

CAREER CHOICE AMONGST NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY ENTRANTS: FACTORS THAT COUNT

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Abstract

This study was undertaken to find out the factors that influence the choice of career amongst undergraduates of Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma. The research was limited to WO level students of the department of Vocational and Technical Education Department of the University. The major finding of the study includes most influential factors in the choice of career by Ambrose Alli University students in the prestige value of the job. The most valued counsel by students as far as career choice is concerned among Ambrose Ali University students, is that of parents. The most prestigious profession as perceived by the students is medicine, followed by engineering and accounting. Male and female students did not differ in the choice of career, showing that the sex of a student did not influence his or her occupational preference. On the bases of these findings, recommendations were made. The recommendations stressed the need for services of guidance counsellor in our school as well as the need for parents to be well enlightened since they play an important role in the student's career choice. It was also recommended that the universities and the private sectors should agree on the occupational needs of the societies and the output of the Universities.

Choice and preferences of an occupation is vital processes in the life of every individual. The student in the institutions of higher learning are fully involved in this process which requires critical thinking as well as taken into consideration several factors before choosing, planning and entering into a particular career. Concentrated thinking and consideration of all relevant factors is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, entering into the wrong career can adversely affect one's emotional and mental health as a result of dissatisfaction and unfulfilled dreams Secondly, a wrong choice of career may lead to constant or continuous job insecurity and lastly, it may lead to bad planning and wrong entering into a profession of career. This can mar one's happiness for life as a result of the resultant mal-adjustment which may also directly lead to emotional instability. The need for careful choice cannot therefore be over emphasized.

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The problem associated with decision making as regards occupational choice among University undergraduates is a very pressing issue today. It appears that due to these problems, hundreds of students in Nigeria universities enter into disciplines, other than the ones they would prefer under normal circumstances. In most Universities for instance, it is an annual affair for a great number of students in faculties of art, education, social science and the science to struggle for course to faculties offering professional courses like Law, Medicine Engineering, Accountancy and other such professional courses. An example of this rush by students to change course was taken from that which occurred in Ambrose Alli University in 2008/2009 academic session where in faculty of education, some candidates that were admitted into the faculty indicated their intention to change their course. These students did not only stop getting and completing the change of course forms, they were so desperate that they went as far as getting the backing of important personalities to put pressure on their head of department to give each of them special consideration in the

approval for the change. This situation is common to other faculties where according to the students they accepted the admission into their present courses as a last resort as many of them did not in the first place apply to this area for admission. This practice is not only common in Ambrose Alli University but to many other public Universities in Nigeria where the possibility of gaining admission into the Universities is becoming very cumbersome by the day and rejecting such admission into these courses one is admitted into may be impossible because the possibility of securing admission into the course of one's choice in the presiding session is a 50-50 chance.

Statement of Problem

The decision on what career to choose is very important one in the life of an individual, this is because, if not adequately done, wrong career choice would lead to frustration, emotional and vocational mal-adjustment which could mar one's happiness for life. As have been earlier observed, it appears that most students in Nigeria universities enter into discipline other than the one they will actually prefer under normal circumstances. This had led to students making frantic efforts at the end of every session, to change the course while those who succeed in changing their courses feel satisfied others who are not are bound to suffer psychological depression that will affect them for a very long time owing to their inability to fulfil their career of dream. There is no doubt that this is a problem not only to the students and their parents, but also the university authorities. This is why the university authorities have shown concern over this trend. This is the problem that this study intends to conduct a research into. It is an attempt to determine the factors which influence career choice by university undergraduates in Nigeria universities with particular reference to Ambrose Alli University Ekpoma.

Research Question

The following questions were raised to guide this study:

1. What factors influence student's choice of career?
2. Out of these identified factors, which is the most important?

~~3. On whose counsel do most of the students choose their career?~~

4. Which is the most preferred career among Ambrose Alli University students?

5. Significance.

The findings of the study will:

- Help to gain insight into the career preference of Ambrose Alli University students.
- Serve as an opportunity to furnish those who are concerned with the education of students, a first hand information on the factors influencing students career choice and help them to find ways of meeting the personal need of students.
- Help the guidance counsellors to know more about students problem and how to help them by giving them prefer career counselling which could save them from further frustrations if they choose wrong profession.
- Be of great use to the nation as she stands to gain in terms of proper use of manpower and productively when people are fixed in their chosen careers.
- Throw more light on the amount of knowledge the students have about job availability in the country and also help curriculum planners to provide meaningful educational programme so that students entering into institutions of higher learning will have a clear perception of what to do.

School Subjects and Students Choice of Career

An individual's choice of subject may influence his decision as to the choice of career he wants to go into. The decision on which subject to choose therefore, is a very important one because of the effect it has on the future life of the student. Okeke (2007), in his article, stated that what student learn at school, shape their future choice of career and condition their interest as regards their area of specialisation. He found out school subjects have most influence on student's occupational choice. In a study conducted in a secondary school in

Edo State, he found that although, only 3% of them indicated their willingness or desire to become farmers and traders but none of them actually expected to take up such job. According to him, it was the school subject that seem to direct their attention away from their parent's traditional occupation because prior to the introduction of formal education. The adolescent towed the occupation line of their parents but formal education and subject studied became status symbols which train them away from parental occupation which now appears to be done by those usually regarded as by illiterates in the society. This investigation was carried out in a school formally established as a commercial school but later changed to a secondary school with productivity to ~~commercially based subject. In an attempt to determine the possible influence of school subject on the~~ *Academic Excellence* chosen occupations of the graduates of the school, a follow up studies was carried out by Nwoke (2008), results indicate that all students who successfully combine general subject with commercial subjects, achieved employment quickly as accounts clerks, office clerks, teachers, and managers of business enterprises. He continued that since it has been irrefutably proved that school subjects stimulate the choice of career and courses offer at higher educational levels, which have vocational implications, it is expedient for educator to structure the curriculum in such a way that it will provide proper interest to the student. Peer group influence on choice of career is another factor that exerts a lot of influence on the students choice of any given course of study. In classroom, the student peer group present some of the most salient meaning reward, they exert strong influence on one another value and attitude about school developing aspiration and school behaviour.

Many scholars have contributed to the view that the home or family environment has significant influence on student's choice of a vocation. Olatunji (2003) opined that there is positive relationship between the educational aspiration of the students and the social status of the family. The advice and encouragement given by parents irrespective of the social status of the family has a significant influence on raising educational aspiration. It is advised therefore, that schools should recognize and understand the family as a teaching institution.

Roe (2004) carried out a study on factors that influence a person choice of career and came up with a theory which was based on the notion of individual's personality development and the desire to satisfy one's needs. According to him, a person parental orientation and his social milieu exert greater influence in the development of basic attitudes, interest and capacities, which will be given expression in the general pattern of adult life in his personal relations, in his emotional reactions and his vocational choice. It was Roe's contention that the type of home an individual comes from influence his vocational aspirations. In her view, scientists come from cold homes and there is always a tendency for individual's from such homes to develop aggression attitude and that such attitude would usually find society accepted in occupational terms. On the other hand, those brought up from accepting homes, tend to be in services to occupation which are primary oriented towards giving services to people.

McLaughlin Lunt and Muntgome (1976) discovered that the socio-economic status of the family influence the occupational choice of the children. Even some students often involuntarily choose careers reflecting the socio-states of the family they came from. The educational attainment of parents also plays a significant role in the student choice of career. Students from literate homes tend to aspire to higher education unlike those from illiterates homes. This is due to lack of motivation from uneducated homes. According to Morish (1972) the parents' interest and their occupational aspirations for children cannot be divorced from their own personal educational and cultural level and the home environment they provide for their children. Explaining the importance of the close association between father's level of occupation and the feeling of belief towards the education of children, Robbins(2005), stated that the proportion of young people who go for full-time higher education is 45% from those whose fathers have skilled manual occupation.

Career Choice Amongst Nigerian University
This study indicates that students' academic performance was highly correlated with the feelings about themselves, especially their self-appraisals as effective peers and as an effective student. In other words, the pattern of peer group friendship within the class and outside has a great impact upon student self-concept and attitude towards school. Therefore, student choice of career or course can be highly affected by

the peer group, which they belong. If their peer groups detest some specific courses, you will feel inferior to go into other lines so that you can continue to belong to your group and hold to your self esteem.

Population

The population of this study is made up of all 450 students in 100 level of the Department of Vocational and Technical Education, Ambrose Alli University for the year 2008/2009 sessions.

Sampling and Sampling Technique

All the 450 students in 100 level students in the department were randomly selected using the random sampling technique. The sample used for this study is made up of 100 students consisting of sixty male and forty female students respectively.

The Research Instrument

The questionnaire was the instrument used for gathering information for the research. This was designed to sample response of students regarding the question raised in the statement of problem. They were constructed to collect relevant information needed for answering the question in the statement of problem of the study.

Data Analysis

The data gathered from the questionnaire were analyzed using the frequency counts, mean scores, standard deviation and percentage.

Results

Table 1: What is the Parents Level of Education?

The Father's Level of Education:

	No. of Respondent	Percentage(%)
Non formal education	14	13.46
Primary education only	11	10.58
Secondary education only	10	9.62
NCE/OND	7	6.73
HMD	8	7.69
University degree	34	36.54
Others	16	15.38
Total	100	100 %

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The Mother Level of Education:

	No. of Respondent	Percentage(%)
Non formal education	25	26.9
Primary education only	10	9.85
Secondary education only	17	16.35
Teachers grade 11	4	3.85
NCE/OND	12	11.54
HND	4	3.85
University degree	20	21.15
Others	15	16.35
Total	100	100 %

From the above data, it was observed that majority of the parents have a high level of education. Quite a number of parents also have little or no education at all. For instance out of the 100 respondents, 25

mothers and 14 fathers have non-formal education, making a total of 42 parents who have non-formal education, 21 of them have primary education and 27 have secondary education.

Table 2: The Most Influential Factor in the Choice of Career by Ambrose Alli University Student.

Factors	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Parental pressure	5	4.81
Subject done at school	17	16.35
Parental education	6	5.77
Prestige value of the job	20	19.23
Socio-economic status of parent	12	11.54
Sex	3	2.28
Case of admission into university	4	3.85
_u ->aL±A	14	13.46
Others	15	14.42

From the data given in Table 2, it can be seen that as far as Ambrose Alli students are concerned, it is the prestige value of the job that influence most of their choice of a career. This factor has the frequency of 17, which is 16.35% of the overall total high salary comes third with a frequency count of 14 and 13.46%. On the other hand, the table has shown that the sex of a student is not an influential factor in students' choice of career, it has a low frequency count of 3, which is 2.28%. Contrary to expectation, two factors, the case of admission and the influences of friends are not highly regarded by students of Ambrose Alli University as influential factors in career choice. Both have frequency count of 4 and 3.85%,

Career Choice Amongst Nigerian University...

Table 3: The Most Valued Counsel by Ambrose Alli University in their Choice of a Career.

	No. of Respondent	Percentage (%)
Parent Teachers	40	41.38
Friends Career	25	24.04
counsellor Personal	18 8	19.23
conviction	9	7.65
Total	100	100 %

Data on table 3, shows that students value their parents advice most when it comes to the question of choosing a career. This factor has a frequency count of 40 and 41.38 percent of the overall total. The importance of the teacher's advice and those of friends come second and third respectively with frequency count 25 and 18 and percentage scores of 24.04 and 19.23. Guidance counselling comes last on this table with a frequency count of 8, which gives 7.69 percent.

Table 4: Mean Scores Standard Deviations and Rank; Order of Occupational Preferences by Ambrose Alli University Students

Occupation	X	Rank Order	Remark
Accountancy	6.08	3	
Medicine	3.97	1	Most prestigious
Engineering	5.74	2	
Law	6.58	4	
Architecture	8.32	5	
Administration office	11.4	10	
University lecturing	11.28	9	

Armed force/police	12.43	14	
Journalism	11.61	11	
Pharmacy	8.60	6	
Banking	8.94	7	
Pilot	9.66	8	
Surveying	12.81	17	
Geology	12.69	16	
Nursing	11.99	12	
Teaching	14.06	19	
Denlistn	12.33	13	
Farming/agriculture	13.65	18	
Clergy	14.62	20	Least prestigious
Contracting business	12.44	15	

The data on table 4, shows that medicine has been chosen as the most prestigious profession by Ambrose Alli University students. It has the mean score of 3.97. Medicine is closely followed by engineering with the mean score of 5.74 and accounting with a mean score of 6.57 others in the ranking order are Law 6.58, Architecture 8.32, Pharmacy 8.60 and Banking and Finance 8.94. On the other hand, the clergy with a mean score of 14.62 is regarded as the least prestigious profession. This is followed closely by teaching with a mean score of 14.08 and farming with a mean score of 13.65.

Discussion and Findings

From the available data given it is discovered that a majority of the parents of the respondents particularly the mothers have low or no educational qualification at all. This is bound to affect the students as far as the choice of adequate career is concerned, since parents play a prominent role in this area, it is therefore necessary that parents should avail themselves of the adult education classes to enable them update and enlighten themselves in order to be in a better position to advise their children adequately on careers to choose from.

Findings in table 2, shows that the most influential factors in career choice as far as Ambrose Alli University students are concerned is the prestige value of the job followed by the subjects done at schools and high salary. This explains the reason why students struggle very hard to change courses and go into areas which have high prestige values and better job prospect. Gone are the days when students just go into the university to study any course at all. There has been an increasing crave for professionalism since the 1980s.

The findings in table 3 also reveal that the students value the advice of their parents very much. The advice of their teachers and those of their friends comes second and third respectively. It must be noted that even though they value that advice of these people very much when they actually want to choose a career, it is the prestige value of the job and the subject done at school that count and influence them most as indicated in table 2. Parent must therefore struggle hard to improve themselves so that they will be in a better position to choice and advise their children since these children value their advice more than any other. The teacher too must help the students to pick the right subjects at school so that they do not have problem when they want to choose a career. Findings also show that students value the advice of their friends too but these friends do not influence them greatly when they want to choose careers. This is probably because friends or peer group of the respondents are not knowledgeable enough on the career available and what those career entail to be able to pressurize their friends to go into such careers. It also show that the career counsellors are not adequately used for students in schools. If the services of these specialists were made use of, most of the problems the students encounter at the university level which push them to struggle for change of course would have been averted.

Findings on table 4, shows that the most prestigious profession as perceived by Ambrose Alli University students is medicine. This is closely followed by engineering and accountancy in that order. It shows that students still regard these traditionally accepted professions as most prestigious. Today there are varieties of

~~Career Choice Amongst Nigerian University~~ equally are prestigious as the ones they have chosen. This can be attributed to the non-availability of career counsellors in most institutions. The findings further reveals that the sex of the students actually play very little role in the students' perception of the most prestigious profession. It goes to show that both "male" and "female" students do not look on any profession as being the preserved of only male or females. The sex of a person no longer matters as far as career choice is concerned. The clergy and teaching followed by farming were chosen by the students as the least prestigious profession. The choice of teaching as one of the least prestigious professions is not surprising, because it is a common fact that teaching is looked down upon in the society probably because of the low remuneration that the job attracts. Farming also is an area that most of the Nigeria youth do not want to go into because it is not a white-collar job. The choice of clergy as the least prestigious professions by all the students however, is highly surprising, one would have thought that profession would be highly regarded and rated because of its divine nature but the fact it is a service profession with low remuneration and a reserved life style may have discouraged many students from going into it.

Recommendations

A number of intriguing issues that need the immediate attention of the federal and state governments as well as the universities and private sections of the economy have been raised in this study, it is therefore recommended that:

1. Vocational guidance service should be incorporated into the Nigeria educational programmes at every level of education from primary to the tertiary institutions so as to help students choose appropriate course for the career they want to study.
2. Since school subject play an important role in determining students' choice of career, students should be guided by school authorities to carefully choose their subjects with the view to pursue the right career.
3. In view of the evidence of this study that parents counsel are valued most by students, parents should be encouraged to be enlighten in order to be able to give sound counselling to their children. Adult education is a very important programme which parents that have non-formal education can attend to put them in a position to counsel their children. This study has shown that most parents of the subjects of this study have no-formal education.
4. The Ministry of Education should develop vocational education programmes for students at the senior secondary school level to enable them have wider knowledge of career and vocation available to choose from particularly during this age of science and technology where many new fields or career openings have come into beings.
5. Teachers should be given training in guidance and counselling seminars and lectures so as to enable them guide the students in their occupational choices. Also, teacher conditions of service should be improved upon to enhance their knowledge dissemination.

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6. There should be greater dialogue between the university and the private sector. The university should know what the labour market needs so that they can streamline their course of study of such needs and advice the students accordingly.

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