guidance and counseling. It caters for the vocational needs of all categories of people with and without special needs. The intervention programme of career development is deemed necessary because of certain disturbing events in Nigeria. Some of these are highlighted below:

- Some parents manifest non-challant attitude towards the vocational development of their children, most especially the handicapped ones, while some other parents negatively influenced the career choice of their children.
- Most students only attend school without tailoring their education towards a particular vocation.
- The increased number of vocation brought about by technological development has made the choice of a particular vocation more complex, confusing and frustrating.
- The number of vocations to which people with disabilities could choose from is limited by their conditions.
- Most people exhibit ignorance about self and available vocations.

Career Development Model

In their attempt to enhance career development of people's with and without special needs, a trained guidance counsellor performs the following duties:

- (i) create enabling environment that will allow the counsellee learn about self and the choice vocation;
- (ii) prepare the counsellee for the demands or requirements of the vocation;
- (iii) ensure the placement of the counsellee in the most suitable vocation and
- (iv) ensure that the counsellee is coping as well as progressing in the vocation.

These duties are sequentially and diagrammatically represented in the conceptual model below:

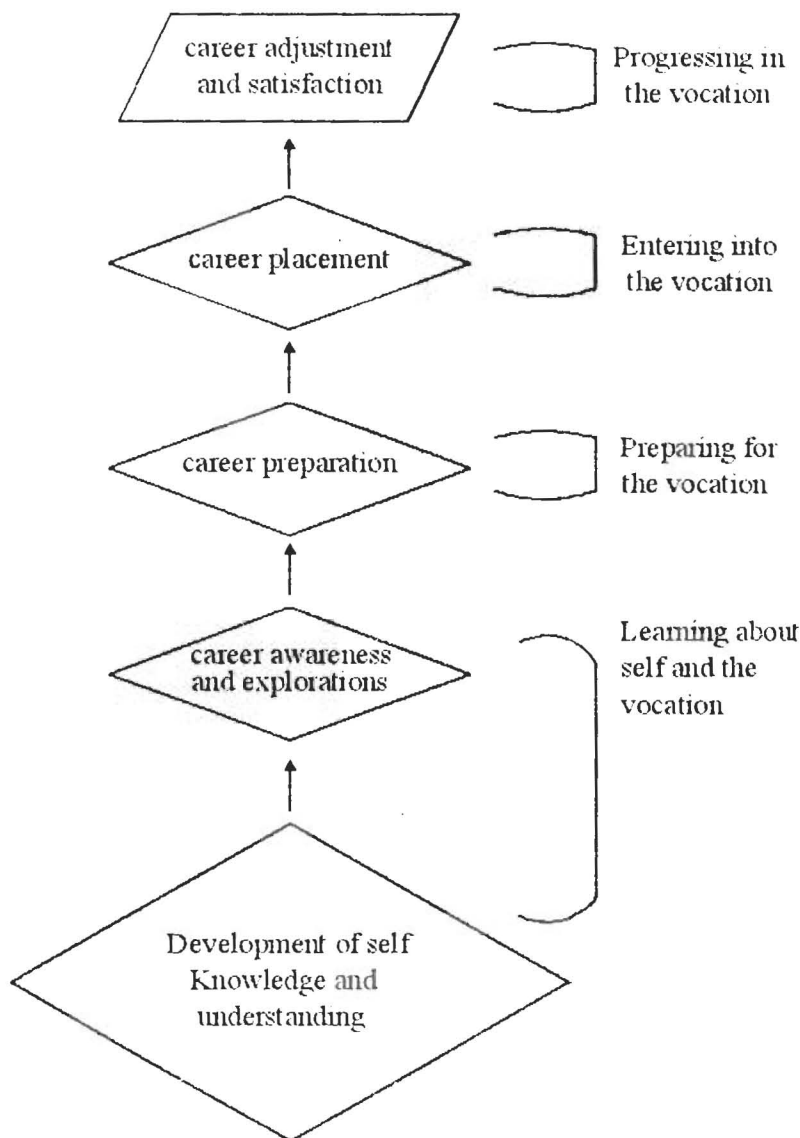


Fig I: Career Development Conceptual Model

(i) Self-Knowledge and Understanding

Developmental psychology which is concerned with changes in human behaviour throughout their lifespan identifies one of the principle guiding human development as uniqueness of an individual. This is interpreted to mean that no two individuals are similar in all ramifications including the uniovular twins. As such individual is to be uniquely considered before certain decisions are taken.

human behaviour throughout their life span identifies one of the principle guiding human development to be uniqueness of an individual. This is interpreted to mean that no two individuals are similar in all ramifications including the uniovular twins.

As such individual is to be uniquely considered before certain decisions are taken

It now behooves on an individual to have self-knowledge and understanding of what makes him/her a unique entity never replaceable anywhere in the world. Areas of focus in this context would not exclude personality make-up, strengths, weaknesses, likes, dislikes, needs, attitudes. Ironically, most people lack the required self-knowledge that would give room for self exploration. The knowledge of self held by some is either faulty or inadequate. Okoye, Adejumo and Achebe (1990) confirm this when they observe that:

Some people cannot really make a reliable and accurate evaluation of their abilities and capabilities and some many develop job aspirational level much higher than they can grapple with. Others may so underrate their potentialities as to develop a very low level job aspiration. In both cases, the individual worker will find it very difficult to adjust to their job situation with obvious vocation problems which will adversely affect both the employee and employer (p139).

Comprehensive information that would create room for self-knowledge and understanding could be attained by the guidance counsellor with the use of appraisal tools (test) and non-test devices) (Akinpelu, 1998). When these are employed the information that the counsellee is not aware of are exposed.

The counselor is, therefore, expected at this starting phase to synthesize behaviour patterns of an individual with a view to create self knowledge and exploration. An individual who understands self would not only know his abilities but also limitations in respect of certain occupations. When accurate self knowledge is appropriately anchored by the counsellor the enabling environment required for career awareness and exploration has been put in place.

(2) Career Awareness and Exploration

For people with and without special needs to choose vocation that would match their personality, abilities, potentialities identified in the first phase they need to know work options and career alternatives. This becomes imperative because there should be congruence between personality and occupation chosen.

Review of literature, however, shows that too many people are ignorant of available career opportunities in their environment. For instance, Omotosho (1998) asserts that:

- (i) There is apparent lack of knowledge about work options and career alternatives. An embarrassing proportion of youths has little or no knowledge of these options and alternatives and must therefore be helped through a systematic plan.
- (ii) So little exists in the Nigerian market of career development literature directed to adolescent populations that no progress towards satisfactory career lives can be made by adolescents without help from others.

Be that as it may there is the need for career awareness and exploratory that would enable an individual choose the best of vocation that matches his/her personality. Personality approach to career choice and development has stressed that an individual is likely to be satisfied, stay on a job or learn it to the extent that his needs personality and especially social environment would match (Okoye, Adejumo and Achebe, 1990).

The above therefore, implies that for an individual to match his choice of vocation with his personality, needs and so on accurate information on available vocation would be required. At this phase, the counsellor is expected to provide adequate information that would enable the counsellee have comprehensive knowledge of all available career opportunities in order to choose rightly. As rightly observe by Hoppock in Kochhar (1999):

Choice always involves knowledge; one cannot choose what one does not know. one may stumble into an appropriate occupation by sheer luck, but the wise choice of an occupation requires accurate information about what occupations are available what they require and what they offer (p.82).

In order to create career awareness that would give room for career exploration the counsellor is expected to source for information on available career opportunities and disseminating such using individual and group techniques of imparting occupational information. Group technique of disseminating information would include the organization of career education/talk/conferences/exhibitions, excursion to establishment, industries, e.t.c. Vital occupational information to be provided would include educational requirement for the vocation, mode of application, place of work, conditions of service, hazards of the job, fringe benefits, salary attached, in-service training, retirement procedure, leave procedure, nature of establishment (government or non-government).

It is the duty of the counsellor to ensure that occupational information obtained from a preferred vocation matches the personality make up of the counsellee earlier revealed at the first phase. If the occupational information obtained is incongruent with the self knowledge then an alternative vocation is inevitable.

(3) Career Preparation

The first two phases of this model emphasize matching of personalities traits with work characteristics by the counsellor. The demands of the job would expose conditions to be met before the attainment of preferred career. This may be in terms of relevant subjects' combination, educational qualification, acquisition of appropriate training or skills require cognate experience, age relevance, entrance exams e.t.c. It is at this career preparation phase that the counsellee is principally made to satisfy conditions that would make him eligible for the career. The accomplishment of these career requirements could be influenced by the level of motivation and reinforcement.

(4) Career Placement

Career placement primarily deals with the assignment of a person to a designated career. Virile placement efforts of the counsellor are directed at placing an individual in a particular job as well as helping him retain the job (Okoye, Adejumo and Achebe (1990).

When an individual has been made to satisfy the mandatory conditions for the attainment of a specified career then placing such an individual in such a career becomes an easy task. If career placement, however, extends to the ability of the individual to retain the career it implies that the counsellor is expected to provide the counsellee with factors that would enable him maintain the career such as in-service training, workshops attendance, obedience to rules and regulations, creativity e.t.c.

(5) Career Adjustment and Satisfaction

When an individual is placed in a career that he is best well-matched for there is the necessity to adjust to the diverse demands of the career. Vocational adjustment in the submission, of Kochhar (1999) means adjustment not only to work concerned but to all social, economic and physical situations connected with the occupation. This is because occupation brings with it social relationship with others. This therefore, implies that an individual is not expected to satisfy adjustment requirement of the career and be maladjusted in other social responsibilities. Inability to maintain balanced adjustment in other social activities would revolve to negatively affect adjustment to work., The counsellor is therefore, expected to use the knowledge of psychology of adjustment in providing adjustment techniques that would enable an individual maintain corresponding adjustment between job and other social engagements.

Conclusion and Recommendations

For an individual to choose the right vocation, maintain and progress in it the employment of career development model principles is inevitable. Vocational adjustment and satisfaction inherent in the model would enhance maximum performance at work and increases productivity. It is, therefore, indispensable to recommend that:

- counsellors who are the personnel trained for the implementation of the model should be adequately employed to provide this services in and outside school settings.

- since the success of the programme depends on availability of certain materials it is imperative that special budgetary allocation for the programme be made available.

- Since counsellors are employed to perform counselling role and functions effort should be made to remove non-counselling duties from the schedule of their work.

REFERENCES

- Akinpelu, O.F. (1998). Appraisal of Student Test and Non-Test Devices. In A.I. Idowu (ed) *Guidance and Counselling in Education* p. 167 –191. Ibadan: Indemac (Nigeria Publishers) Limited.
- Gesinde, S.A. (1984). *Career Planning and Employment Opportunities for Secondary School Students*. Lagos; Nigerian Educational Research Council.
- Gibson, R.L. & Mitchell, M.H. (1986). *Introduction to Counselling and Guidance*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.
- Okoye, N.N.; Adejumo, D; & Achebe, C. (1990). *Fundamentals of Guidance and Counselling*. Abeokuta: Heinemann Educational Books (Nigeria) Ltd.
- Kochhar, S.K (1999). *Guidance and Counselling in Colleges and Universities*. New Delhi : Sterling Publishers Pvt Limited.
- Omotosho, J.A. (1998) Career Guidance and Students' Choice of Subjects. In A.I. Idowu (Ed) *Guidance and Counselling in Education* P. 98 – 126. Ibadan: Indemac (Nigeria Publishers) Limited.
- Vorkeh, E. K. (1990). *Careers Guide for Africa*. Worcester: Square One Publications.