

# SELECTION OF SCHOOL SUBJECTS AND STUDENTS' OCCUPATIONAL CHOICE FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING

**DR. ABUBAKAR BOYI**

*Department Of Educational Psychology,  
Shehu Shagari College Of Education,  
Sokoto.*

**ZALIHA N. BELLO**

*Department of Educational Foundations,  
Sokoto State University,  
Sokoto.*

**And**

**MUHAMMAD BELLO YUSUF**

*Nigeria Reading and Access Research Activity,  
RTI International,  
Sokoto.*

## **Abstract**

*The main aim of this paper is to help Nigerian students have proper school subjects and occupational choices for proper career development. Therefore the paper highlighted on the nature and complexity of new school curriculum in terms of contents and organization. Challenges faced by secondary school students in choosing career, conditions and or challenges faced by guidance and counseling service in Nigerian secondary schools were equally identified. It however, pointed out the relevance and position of guidance and counseling in National Policy on Education, offered some counseling tips that could enhance career development among students in Nigerian secondary schools. The paper concluded that, Nigerian secondary schools are lacking functional guidance and counseling units where students are properly and adequately guided. It recommended that, educational and vocational counseling should be introduced into new national curriculum as a subject. The inclusion may at least concern Junior Secondary School (JSS) level, a level at which students could be exposed to ideas and process of school subjects choice and matching career for individual's development and national development in general.*

Guidance services in Nigerian secondary schools have for a very long time been left in the hands of school teachers who are already overloaded and without professional

training in the area of guidance and counseling. Bearing in mind that, our curriculum has passed through different and significant stages of change in terms of scope and contents – many subjects were introduced and more formalised. For example Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) directed that, every student shall take all the six (6) labeled core subjects in group A and a minimum of one and a maximum of two (2) from the list of elective subjects in group B and C to give a minimum of seven (7) and maximum of eight (8) subjects. However, FRN (2013) is indicated that, each student is to take the four (4) compulsory cross – cutting subjects. For the trade/entrepreneurship subject, each student is expected to select one (1) trade/entrepreneurship subject from the list of 34 trade/entrepreneurship subjects. Each student may then choose two (2), three (3), four (4), or five (5) subjects from each of their preferred Four Fields of Studies depending on their potential, interest and capability such that the minimum number of subjects is eight (8) while the maximum number of subjects is nine (9).

Many children go to school without knowing what they are supposed to do, and leave school without any idea of what type of jobs or careers they should follow. In addition, they have little understanding of themselves and their socio-economic and political environment. Many school leavers today, end up on the streets and quite a sizeable number keep on moving from job to job, trying to explore, within the world of work, which job meets their interest and capabilities. The majority of these school leavers are not aware of their potentials. There is therefore, a need to help young people and children to know themselves, i.e. their abilities, interest, personalities, values and beliefs and potential.

It is in view of this therefore, this paper highlighted the nature of our present and reviewed senior secondary school curriculum, the challenges faced by secondary school students in choosing career as well as the conditions and or challenges faced by of guidance and counseling units in our schools. It however highlighted on the recognition of guidance and counseling made by National Policy Education and its relevance in schools as well as putting forward some counseling tips that may enhance proper career development among our secondary school students. These would no doubt prepare them for adult life as well as help them acquire appropriate attitudes and values that enable them to become productive and active members of their communities so as to have better education and development in Nigeria beyond 2020.

### **New Senior Secondary School Curriculum in Nigeria**

Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) has reviewed and came out with new national secondary school curriculum with some modifications in the contents and scope of the document. It modified the contents by formalizing and broadening it more than the initial documents. In the initial policy, 2004 for example, the subjects were

*Selection Of School Subjects And Students' Occupational Choice For Career Development: Implications For Counselling*-Dr. Abubakar Boyi; Zaliha N. Bello and Muhammad Bello Yusuf

---

grouped as core, pre-vocational electives, and non-vocational electives. The following is a breakdown of senior secondary school subjects in the NPE (2004):

**Group A. Core**

- i) English language
- ii) Mathematics
- iii) A major Nigerian Language
- iv) One of Biology, Chemistry, Physics or Health Science
- v) One of Literature-in-English, History, Geography or Religious Studies
- vi) A vocational subject

**Group B. Vocational Electives**

- i) Agriculture
- ii) Applied Electricity
- iii) Auto-Mechanics
- iv) Book-Keeping & Accounting
- v) Building Construction
- vi) Commerce
- vii) Computer Education
- viii) Electronics
- ix) Clothing and Textiles
- x) Food and Nutrition
- xi) Home Management
- xii) Metal Work
- xiii) Technical Drawing
- xiv) Woodwork
- xv) Shorthand
- xvi) Typewriting
- xvii) Fine Art
- xviii) Music

**Group C. Non-Vocational Electives**

- i) Biology
- ii) Chemistry
- iii) Physics
- iv) Further Mathematics
- v) French
- vi) Health Education
- vii) Physical Education
- viii) Literature in English
- ix) History

- x) Geography
- xi) Bible Knowledge
- xii) Islamic Studies
- xiii) Arabic
- xiv) Government
- xv) Economics
- xvi) Any Nigerian Language that has orthography and literature etc.

However, the current NPE, that is 2013, has come with new arrangements with regards to the contents of the curriculum. The following also illustrates the nature of our present curriculum that necessitates the intervention of a school guidance-counselor for students to make an intelligent choice of school subjects leading to career choice:

### **Compulsory Cross – Cutting Subjects**

- i. English Language
- ii. General Mathematics
- iii. Trade/Entrepreneurship Subject
- iv. Civic Education

### **Fields of Studies**

#### **Science and Mathematics**

- i. Biology
- ii. Chemistry
- iii. Physics
- iv. Further Mathematics
- v. Health Education
- vi. Agriculture
- vii. Physical Education
- viii. Computer Studies

#### **Technology**

- i. Technical Drawing
- ii. General Metal Work
- iii. Basic Electricity
- iv. Electronics
- v. Auto Mechanics
- vi. Building Construction
- vii. Woodwork
- viii. Home Management
- ix. Food and Nutrition

**Humanities**

- i. Christian Religious Studies
- ii. Islamic Studies
- iii. Visual Art
- iv. Music
- v. History
- vi. Geography
- vii. Government
- viii. Economics
- ix. Literature-in-English
- x. French
- xi. Arabic
- xii. Nigerian Language.

**Business Studies**

- i. Stores Management
- ii. Accounting
- iii. Commerce
- iv. Office Practice
- v. Insurance

**Trade/Entrepreneurship Subjects**

- i. Auto Body Repair and Spraying Painting
- ii. Auto Electrical Work
- iii. Auto Mechanical Work
- iv. Auto Parts Merchandising
- v. Air Conditioning and Refrigeration
- vi. Welding and Fabrication Engineering Craft Practice
- vii. Electrical Installation and Maintenance Work
- viii. Radio, TV and Electronic Servicing
- ix. Block Laying, Brick Laying and Concrete Work
- x. Painting and Decorating
- xi. Plumbing and Pipefitting
- xii. Machine Woodworking
- xiii. Carpentry and Joinery
- xiv. Furniture Making
- xv. Upholstery
- xvi. Catering Craft Practice
- xvii. Garment Making
- xviii. Clothing and Textile
- xix. Dyeing and Bleaching

- xx. Printing Craft Practice
- xxi. Cosmetology
- xxii. Photography
- xxiii. Mining
- xxiv. Tourism
- xxv. Leather Goods Manufacturing and Repair
- xxvi. Stenography
- xxvii. Data Processing
- xxviii. Store Keeping
- xxix. Book Keeping
- xxx. GSM Maintenance and Repairs
- xxxi. Animal Husbandry
- xxxii. Fishery
- xxxiii. Marketing
- xxxiv. Salesmanship

### **Challenges Faced by Secondary School Students in Choosing Career**

As highlighted earlier that, many school leavers today end up on the streets and quite a sizeable number keep on moving from job-to-job, trying to explore, within the world of work, which job meets their interests and capabilities. In the process, they are confronted with one problem or the other due to lack of proper and adequate guidance. Many run into a big and serious problem just because they lack somebody to properly guide and put him/her in the right path. In other words, very minor problem resulted into very big and serious problem, sometime curative rather than preventive. But if it is earlier identified it might be prevented for prevention is better than cure.

The following are some of the misleading factors affecting the choice of career by students in Nigerian secondary schools as identified by Hayes and Hopson (1987):

1. **General Ability:** This denotes how good your general performance is compared with other people of your age. Some students are not aware of their aptitude and capabilities into some subjects they just decide wrongly to choose so and so subjects.
2. **Parental Pressure:** This refers to situations whereby parents dictate the choice of school subjects for their children which could lead to wrong choice or inability to perform well. Many parents make wrong choices for their children which lead to failure in their WAEC & NECO examinations.
3. **Interest/Intellectual Ability:** This refers to individual's ability to make a rightful decisions based on his/her interest and intellectual ability. Some students do not consider or choose career that fits their interest and or academic performance.

4. **Peer Group Influence:** Many students are significantly influenced by their peers. The influence can be positive or negative. It is positive if both students' interest and ability are favoured. It can however be negative if one or both of the parties' interest is not favoured.
5. **Personality Characteristics:** There are some jobs that require personality characteristics or physical make up. What sort of person you are if you like to be with other people or to be in particular job? Do you really and physically fit to the job?

For one to select a suitable career, cautiously match knowledge of self with occupational information that you may be effective, productive, fully functioning and happy in life. This is what George (1997) referred to as intelligent choice. He further said intelligent choice has to be made because of the following reasons:

- i. To gain self-satisfaction and job satisfaction and effectiveness.
- ii. Entering into wrong career can adversely affect one's physical health.
- iii. Wrong career choice may result one to find himself in a company of wrong friends or associates and there acquire bad life-styles.
- iv. Wrong choice as a bane to planning in terms of further education or technical training which one is expected to undergo before actually entering the occupation.
- v. Wrong choice of occupation may lead to constant job insecurity.
- vi. Wrong choice leading to faulty planning and entry can mar one's happiness for life as a result of occupational maladjustment which may also directly or indirectly lead to emotional maladjustment.

### **Challenges of Guidance and Counseling Units in Nigerian Secondary Schools**

Possibly Nigeria is aware of Guidance and Counseling hence its entrenchment in the New National Policy on Education. However, such awareness is still limited to the school setting. But one may still note that even in the school setting effective guidance programme has not emerged in a large scale. This possibly may be due to some problems and issues in Guidance and Counseling as identified by Kolo (1992) which are still not resolved. Some of these problems and issues are briefly highlighted here.

### **Rivalry**

In a successful organization of any guidance programme, attempt should be made to clarify the role of the counselor. This lack of clarity of role has led to some unpleasant experiences especially by young counselors sent to schools. Some principals or schools are not too clear about the role of guidance counselors and some Vice-Principals have even viewed them as rivals (Tambawal, 2009). They are regarded with suspicion even by other teachers. They are offered very little co-operation and some

have received open hostility (Laosebikan, 1980). Some advocate that since counselors are in the educational setting and staffing problems are being experienced, the counselors should also perform teaching roles. So in many cases the counselor because of the burden of adding counseling to normal teaching loads decides to 'forsake' counseling.

### **Inadequate funds**

In considering how guidance service will be offered, issues such as finance, schedule of time, location of office and keeping of records cannot be overlooked. Funds for the innovative efforts of counselors have not usually been forthcoming since school heads find it difficult to give out of the already scarce funds to counselors. This may not be exactly their faults as provision may not have been made for this from the governmental level. Any successful service is not cheap. Funds are needed for the purchase of tests, collection and storing of information etc.

### **Location**

The location of the counselor's office affects the attitude students have toward it. Laosebikan (1980) related an account of a school where the counselor was given a room directly opposite the staff-room and students who were seen going in were later questioned by other members of staff. Many schools do not provide an adequately prepared room for the guidance service. Some use rooms in the administrative block while others are left to look for shades, neither of which are acceptable. Records in the guidance services are very important especially for reference purposes. However, because of inadequate arrangement of rooms, the necessary clerical staff and even finance, successful keeping of records had been a problem in schools where guidance services are offered. It is not easy for the guidance counselor to combine counseling services with the clerical duties of recording keeping.

### **Negative Attitudes Towards it**

Confidentiality of given information is paramount in the provision of guidance services. Students need the assurance that their secrets will be kept secret. However, some principals and teachers expect counselors to divulge this information when they require it. This is against the ethics of the profession and thus the counselor finds himself between two opinions. If he insists on keeping such information secret, the relationship between him and other members of staff is further strained. While some significant others seek for information to be divulged others see the counseling relationship as an invasion of the privacy of the individual. Some parents who are in support of his view attempt to frustrate rather than support the Guidance Programme (Makinde, 1981). These negative attitudes lead to an unsuccessful implementation of the guidance services since these attitudes are sometimes passed on to the students.



### **Commitments**

Counselors themselves have sometimes constituted great problems for themselves. Some of them are not fully committed to the profession (Tambawal, 2009). Enough time is not left for the counseling interaction. With regards to the counselor, some have created problems concerning his age. Some people have come to the conclusion that older counselors are better than young ones because of the experiences they have passed through. This attitude on the part of some principals or teachers is passed on to the students and they would rather seek older counselors. That notwithstanding the present counselors in the school system must pull their weight to negate the ill-feelings and suspicion of them by the school authority.

### **Relevance and Position of Guidance and Counseling in NPE**

The total development of a child can only take place in an environment conducive for teaching and learning. It is in view of this therefore, National Policy on Education (2004) outlined some educational services which aim at promoting teaching and learning in schools. Counseling services are among of such educational services. National Policy on Education (2004:37) states that:

*In view of the apparent ignorance of many people about career prospects and in view of personality maladjustment among school children, career officers and counselors shall be appointed in post-primary institutions. Since qualified personnel in this category are scarce, government shall continue to make provisions for training of interested teachers in guidance and counseling. Guidance and counseling shall also feature in teacher education programmes, proprietors of schools shall provide guidance-counselors in adequate numbers in each primary and post-primary school.*

Unfortunately, these schools do not have functional school counselors. Thus, in order to ensure proper compliance to this policy, the paper intends to suggest for the inclusion of an aspect of guidance and counseling in our secondary school curriculum at least of Junior Secondary School (JSS) level so that students transiting would be properly guided on subject choice as well as the career choice.

### **Counseling Tips that Enhance Proper Career Development**

Many secondary school students find it difficult to make a right choice of subject combinations in which they have the capacity and interest. The wrong choice of subject combinations leads to wrong choice of jobs in future. There are two issues involved in choosing a career. The first is the *career* while the other is *self* or the person choosing the career. We must look at our personal attributes and know them very well.

We do not stop there alone. What are the requirements of the career we hope to go into? We should then attempt to answer some pertinent personal question such as do I have the personal attributes to make success of the career? Is it a job I will enjoy when I enter it? Therefore Tambawal (2015) outlined some factors that could help in choosing a suitable career.

- a. **Interest:** This is the expression of our desire to know or learn something. It could be something in which we concern ourselves. It could also be something that arouse our attention curiously or concern. Students' interests vary in various subject areas. Students pursue more vigorously those subjects that interest them. Knowing our interest area will aid a realistic choice of our occupation. Interest also refers to what we like to do or what one enjoys doing. If you have interest in travelling, you will enjoy doing the kind of work that involves travelling.
- b. **Intelligence:** This refers to the power of perceiving, learning, understanding and knowing. People differ in the gift of intelligence. We have people of high, average and low intelligence. Intelligence aids learning and it is a major requirement to be successful in certain occupation. Thus an individual's intelligence needs to be known and harnessed towards various occupations that he may want to pursue.
- c. **Aptitude:** It is the ability for one to be successful in a given programme when trained. Some people have verbal aptitude, that is they are really gifted in the manipulation of words. They can speak eloquently and convince others to agree with them. People who have numerical aptitude are very good in the manipulation of figures. They include great mathematicians and computer Scientists. Other people have aptitude for remembering numbers, dates etc. There is aptitude for mechanical works, musical and artistic aptitude etc. *Talents* are very close to aptitude. They are special gifts from God and quite natural. They need no training.
- d. **Ability:** It is a special power to do something well. It could either be physical or mental. People with physical ability are strong and enjoy doing physical activities such as sport etc. Those with high mental ability enjoy working with ideas and figures.
- e. **Attitude:** Attitude is simply a way of thinking, feeling and behaving. Our attitude to life can greatly affect our choice of career. Some people are carefree and they can take anything that comes their way. Some others are very careful, choosy and will always look and hope for the best.
- f. **Personality:** Personality could be describes as those qualities that make up a person's character. They include cheerfulness, flexibility, intelligence, shyness, interest and ability. A psychologist, Holland (1959) identified six (6) personality types. Those

*Selection Of School Subjects And Students' Occupational Choice For Career Development: Implications For Counselling*-Dr. Abubakar Boyji; Zaliha N. Bello and Muhammad Bello Yusuf

are Intellectual, Realistic, Social, Artistic, Conventional and Enterprising persons. Each of the above personality types matches certain occupations. We need to know our personality type in order to choose an occupation that will match it.

g. **Realities of our Situation (Family Background):** Some students possess high intellectual ability but due to poverty in the family, they may not be able to get formal education at all or may only resort to a minimum level that will not satisfy them.

h. **Academic Performance:** Academic performance has a being on career choice. Some students are not doing well in some subjects yet the careers they want to pursue require a Credit pass in such subjects. Some others do not take their school work serious. Unseriousness about school work can jeopardize high career aspired.

i. **One's Working Environment:** Many people have preferences for where they can work. Some do not mind where their job can take them to. An accountant once opted to teach because he did not want to leave his environment. Some fear to work in the city because of urban problem evident in cities yet they cannot get a satisfying employment for their career unless they got to the city. One's career may also not be in demand in environments where we hope to work. This and other things have to be considered before choosing a career.

Furthermore, Focus Counseling and Educational Consultancy Services (2013) has come with choice of subjects and choice of career *made easy* for youth. The following is table illustrating choice of subjects and some counseling tips on career:

**Table 1: Table of Choice of Subjects**

	SCIENCE & MATHEMATICS	HUMANITIES (ARTS)	BUSINESS STUDIES (COMMERCIAL)	TECHNOLOGY (TECHNICAL)
As COMPULSORY – ONLY FOUR (4) SUBJECTS	English Language General Mathematics Civic Education A Trade/Entrepreneurship Subject.	English Language General Mathematics Civic Education A Trade/Entrepreneurship Subject.	English Language General Mathematics Civic Education A Trade/Entrepreneurship Subject.	English Language General Mathematics Civic Education A Trade/Entrepreneurship Subject.
As FIELD OF STUDY To Choose Minimum of 2	Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Further Maths, Agriculture, Physical Education & Health Education	Nigerian Languages, Literature in English, Geography, Government, CRS/IRK, History,	Accounting, Commerce, Insurance, Store Management & Office Practice	Technical Drawing, Metal Works, Wood-

and Maximum of 5 Subjects	Computer Studies/ICT	Arts, Music, French, Economics & Arabic		Works, Electronic, Auto-Mechanics, Building, Home Mgt, Food & Nutrition, Clothing and Textiles, Basic-Elects
As ELECTIVE Or COMPLEMENTARY	To Choose the Rest to Make Up Nine (9) Subjects in any of the other Field of Studies			
35 TRADE/ ENTREPRENEURSHIP SUBJECTS (To select one is Compulsory)	(1) Auto Body Repair and Spray Painting (2) Auto Electrical Work (3) Auto Mechanical Work (4) Auto Parts Merchandising (5) Air Conditioning Refrigerator (6) Welding and Fabrication (7) Electrical Installation and Maintenance Work (8) Radio, T. V. and Electrical Work (9) Block Laying, Bricklaying and Concrete Work (10) painting & Decorating (11) Plumbing and Pipe Fitting (12) Machine Wood Work (13) Carpentry and Joinery (14) Furniture Making (15) Upholstery (16) Catering and Craft Practice (17) Garment Making (18) Textile Trade (19) Dyeing and Bleaching (20) Printing Craft practice (21) Cosmetology (22) Leather Goods Manufacturing and Repair (23) Keyboarding (24) Shorthand (25) Data Processing (26) Store-Keeping (27) Book-keeping (28) GSM Maintenance (29) Photography (30) Tourism (31) Mining (32) Animal Husbandry (33) Fisheries (34) marketing (35) Salesmanship			

**Hints: Note that**

1. Choice of subjects leads to choice of career
2. The choice of subject is made at the beginning of SSS1
3. School subjects are classified into four areas: Science and Maths, Humanities, Business Studies and Technology.
4. A student is to offer minimum of eight and maximum of nine subjects.
5. The four (4) compulsory subjects are basic, general and important.
6. A student is to choose between Two and Five subjects in the field of study (core)
7. He/She may choose the rest to make up nine (9) subjects in any of the other field of studies.
8. Combinations of subjects above can qualify one to choose out of these various careers below:

**Table 2: Fields of study and their respective careers**

<b>Science and Maths related careers</b>	<b>Humanities (arts) related careers</b>	<b>Bus. Studies (commercial) related careers</b>	<b>Technology (technical) related careers</b>
Medicine Pharmacy Nursing Dentistry Physiology Microbiology Geology Zoology Botany Agric. Science Statistics e.t.c.	Law Philosophy Mass. Comm. Language (Local/Foreign) Dramatic Art Creative Art Archeology Religious Studies Guidance and Counseling Education etc.	Accountancy Banking & Finance Marketing Business Administration Political Science Insurance Secretarial Studies Industrial Relations Geography Economics etc.	Architecture Estate management Town Planning Surveying (land & Quantity) Transport & Logistics Civil Engineering Mech. Engineering Computer Engineering Textile Engineering Aircraft Engineering Etc.

### **Basic Factors for Choosing a Suitable Career**

Among others, you are to first consider the following

1. **Trait Factor:** i.e. Natural gifts, inborn potential and talents
2. **Self-Factor:** i.e. Self-interest and loved area.
3. **Resources Factor:** i.e. Availability of the training institution, the trainers, equipment, materials and employment opportunities.
4. **Economic Factor:** Cost of training and establishment, lucrativeness and marketability.
5. **Social Factor:** i.e. Societal values respect and regards for such career religious and cultural acceptability.

### **Conclusion and Implications for Counseling**

From the discussions so far, it could be concluded that, Nigerian secondary school curriculum is mostly restructured in such a way that it needs a professional intervention for students to be properly and adequately guided to select subjects that fit their aptitude, interest and capability. However it is noted that, secondary schools are lacking functional guidance and counseling units, where they have, they are not being regarded by the school management and government in general and are bedeviled by

many problems. Therefore, for these students to have intelligent choice and develop their career, guidance and counseling services are imperative.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the problems discussed, the paper recommends the following that: Educational and vocational counseling should be introduced into new national curriculum as a subject. The inclusion may at least concern Junior Secondary School (JSS) level, a level at which students could be exposed to ideas and process of school subjects choice and matching career by the teachers and supported by a school guidance-counsellor. This is with a view to assisting students to have intelligent choice in their career for individual's development and national development in general.

### **References**

- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013). *National Policy on Education*. Yaba: NERDC Press
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004). *National Policy on Education*. 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Yaba: NERDC Press
- Focus Counseling and Educational Consultancy Services (2013). *Choice of subjects and choice of career made easy for youth*. Ibadan: Focus counselling Co.
- George, I. N. (1997) *Towards realistic occupational choice: Guidance and Counseling*. An information Handbook for Students, Teachers, Parents and Professional helpers. Enugu, Academic printing press.
- Hayes, J. and Hopson, B. (1987) *Career Guidance: The role of the school in vocational development*.

*Selection Of School Subjects And Students' Occupational Choice For Career Development: Implications For Counselling*-Dr. Abubakar Boyi; Zaliha N. Bello and Muhammad Bello Yusuf

---

Kolo, F. D. (1992). *Guidance and counseling in perspective*. Zaria:Stevano printing press Zaria

Laosebikan, S. (1980).On the resistance of principals and teachers to the introduction of guidance and counseling services in secondary schools in Oyo state.*Cousellor*, 3 (1 & 2) 57 – 63

Tambawal, M. U.(2009).Principles and techniques of guidance.Unpublished manuscripts, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto.

Tambawal, M. U. (2015). Career Guidance. A training Manual for a 6-Day workshop on Guidance and Counseling for Para-counselors in UBE Schools.