

## **CAREER CHOICE: A BASIC ISSUE IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL**

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### **Abstract**

*A career is the sequence of occupations, jobs and positions held during the course of life. The paper examines the conceptual models in career, the role of school towards the students, career education in primary and secondary schools, and their subjects. Also, this paper tries to restate the basic issues that affect the career choice of primary and secondary school students in choosing their life career. Conclusions were reached and recommendations made.*

### **Introduction**

Accordingly, the discussions in this paper shall begin with some examination of the nature of career and career choice and proceed therefore with a survey of basic issues that might affect the career choice of a student.

In this regard, we shall seek answers to questions such as:

- What are career/it four conceptual models?
- What are the roles of the school towards the students?
- What is primary education?
- What are primary school subjects and activities?
- What is career education in secondary school (i.e. junior and senior secondary school)?
- What are the secondary school subjects?
- What are the basic issues that affect the career choice of primary and secondary school students?

Subsequently, we shall focus intensely on the Nigerian Career scene for purpose of making specific exemplification. This is being done in the hope that the Nigerian example will offer to readers as well as other interested scholars in the novel opportunity of observing the career choice and basic issues in making a career adventure.

### **Concept of Career**

Career talk of this nature is very complex and wide field with wide implications for the students, teachers, parents and industry as well as the larger society. Career refers to the major life domains which engage the individual in multiple roles, such as worker, family member, community participant and leisure-time participant. Yet other scholars' sees a career as the sequence of occupations, jobs and positions held during the course of life. On the other hand,

career education is the total effort by educational agencies and communities in presenting organized career-oriented activities and experiences to all persons from the nursery school through adulthood (Osuala, 1998).

The question now, is what are the four phases of the conceptual model of career education?

**The career education as a conceptual model comprised of four phases, thus;**

- Career awareness - Elementary 1 through 4
- Career exploration - Elementary 5 and 6
- Career Orientation - Classes 1 through 3 (junior sec sch.)
- Career preparation - Senior Secondary Classes & continuing advancement education.

Elementary 1–4: All students through their regular classroom activities have an opportunity to learn the world of work and begin to understand and appreciate the dignity of work and the social contributions made by various occupational groups and progressives

**Elementary 5 & 6:** All students have an opportunity to explore occupational options with “hand on” activities in major occupational clusters.

**Classes 1 – 3 (Jss):** “The emphasis in this area is on narrowing occupational choices and initial vocational preparation. Students will be prepared to enter careers, continue in post-secondary programmes, or enter professional programmes.

**Senior Secondary School (SSS) “classes and continuing education:** At this level, programmes are provided to assist individuals to pursue their chosen careers.

### **The Role of the School towards Students’ Career Choice**

Career choice is a very central and topical issue at this stage of the students’ conditions of study. This is thus the crucial stage with which the student’s mind gradually being shaped to face the challenges of the transition to adulthood.

Perhaps the first career question, which the student may ponder over, may be “what will I become after completing school? There are many things a student can become after completing the school. At this crucial stage, it is imperative that the student is exposed to a variety of career responsibility amongst themselves; The school inculcates the habit of appreciating cultural differences as well as tolerance and respect for each person’s or groups ways of life.

### **Primary Education**

Primary Education is considered the foundation of education, if for nothing else, it is expected to prepare the child to read and write. Primary education as referred to in NPE (2004) is the education given in institutions for children aged 6 to 11 plus. Since the rest of the education system is built upon it, the primary level is the key to the success or failure of the whole system. The duration shall be six years.

Olaniyan and Olabanji (2010) states that the primary education in all the states of the federation was to help the child to:

- Master the three Rs – Reading, writing and Arithmetic, this is to develop permanent literacy.
- Develop sound standards of individual conduct and behaviour.
- Acquire some skills and appreciate the value of manual work

In support of the above view, Osuala (1998) affirms that every elementary school should integrate career education as a part of the total programme. The objectives are to develop in the

students an awareness of the occupational world through unrestricted exposure to all fields of work. So, the objective of the primary education in Nigeria can be summed up as a broad based education with emphasis on the effective communication skills (FRN, 1986).

### **Primary School subjects and Activities**

In the primary school, there are essential subjects that the pupils are introduced to According to. Okoro (1993), the essential subjects in primary school include:

- Writing
- Reading
- Elementary Mathematics
- Indigenous language and literatures
- Foreign language
- Basic Science
- Social studies

Here, each subject introduced to the pupils is expected to stimulate certain skills, experiences, attitudes, principles, etc, which can initiate the achievement of the outlined general objectives. Each subject has a list of topics which the teacher should teach the pupils. A collection of the different topics listed for each subject constitutes the syllabus which is only on aspect of the curriculum.

A part from the above topics listed out, there are numerous activities that are introduced to the pupils in the process of education which are the entire activities of the pupils are regulated by the school bell. Other primary school activities include singing and club association.

At this stage, there will be no necessity for the elementary school students to make specific career choices. Research study tends to support the fact that crystallization of career choice usually takes place in the secondary school and not in the elementary school (Osuala, 1987).

### **Career Education**

The term career education is used to include those educational experiences and service provided at the elementary, secondary, post-secondary and adult levels, which help people to make more intelligent occupational of their choice, and to advance in their choosen field. All education should be directed towards preparing the individual for entry into and adjustment to the world of work (Osuala, 1998). Proper choice of career (Ogueze, 2008) leads to success and happiness and indeed is a prerequisite for self-actualization. Career exploration begins in the secondary school. The career education at the Secondary School level is grouped into two parts; the career educators is Junior secondary school (Jss) and senior secondary school (SSS).

At JSS level, the progamme provide separate courses related to all fields of work. This includes opportunities for practical experience. Objective of career education in the (JSS) Junior-Secondary school should be to:

- ❖ Stimulated occupational interest
- ❖ Provide exploratory prevocational experiences that involve specifics and occupational clusters.

While at the (SSS) Senior Secondary School level, the objective of career education in SSS is to provide.

- ❖ Provide advanced specific occupational training for specific occupations or occupational clusters to meet the specific needs of the individual.

The question now is what are the subjects offered at the secondary school level that will enable these students to achieve their career target in life?

### **The Secondary School Subjects**

In Nigeria educational system we operate 6-3-3-4 system of education.

- Primary school involves 6 years
- Junior Secondary school (SSS) 3 years
- Tertiary Institution 4 years

### **Junior Secondary School Subjects**

In the junior secondary school level the following subjects are involved;

**Elective Subjects:** Three of the following subjects must be passed before such a students can proceed to junior secondary school year one; Physical and Health Education, CRS /IRK, Nigeria languages (Hausa), Yoruba, Ibo and Edo, Agricultural Science, Music, Arabic or French

**The Core Subjects:** At Jss level, all students' irrespective of the student's attitude, interest or future ambition must register and pass the following compulsory subjects.

- English Language
- Mathematics
- Social Studies
- Integrated Science

**Pre-vocational Subjects:** At Junior Secondary school level, the students are expected to offer and pass at least nine from the following subjects introductory Technology, Business Studies, H.P.E, C.R.K, Social Studies, Home Economics, Food Nutrition, Agricultural Science Fine Arts or Local Arts. Though English language, Mathematics and Inter-science are very compulsory subjects.

### **The Senior Secondary School (SSS) Subjects**

The subjects offered at the Senior Secondary School level are grouped into Business Based Courses and Science Based courses.

**Science Based Subjects:** The major subjects offered by the students in science based schools must include all the traditional science subjects such as chemistry, Biology, Physical and to some extent geography and mathematics. (National Policy on Education, 1981 and National Board for Technical Education, 1994). The courses of instructions have to essentially conform with the requirements leading to the pursuance of science and technically based careers or professions.

The science-based courses and careers which students may opt or pursue for the whole of their life including Engineering and Technology, Environmental Sciences, Medical Science, Agricultural Sciences and a number of special or specific science disciplines (Abbass, 1997).

All such courses and careers are obtainable in all our universities, polytechnics and colleges of education. Courses and careers expressed below are in five major categories. Professionals, versed in specific fields, should be invited on regular basis to give career talks to the students. These courses/careers are

- **Engineering and Technology:** Agricultural Engineering, Automobile Engineering Technology, Ceramics Engineering technology, Building construction, Chemical Engineering, Civil Engineering, Communication Engineering Technology, Electrical and Electronic Engineering, Electronic and Computer Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Materials Engineering, Forestry Engineering, Food and Science Technology, Environmental and Public Health Engineering, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration, Meteorology, Mining, Metallurgical Engineering, Petroleum Engineering, Petrochemical Science and Technology, Power/Energy System, Production Engineering, Project

Management Technology, Soil and Water Engineering Technology, Textile Science and Technology, Water Resources and Environmental Engineering, Wood Processing Engineering.

➤ **Engineering**

The Engineering and Technology courses above require the conditions which each aspirant must be very familiar with. If you do not possess the necessary subject requirements for any chosen discipline, you will not be admitted.

➤ **Environmental Science:** Architecture, Construction Management, Building Estate Management, Industrial Design, Farm Management Land Surveying, Quantity Surveying, Urban and Regional Planning.

➤ **Medical Science:** Dentistry, Medicine and Surgery, Pharmacy, Medical Laboratory Science, Physiology, Environmental Health, Human Nutrition Technology, Nursing, Veterinary Medicine, physiotherapy/Medical Rehabilitation, Radiology.

➤ **Agricultural Sciences:** Agricultural, Agricultural Economics, Crops Science/Production, Agricultural Extension/Animal Science Production, fisheries, food science/Technology, forestry with wild life, Soil Science, home Economics, Nutrition and Dietetics.

➤ **General and Specific Sciences:** Analytical Chemistry, Applied Biology and Biochemistry, Applied physics, Applied Mathematics, Biochemistry, Biology, Botany, chemistry, Computer Science, Dye and Textile Chemistry, Geology, Earth Science, Geography, Geophysics, Human Anatomy, Industrial Chemistry, Industrial Mathematics, Industrial Physics, Mathematics, Nuclear physics, meteorology, Microbiology, petrochemical science and Technology, Pharmacology, Physics, polymer and fiber science, statistics, Toxicology, Wood Pulp Paper Chemistry, Zoology.

- These courses and careers may be pursued at the Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education.

### **Medical Sciences**

To read the above courses you need school certificate with five credits including: Mathematics, English Language, Physics and Chemistry and Biology. Other programmes in the Medical Sciences more or less require the same entry qualifications a minimum of four relevant subjects; qualify candidates into the various programmes. It must be stressed that English Language and mathematics are two core subjects, which are compulsory or required for a successful pursuance of such careers.

### **Business Based Subjects**

The world of business also offers very fascinating opportunities for careers life that could even provide the individual independent and every profitable life. The business areas include Accountancy, Business Management, Banking, Marketing, Insurance and Public Administration, etc. The business of producing, transporting and marketing the numerous items of life's needs gives regular employment to millions of people. There is nothing to stop activities necessary to carry on these businesses (Hill, 1963).

Other very fascinating areas are the legal profession and mass communication. One can make very profitable independent living in these fields.

Educational industry is one other vast area. Many people particularly the youth have negative attitude towards teaching and educating others. Children to be taught. The misconceptions and prejudice at its three levels of primary, secondary and tertiary (Ogueze, 2008)

Education is very flexible in its recruitment to admit people of varying disciplines. One could establish private educational institution in order to make independent living out of education but this may not be possible immediately to the youth trying to survive.

Besides the above situation, there are opportunities in other areas of public service. They include the following white colour jobs: Welding, lumbering, furniture making, and shoe-making, etc.

### **Major & Career Profiles**

#### **Career Categories**

- ❖ Agricultural
- ❖ Architecture, Engineering and Drafting
- ❖ Arts, Visual and performing
- ❖ Business and Finance
- ❖ Community and Social Services
- ❖ Computer and Math
- ❖ Construction
- ❖ Environment
- ❖ Health Care Support
- ❖ Health Diagnosis and Treatment
- ❖ Health Technology
- ❖ Installation and Repair
- ❖ Law and Government
- ❖ Management
- ❖ Media and Communications
- ❖ Office and Administrative Support
- ❖ Personal Care of Culinary Service
- ❖ Production
- ❖ Protective Service
- ❖ Sale
- ❖ Social Science
- ❖ Sports and Fitness
- ❖ Transportation

#### **Major Categories**

- ❖ Agricultural and Related science
- ❖ Architecture and planning
- ❖ Area, Ethnic, Cultural and Gender Studies
- ❖ Arts, Visual and Performing
- ❖ Biological and Biomedical Sciences
- ❖ Business
- ❖ Communication and Journalism
- ❖ Communication Technologies
- ❖ Computer and Information Science
- ❖ Construction Trades
- ❖ Education
- ❖ Engineering Technologies
- ❖ English Language and Literature

- ❖ Family and Consumer Sciences
- ❖ Health Professions and Related Clinical Sciences
- ❖ History
- ❖ Languages, Literatures, and linguistics
- ❖ Law and legal studies.
- ❖ Liberal Arts and Sciences, General studies and Humanities
- ❖ Library Science
- ❖ Math and Static's
- ❖ Mechanic and Repair Technologies
- ❖ Military, army, Navy, air force and the police
- ❖ Multi/interdisciplinary studies
- ❖ Natural Resources and conservation
- ❖ Parks, Recreation, and fitness
- ❖ Personal and culinary services
- ❖ Philosophy and Religion
- ❖ Physical Sciences
- ❖ Precision Production Trades
- ❖ Psychology
- ❖ Public Administration and Social Services
- ❖ Science Technologies
- ❖ Security and Protective Services
- ❖ Social Sciences
- ❖ Theological Studies and Religious Vocations
- ❖ Transportation and Material moving

### **Educational Requirements for Careers**

One determining factor in making a good choice is education. Every white job requires some educational conditions for admitting entrants. Some require specific educational and subject qualifications which must be met. For instance to be admitted to read law in the university, a candidate must possess school certificate with five credits including English Language and a pass in Mathematics.

The purpose of emphasizing educational qualification is to ensure that the person is properly grounded to be effective in the chosen career. The entry requirements are basic background for the pursuits. (Ogueze, 2006) if you therefore, plan to make a successful career in any discipline, you should be prepared with the subject entry requirements.

### **The Basic Issues that Affect the Career Choice of Primary and secondary school students**

#### **➤ Knowledge of the job**

One other thing that facilitates right choice of career is knowledge of the job. This may just be rudimentary but it is necessary. It is indeed believed that young people lack adequate information about occupations, careers, work activities and available options (Grinder, 1973). It is therefore important, careers, work activities that go on in various work places, the prospects, the duties and responsibilities expected. To be a lawyer for instance, besides having the natural quantities of wisdom, intelligence and brilliance, the individual must be an assiduous indefatigable worker or student to be really called learned Gentleman". To retain his wig and gown, the individual must not be fraudulent or dubious and must be a genuine vanguard of justice and equity. To be a happy and

successful teacher you must be honest, an assiduous and indefatigable worker, patient sociable and humane.

➤ **Self-Knowledge**

Besides the requisite educational qualifications some personality factors should necessarily be considered in career choice. One should relate one's personal attitude to life to choice of career. Career training can modify individual attitude but to a large extent inherent propensities are important determinants. One may have all it takes to be a medical doctor but may not stand the site of drop of blood or site of corpse. So such person could opt for the engineering or environmental disciplines. One could have the educational qualification to be a lawyer but may disapprove of the airs of the lawyer or the subtle legal arguments and disputations in the court. The smell of drugs may create phobia in a person who may otherwise opt for pharmacy. Personal health problem like asthma may make a person not go to for pharmacy for fear of drugs with irritating odour. That you may have to read, write and talk continuously in class every working day may be a reason for one to avoid the teaching profession or the business of buying and selling. The knowledge of one's personal abilities, attitudes or dispositions should guide one's choice of career.

➤ **Parental and Peer Group Constraints**

When we have considered the various job alternatives, the educational requirement for jobs, the information about the chosen job, the question of self-knowledge for job suitability, we should stress the hazard of parental pressure and to some extent peer group influence on the job choice of the young. Some young people want to get to where the friends aspire to reach whether or not the enabling conditions are met. More seriously, most parents choose careers for their children. This, as the preceding, is not bad in itself but there are enormous and intractable problems where the child's capabilities, aptitudes, values, skills personal interests have not been fully reckoned with.

➤ **Finance**

Parent's financial status influences choice of career. In choosing a career the person must consider the duration and cost of education necessary for preparing for the job. Some programmes are more expensive than others. Programmes like Pharmacy, Medicine, Law, Dentistry and Engineering take more years and demand very expensive books and materials. Without Government interventionist measures in the form of loans, bursaries and scholarships, the consideration of parental financial position affects choice of career.

However, the purpose of education is to make the individual develop his various faculties that will make him useful to himself and the society. Wrong choice of career whether induced or by any form of false consciousness generates frustration in a work place. The individual becomes the workman who quarrels with his tools. It could lead to loss of employment and unemployment with all its woes including a sense of uselessness or worthlessness, a feeling of rejection and grief (Anigbogu 1988). Uba (1997) emphasized that when the right choice is not made, the results are job dissatisfaction, failure to make a success in a career and desire to change job.

When the right job is taken or right career chosen one matches on without future regrets. Observable results will include settled mind and joyful desire to work and to a



make a career. Attendant to work challenges are handled with skill and dynamism are handled with skill and dynamism. Work is efficiently and effectively prosecuted. Greater and more productivity is provided all to the benefit of the society and the individual. Personal progress and continuous mobility to greater heights of responsibility result. The individual therefore enjoys a sense of personal fulfillment, a sense of achievement and a sense of self-actualization.

### **Challenges**

In view of the fact that career is developmental, the process of preparing for it is challenging to the individual. The challenges are practical and they stand on your way to the career, to test your ability to get on it or drop on your way. You are therefore encouraged to rise to the under listed challenges:

- Discover yourself, build your – concept, and identify your personality characteristics – your strengths and weaknesses. You can never be exactly like the other person for no two persons are alike. So know who you are, and what you can do. Sort yourself out and be firm in your decision.
- Prepare yourself well academically. Know your subjects and the ones that are related to your career of aspiration. Pursue them with all vigor. Out side WEAC is not the solution. You need to defined what you have; it is a challenge so, know what you have.
- Be fully aware of the Almighty JAMB and its brochure and prepare well for it . JAMB is not a child's play and must be taken with all seriousness. Your greatest challenge now is the post JAMB Screening Test. If you buy your JAMB score, you cannot buy your test score and there must be correlation between the two scores before you secure admission otherwise you loose the admission no matter how high your JAMB Score may be.
- Life in institutions of higher learning is challenging for you to attain your career of aspiration, you must pass through the school and also allow the school to pass through you. Attendance to lecturers, quizzes, tests and assignments on regular basis is very helpful because they are geared towards preparing you for your aspired career. Avoid cultism, exam – malpractice and rape. These can ruin your career life.
- Collect sufficient information about the world of work especially your career of aspiration. Such information will provide you with details on what it takes to enter the career, the qualification required, and duration of training, salary structures, advancement pattern, benefits, prospect and hazards. The information will enable you to take decision that will be rewarding and satisfying
- Be computer literate. The world is going computer. The net working of business is all over the place. JAMB, WASSCE, NECO, even admission registration exercise are all on-line. Do not use your air – time on irrelevances. Time is money. It is challenge to survive in the fast advancing technology of the world in net. Make haste while the sun shines.
- Your school Guidance/Teacher Counsellor is your best friend. She is always there for you. Consult and discuss with her. She is helpful to you. She can help you digest the challenges facing your life and career aspiration. The challenges are obstacles on your way. They can be harnessed. Your counselor is your immediate resources person. Confide in her.

Furthermore recommendations on the part of the school are thus:

- Career talk seminars and career days should be organized regularly in schools to help students gather reliable occupational information on different work types from different professionals. This would curb the youth unsteadiness on jobs.

- The State Ministry of Education in collaboration with the secondary school board and science and technical board should ensure that at least guidance counselors are employed and posted on full time basis to man each of the secondary schools in the state. With these measures, the counselors will devote more time to effective career counseling strategies which would enable the students' realistic occupational preferences.
- Each school should have equipment such as audio and audio-visuals like radio, tape recorders, television, overhead projectors with occupational films for a more effective career counseling of the students. Also, career bulletin boards are provided where information about different career can be displayed for the students.
- The Nigerian Educational Curriculum should be modified and reviewed to incorporate systematic career counseling programs for Nigerian students from the primary to tertiary levels of education.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

It is pertinent to point out that in rising to the responsibility of these challenges, it becomes imperative to alloy forces with the Almighty God through prayers, fasting, almsgiving and charitable work. Prayer is the master key.

If one can rise to the challenges facing the preparation of his/her career of aspiration, the sky will be his/her limit. The person will be prosperous.

Finally, if one prepares well for his/her Career, he/she will be

- Viable and marketable
- Demonstrate expertise, confidence and professionalism
- Enjoy gainful employment; have job satisfaction
- Be happy and well adjusted
- Enjoy rewarding experience
- Prepare for adult life
- Attain fulfilled adult life
- Be financially stable.

Students should be courageous, focused, prepared and guided to face the realities of life.

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