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Influence of Vocational Guidance Services on Career Choice in Educational Management among University Undergraduate Students in Taraba State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of vocational guidance services on university undergraduate student's choice of career in Educational Management. The study adopted the survey research design. The population of the study was 751 respondents comprising 673 undergraduate students, 48 Lecturers of Educational Management and 30 counselors in Taraba State, Nigeria. The sample for the study was however 350 respondents. A 45-item structured questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts. After trial testing of the instrument, reliability coefficient of .89 was obtained. The instrument was administered on the respondents by the researchers and three (3) research assistants. Mean and standard deviation was used to answer research questions. Findings of the study revealed vocational guidance services that are available to students for career choice in Education Management among University undergraduate students. It was recommended among other things that university undergraduate students should be exposed to vocational guidance services to make career choices in Educational Management.

Keywords: Vocational Guidance, Career Choice, Educational Management, Undergraduates, Students

Introduction

The quest for the acquisition of vocational and saleable skills for human capital development has promoted the vocational aspect of the nation's educational system. Vocational education is any form of education that aims at the acquirement of qualifications related to a certain profession, art or employment or that provides the necessary training and the appropriate skills as well as technical knowledge, so that students are able to exercise competence in a profession (Mortaki, 2012). The success of vocational education however depends on the extent to which vocational guidance is given prominence.

Vocational and guidance services are essential tools in student development especially during adolescent stage is characterized by rapid growth and change both socially, spiritually, physically, morally and intellectually. Vocational guidance is the giving of information, experience and advice in regard to choosing an occupation, preparing for it, entering upon it and progress in it. Vocational guidance, according to Parsons in Nweze and Okolie (2015) is the processes of helping an individual match his personal attributes and his background with suitable jobs and employment opportunities. According to Wordu *et al.,* (2013) vocational guidance is all indispensable segment of vocational technical education programme.

Similarly, Osuala (2004) viewed vocational guidance as the foyer and back porch for vocational technical education programme because there cannot be a vocational education without beneficiaries of such training being guided into the different vocational or career areas that are available, such as agriculture, woodwork trade among others. Vocational guidance is a help rendered to a person or group of persons that is aimed at solving their problems which relates to occupational choice and progress. Vocational guidance in this context is a facilitative process, a service rendered to the individual to aid him in choosing and adjusting to an occupation in education management.

Education management according to Indeed Editorial Team (2025) is the administration that oversees an education system. This administration is responsible for designing, planning and implementing learning structures. Professionals in education management can specialize in various fields such as human resources, student services, financial aid among many others.

It is important to note that a choice of the type of job one wants to go into is a crucial and delicate decision. According to Agbulu and Wever (2011) such a decision marks the beginning of one's identification of who you are and the type of person you can become later and also indicate the type of life style such an individual will adopt. One's choice of a job also shapes the type of friends he/she may have and also exerts some influence upon his/her personal and social development in adulthood.

Therefore, noting these consequences it is highly of value for vocational guidance to be provided so that by the time one is making a choice of job to enter into, one may likely choose those jobs that could give an individual inner satisfaction.

Career choice is not one that is made abruptly. It is a continuous process. Career is a series of job that a person has in particular are of work, usually involving more responsibilities as time passes (Okonkwo, 2011). According to Alutu (2001), career development and choice should be indicated as early as the nursery school yours through the primary, Secondary and to the tertiary school level. Making appropriate careers choice has become an uphill task among secondary school students consequently vocational guidance as an area of guidance and counselling has been introduced in all levels of Nigeria's education system to help tackle this problem. Sofyan *et al,* (2022) stressed that the purpose of vocational career guidance and counselling can be provided to individuals with the necessary tools and resources to make informed decisions about their careers. There is therefore, the need for vocational guidance efforts to be tailored towards exploring the career options and opportunities in educational management for human development.

Statement of the Problem

The increased rate of unemployment and underemployment among university graduates in Taraba State just like any other state in Nigeria is a major cause of concern. It is assumed that one of the contributing factors of unemployment particularly among university graduates in Nigeria could be largely due to inadequate or poor vocational guidance services to students in school. Students at university undergraduate level often time lack access to relevant vocational or occupational information that will enable them graduate from school to a suitable occupation. Similarly, such students graduate with little or no information to make proper choices on career and vocational prospects.

The choice of a particular vocation or career is a life time decision in the life of every individual, especially the young ones. Failure to make such appropriate decisions could results to severe consequences. The problem of this study is therefore coined in a question form thus: how does vocational guidance services influences career choice in educational management among university undergraduate students in Taraba State, Nigeria?

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of vocational guidance services on career choice in Educational Management among University undergraduate students in Taraba State. Specifically, the study sought to:

i. examine the vocational and guidance services available to students for career choice in Educational Management among university undergraduate students in Taraba State

ii. examine the extent to which these vocational and guidance services are utilize by the students in the choice of career in Educational Management among university undergraduate students in Taraba State
iii. identify career opportunities and options in Educational Management for university undergraduate students in Taraba State
iv. determine the influence of vocational and guidance services on career choice of university undergraduates in Educational Management in Taraba State

Research Questions

i. What are the vocational and guidance services available to students for career choice in Educational Management among university undergraduate students in Taraba State?
ii. To what extent does these vocational and guidance services are utilized by the students in the choice of career in Educational Management among university undergraduate students in Taraba State?
iii. What are the career opportunities and options in Educational Management for university undergraduate students in Taraba State?
iv. How does vocational and guidance services influence career choice of university undergraduates in Educational Management in Taraba State?

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a survey research design. The design was considered appropriate for the study since data were collected from a large number of respondents on how vocational guidance services has influenced career choice of university undergraduate students in Educational Management.

Area of the Study

The study was conducted in Taraba State, Nigeria. The state is made up of sixteen (16) Local Government Areas and two (2) special development areas. The state was considered appropriate because the state has many higher educational institutions offering educational management or educational administration and planning as a course and many university graduates who lack sealable skills to take up jobs in both public and private sectors.

Population of the study

The population of the study was Seven hundred and fifty-one (751) respondents consisting of 673 undergraduate students, 48 Lecturers of Educational Management and 30 counselors in Taraba State.

Sample and Sampling

The sample for the study was 350 respondents consisting of 311 students, 29 Lecturers and 10 counselors obtained using Taro-Yamene formula. The study adopted the multi-stage sampling procedure. In the first stage, purposive sampling was used to select public universities offering Educational Management or Educational Administration and Planning as a course at the undergraduate level. Secondly proportionate sampling procedure was used to divide the population into clusters of students, lecturers and counsellors. Finally simple random sampling was used to select 311 students, 29 lecturers and 10 counsellors.

Instrument for data collection

A 45-item self-developed structured questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. The items were generated based on the information gathered from the review of related literature. The instrument had a four-point scale for rating the response options of Strongly Agree (SA) 4 points, Agree (A) 3 points, Disagree (SA) 2 points and Strongly Disagree (DA) 1 point for Research Questions 1,3 & 4 while response options for Research Question 2 were Very High Extent (VHE) 4, High Extent (HE) 3, Low Extent (LE) 2, and Very Low Extent (VLE) 1.

Validity of the Instrument

The instrument was validated by three experts from the Departments of Educational Foundations and Guidance and Counselling both of Taraba State University, Jalingo. The validates carried out both content and face validity. All observations by the validates were used to improve the research instrument.

Reliability of the Instrument

A trial test of the instrument was conducted in Adamawa State University, Mubi after which Cronbach Alpha Formula was used to determine the internal consistency of the validated instrument. A reliability coefficient of .89 was obtained indicating that the instrument was reliable to consistently generate the required data for the study.

Method of Data Collection

The collection of data was done by the researchers with the help of three research assistants. The researchers and research assistants visited the selected public universities and administered the instrument. Three hundred and fifty (350) copies of the instrument were administered and retrieved on the spot. However, only three hundred and fifteen (315) copies of the instrument were filled and returned correctly.

Data Analysis Technique

The data collected for the study was analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research question. The mean value of the (4) point response scale was 2.50 which was used as a benchmark for making decision. Any item of the instrument with a mean of 2.50 and above was accepted whereas, any item with a mean of less than 2.50 was rejected.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of respondents on vocational and guidance services available to students for career choice in Educational Management among university undergraduate students in Taraba State (N=315)

S/N	Item description	Mean	Std Dev.	Decision
	Information and Resources			
1	Career Exploration	3.05	0.42	Agree
2	Labor Market Trends	3.50	0.30	Agree
3	Educational Pathways	3.16	0.65	Agree
4	Skills and Abilities Assessment	2.55	0.92	Agree
5	Workplace Simulations	3.26	0.37	Agree
	Counseling and Guidance			
6	Individualized Counseling	3.33	0.43	Agree
7	Group Counseling	3.50	0.59	Agree
8	Mentoring	3.33	0.73	Agree
9	Career Assessments	3.16	0.49	Agree
	Placement and Referral Services			
10	Job Search Assistance	3.67	0.35	Agree
11	Internship and Apprenticeship Placement	3.43	0.44	Agree
12	Referral to External Resources	3.58	0.81	Agree

Findings from Table 1 showed a mean value ranging between 3.67 to 2.55 indicating that the respondents are unanimous in their opinion that all the 12 items represent the vocational and guidance services that are available to students for career choice in Educational Management among University undergraduate students. The standard deviation value ranging between 0.81 to 0.30 indicates the closeness in the opinions of the respondents. The findings is corroborated by Ravichandran (2023) who opined that vocational guidance and counselling services that are necessary in helping students make informed decision include assessment to identify an individual's strengths and interests, exploration of different career options and assistance with job search and application processes.

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of respondents on the extent to which vocational and guidance services are utilize by the students in the choice of career in Educational Management among university undergraduate students in Taraba State (N=315)

S/N	Item description	Mean	Std Dev.	Decision
	Information and Resources			
1	Career Exploration	3.83	0.51	VHE
2	Labor Market Trends	3.66	0.37	VHE
3	Educational Pathways	3.92	0.48	VHE
4	Skills and Abilities Assessment	2.58	0.83	HE
5	Workplace Simulations	3.26	1.09	HE
	Counseling and Guidance			
6	Individualized Counseling	3.76	0.45	VHE
7	Group Counseling	3.50	0.30	VHE
8	Mentoring	3.16	0.65	HE
9	Career Assessments	2.55	0.92	HE
	Placement and Referral Services			
10	Job Search Assistance	3.50	0.39	VHE
11	Internship and Apprenticeship Placement	2.59	0.57	HE
12	Referral to External Resources	3.11	0.61	VHE

Findings from Table 2 showed a mean value ranging between 3.92 to 2.55 indicating that the respondents are unanimous in their opinion that all the 12 items represent the vocational and guidance services that are utilize to a very high and high extents by the students in the choice of career in Educational Management among University undergraduate students. The standard deviation value ranging between 1.09 to 0.30 indicates the closeness in the opinions of the respondents.

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of respondents on career opportunities and options in Educational Management for university undergraduate students in Taraba State (N=315)

S/N	Item description	Mean	Std Dev.	Decision
1	Curriculum Developer	3.33	0.48	Agree
2	Educational Consultant	3.06	0.57	Agree
3	Human Resources Specialist	3.00	0.49	Agree
4	Instructional Coordinator	3.52	0.43	Agree
5	Instructional Designer	3.49	0.29	Agree
6	School Counselor	3.50	0.73	Agree
7	Career Counselor	3.36	0.99	Agree

8	Special Education Teacher	3.70	0.55	Agree
9	Paraeducator	3.51	0.43	Agree
10	Community Education Officer	3.49	0.32	Agree
11	Learning Mentor	3.49	0.73	Agree
12	Special Educational Needs Coordinator	2.39	0.51	Disagree
13	Teaching Assistant	2.79	0.65	Agree
14	Academic Advisor	3.18	0.51	Agree
15	Financial Aid Coordinator	3.36	0.79	Agree

Findings from Table 3 showed a mean value ranging between 3.70 to 2.79 indicating that the respondents are unanimous in their opinion that 13 out of the 14 items represent the career opportunities and options in Educational Management for university undergraduate students. The standard deviation value ranging between 0.99 to 0.29 indicates the closeness in the opinions of the respondents. According to Indeed Editorial Team (2025), career opportunities and options in educational management includes curriculum developer, paraeducator, community education officer, instructional designer, school and career counselor, educational consultant, human resource specialists among many other options and opportunities.

Table 4: Mean and standard deviation of respondents on how vocational and guidance services influence career choice of university undergraduates in Educational Management in Taraba State (N=315)

S/N	Item description	Mean	Std Dev.	Decision
1	Vocational guidance helps individuals understand their skills through Self-Assessment	2.58	0.36	Agree
2	Vocational guidance services provide access to information about various careers through Career Exploration	3.00	0.41	Agree
3	Vocational guidance often includes opportunities for practical experience	2.98	1.11	Agree
4	Vocational guidance helps individuals set realistic career goals and develop plans to achieve them	3.22	0.77	Agree
5	Career counselors provide guidance and support throughout the career decision-making process	3.30	0.56	Agree
6	Vocational guidance helps bridge the gap between education and the world of work by providing information about employment trends	2.52	0.75	Agree

Findings from Table 4 showed a mean value ranging between 3.30 to 2.52 indicating that the respondents are unanimous in their opinion that all the 6 items represent the various ways in which vocational and guidance services influence career choice of university undergraduate students in Educational Management. The standard deviation value ranging between 1.11 to 0.36 indicates the closeness in the opinions of the respondents. This is in agreement with Uwaifo (2019) who observed that, vocational guidance ensures there is development of decision-making skills related to career choices. Through counseling sessions, career assessments, and discussions, students learn how to gather and analyze information, evaluate options, weigh pros and cons, and make informed decisions. These decision-making skills are transferable and can benefit students not only in their career choices but also in other aspects of their lives.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Vocational and guidance services are essential tools in student development especially during adolescent stage is characterized by rapid growth and change both socially, spiritually, physically, morally and intellectually. Career choices which are continuous are a series of jobs that a person has in particular are of work, usually involving more responsibilities. The need for vocational guidance efforts to be tailored towards exploring the career options and opportunities in educational management for human development cannot be overemphasized. It is therefore recommended as follows:

i. University undergraduate students should be exposed to vocational and guidance services to make career choices in Educational Management.
ii. University administrators should identify career opportunities and options in Educational Management for university undergraduate.
iii. University guidance and counseling officers should identify the various ways in which vocational and guidance services influence career choice of university undergraduates in Educational Management.

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