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Original Research

Influence of Vocational Guidance on Career Choice in Agriculture among Senior Secondary School Students in Benue State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: This paper focused on the influence of vocational guidance on student's choice of career in agriculture in secondary schools in Benue State. Three research questions guided the study. The study made use of survey research design. The population for the study was 1250 students and 200 agriculture science teachers. The sample for the study was 350 respondents. A structured questionnaire was used for collecting data from the respondents. The structured questionnaire was validated by three experts. The reliability of the questionnaire items was determined using Cronbach Alpha statistics and a reliability Coefficient of 0.78 was obtained. The questionnaire was administered on 350 respondents made up of 150 agriculture science teachers and 200 students of agriculture in secondary schools. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer research questions while t-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significant. The findings of the study revealed that crop production, animal production, fish production, snail farming are some of the career opportunities in agriculture. Based on this, it was recommended among others that teachers should encourage students in the choice of career opportunities that are in agriculture for profitable livelihood.

Keywords: Vocational guidance, career choice, agriculture

INTRODUCTION

The quest for the acquisition of vocational and saleable skills for human capital development has promoted the vocational aspect of the nation's educational system. Vocational education is any form of education that aims at the acquirement of qualifications related to a certain profession, art or employment or that provides the necessary training and the appropriate skills as well as technical knowledge, so that students are able to exercise competence in a profession (Mortaki, 2012). The success of vocational education however depends on the extent to which vocational guidance is given prominence.

Vocational guidance services are essential tools in student development especially during adolescent stage is characterized by rapid growth and change both socially, spiritually, physically, morally and intellectually. Vocational guidance is the giving of information, experience and advice in regard to choosing an occupation, preparing for it, entering upon it and progress in it. Vocational guidance, according to Parsons in Nweze and Okolie (2015) is the processes of helping an individual match his personal attributes and his background with suitable jobs and employment

opportunities.

Vocational guidance in the view of Denga (2001) is the assistance given to students to make realistic and appropriate vocational decisions. The author further stressed that those decisions should not be beyond the reach of those making them. This means that students should aspire to enter occupation that suit their interest, values, abilities, skills, talents or aptitudes and personality characteristics. According to Wordu et al., (2013) vocational guidance is all indispensable segment of vocational technical education programme.

On the other hand, Osualu (2004) viewed vocational guidance as the foyer and back porch for vocational technical education programme because there cannot be a vocational education without beneficiaries of such training being guided into the different vocational or career areas that are available, such as agriculture, woodwork trade among others. Vocational guidance is a help rendered to a person or group of persons that is aimed at solving their problems which relates to occupational choice and progress. Vocational guidance in this context is a facilitative process, a service rendered to the individual to aid him in choosing and adjusting to an occupation.

It is important to note that a choice of the type of job one wants to go into is a crucial and delicate decision. According to Agbulu and Wever (2011) such a decision marks the beginning of one's identification of who you are and the type of person you can become later and also indicate the type of life style such an individual will adopt. One's choice of a job also shapes the type of friends he/she may have and also exerts some influence upon his/her personal and social development in adulthood. Therefore, noting these consequences it is highly of value for vocational guidance to be provided so that by the time one is making a choice of job to enter into, one may likely choose those jobs that could give an individual inner satisfaction.

The provision of vocational guidance in the school has been necessitated by great changes in our society and the world at large, and has become more complex than ever before. The rate of technological changes, and the isolation of young people from possibilities for employment, has created problem in occupational choices. According to Ode (2017) many students are not able to obtain an informal exposure to a variety of occupations nor can they easily obtain relevant data about them. Students have a limited knowledge of occupations. Vocational guidance programme in the schools should assist or provide students with adequate occupational information. Wever and Obiyai (2019) observe that it is necessary that an individual should take proper care and be given adequate help to avoid mistakes. Secondary school students choose their career based on certain factors such as family influence passion, friends, relatives, teachers, printed information, salary and past experiences. There are many careers in agriculture from which students may choose. There are great opportunities for advancement and job placement in the field of agriculture.

According to Johnson *et al.* (2015), there are many careers in agriculture from which students may choose. Career in the field of agriculture include extension services, crop production services, animal production, soil science, agricultural business and agricultural engineering. In the past, students who had interest in agriculture went home to work on the family farm after graduating from secondary schools.

In Nigeria, with particular reference to Benue State students lack adequate occupational information before they enter into occupations. In some cases, the students concern themselves with reading other courses in the schools without due regard to marketability and employability of the graduates in the fields.

Career choice is not one that is made abruptly. It is a continuous process. Career is a series of job that a person has in particular are of work, usually involving more responsibilities as time passes (Idowu *et al*., 2020). According to Alutu (2001), career development and choice should be indicated as early as the nursery school yours through the primary, Secondary and to the tertiary school level. Making appropriate careers choice has become an uphill task among secondary school students consequently vocational guidance as an area of guidance and counselling has been introduced in secondary schools to help tackle this problem.

Vocational guidance service as a pivotal tool in molding, rebuilding and assuaging the risk of making wrong career choice by secondary school students. According to Egbo (2017) career selection is one of many important choices students will make in determining future plans; this decision will impact them throughout their lives. At this stage, there are available career options for students in diverse areas including agriculture.

Agriculture is directly linked with food security which guarantees human security and sustenance. To this end, Olatunji *et al*., (2012) opined that, the quest for improved agricultural practices and the increasing need of agricultural practitioners and professionals to manage agricultural sectors as well as ensure food security in Nigeria cannot be over emphasized. There is therefore, the need for vocational guidance efforts to be tailored towards exploring the career options and opportunities in agriculture for sustainable food security and human development.

Statement of the problem

The increased rate of unemployment and underemployment among secondary school leavers in Benue State just like any other state in Nigeria is a major

cause of concern. It is assumed that one of the contributing factors of unemployment particularly among secondary school leavers in Nigeria could be largely due to inadequate or poor vocational guidance services to students in school. Students at secondary school level often time lack access to relevant vocational or occupational information that will enable them graduate from school to a suitable occupation. Similarly, such students graduate with little or no information to make proper choices on career and vocational prospects.

The choice of a particular vocation or career is a life time decisions in the life of every individual especially the young ones. Failure to make such appropriate decisions could results to severe consequences. The problem of this study is therefore coined in a question form thus: how does vocational guidance influences career choice in agriculture among secondary school students in Benue State, Nigeria?

The purpose of the study

The purpose of this study, therefore, was to examine the influence of vocational guidance on students' choice of career in agriculture in senior secondary schools in Benue State. Specifically, the study sought to:

i. identify career opportunities in Agriculture.
ii. determine the influence of vocational guidance on career choice of secondary school students in agriculture.

Request questions

i. What are the career opportunities in agriculture?
ii. What is the influence of vocational guidance on career choice of secondary school students in agriculture?

Research hypotheses

The following null hypothesis was formulated and tested at .05 level of significance

$H0_1$: Vocational guidance has no significant influence on career choice of secondary school students in agriculture.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a survey research design. The design was appropriate for this study since data was collected from a large number of respondents on how vocational guidance can influence career choice of secondary school students. The study was conducted in Benue State, Nigeria. The state is made up of Twenty-three Local Government Areas. The state was considered appropriate because the state is an agrarian state with many secondary schools offering agriculture as subject.

The population of the study was 1250 respondents made up of 1050 students and 200 Agricultural Science Teachers. The sample size for the study was 350 respondents comprised of 150 agricultural science teachers and 200 students of agriculture in the secondary schools.

The instrument used for data collection was a self-developed structured questionnaire. The items were generated based on the information gathered from the review of related literature. The instrument used a four point likert scale for rating the response options of Strongly Agree (SA) 4 points, Agree (A) 3 points, Disagree (SA) 2 points and Strongly Disagree (DA) 1 point. The instrument was validated by three experts from the Department of Agricultural Education, Joseph Sarwuan Tarkaa University, Makurdi. The validated performed both content and facial validity checks. The validates' observations were used to develop the study instrument. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha Formula to determine the internal consistency of the validated instrument and a co-efficient of 0.78 was obtained. Data was collected by the researcher with the help of six research assistance, two each from the three senatorial zones of Benue State. Three and hundred fifty copies of the instrument were administered and returned.

The data collected for the study was analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions while t-test statistics was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The mean value of the (4) point response scale is 2.50 which was also used as a benchmark for making decision. Any item of the instrument with a mean of 2.50 and above was accepted whereas; any item with a mean of less than 2.50 was rejected.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study were obtained from the research questions answered

Research question 1

What are the career opportunities in agriculture?

Findings from (Table 1) revealed that respondents rated all the careers opportunities in agriculture above 2.50 indicating that they agreed on the existing career opportunities to be explored. This further showed in their mean rating which ranges from 2.73 to 3.58. Corresponding standard deviation ranges from .67 to .90. The closeness of SD showed that the respondents' opinions are not far from each other. The findings are in consonance with the study by Darren (2013) who reported that career in the field of agriculture exists that

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents on Careers Opportunities in Agriculture. N =350.

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remarks
1.	Crop Production	3.09	0.72	Agreed
2.	Animal Production	3.17	0.78	Agreed
3.	Agricultural Business	3.58	0.90	Agreed
4.	Agricultural Engineering	3.43	0.58	Agreed
5.	Forestry	3.27	0.60	Agreed
6.	Fish Production	3.01	0.59	Agreed
7.	Poultry Production	3.09	0.79	Agreed
8.	Snail Farming	2.99	0.67	Agreed
9.	Veterinary Services	2.73	0.90	Agreed

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of responses on the influence of vocational guidance on students career choice = N = 350.

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remarks
1.	Vocational guidance directs students towards occupational choice	3.90	0.89	Agreed
2.	Vocational guidance enables students to identify their potentials in a career	3.89	0.56	Agreed
3.	Vocational guidance helps students to identify their psycho productive skills before career choice	4.00	0.55	Agreed
4.	Vocational guidance redirects students interest and ability towards specific occupation in agriculture	3.90	0.89	Agreed
5.	Vocational guidance ensures that students make choice of career at proper age	3.93	0.80	Agreed
6.	Vocational guidance redirects and channel students energy towards the long term benefit of occupational choice	3.94	0.73	Agreed

Table 3: t-test analysis of mean ratings of responses of students and teachers on influence of vocational guidance on career choice.

Status	N	Mean	std	Df	s.g.	Alpha value	Remarks
Teachers	40	3.6509	0.7530	0.348	0.261	0.05	NS
Students	310	2.6813	0.5128				

offers students long life occupation. These careers are capable of yielding maximum income for the students and could further create more pots.

Research question 2

What is the influence of vocational guidance on career choice of secondary school students in agriculture?

Findings from (Table 2) showed that respondents rated all the 6 items agreed as the mean ranged from 3.90 to 4.00. This shows that vocational guidance has positive influence on students' choice of career in agriculture. The table also revealed that the standard deviation (SD) of the items range from 46 to 83 indicating that the respondents were not too far the mean and not too far from their opinions. The findings is in line with the report of Ode (2017) who asserts that these factors (peer group influence and parental level or financial status) determines the students' choice of career in agriculture. The findings of Wever and Obiyai (2019) further aggregates the findings from Table 2 that school influences students' career choice.

Hypothesis

Vocational guidance has no significant influence in career choice of secondary Schools students in agriculture. Findings from (Table 3) showed a p-value of .261 which is greater than the alpha value of .05. This indicates that there was significant difference between the mean ratings of the responses of teachers and students on career opportunities in agriculture. Therefore, the hypothesis of no significant difference for the two groups of respondents was accepted. To this end, Denga (2001) restates that appropriate vocational guidance enhances

proper vocational and career for students.

Conclusion

The study established that there are several career opportunities in agriculture that students could undertake as an occupational enterprise. Embracing these occupations is capable of enhancing maximum income. Besides, factors that influence students' choice of career in agriculture are largely influenced by that of parents, peer groups and school. The directions of the influence in most cases are negative towards agriculture.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Teachers should encourage students on the choice of career opportunities that are in agriculture for profitable living.
2. The school should set aside career day for students where videos of successful entrepreneurs on agriculture could display or shown.
3. Career development and choice should be introduced right from primary school.

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