

The Awareness of Occupational and Labour Market Information among in-School Youths in Calabar, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT Rapid changes in the Nigerian economy in recent years have brought about obvious transformation in the labour market and in the nature of many jobs. Using questionnaire data obtained from three hundred secondary and tertiary institution's students, this study explored the extent to which these young people are appreciating this trend through finding out their level of occupational and labour market information awareness. The results showed that most of the students are not aware of recent occupational and labour market information trends especially at the secondary level. The commonest sources of this information available to them are friends, parents, mass media and little effort by the school/counselor. Suggestions have been offered for increased level of awareness of information on occupations among the youths.

INTRODUCTION

The advent of industrialization, technological development and urbanization has opened various ways for emergence of new occupations. Lack of appropriate information on occupations and labour market trends can indirectly promote increased unemployment among youths. In-school youths who are ignorant of the nature and requirements of various occupations can find the issue of selecting an occupation difficult and complex. As indicated by Asuquo (2007) the choice of occupations becomes more difficult as new ones develop in the ever increasingly complex contemporary society of the 21st century in which the range of career opportunities becomes greater. Young adolescents in schools are often confused and sometimes in a state of dilemma. They require the right career information since this is the foundation for the provision of career guidance services.

It is becoming obvious that many Nigerians obtain degrees and certificates in disciplines that do not really match their skills and interests or are required by the economy and invariably end up being unemployed. Some, who are employed, are into jobs not related to their academic training. As put forward by Umo (2000) over 70% of the unemployed people are youths within 15-25 years bracket. This trend may continue to escalate unless there are drastic changes in the nation's economic fortune and adequate information on occupation and labour market trends are made available to the in-school youths.

Students do need information on labour market in order to establish appropriate preferences and make the right decisions in the face of competing educational, training and employment opportunities. This career information includes descriptions of the work in occupations, education and training requirements, composition of occupational families, salary and wage information. Also included are working conditions, characteristics of people normally successful in the occupations.

In Nigeria, the choices of careers are sometimes made at an age when most of the students are too young and immature to be fully aware of the consequences of some of the choices they may make (Olayinka 1993). Once choices are made in the fourth year of a secondary school, they are as it were almost irreversible. To worsen the situation, most of in-school youths have limited or no reliable information to guide them in their choice of careers. The result of this is that they are locked into careers that appeared promising at the age of fifteen but become unsatisfying at the later age. Students of secondary schools and tertiary institutions of learning need vocational guidance at pre-vocational stage and at the time of selecting a career. According to Aziude and Iwundu (1995) occupational information is required to facilitate this process as it leaves the client or student with a better understanding of the deeper implications of the job he may want to take up. It is simply to make sure that the demands of the job conform to individual's personality traits.

This is reinforced by the fact that most of the individual life time is consumed by working hours and if this is the case, there is the need that the person gets satisfaction from the job he keeps. According to Onyejiaku (1987), occupation is regarded as a way of life. This therefore arouses the need to expose students to enough occupational and labour market information that will enable them plan successful and meaningful careers. There is need to give our in-school adolescents and youths adequate career information and guidance for the proper manpower development. In this case, there will be no overproduction of graduates in one sector of our economy and under production in the other sectors. Earlier, Kuti (1979) had confirmed that provision of occupational information leads to improvement in the vocational decision making of secondary school youths. The level of understanding an individual has about any occupation is determined by the amount and quality of occupational information he has received.

Review of Related Literature

A good combination of school subjects by a student will facilitate educational programme that will lead to gainful employment. Many studies have revealed that occupational choice poses many problems to many ill-informed and uninformed adolescents and youths in our senior secondary schools. As early as 1970, Durojaiye followed up 196 pupils from form 1 to upper vi in the International school, Ibadan, found that the students (50% Nigerians and 50% non-Nigerians) were unrealistic in their choice of occupations. He discovered that while the students' occupational expectations and aspirations were very high, their academic performance and consequent self knowledge of their ability to ensure and sustain their chosen occupations were comparatively low. He proposed a programme of occupational guidance which will prepare and expose the youths to occupations at which they will be well adjusted. In a brief review as reported by Asuquo (2007), this study has been replicated subsequently at different locations with similar outcomes.

Olayinka (1993) carried out a study on the job aspirations of youths and educational provisions in Lagos. A total sample of 173 form four students comprising of 96 boys and 77 girls were used.

The investigation showed that 35.5% of the sample consulted their parents on the choice of career while 41% got such information from the rest of the family – sisters, brothers, cousins, uncles and aunties. He discovered that in the absence of proper guidance by school counselors, most of the youths in the study chose jobs without relating them to their area of interests and ability to cope with the nature of the jobs. Most of the youths selected some jobs because they have high rates of payment or for prestigious reasons.

Napier (1972) stated that if students are left to choose educational programmes that are not tenable to them, the results will only be frustration and eventual reallocation of talents into alternative and less appropriate choices, not only in educational programme selection but also in occupational choice. This problem occurs when the students are not exposed to occupational information to guide them into appropriate occupations. Okeke (1993) in his study on "Impact of school subjects on choice of occupation and profession" found that adolescents in pro-formal education era followed the pattern of occupation of their parents but nowadays, such adolescents tend to choose occupations and professions according to their school subjects. According to Hayes and Hopson (1987), the degree of success an individual will achieve in finding an occupational role which suits his personality, interest, and aptitudes will be determined, at least in part, by the information he possesses about him and the information he possesses about occupations.

If the career programme is to be an important influence in the vocational thinking of the students, then it must be introduced as early as possible into the secondary schools. The first inputs of occupational information to be introduced should be designed to introduce students to the world of work, to widen their horizons so that their vocational thinking need not be confined within restricted perimeters. Hinchliffe (1973) considering the educational stage at which occupational choice is made, found that the first and second year male students at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, during the period of study, 61% and 84% respectively made their decisions before coming to university.

Abiri (1977) studies a sample of Nigerian adolescents and came out with the point that students' vocational interest and choices should

not be left to chance or accidents. That left unguided that is without adequate occupational information, some students tend to choose wrong professions and regret them all their lives. If the society is not to be plagued by disgruntled, frustrated and unrealistic individuals, it is desirable that career information and adequate guidance and counselling be provided to enable the Nigerian student to arrive at a realistic choice with due realization of the limits of his own potentialities, the available opportunities and social expectations of the community (Abiri 1977).

The main objective of manpower development is to prepare an individual to work and thereby enter into the labour market. Nigeria's manpower stock derived from 15-65 age brackets in the population is about 31million with unemployment rate average of 8 percent (Umo 2000). The majority of those in the labour force are employed in the informal sector.

There has been a phenomenal expansion in the Nigerian university system characterized by growth in the overall number of universities and student population within the past 30 years. Thousands of graduates are produced yearly into the labour market. According to Dabaleen et al. (2000), in 1986, federal universities supplied 27,312 job seekers with degree training. In 1991, this number had increased to over 42,000. By 1997, annual labour market entrants with a university degree from federal universities were in excess of 47,000. There is excess supply of graduate labour judging by the growing trend of unemployment, underdevelopment and non-employment. According to Oni (2000), labour market surveys reveal that graduate unemployment is a serious problem. This unemployment in Nigeria exists with acute shortage of skilled manpower because despite the oversupply of graduates to the Nigerian labour market, universities tend to produce fewer graduates in certain areas of critical skills.

As stated by Dabalen et al. (2000), graduate output of all funded universities from 1986 to 1996 was 196,545. Out of this, education produced 59,311 (30.1%), social sciences produced 31,112 (16.8%), and art disciplines produced 23,436 (11.9%) graduates. Medicine produced 9,285 (4.7%), pharmacy 1,970 (1.0%), Engineering/technology 11,763 (6.0%) and veterinary medicine 1,122 (0.5%). In 1996 only 2402 graduates of medicine, 405 pharmacists and 275 veterinary doctors were produced for a nation of 120 million people then.

In Nigerian where delivery of educational services is an urgent matter, many of the graduates are absorbed into the education sector followed by social sciences and then natural sciences. Federal office of statistics FOS (1997) stated that overall unemployment rates in Nigeria ranged from 2 to 3 percent between 1992 and 1996. At the same time, urban rates were at most 6 percent while rural unemployment never exceeded 4 percent.

A 1984 tracer study by Federal Government of Nigeria (1986) indicated that the majority of the graduates (58 percent) worked in the public sector. It found that over half the graduates obtained employment in state civil service, 6 percent found jobs in the federal civil service and another 17 percent worked in government parastatals. The three main sources of employment for university graduates are the public sector which include government ministries, schools and parastatals; the private sector made up of small to medium - sized private businesses and multinational corporations; self employment. The number of graduates finding jobs in the public sector has fallen frantically relative to the private and self-employment sectors.

Omoifo, Badmus and Awanber (1998) carried out a tracer study of graduates of the University of Benin and found that only 33 percent of the sampled respondents work in the private sectors while 8 percent were self-employed. This result is slightly different from a similar study carried out by Federal Government of Nigeria (1986) from 1984 in which only 27 percent of the sampled respondents worked in the private sectors. Federal Government of Nigeria – National Manpower Board (1998) shows that the recent labour market studies report that 22 percent of the graduates surveyed are unemployed.

Statement of the Problem

With the Nigerian population of about 140 million people, more youths are getting into the educational system, more youths are also graduating, more are getting into the labour market while more are also becoming unemployed. Some of the manifestations of the failings of both the educational system and the economy are unemployment and underemployment. Rural and urban unemployment is growing progressively worse. As stated by Umo (2000), composite unemployment is estimated at about 8 percent in Nigeria, although some states of the federation

have unemployment rates of over 15 percent. To combat this problem, the adolescents need to be exposed to the occupational information and labour market trend in the country. Vocational information to assist the students to be sufficiently knowledgeable about the world of work is severely lacking in Nigeria as stated by Denga (1998).

Some adolescents do not think about any job at all until they are faced with the issue of locating one. The contributing fact to this is that career guidance is minimally emphasized in our school system. Emphasis is rather laid on academic certificates. When the youths are not formally provided with occupational information which forms the basis for realistic occupational choice, some often accept any job for which they are not well prepared for. This results in inefficiency, low productivity and frustration.

There are numerous youths and adolescents roaming the streets in search of jobs. Some have graduated from the tertiary institutions with good performances but are in job search for many years. Out of frustration and disappointment, they form gangs of armed robbers, looting and destroying lives and properties. Early identification of one's talent is of great importance as well as early exposure to appropriate information on occupation and labour market trend. Occupational information is needed by the students to solve the problem of occupational choice.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to:

1. Assess the level of awareness of occupational and labour market information of youths in our secondary schools and tertiary institutions in Calabar, Nigeria.
2. Identify the sources of occupational and labour market information available to students.

Research Questions

The following research questions were generated as a guide to the study.

- a. What level of awareness of occupational and labour market information exists among secondary school and university students in Calabar, Nigeria?
- b. Are students in the universities more

enlightened on labour market trend than those in secondary schools?

- c. What are the commonest sources of information on occupations for students?

METHODOLOGY

This study was essentially a survey, with questionnaire as instrument for data collection. The population consisted of all final year senior secondary school students and final year students of university in Calabar, Nigeria. The authors randomly selected one hundred and fifty final year students from secondary schools and one hundred and fifty final year students from university of Calabar, making a total of 300 final year students for the study.

RESULTS

The information gathered from the students were subjected to descriptive statistics using tables, percentages and ranking. The analysis are shown in table 1 to 4

The table 2 shows that 37% of the one hundred respondents in secondary schools were aware of the concept of occupational information while 48% of the university students affirmed they were aware of the concept.

The table 3 indicates that the university students are more aware of labour market trends (40%) than their counterparts in secondary schools (30%).

The table 4 shows that friends/classmates constitutes the commonest source of information on occupations. This is closely followed by parents and mass media ranked third. School/counselor came 4th which indicates that the school guidance counsellors need to be equipped to do more work on vocational guidance.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In trying to ascertain the level of awareness of occupational information and labour market trend of final year secondary and university students, it was discovered from the results of the study that most of the students were not aware of those concepts. The students, however, did not have in-depth knowledge of what occupational information covers and the trend in the labour market. This is so, perhaps, due to the fact that there is no special attention given to

Table 1: Display of responses on awareness of occupational information

S. No.	Question	Yes		No		Total	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Are you exposed to occupational information in your school?	121	40	179	60	300	100
2	Do you understand the meaning of occupational information?	114	38	186	62	300	100
3	Do you know that occupational information covers description of jobs, education and training requirements, composition of occupational families, salary and wage information, working conditions; physical activities, characteristics of those who succeed and inter occupational mobility?	90	30	210	70	300	100
4.	Do you think that teaching occupational information in schools can combat unemployment?	112	37	188	63	300	100

Table2: Comparison in awareness of concept of occupational information between secondary and tertiary institutions students

Secondary school N = 150		Tertiary institutions N = 150	
Number of those aware	%	Number of those aware	%
55	37	72	48.0

Table 3: Comparison in awareness of labour market trend between secondary and tertiary institutions' students

Secondary school students N = 150		University students N = 150	
Number of those aware	%	Number of those aware	%
45	30	60	40

Table 4: Ranking of common sources of information on occupations (n = 300)

Source of information	Percentage	Ranking
Friends/classmates	65	1
Parents	58	2
Mass media-radio, TV, Newspapers	52	3
School/Counsellor	50	4
Other relations (brothers, sisters, aunties, uncles, cousins)	48	5
Neighbours	41	6

occupational information in the school time table. The school counsellor is so busy with other counselling activities to give adequate attention to occupational and labour market information. The result of the study supports this since as much as 60% of them were never taught or exposed occupational information. The counsellors that should expose the students to this information may not do it in details to the satisfaction of the students.

It was discovered that students in the university were more enlightened and aware of the occupational and labour market information than those in the secondary schools. This may be due to environmental influence of the

university. In the university, students of various courses are available and this may expose them to various occupations and their requirements.

Sources of information an occupation and labour market were ranked and friends came first, followed by parents, the media and teachers/school which include the counsellor. It was sad to note from the study that schools in particular the counsellors are not living up to the expectation as regards exposing the youths to career information. Most school counsellors hardly have time to embark on group counselling on occupational information and labour market trend. This lapse makes the inquisitive youths to seek information from friends who are always around them. Where the parents are enlightened, they tend to impose careers on their wards.

Lack of occupational and labour market information results in increasing rate of unemployment. This work is in line with Federal Office of Statistics (1997) that those with secondary education are much more represented among the unemployed than those with university education. Those in university are more aware of occupational information and labour market information than those with secondary education according to this finding. Those in the university on graduation stand a better chance

of obtaining employment than those with only secondary education.

In conclusion, school counsellors as a matter of urgency and great importance should be alert to their responsibility of providing occupational and labour market information to the students at both the secondary level and the university level. This should be purposely executed in order to prevent parents imposing careers on their children. Youths especially at the secondary level, when they are exposed to occupational information, the issue of career choice posing a great problem and confusion will be minimized. When they know the labour market trend in the country, the issue of choosing a career with little job prospects will also be minimized.

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