

# REPOSITIONING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA THROUGH CAREER CHOOSING AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES: AN OVER VIEW

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## **Abstract**

*The focus of this paper was to give an overview about repositioning vocational education through career choosing and development strategies, since prospective employees find it difficult to choose a career that would suit their internal and external environment. While employers on the other hand find it difficult to develop an effective career development strategy. This paper addresses career, career choosing and career development definitions, factors influencing career choosing such as family, school, gender, peer, marriage among others. This paper also addresses the steps in choosing a carrier, career development strategies, and benefits. Recommendations and conclusion.*

Vocational education prepares learners for jobs that are based in manual or practical activities, traditionally non-academic and totally related to specific trade, occupation, or vocation, hence the vocational education can be referred to as a training given to a learning to enable him/or her acquire skill that aids in career choosing.

A career as a pattern of work experiences comprises the entire life span of a person, which is generally seen with regard to a number of phases or stages reflecting the transition from one stage of life to the next (Risha, 2017). For most people “career” means probably a hidden contrast with “job”. notions of status, advancement, and intrinsic satisfaction, whilst job means something one does to earn a living. Workers in contemporary society are expressing a strong desire to pursue more than just a job. With improved living standards and the usual fringe benefits, workers want a career that will express their interests, personality, abilities and also harmonize with their total life situations (Career Development Association of Alberta, 2016).

An individual’s career determines the environment he/she lives in, the type of people to interact with and their social status. Thus, career choosing and development is an important decision that needs prompt and special attention because its consequences can be inescapable. Career choosing is one of the most important decisions a student or a professional has to make in order to achieve a goal. Whether the decision is to select a specialization, organisation or a profession, it should be made after careful consideration of the internal (physical, emotional and intellectual demands) and external environment (which involves one’s suitability to the type of work). This choice is crucial as it shall drive what would be the individual’s daily schedule for the rest of their life. Furthermore, it will have a direct impact on their other aspects of life such as life style, self-satisfaction, work-life balance and quality of life.

Career development can be seen as enumeration of consecutive jobs and training. According to (Rodrigues, and Guest, 2015), an individual's career development is a lifetime process that encompasses the growth and change process of childhood, the formal career education at school, and the maturational processes that continue throughout a person's working adulthood and into retirement. Owyang (2017) explain that a career consists of different stages and the individual is confronted with different issues during each of these stages. The common pattern of multiple careers during individuals' adult years requires evaluation, personal decisions and implement career transition actions at several points during their lifetime.

### **Concept of Career**

Career could be conceptualized more broadly in terms of individual development in learning and work through life time which may involve voluntary work and other life experiences (Danish, Shahid, Aslam, Afzal and Ali, (2015). Career is a job or profession for which one undergoes regulated education and training over a period of time and which one intends to follow for the whole of one's life. It is thus a chosen pursuit, life, work and success in one's profession. A career is now broadly defined as the unfolding sequence of a person's work experience over time (Kochun and Migunde, 2017) or in more detail as the sequence of employment related positions, roles, activities and experiences encountered by a person. Kochun and Migunde are of opinion that career is an individual's vocation or trade or how one makes a living, which portrays that individual's pattern of life is determined by one's career

A career entails a succession of work-related activities stretching over a lifetime as influenced and shaped by different values and attitudes. Careers can be described as actions aimed at self-actualisation, integrating the different life roles with the worker role. Careers are duties, exposure to duties and experience gained in both the workplace and at home, manifesting in a variety of tasks (Oyamo and Amoth, 2018). These tasks based on policies in the workplace assist individuals with career planning in terms of balancing different life roles and responsibilities, which exists all through individual's life time.

### **Career Choosing**

When experts talk about career choice, they are usually referring to someone deciding what he/she wants to do to make a living (Kochun and Migunde, 2017). A career choice is the process of determining a field of learning that requires certain knowledge and skills, acquired through a specific educational program which results in a certificate or degree attesting to one's accomplishment (Powers, 2013). Since the average person works 45 to 50 years in his or her lifetime, finding a satisfying career and not just a job is important. Career choice has therefore become a complex task today as one has not only to make the career planning but also to do an exhaustive career research before making career choice so as to adjust with the evolving social-economic conditions (Wattles, 2016).

Watson, McMahon, Foxcroft and Els (2015) affirmed that career choosing involve evaluating individual's abilities, skills and values in the light of the occupations available and how these align with the work values of the available alternatives. Gottfredson in Watson, McMahon, Foxcroft and Els (2015) posits that developmental Theory of occupational aspirations describes a natural affection

of individuals towards certain occupations. The concept of self-realisation is key factor in career choosing as most individuals want to do jobs that tend to align with the perceived self-image they have. The key variables that determine or help individuals perceive this image are social class, ability, intelligence and experiences.

### **Factors Influencing Career Choosing**

Kochun and Migunde (2017) stated that each individual undertaking the process of choosing a career is influenced by several factors such as personal aptitudes, social contacts and educational attainment. According to Shahzad, Zahra and Ahmed (2014), career choice is influenced by multiple factors including personality, interest, self-concept, cultural identity, globalization, socialization, role model, social support and available resources such as information and finance.

Furthermore, Salami and Salami (2016) stated that an individual's environment, talents, skills, and academic achievement exert an influence on career choice. Other factors such as aptitude, life circumstances, and academic achievement have also been proven as determinants of career choice. Educational level of parents, their profession and income are also identified as very important factors. Any individual at a certain point in life has to make a choice regarding one's career.

### **Family Influence on Career Choices**

Family plays a lot of influence on a child's/ward's career choosing, the first interactions of a child start within the home and this involves parents, siblings and relatives (Sharf, 2015). A child is affected by a number of family-related factors such as the marital relationship of the parents, the socio-economic status of the family, the atmosphere of the home (whether parents are warm or hostile), the environmental condition, occupational status of the parents and the number of siblings in the family (Vosh and Schauble, 2014). The family dynamics therefore play a pivotal role in the career readiness of the students.

### **School Influence and Career Choice**

Career guidance is offered at institutions of learning such as schools, colleges and universities among others. High schools are a transition to higher institutions of learning and the world of work so they have a critical role in assisting students choose careers (Maxwell, 2015). If students have too many choices of careers or have not made a decision on which career to take, school career guidance is helpful in selecting their study paths and in identifying their potential strengths to enhance their competitiveness for positions (Hooley, 2016). Krumboltz's theory of Social Learning Theory of career development emphasizes teaching people career development techniques so that they can give career guidance in schools. Similarly Hewitt (2017) stated that the transition from high school to university or the world of work has been understood as one of the most difficult developmental challenges confronting adolescents and that schools play a crucial role in guiding the students towards a career.

Nigerian school youths who are ignorant of the nature and requirements of various occupations can find the issue of selecting an occupation difficult and complex (Petters and Asuquo, 2009.). As such, schools engage a variety of activities to help students cope with the complexity of career choices. Hence, career guidance was introduced to assist individuals to identify, learn the skills

for more effective planning and choosing jobs, for effective self-employment aiming at reducing the issue of unemployment in the society.

### **Gender Influence and Career Choice**

In a lay man's point of view, individuals choice of career is based on sex, since gender is used to distinguish between males and females, it implies that there are a number of attributes that go with gender as defined by the society. According to Kochung and Migunde (2017) through interactions with caretakers, socialisation in childhood, peer pressure in adolescence, and gendered work and family roles, men and women are socially constructed to be different in behaviour, attitude and emotions. This also influences the careers they choose. There are also different roles for men and women. Alika and Audu (2017) state that traditional individuals believe that a woman's role is to be a homemaker and that a man's role is a breadwinner. However, there is a paradigm shift as more egalitarian individuals believe that women should share in financial support of the family and that men should participate in childcare and other traditionally feminine aspects of household labour (Gettings, 2016). In other words, women have the capacity to engage in male-dominated careers and men engage in what are perceived as women's jobs as defined by the society.

The influence of gender in career choices has been documented in many studies. In Nigeria, female students go for careers that are feminist in nature while their male counterparts opt for careers that are masculine in nature (Olaopa, 2016; Arazu, 2018). Arazu, (2018) state that gender differences are attributed to sex role socialisation which creates a clear distinction between sex roles, prejudice and discrimination which affect the status of women in the economy. Kenyan females choose careers that correspond with their traditional gender roles and males also choose careers that match those of their traditional gender roles (Heilman and Kennedy-Phillips, 2015).

### **Peer Influence and Career Choice**

Most persons, are influenced by friends when making career choice, hence the kind of friend they make either make them or mar them, therefore, parent's and school guidance's attention are of great important. Peer influence cannot be underestimated as it was found to be influential in career choices. Atueyi and Isiaku (2016) in Nigeria, found that students were influenced by their peers in a variety of ways such as peer counselling, peer interaction, peer advice and peer relationships. Peer counselling is a way of relating, responding and helping aimed at exploring feelings, thoughts and concerns with the hope of reaching a clear understanding. In schools, peer counselling is a phenomenon that was established to help students in schools solve problems (Berkus, 2014). The main goal of peer counselling is to enable students to appreciate each other as well as to understand the importance of education (Odirile, 2012). Studies (Antoniou, 2016; Danish, Shahid, Aslam, Afzal, and Ali, 2015) revealed that peer counsellors are important in mentoring students, sharing information and supporting each other.

Students' interactions with peers play a central role in how students think about themselves (Chuke and Ukpabia, 2017). Chuke and Ukpabia in their study revealed that students' interactions with peers of diversified interests, races and backgrounds have the potential to stimulate reflection, knowledge and beliefs which may lead to new ways of thinking about the world, For peers to understand the

world of work, their interaction makes it possible for them to venture into careers they were unaware of.

### **Marriage Influence and Career Choice**

According to Human capital theory by (Becker cited in Lim, Stephen (2016) on the role of marriage there are three theoretical perspectives which determine career advancement. This theory describes that men who are married got too many commitments than a singleman especially one with children too. Married men especially with children go for the jobs of less commitment so that there should be less pressure on them from work side and they can successfully maintain the balance between work and personal life. For this decision they need to pay in less wages or salary jobs. Same in case of women, who got less commitment in their personal life are more successful in their career as they can choose jobs which need more time commitment as result they are paid more and their career graph goes on increasing as result to those ladies who got lot of commitments in their personal life like children, some old people to look after at home (Sullivan and Baruch, 2017).

Agba, Festus, and Ushie, (2010), added that men who got spouse support can go for the more committed and time consuming jobs as they got someone to take care of their family at home which gives them relieve unlike the single parent as they have to maintain the balance between both equally as they need to do all their household chores and other personal commitments for themselves. But this spouse support view gets little inapplicable in the cases where the spouses are working too especially for full time. In many researches, it has been observed that women are more likely to support their husbands or partners in their career by taking full charge of household and other personal commitments by going for their own career growth as well.

### **Steps in Choosing a Career**

Owyang (2017) state that there are five major steps to choosing a career. They include the following;

- **Evaluate your choice:** Throughout life and often times before reaching ones first goals, an individual is presented with a series of crossroads. One must determine if he/she want to make changes in ones roadmap and set different goals or if ones original plan still fits. An individual may find information that he/she had not uncovered before that causes the individual to question his/her choice.
- **Make a decision:** By test driving possible career choices, an individual have identified options that meet his/her selection criteria from the inventories completed in the first step. Now is the time to evaluate and select career options that best meet the majority of the individual's criteria. The individual need to develop a map or plan that will help him/her reach his/her career goals.
- **Test Drive Carriers:** the individual need to talk with people in the field, observe them working, or work in the field as an intern, co-op student, part-time, or temporary worker or take classes to learn more about the career. This may be a time to reposition oneself on the stairway. As possible career choices are eliminated, others may need to be identified, requiring a step back.
- **Explore and investigate carrier filed:** One need to know the occupations and career fields that provide the best blend of unique style, interests, skills, and values? The goal in this step is to identify possible career options that match ones criteria for job satisfaction and those which offer no

fit. In this step, books and computer programs can provide knowledge about career fields, so comparisons between occupational characteristics and personal characteristic can be made.

- **Know oneself:** A good career decision can only be made when an individual takes inventory and becomes aware of his/her personal style, identify his/her interests and skills, and acknowledge his/her work values.

### **Career Development**

Development can be viewed as personal improvement by means of enhancing skills and knowledge that is complex and unstructured in nature (Agba, Festus and Ushie, 2010). Development also refers to an action, that is a process of growth, implying changes in terms of structure and function. Career development is a lifelong process (ongoing) or cycle of growth to prepare, sustain and advance within a career (Patrick, and Amit Kumar, 2016). Career development implies the interaction between a human and the environment embedded in economical, historical, cultural and community factors.

After procuring a work position, career development and career planning continue because human needs are needed to be satisfied (Mabula, 2015). Career development is a dynamic process where an individual takes responsibility for the evaluation of one's personalities, skills, needs, and priorities and-values. It implies growth through learning and developing skills to enable an individual to accumulate career experience, to execute career decisions and make the necessary changes and adaptations to execute a certain scope of work.

Career development is a process of developing and implementing career self-concepts, where synthesis and compromises must be found between self-concepts and reality leading to self-actualization.

### **Career Development Strategies**

There are two critical strategies for career development which are: individual strategies and organizational strategies;

- i. **Individual Strategies:** Usually, organizations put efforts to develop their employees. However, employees should also take initiatives to develop their own careers. Career is the result of matching individual's goals with the organizational goals. Career development is a joint responsibility of an employee and the organization. If an employee wants only the organization to develop his career, the organization is likely to impose too much organizational control restricting the autonomy of that employee. Therefore, it is advised that one should be instrumental to manage one's own career (Risha, 2017). The self-management of one's career will help the individual to control one's own vocation and boost ones independence. In career decisions, the individual is the only one having appropriate information. Individual must be assertive to express his/her feelings so that he/she does not get deceived with regard to the career. The steps involved in successful self-management of career according to Shaito (2019) are:

- Do it now
- Know yourself
- Analyze career opportunities

- Establish career goal
  - Obtain feedback
  - Manage your career
- ii. **Organizational Strategies:** Shaito (2019) state that for the aim of developing human resources management, and career issues such as reducing employees attritions, developing high-potential employees, preparing for managerial positions, enhancing problem solving skills..., organizations spend efforts on designing programs for their employees' career development. Literatures suggest a number of specific drives that organizations can take to make the career programs effective;
- Human Resources Planning and Forecasting System  
Improving Dissemination of Career Option Information  
Initial Career Counselling
- Support of Education and Training
  - Job posting
  - Special Assignments and Job Rotating
  - Career Development Workshops
  - Flexible Rewards and Promotional System
  - Development and Use of Assessment System

### **Benefits of Career Development**

Management - Training Guru (2015) posited the following as benefits of career development;

- Career development fosters open communication within the organization. This indorses the open communication upon all organizational levels, the top managers and managers, and the employees and managers.
- Career development encourages better use of employee skills. It aids the organization by means of allowing managers to be aware of their skills and competencies so that they can apply them at a position or occupation where they'll be able to have better results.
- Career development offer employees and the managers with beneficial assistance with regards to career decisions. Moreover, they acquire an opportunity to evaluate their skills and competencies and discover their objectives and future plans.
- Due to the fact that organizations need to retain their indispensable assets and prepare them for top-level positions in the future, they have to understand their career expectations and requirements from their organization, and this is accomplished by the aid of career development plans.
- Career development plans provides feedback. This is necessary to evaluate the success rate of a particular policy employed and the initiatives taken by the organization. Correspondingly, this also helps managers to provide feedback for employees' performance.

### **Conclusion**

Career was viewed as an individual's development in learning and work throughout life which includes voluntary work and other life experiences. An individual's career determines the

environment he/she will live in, the type of people he/she will interact with and his/her social status. Career choosing is one of the most important decisions a student or a professional has to make. Whether that decision is to select a specialization, organisation or a profession, it should be made after careful consideration of the internal and external environment. Several factors were found to influence career choosing such as family, school, gender, peer, marriage among others. The steps to choosing a career were also discussed. Career development was viewed as work in all its dimensions, facets and consequences, as well as to the individual's quality of work life. Career development strategies were discussed in two broad categories; individual strategies and organizational strategies. As a conclusion, a career development strategy is essential for both organizations and employees, it has several benefits for both as we discussed. It is challenging to do that effectively, but it can be effective if all career management components are taken into consideration when planning and implementing the career development plan.

### **Recommendations**

Drawing from the above discussions, the following recommendations are therefore made; More emphases should be laid on career guidance and counseling at institutions of learning such as schools, colleges and universities as this would be helpful in selecting their study paths and in identifying their potential strengths which would lead to a better career choice.

Individuals should not wait for the organizations to develop their career path rather they should take the initiative to develop their skills and competencies, stay up-to-date for any new features related to their field.

Employers need to recognize that employees are organizations' most important assets. They should be provided with programmes for personal and career development. This entails, long range planning for career development programme including ways of securing union support.

Employees should be provided with information on opportunities that exist within the company for job expansion and upward mobility or expansion.

Employees should be given many and varied experience to enable them develop and better equip them with job related skills.

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