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POVERTY ERADICATION THROUGH ENTREPRENEURIAL GUIDANCE: IMPLICATION FOR VOCATIONAL COUNSELLING IN NIGERIA.

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Abstract

This paper examines poverty eradication through entrepreneurial guidance: Implication for vocational counselling in Nigeria. For the paper, entrepreneurial guidance is a specialized form of training given to people to enable them acquire skills, ideas, managerial abilities, competencies and capabilities for vocational self-employment rather than waiting for vain employment from government and non-government agencies. Day by day many of our youth graduate from schools without functional and employable skills. Today, there is an increasing wide gap between paper qualification and skill acquisition in our socio-economic system. This ever-widening gap ultimately leads to unemployment and mass poverty among our school leavers. It is against this background that entrepreneurial guidance is introduced to assist people to identify latent business opportunities and also equip them with the capacity to organize the required skills and resources with a view to helping them to take advantage of such opportunities for self-employment. The political, social and economic changes in Nigeria today calls for some degree of rational adjustment so that one can choose occupations that best suit his or her individual abilities at graduation from school. Entrepreneurial guidance based on vocational counselling is the key to poverty eradication in our fast changing economic system.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship guidance, vocational counselling, self-employment, skill acquisition & managerial abilities.

Introduction

In our present day Nigeria, the jobs that were considered secure are falling like a pack of cards in the face of downsizing, privatization, mergers and acquisitions in different sectors of the economy. As jobs are becoming less secure, the urge for entrepreneurship gets more pronounced. More people are now opting for self-employment, especially those with handsome disengagement benefits that can be used as venture capital. Interestingly, some of the entrepreneurs are so successful that they regret the years spent in paid employment (Essien, 2006).

People are faced with decision making every day which leads to choice of all kinds. Some decisions require serious thoughts before the choice is made. The sophisticated life one desires today is not built on careless and thoughtless assumption but rather on careful observation and strict adherence to the laws of success (Akpan, 2009). Many youth do not pay attention to principles; they are carried away by peer pressure which often forces them to opt for that which they have no skills. They build their youth on the wrong foundation and attend to things that are irrelevant.

Many of our young ones graduate from schools without functional and employable skills. Making the right career, vocational choice has always been a major source of anxiety for the young person. In this era of high technology, occupational choice in Nigeria has become more complex. New job dimensions have emerged requiring new measures of skills and higher level competencies. The world of work is competitive than it has ever been. This is why George (2005) observed that in Nigeria today looking for a job is a job itself in the sense that it calls for experience, patience and perseverance. There is a very wide gap between paper qualification products of schools today and lack of functional utility of the certificates in the world of work. As observed by Nwachukwu (2007), the paucity of economic and developmental breakthrough in Africa has exposed the major lapses in the present educational policy and practice.

There is high rate of unemployment, underdevelopment and mass poverty: Nwachukwu (2007) asserted that more than 50% of the population in almost all African nations including Nigeria lives below poverty line. The earlier steps are taken to curb and prevent continuous life of poverty, the better. This is the right time for a shift from what we have been used to by starting very early to guide and counsel our young ones on the right choice of career, vocation via entrepreneurial guidance based on their interest, personality make up, character, likes, dislikes, mission and vision in life.

WHAT IS ENTREPRENEURSHIP?

Entrepreneurship is the capacity to harness the right quantity, quality and combination of resources that are consistent with profit making under risks and uncertainty. According to Essien (2006), entrepreneurship can be defined as the totality of self-asserting attributes that enable a person to identify latent business opportunities together with capacity to organize needed resources with which to profitably take advantage of such opportunities in the face of calculated risks and uncertainty. An entrepreneur therefore is the person who carries out the functions of entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurial skills can be taught and learnt based on empirically observed tenets that are carefully analyzed, validated and generalized. Entrepreneurship in the view of Nwakolo (1997) is the ability to set up a business enterprise as different from being

employed. The ability should be acquired and should differ in some respects from the ability required to enable a person obtain employment. This involves the acquisition of skills, ideas and managerial abilities necessary for self-reliance (Eze, 1995). The need for entrepreneurship in today's Nigerian economy becomes very timely based on the high level of unemployment and poverty.

Entrepreneurship in any country is important for the following reasons: reducing unemployment, with the zeal of entrepreneurship very valuable jobs will be created not just for the entrepreneurs but also for others. This creation of job will to a large extent reduce government expenditure in a way, and thus contributing to a balanced budget for the economy. (Edward and Salvatore, 1983).

ENTREPRENEURIAL GUIDANCE AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Marked flexibility has to be shown in our educational system if it must be of value to its recipients and the entire society. As observed by Miller (2005), the political social and economic changes in Nigeria today calls for some degree of rational adjustment in our educational system. In view of Orubele (2005), the present unemployment situation will change when the youths are guided effectively at school into choosing subjects and occupations that best suit their individual abilities and interests. As posited by Udensi (1996), entrepreneurial educational offers the citizen the opportunity of acquiring the necessary technical know-how on business management, risk taking in business management thereby creating productive populace in the state as well as eradicating poverty in the nation.

Atu (2006) in a bid to further support entrepreneurial guidance observed that the primary requirement for the desired technological development and self-sustenance is the availability of human resources that have passed through series of sound vocational education programmes and are thus interested and prepared to take up the challenges. The success of the present system of education depends much on the entrepreneurial guidance and functions of the school (Okeke, 1976). Therefore, there is a great need for a functional entrepreneurial guidance for the 6-3-3-4 system of education to be meaningful and effective in achieving the national objectives. In summation, Ayeduso (2004) attested that this will ensure the emergence of new breed of skilled personnel with the entrepreneurial orientation needed for the task of national development. Finally, entrepreneurship guidance therefore is a specialized training given to individuals to acquire skills, ideas, managerial abilities and capabilities for self-employment rather than being employed for pay.

REASONS FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND ENTREPRENEURIAL GUIDANCE IN A RAPID CHANGING ECONOMY

The failure of our education sector today is a as a result of little or no attention which the

school system pays to vocational education and entrepreneurial guidance as an important educational responsibility to students. Denga (1982), asserted that the absence of career counselling in our educational system in the past, must be held responsible for the frustrations observed among our youth. An adolescent who is not guided and helped to become a useful, productive adult might end up being useless to self and the society at large. As asserted by Nwachukwu (2007), such persons constitute social menace to the civil society. In the view of Anagbogu (2002), the Nigerian adolescent needs vocational guidance, but decision to take any career depends greatly on his abilities, his relevant knowledge, his mental and physical resources, his personal interest, parental influence peer, group influence, the need for the country and help from siblings.

Interest is a very important factor in the choice of career. It implies the kind of things we enjoy and like, apart from the childhood interest, in jobs. Individuals select subjects because of their interest in them, these subjects selected give them the indication for a particular job which may be interesting. It is therefore interest that makes the individual to persist no matter how difficult the job may be. It is interest that gives the zeal and energy to overcome difficulties and in most cases enjoy the situations of the work environment no matter how tedious and arduous the task may be (Oladele 1998)

According to Super (1970), in vocational development, people differ in abilities, interests and personalities. No two people are exactly alike; they have a characteristic pattern of traits and abilities. Onyejiaku (2001) in support of Super maintained that work and life satisfactions depend upon the extent to which the individual finds adequate adjustment for his abilities, interest, personality traits and values.

As asserted by Udokang (2007) counselling should be regarded as an enabling process which encourages self-responsibility, as people make choices and decision or share an inner burden. Counselling enables people to examine their needs and problems and in so doing reduce the confusion in the thoughts and feelings that should be stressed. Lack of occupational information has made the student unable to identify the relationship between various subject choices and occupational opportunities. This has led to productions of graduates without entrepreneurial knowledge and skills for effective running of business, hence emergence of increased poverty trend in the states (Onyejiaku, 2001). Anagbogu (2002), suggested that vocational counselors should stress the possibility of self-employment, the nature of the occupations, the job requirements while teaching as this will help the students after graduation to apply his knowledge in varying context.

Vocational services are the service given to help a pupil understand world of work, how to find his rightful place in it and perform to his optimum (Nwachukwu, 2007). These

services also involve the dynamics of the world of work, career choice, all types of professional preparation, knowledge of job requirements and all other concerns in the world of work. This unit is concerned with subject combination for career aspiration, career choice and career crystallization.

The counselor who should constantly up-date his knowledge of existing occupations should help the students to know the following:

- ❖ Type of occupation
- ❖ Job families
- ❖ Subject combination

The counselor should organize school career day or week. This should be done at least twice in a school year. The counselor can equally organize excursions; career tours field trips to work places and learning sites. This will motivate students in choosing their career. Nwachukwu (2007), posited that it will be of very good help to create school information center or corner as an innovation. Thus the school counselors have a responsibility to ensure that students are familiar with consequences of the choice they make. Choice of career is important to the secondary school child and the subjects that a child offers strangely affect his future career. It is based on this that entrepreneurial guidance is needed for appropriate vocational choices among secondary school students to enable them choose careers that lead to self-sustenance and subsequently reduce poverty.

POVERTY ERADICATION THROUGH VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND ENTREPRENEURIAL GUIDANCE

Poverty is evidence of the failure of modern societies to adopt social and economic strategies that benefit all people. Many families have lived in abject poverty for many generations. Children especially girls continue to inherit family poverty. It is the entrepreneurship guidance right from the primary to tertiary level of education that can break this cycle. In a bid to eradicate abject poverty, the United Nations declared the years 1997-2006 to be the decade for poverty eradication. Many international and national initiative that followed this declaration identified education as a key to poverty eradication (IMF, World Bank Issues Paper, 2002).

UNESCO (2001) in order to launch its programmes organized an inter-agency meeting and produced a document "Education and Poverty Eradication – Cooperation of Action". This document recognizes that the role of education in eradicating poverty must go beyond literacy skills and school enrolment, to empowering people to take charge of their lives and be active participants in school and economic development.

UNESCO (2001) in its view stated that input to poverty eradication will be made through efforts to achieve the goals of Education for All (EFA). These include early childhood education, good quality primary education for all children, meeting the learning needs of youths and adults, improving adult literacy, elimination of gender disparities and improving all aspects of the quality of education.

As attested by Nwachukwu (2007), poverty eradication has not been given much importance in the development plans of the nations. The trickle-down theory initiated and implemented to attack poverty has only worsened the plight of the poor. This has made poverty reduction an issue of the most difficult challenges facing Nigeria today. It is believed that if proper entrepreneurial counselling is implemented in our secondary schools, students will be able to make appropriate vocational choice which would lead to self-reliance thereby reducing poverty in the states. Umoh (2010) in a study titled, "Entrepreneurial guidance, poverty eradication counselling and vocational choices of senior secondary school students in Uyo Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State, observed that when entrepreneurial guidance and poverty eradication counselling is properly instituted in schools, it will enhance the nation's economy and man power development. Poverty eradication counselling will help to locate and identify the relevant target groups, and design suitable strategies for addressing their needs.

During the world education forum that was held in Dakar in April 2000, it was stressed that there is every need to eradicate poverty. The international community at that time agreed to work towards poverty reduction through education (United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organizations, 2001). Ferdman (2007), asserted that education contributes to poverty eradication by increasing people's income, improving health and empowering all individuals including the disabled and other marginalized or hard to reach communities and groups. Ferdman affirmed that poverty eradication can be achieved through capacity building, use of practical tools rather than theories and relying on locally available resources. Entrepreneurial guidance will assist learners to create wealth in future by integration of school education within the economic activities of the community. For instance, in a village where there is tie and dye industry, the school can include designing, colour combinations and marketing into their curriculum. By so doing, the school will help children to improve on traditional trade skills of the village together with other curricular contents. This will ensure their future employment opportunities and contribute to their total well-being.

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE AND ENTREPRENEURIAL COUNSELLING: IMPLICATIONS FOR GUIDANCE COUNSELLORS

Counselling being an integral part of the present system of education should be encouraged. It should be ensured that vocational guidance built on specialization is

encouraged to start at the primary school to tertiary institutions. In a bid to prevent unemployment after school, improper choice of subjects and vocational choice, the counselor must employ some high level counselling strategies to instill in students skills of overcoming the problem such as one-on-one counselling, counselor versus couple, vocational/job placement counselling, etc. Counselling for work should involve demonstration, project, field trip and role-playing; these will help the students in their process of vocational choice. Entrepreneurial and poverty eradication activities involve some practical skills. The guidance counselor should organize group counselling for group discussion, seminars and conferences to fasten vocational development of youths.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (1) Vocational guidance unit should be introduced in the educational institutions right from occupational fantasy level of the nursery school through tertiary level.
- (2) The guidance counselor should help pupils and students to pursue courses which are relevant to them and the world of work in which they live.
- (3) Subject specialists' teachers should be employed to handle their subject areas. This will reduce learning difficulty and will help in career choice crystallization.
- (4) Guidance and Counselling should be given official space in the school timetable as a recognized educational activity.
- (5) Counsellors should use practical tools rather than theories, make use of available resource in their locality, and encourage students to be involved in the local trades in their communities. These will improve the students' skill and knowledge needed.
- (6) Counsellors should collaborate with subject teachers to assist students to know their abilities and disabilities in their subjects and vocations of choice.
- (7) The guidance counselor should be provided with a conducive room with necessary infrastructure which will allow confidentiality and proper rendering of his services.
- (8) Guidance Counsellors should be employed and posted to all levels of school. This will promote early identification of maladjustment indicators for early remedy.
- (9) The government should make it compulsory for private schools to employ a guidance counselor before authority to operate is given.
- (10) Federal Ministry of Education in collaboration with States Secondary Education Board should organize regular seminars, workshops, conferences and in-service training programmes for guidance counsellors to up-date their knowledge and skills, which will enhance their professional competence.

CONCLUSION

The need for entrepreneurial guidance in our schools to eradicate poverty in our nation cannot be over-emphasized. Entrepreneurial guidance is aimed at meeting the demand

pressing need of today's world of work. This is as a result of changes in needs and values which affect individual's personality and job satisfaction in our ever-changing socio-economic system.

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