

CAREER CHOICE: DECIDING WHAT AND WHERE YOU WANT TO BE!

Shehu Yahaya Tsagem

Department of Educational Foundations
Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto
shehu.yahaya@udusok.edu.ng

Abstract

The paper looked at issues concerning choice of career among students. After a brief look at what career choice and development is, the paper describe some terms associated with career; terms that a considered synonymous by many but are actually different. The paper was based upon the system theory which focuses on the importance of society and the environment along with individual differences and it was also based upon the chaos theory which focuses on the complexities of social realities and the unpredictable incidents they will generate. Furthermore, the paper discussed on the various assumptions or perspectives underlying career choice like opportunities and choices should be available for all people, regardless of sex, socio-economic class, religion, disability, sexual orientation, age, or cultural background. Attempt was also made to discuss on some of the classification of occupational types though the thousands of occupations are known to be existing in the world of work. Likewise, factors that are known to affect occupational choice and types are carefully elucidated. General process of career choice were discussed which involves facilitating greater self-awareness, linking individuals to resources containing labour market information, increasing awareness of options, assisting with the decision making process, and teaching job search strategies.

Introduction

In the past, most people prepared for a job and remained in that line until they retire. Consequently the layman's understanding of what is meant by a career development is from a static perspective. But, now as occupations are changing rapidly and society is becoming increasingly complex and multicultural, so do individuals need to plan for diverging rather than converging career paths; then it is essential that the context of career decisions should be dynamic. Furthermore, in times of social change and economic uncertainty, students often feel discouraged, despaired, and hopeless about their futures. The increasing complexity of students' needs and career counseling interventions have rendered inadequate, and simplistic approaches to resolving career issues. Although traditional approaches still may play a role in career planning, additional emphasis must be placed on other issues: how self-concept is implemented (Super, 1990), personal adaptability (Super, 1985), and personal meaning-making (Miller-Tiedeman & Tiedeman, 1990).

Career counseling should also help students achieve independence rather than dependence. Such factors necessitate a different vision of the career process.

After nearly seventeen years of full-time education under this system of education, it is not unreasonable to ask oneself “Where is all this leading to?” Meaning, what path have I chartered for myself and how far can the existing circumstances allow me to get there? This brings in the situation where one is constantly thinking about “life after school” and because individuals have reached the stage where they can disengage from their parents and start their own family, how can I secure myself “means of livelihood” to be an acceptable member of the society. Thus, the notion of career interest gets stronger. And the best way one can think or identify the interest element on a particular career as put by Okpara (as cited in Egbule, 2002) is to think or talk about them. Moreover, the rapid changes in economy in Nigeria has brought the importance of manpower into sharp focus. As a result of technological advancement, the nature of many jobs changes and the need for occupational information and techniques of this provision to students become very important. In this age the only thing that is permanent is **change**. We must therefore realize that changes often occur in our career. In some advanced countries, for example, a person might change four or five times from one job to another wherever there are job opportunities. Such a situation is already in Nigeria. One may start a career as a clerical officer and end up as the managing director in a company. One may also start a career as a primary school teacher and end up as a university lecturer or a professor. Even when one is on the same career, there are opportunities to grow on the job by attending specialist courses.

Terms Associated with Career Development

As noted by Egbule (2002) career and vocation are two words that are used interchangeably though synonymous in meaning. They are used mostly in the areas of vocational counselling, with broad meanings. Thus, an understanding of career development requires explanation on some terms as presented below.

Career

Technically, career refers to a sequence of roles, or positions, including work, leisure, and educational pursuits which may encompass a number of occupations vocations or jobs one person engages in during his/her working life (Seligman, 1980). Thus, it encompasses the interaction of work roles and other life roles over a person’s lifespan including both paid and unpaid work in an

individual's life. People create career patterns as they make decisions about education, work, family and other life roles.

My Career (2014) pointed out that the notion of career has changed with time. If once career was a synonym for the individual progress in the organizational hierarchy or in one profession, today it is a term that describes the path of learning and the path of work of an individual. And it is not one term which is exclusive for the most successful individuals (managers, singers, athletes etc.) but it refers to all adult individuals but also to students. Today, everybody has a career. The periods of education, capacity building, unemployment, and maternity leave are phases in one person's career.

Career development

Career development (in the context of career orientation) is a lifelong process which involves the management of learning, work and transition in order to advance and head towards a determined individual future developed personally. The career development is the individual managed by the individual. Thus, it is the total constellation of economic, sociological, psychological, educational, physical and chance factors that combine to shape one's career (Sears, 1982).

Vocation

Though synonymous with occupation, Hopke (1968) states that it is more usual for a worker rather than his employer to use the term to refer to a work activity. Yet in another turn, Egbule (2002) saw it as the "natural gift of the individual" because he maintained that IRTAC (1980, as cited) defined it as a spiritual calling which is reserved for those who are committed to their work, have greater autonomy in performing it and finds it intrinsically rewarding with a lot of economic values attached to it. It is an occupation with essence of commitment and is person centered. Therefore, occupation like priesthood, politics, military and even counselling can rightly be regarded as a vocation.

Occupation

Egbule (2002) observes that an occupation is a type of work activity in which people engage a group of similar tasks organized in similar ways in various establishments, an activity that has a value market and in which people are therefore paid to engage. It is one's principal

employment e.g. business, vocational trade or other means of livelihood. It is a specific job or work activity that is society controlled e.g. politician, physician, president, journalist, philosopher etc. a person may change occupation more than once in his life time.

Job

A job means a related or similar position in a single educational institution, organization or business establishment. It is a continuous period of paid employment; it is just a way of making a living. In a career one can feel that his/her abilities are being properly used that the work is worth doing, that it is interesting. It is a group of similar positions requiring similar attributes in a single organization. Apart from course lecturers, there may also be technician-lecturer who hold a position similar or related to the lecturer's. Therefore, the technician-lecturer's position is considered a job.

Position

Achebe (as cited in Egbule, 2002) observes that a position refers to the group of duties, tasks or activities performed by a given person. For instance, a lecturer is usually involved in different work activities, such as instruction, exam coordination, supervision etc. when therefore we group together these various work activities, tasks or duties that the lecturer performs, we can begin to have an idea of the position he/she holds.

Theoretical Interpretive Framework

Though there are numerous theories on career counselling (process theory by Ginsberg *et al*, self-concept theory Super *et al*, personality environmental fit theory by Holland, traits and factor theory by Williamson e.t.c.), this paper was based upon the system theory and the chaos theory.

System theory (Patton and McMahon, 1999) which has been found useful across cultures highlights the importance of society and the environment along with individual differences such as gender, values, sexual orientation, ability, disability, interests, skills, age, world-of-work knowledge, physical attributes, aptitudes, ethnicity, self-concept, personality, beliefs, and health. The theory also discuss the interaction of the individual with the social system including educational institutions, peers, family, media, community groups, and the workplace. These

interact with the environmental social system that includes geographical location, political decisions, historical trends, globalization, socio-economic status, and the employment market.

The chaos theory is another approach to career counselling on the rise at present. It is used in analysis of current career patterns (Bright and Pryor, 2005), of contemporary counselling models and of counsellor 'working methods. Robert G. L. Pryor, Norman E. Amundson and Jim E. H. Bright claim that the Chaos Theory of Careers (CTC) assumes first of all that the more complicated the social realities are, the more unpredictable incidents they will generate. This has consequences for individual lives in that the options/events one faces in life represent but one of a range of possibilities. As all components of the social reality are closely interconnected, an alteration in one of them may severely affect any of the remaining ones. The authors believe that such assumptions have rather serious implications for career counselling, which is required to take a number of new factors into account. Hence, they elaborate a comprehensive career counselling model based on this theory (Pryor, Amundson, Bright, 2008).

Perspectives Underlying Career Choice

There are various assumptions underlying career choice, these include the following:

1. People have the ability and opportunity to make career choices for their lives. The amount of freedom in choices is partially dependent upon the social, economic, and cultural context of individuals.
2. Opportunities and choices should be available for all people, regardless of sex, socio-economic class, religion, disability, sexual orientation, age, or cultural background.
3. Individuals are naturally presented with career choices throughout their lives.
4. People are generally involved in a wide range of work roles across their lifespan. These roles include both paid and unpaid work.
5. Career counsellors assist people to explore, pursue and attain their career goals.
6. Career counselling basically consists of four elements: (a) helping individuals to gain greater self-awareness in areas such as interests, values, abilities, and personality style, (b) connecting students to resources so that they can become more knowledgeable about jobs and occupations, (c) engaging students in the decision-making process in order that they can choose a career path that is well suited to their own interests, values, abilities and personality style, and (d) assisting individuals to be active managers of their career paths (including managing career transitions

and balancing various life roles) as well as becoming lifelong learners in the sense of professional development over the lifespan.

7. The reasons why individuals enter particular occupations vary according to the amount of importance placed on personal preferences, such as interests, or external influences, such as labour market trends or parental expectations.
8. Career decision-making is not something that happens only once in a person's life but, rather, it is an ongoing process that might take place at any age.
9. All forms of work are valuable, and contribute to the success and wellbeing of a society.

Classification of Occupational Types

Having understood the various assumption about career choice, now let us look at some occupational types which is fundamental to an understanding of labour supply and labour requirement problems, employment, labour turnover and employment conditions. As previously defined, occupation refers to any kind of job, business, career, trade or work done to earn a living and in this respect, there are various occupations in which a person may be gainfully employed. Occupation range from professions such as medicine, engineering, pharmacy to entertainment such as singing, music and dancing. One can classify occupations according to types. In this regard, various approaches were used to classify the thousands of occupations known to be existing in the world of work. Thus, a summary of some occupations are hereby presented:

Mechanical occupations: This involves people interested in constructing things, assembling and repairing machines, engines, designing of structures. They include engineers, technologists, technicians, architects, surveyors, design workers of all kind.

Computational Occupations: This involve calculation of computation of numbers, examples are computer analyses statisticians, mathematicians, accountants, cashiers e. t. c.

Scientific Occupations: this occupation deals with investigation into natural and social phenomena or problems. Examples are biochemists, chemists, physiologists, scientific and laboratory technologists.

Persuasive Occupations: This category requires people who are good in persuading others to buy ideas. They include traders, sales agents, insurance agents, lawyers, advertisers, marketers, travel agents, public relations worker e. t. c.

Artistic Occupations: This category of work displays a high creativity and originality in drawing, painting, sculpturing, singing, playing musical instrument and entertaining others. Examples of

such works include fine-artist, professional painters, interior decorators, designers, cartoonist e. t. c. also in this category are those gifted in sport as boxers, footballers e. t. c.

Social Service Occupations: This involves working with people or serving the public. Examples of people in this service occupations are teachers, counsellors, clergymen, doctors, nurses and all other medical staffs, social workers, dental technicians, health inspector, pharmacist, receptionist, prison service and fire brigade workers e. t. c.

Outdoor Occupations: Activities in this kind of occupation takes individual out of the home for a fairly long time. Examples are pilots, sailors, construction workers, geologists, land surveyors e.t.c.

Clerical/Business Contact Occupations: This category include business executive, managing directors, contractors, managers, clerks, supervisors, book keeper, office machine operators, ticket clerk, telephone operators, stenographer, typists, secretarial staff e. t. c.

Agricultural Occupations: The work here is usually done in farms, forests, as well as nursing young plants and animals. Examples of works in this category include farmers, agronomist, horticulturist, cattle rearers, fishermen, hunters, agriculture and forest officials e. t. c.

Literary Occupations: This job involves a lot of reading and writing books, magazines, plays, and articles for newspapers, radios, and televisions. It also involves interpreting and translating information into different languages, operating device to send message to different places. People found in this type of job are journalists, novelists, newscasters, playwrights, authors, poets e. t. c.

General Culture Occupations: Workers under this category deal with cultural matters such as culture and traditions of an identified group of people. Examples of such workers include historians, archeologists, anthropologists e. t. c.

Regimental Occupations: Workers under this category give protection to other people and properties. They are usually engaged in maintaining law and order, arresting criminals, quelling riots, controlling crowd and fighting wars. Men and officers of the police force, air force, navy and army as well as immigration and custom officers belong to this category of occupation.

Occupations of Social Interest: This involves activities like advertising, air stewardess, book selling, catering and hotel interest, dietician, beautician, hair dressing, domestic service work e.t.c

Factors Affecting Occupational Choice

Occupational choice is greatly affected by the experience a child undergoes and the parents play an important role in directing the vocational choice of their children. Olayinka (as cited in

Egbule, 2002) state that the pathway of roles available to the child and hence his choice of careers either facilitated or inhibits to a large extent, the experience that his parents make available to him. He further states that the child's biological endowment in terms of personality traits are transmitted to him in form of genetic inheritance. Nevertheless, the following factors are known to affect occupational choice and types:

Social Status: parental socio-economic status and intelligence have effects on the child depending on the trait inherited and the environment in which he is brought up.

Work Roles: The family normally provides the child with the first social encounter through socialization process. Parents, siblings, relatives, friends and neighbors who regularly interact in the home provide the models with which the child identify.

Imitation of Models: An individual can consciously learn from others that serve as his role models. He may learn attitudes and emotional expressions by imitating his role models and this may go to a large extent of affecting his interest in a vocation and eventually engage in it.

Personal Factors: A person making a vocational choice has to remember and include his personality, intellectual ability, aptitude, interest, sex, and his self-concept while on the other hand, such a person might also strive to get well-paying jobs, a job with family and pride, one with secure and long lasting prospect or one that fulfil the self needs. Intellectual ability of the individual is another factor that may affect occupational type of the child.

Aptitude: Aptitude also exert influence on the vocational level individuals are likely to be admitted to or succeed in and the quality of work they are able to perform.

School Type: The school type offers the individual a new range of experiences through its formally organized curricular, co-curricular and through informal interactions with peer teachers and others. The type of a school that a student goes, to a large extent, determines his future career.

Family Norm and Parental Influence: the family norms and standard of living and decorum also affect a child's occupational preference and choice. Under normal circumstances parents will not accept anything short of what they are or approved of.

Personality: A particular occupation may demand from its worker, personality traits which is different from those demanded for in another occupation as it has been seen in Holland personality theory and personal model of occupational choice.

Self-Concept: Self-concept and self-esteem according to Super (1957) would affect individual perception of their ability to perform different tasks and occupational roles. Value patterns affect

those who seek career in humanities, education's and law, while career choices in medicine, engineering, physical science, and business influences the person's value.

Interest: Interest is another factor that affects occupational type. It has been found that men in particular occupations have characteristic sets of likes and dislikes which differentiate them from men in other occupations and from men in general.

Educational Achievement: The level of educational achievement of the youth also affect his choice of career. A youth with only first school living certificate after completing his primary school education will not have a better choice than one with a higher qualification.

The Effects of Counselling: Lack of vocational counselling can affect the career choice of a student. The concept of guidance and counselling in school present an extension of the role of the school to the life of the student, and this implies the assumption that any guidance programme does more than function as a means of academic mentoring of a placement service.

Economic Factors: Majority of individuals are vulnerable to the attraction of and temptation dangled by fat salaries. The choice of occupation is thus determined by the amount of remuneration that the individual may receive at the end of his preparation or training.

Societal Influence: Society both directly or indirectly rank other occupations and accord higher prestige status to certain occupations than to others. The status of a medical doctor, a lawyer, a bank manager or an engineer is definitely higher than the statue of a school teacher.

Environmental Factors: Environmental factors include vocational opportunities that are created by geographical and ecological factors. Occupation opportunities in fishing, lumbering, rice faring, boat building have linkage with environmental influences. Denga (1986) pointed out that the availability of jobs in a particular environmental setting influence the selection of those jobs.

Change: This refers to a situation when some people fit into a job because they happened to be there when the employer needed a person to be employed. They may get a job because they happen to know somebody who is favorably connected with the employer or the employment machinery.

Mass Media: Some children may develop interest in a particular field of occupation as a result of advertisement propaganda through the television, radio or other electronic devices. Newspapers advertisement may also influence a person to choose an occupation.

Individual physique and Sex Differentials: A person's physique and sex may be an asset or handicap in choosing a job. A short person may not be eligible for certain jobs (police, army). A sickler may fair badly for job that requires endurance, stamina and good health generally. Some

occupations are more suited to females (nursing, hair dressing, dress making). While others are more suited to males (engineering, building, and mining).

Political Factors and Government Policies: The political situation in a country has some effect on the career choice of her citizen. During civil wars, for instance, people can be forced into the army against their own will. In addition, the policies of the government determines occupational opportunities, there could be embargo on certain employment while some area may be rationed on quota basis in the federating units of the country. People are forced into certain jobs.

General Process of Career Choice

The usual process of career choice involves facilitating greater self-awareness, linking individuals to resources containing labour market information, increasing awareness of options available (including further study/training opportunities, work shadowing/experience/volunteer work as stepping stones towards long-term goals), assisting with the decision making process, and teaching job search strategies.

Self-awareness

When individuals are considering career options, it is useful to attain greater self-awareness by understanding your interests, values, and skills in order that you might better understand which jobs you are suited to and which ones are not a good match. Someone who is well matched to the job is likely to be more motivated and successful in his/her work, and to enjoy the job more than the person who is poorly suited.

Labour market information

Individuals need to gather information about the kinds of jobs that are available to them. This kind of information may be found through books or websites, as well as through a labour market information service that tracks current labour market trends and opportunities in the region or country. Along with using books and websites or a labour market information service, students can talk to family members, potential employers, and members of the community to ask questions about work options available.

Decision-making/Setting goals

In making a decision about the kind of work to pursue, it is important to integrate self-awareness with labour market information to arrive at the best fit for yourself. It is often useful to

engage in a discussion and weigh the costs and benefits of the various choices. Setting both short-term and long-term goals is also a useful activity for students to engage in.

Job search

Individuals may need assistance with job search strategies such as writing a résumé and cover letter, learning interview skills, and knowing where to look for jobs that are advertised as well as those jobs that are not advertised.

Summary

Coming to the finishing line of your school life may not be free from worries about what the outside world holds. The constant worry of how to secure a job or what career to pursue is normal and coupled with that is the nature of the country's political situation where "work" is not easily available. Not to talk about the one you want to choose. But, still against all that, the future is bright if you just think rationally and plan adequately, after all government work is not the only "work" around. With the technological advancement of Nigeria today, opportunities abound within which one can make gainful employment under somebody or as self-employed. What it takes is understand yourself; your abilities, capabilities, aptitude, what you really want and where you really want to be and then look at the reality of the situation around you. Above all, be truthful to yourself!

The congruence of personality trait and career choice/development is an established fact. Usually, dejection, no motivation and satisfaction are discerned when individuals take on jobs that do not suit them. Thus, if the job does not suit you, don't force yourself into it. Likewise, try to break age old tradition, barriers and stereotypes when it comes to engaging in careers that you know best suited you. Don't let your background or sex discouraged you.

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