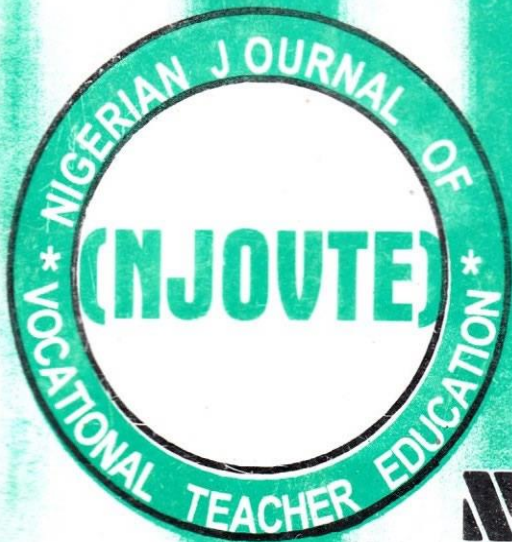


ISSN 1119-5746



**NIGERIAN JOURNAL
OF VOCATIONAL TEACHER EDUCATION**

VOL 1 NO. 2, JULY, 1998

THE NEED FOR OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS

BY

E. B. USORO (MRS)*Department of Vocational Education
University of Uyo***ABSTRACT**

Over the ages, occupational information has been found useful to people of all works of life, from primary school to graduates of colleges and universities and even workers. When such information is rightly provided to children early in life, they are made aware of the occupations available in their society and the requirements for such. This paper presents the usefulness of and the need for occupation information in creating awareness in children.

INTRODUCTION

The term occupational information is defined variously by experts in the field of occupational information. Osuala (1985), defined occupational information to mean "accurate, understandable, and usable facts that describe, explain and interpret occupations, vocations, careers and jobs - it includes facts about entrance requirements, opportunities for employment, working conditions, nature of work done, duties performed, opportunities for advancement, rates of pay, health hazards encountered, trends and outlook".

It could be said that the largest amount of useful material specifically prepared to assist youth and adults to obtain valid information about present and probable future opportunities in the world is in the field of occupational information. The information service of the guidance programme provides valid information about the educational, occupational and social aspects of the present and probable future environment of students. In an effort to outline and define this service, Norris (1966) said that "occupational information is valid and usable data about positions, jobs, and occupations, including duties, requirements for entrance, conditions of work, reward offered, advancement pattern, existing and predicted supply of and demand for workers, and sources for further information."

Occupational information, then can be said to involve different and related components of work conditions, job description, opportunities for occupational mobility, salary, work and health hazards, security, etc. Once these basic components have been outlined, any job seeker would be in a good position to decide for himself whether or not to train.

TYPES OF INFORMATION SERVICES

There are different types of information services that can be given in schools. They include among others, occupational information, educational information and social information. Of the many classifications of the materials basic to the information service, the most useful and significant is that built around the major life activities in which youths are engaging or will engage - occupational, educational and social. These categories are closely related and often overlap. It is difficult, in practice, to distinguish one from another.

- A. **Occupational Information:** As earlier defined and described, takes into consideration information on entrance requirements which include factors related to the personal characteristics of the applicant, his preparation training and experience, and to methods as locating and obtaining positions. Work conditions refer to duties, hours, health hazards, etc. While rewards include not only wages and salary, but accommodation, loans, job satisfaction, feelings of effectiveness, etc. Trends and outlook pertain to the opportunities for employment in the occupation both in the immediate future and in long-range terms. Finally, advancement or mobility relates to the usual opportunities within any one occupation, for the worker with additional training or experience to constantly improve his work status.
- B. **Educational Information** on the other hand refers to "valid and usable data about all types of present and probable future, educational or training opportunities and requirements including curricular and co-curricular offerings, requirements for entrance, and conditions and problems of student life" (Norris, 1966). These include resources of the school in attendance by the student, fellow student, school staff and plant. It also involves vocational and technical schools, apprenticeship and other training, on-the-job opportunities, educational opportunities in the armed services, extension and adult literacy programmes. It therefore, becomes necessary that educational information should be provided for the sake of students considering further formal learning experiences either through the tertiary institutions or on-the-job opportunities.
- C. **Social Information:** According to Norris (1966), social information is "valid and usable data about the opportunities and influences of the human and physical environment which bear on personal and inter-personal relations". This includes information about human beings which will help a student to understand himself better and improve his relations with others. It further includes boy-girl relations, manners and etiquettes, leisure time activities, personal appearance, social skills, home and family relationships, financial budgetings and health affairs.

Based on the above explanations of the different information services, it is pertinent that various agencies and resource persons need information. They include, the students, parents, counsellor, teacher, administrator (principal/proprietor), educational planners,

and generally, the implementers. Principal among these people are children who observe adults and would, with time, want to be like them.

THE NEED FOR OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION

The Nigerian school graduates encounter a lot of difficulties in making the necessary transition from school to work because they lack relevant information about occupations as well as the specifications required to progress in them. With this in mind, then the need for occupational information cannot be over emphasised. Kuti (1976) has argued for its maximum provision in Nigerian schools when he said that:

"Assuming that a student has chosen his subjects wisely, he still requires some occupational information for various reasons among which may be congruent with his vocational expectations. It is also possible that exposure to the varieties of occupations are limited only to those the students aspire to, in which case provision of vocational information may broaden the horizon of the students and lead, hopefully, to better and more realistic choice".

MacDaniel (1948) had earlier pointed out that occupational information is important in that the schools staff or counsellors are enable to interpret and use information concerning the characteristics, needs and opportunities available to the student. If occupational information is provided in time, it assists the individual in making an intelligent choice. Occupational information is also important because it helps the individual to find out about skills, qualifications required for a particular occupation of his choice. Also, it helps the individual to secure knowledge of facilities used in his chosen field thus reducing the unnecessary hazards sometimes encountered.

The children of today live in an age of uncertainties and confusion of what occupations to pursue and for what purposes. In fact, most students in our school system have not defined for themselves why they are in one school or the other. They have been caught up in the rush for educational acquirement. It therefore emphasizes the great need for guidance personnel to provide information on occupations as a means of awareness. In this regard, Okorie and Ezeji (1988) emphasized the need for occupational information since this would help school leavers to narrow down their choices and direct even school drop-outs on where to fit in the world of work.

SOURCES OF OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION

In a study on sources of occupational information in schools, Achebe (1972) found out that the major source of occupational information was not the school. In rank order, the family accounted for 36.8 per cent, school activities 22.6 per cent, mass media 13.6 per cent, friends 12.4 per cent, principal/teacher 5.6 per cent, previous work experience 4.9 per cent and lecture 4.1 per cent. This indicates that the most usable source of occupational information for the children is the family followed by school activities. It

then calls for the need for parental guidance and proper provision of information in the school for children. She (Achebe) also expressed the need for the following literature to be updated: National Standard Classification of Occupations (1966), Careers in Nigeria (1966) and Careers Guide. The updating is to include the ever-expanding and new occupations available now.

Various sources of career information abound. They include the worker who does the work, the person who pays to do the job, and the government agents which issues licences and regulate employment. Others are the immediate community on job possibilities, which serve as a laboratory for tryout work experience for youths while on training, labour offices which are set up for information purposes. Also government agencies at local, state and national levels provide literature for needed information on occupations. Other ways are during the mounting of programme on Career Day, Career Week, or Career exhibitions. Through this, people would be given contacts with representatives of the different occupations. Occupational information could also be given through audio-visual aids such as films, tapes, slides, television, etc. Other sources are professional societies and trade associations, the national vocational centres, individual conferences with employers, dictionaries, encyclopaedias and university catalogues.

Okorie and Ezeji (1988) listed the following as other sources of occupational information - journals, libraries, magazines, follow-up studies, information bureaux, career conferences, field trips, work experiences/vacation jobs and internships, counsellors, subject teacher and the mass media.

PROVISION OF OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION IN SCHOOLS

Occupational information provided in schools vary due to the readiness of individuals; the community or society, and the "kinds of times" in which the individuals pass through e.g. depression, war, etc. However, in providing occupational information it is necessary that the guidance personnel giving the information should be careful not to indicate by action or words his prejudices about different occupations.

The provision of information for childhood education should be of a very general nature. Choices of decisions are not made at this stage though children are aware of some occupations and may indicate a desire to be in one or more. However, it should be aimed at developing a wholesome attitude towards all fields of work and creating an awareness of the wide variety of workers. It should help the child answer the questions that disturb him, and to acquaint him with some abilities and personal qualities required for a job. This could be achieved through films television, excursion and role-plays. The emphasis here is strictly that of creating awareness in the children with no indication of attachment to any occupation.

THE USEFULNESS OF OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION

Over the ages, occupational information has been found useful to people of all walks of life, from primary school to graduates of colleges and universities and even workers.

When such information is provided early to children they are made aware of the occupations available in their society and the requirements for such. It also broadens their views toward the personal qualities needed for the job. Occupational information, when made available, provides the necessary details concerning an occupation - entry qualification, rewards, working conditions, work and health hazards, opportunities for advancement, etc. This provision, therefore prevent job dissatisfaction and frustration in a job because an individual would be fully aware before making his decision. It rather creates room for productivity and efficiency.

The provision of occupational information saves people the problems of choosing a wrong profession or an over-crowded profession. The knowledge of the needed information helps students to eliminate unnecessary and irrelevant jobs narrowing down their decision to relevant areas. It would help them to be objective in their decision making and not emotionally influenced by ~~minor~~ ^{minor} factors.

On the other hand, occupational information helps the teachers, administrators to interpret and use information to the benefit of the students. It creates knowledge of facilities used in the work situation which would be needed in the school system. It could also be said that the provision of occupational information solves unemployment problems because correct occupational decisions will place people in their proper places irrespective of the times. It therefore, builds up future leaders in the different occupations. It further enables and helps those who made wrong decisions to change occupations and to easily adapt in their new occupations. Finally, the provision of occupational information will lead to a proper sense of work values and self contentment with the need to appreciate each other in the different occupations they have so chosen.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Occupational information is defined to include work requirements, conditions of work, work and health hazards, rewards, opportunity for advancements and security provisions. The various sources of occupational information include among others, magazines, mass media, libraries, occupational monographs, abstracts; posters and charts, subject teachers, parents, counsellors and dictionaries.

The need for occupational information need not be over-emphasized. Since children and even adults live in an age of uncertainty and confusion of occupations, the provision of adequate occupational information would go a long way to educate and make them aware of the different requirements for an occupation thus helping them to make right decisions or change occupations for proper adaptation. The resultant effect is that in Nigeria, unemployment, occupational frustration and dissatisfaction will be greatly minimised. To achieve this, occupational information should be provided right from primary schools to universities. The Federal Military Government should step up effort to include career awareness as a programme in the primary school curricular. Vocational counsellors should be sent to the different schools at the different levels, for guidance and adaptation programmes. There should also be definite efforts at mounting Career Day, Career Week, or Career Exhibitions as a means of exposing the youths to different careers available for them.

REFERENCES

Achebe, C. C. (1972). Vocational Aspirations of Secondary School Students in the East Central State of Nigeria Unpublished M.A. Thesis.

MacDaniel C. (1948). Youth too young to choose. Vocational Guidance Quarterly. No. 26.s

Norris, W. (1966). The Information Service in Guidance. Rand McNally and Coy., Chicago.

Okorie, J. U. and Ezeji, S.C.O.A.(1988). Elements of Guidance, Vocational and Career Education. Summar Education Publishers (Nig) Ltd., Onitsha.