

# Effective Career Counselling: A Tool for Transforming Education for a Creative, Competitive and Sustainable Economic Development

By

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## **Abstract**

*This study is a descriptive survey designed to investigate how effective career counselling can be a tool for transforming education for a creative, competitive and sustainable economic development. Sample for the study consisted of 900 Senior Secondary Schools students in Lagos State, Nigeria. The data for this study were collected using Vernon (2008) Career Counselling Checklist adapted by the researcher. The reliability was established using Cronbach Alpha with 0.92 coefficients. Data collected were analysed using statistical tools of SPSS. It was revealed among others that gender will not affect student's career concern; it also shows that religion values will not affect the career need of the students. It was concluded that gender, race and physical abilities may not influence their career choice. Finally, it was recommended that effective career counselling should be promoted in our schools to bring changes in the attitude and behaviours of students concerning their career.*

**Keywords:** Career Counselling, Creative, Competitive, Sustainable Economic Development and Transforming Education.

## **Background to the study**

Education provides foundation for sustainable economy. Education for sustainable development has come to be seen as a process of learning how to make realistic decisions that considers the long term future of the economy and social wellbeing of a nation. It represents a new vision of education, a vision that helps students better understand the world in which they live, addressing the complexity and interconnectedness of problems such as poverty, environment and degradation, conflict and other social vices that threaten our society and the future of our younger ones.

Education for a creative, competitive and sustainable economy is a vision of education that emphasizes a holistic, interdisciplinary approach to developing the knowledge and skills needed for a sustainable future as well as changes in values, behaviour and lifestyles. (UNESCO, 2002). The potential of education is enormous, it can increase concern over unsustainable practices, and it can serve as effective means in the quest to achieve reduction in increasing youth unemployment which is one of the many problems that Nigeria as a country is battling with at the moment, and also the most serious socio-economic problems confronting the nation. Majority of our graduates enter the labour market every year without the hope of getting a job for life sustenance. This unemployment

issue is a consequence of several factors such as employable skills due to inappropriate career counselling.

Building bridges between the world of work and training is very important to match skills needed for entrepreneur and labour market. All the stakeholders and actors within the educational system need to adapt to the organizational changes within the labour market to equip the youths with the knowledge, attitude, preparation, training, behaviour and skills required in the enhancement of effective and efficient educational system towards achieving training and technical skills for labour market.

An individual's career is supposedly what a person have prepared, educated and trained to do over a period of time. The choice of career is one of the most important decisions one makes, it is crucial when people feel that they are doing something worth doing and doing it well, they feel good, happy and satisfied about themselves. This cannot be achieved if there is lack of employable skills due to inappropriate school curriculum. The essence of incorporating guidance and counselling into the school system was to eliminate overwhelming ignorance of many young people on their choices of career prospects and personality maladjustments among school children. Based on these and more, career officers and counsellors were appointed to take the responsibilities in sensitizing students on the needs for effective career choice (Oye, Obi, Mohd and Bernice, 2012).

Development of citizen should be given high priority among human resource development with which is all about mobilization of human talent and potential through learning. It is essential to any nation in this era of rapid and phenomenal advancement in science and technology to develop her work force to meet up with the challenges of the technological advancement. This requires acquiring the relevant skills needed through assistance of career counsellors by assisting individuals to make educational, training, occupational choices and to manage their career. Career counselling is the missing link that is needed. Going by Hansen (2006) career guidance is widely accepted as a powerful and effective method of helping to bridge the gap between education and the world of work, as well as between school and society. It is a means of assisting young people to make appropriate and judicious educational choices that will enable them to develop their potential and to have access to employment opportunities that are compatible with their interests and abilities. It can also help to instil confidence and positive attitudes, to derive fulfilment from their chosen areas of learning and work and most importantly, to inculcate an eagerness for lifelong learning. The potential impacts of such efforts include reducing youth unemployment and thereby raising income; reduce maladaptive behaviour, frustration and untimely death. According to Rayan (2015) career counselling addresses skills shortages, improves labour adaptability, geographical and occupational mobility, reduces extent and duration of unemployment and encourages entrepreneurship.

Career counselling includes all counselling associated with career choice over a life span. In career counselling process, all aspects of individual needs are recognised as integral parts of career decision making and planning (Vernon, 2008). It also includes a concerted effort to build an understanding of an individual's traits, aspirations, motives, preferred lifestyle and personal concerns. It is an effective way of investing in human resources. Ekanem (2010) says that this can empower the citizenry with knowledge and skills capable of making them gainfully employed and socio-economically productive.

Career counselling becomes an important strategy for preparing students and integrating them into labour markets thereby addressing unemployment challenges. Career counselling has been identified as a key focus in addressing this mismatch between the needs of labour market and the products of the educational and training system thereby dealing with unemployment and improving labour mobility (Balasuriya & Hughes, 2003). This is because career is crucial to mankind; it occupies almost all entire human life. Every student desire to be identified with a good profession,

but this could only be achieved through effective counselling on the choices of career to maximize their potentials. This is due to the fact that career contributes enormously to all human activities, building individuals high self-esteem, satisfaction and adjusting to healthy life. It equally assists students to discover their innate potentials and acquire the needed knowledge for building lifelong profession (Oye et al., 2012).

According to Alao (2013) career counselling refers to a developmental process extending over almost the entire life span, through which persons develop the capacity for and engage in work as part of their total life cycle. It includes all counselling activities associated with career choice over a life span. In the career counselling process, all aspects of individual needs (Including family, work, personal concerns, and leisure) are recognised as integral parts of career decision making and planning. Career counselling also includes counselling activities associated with work maladjustment, stress reduction, mental health concerns and developmental programs that enhance work skills, interpersonal relationships, adaptability, flexibility, and other developmental programs that lead to self-agency (Vernon, 2008)

There is need for creative thinking and acting in new ways to meet up with the challenges of labour market. The purpose of this study therefore, is to investigate whether the secondary school students have career concern and to also establish the need for career counselling in secondary school.

### **Research Questions**

To enable the achievement of the objective of this study, the following research questions were posed and answered in the study;

1. Do the secondary school students show any concern about their career?
2. Is there need for career counselling among secondary school students?

### **Research Hypotheses**

Ho<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant difference due to gender in the opinion of students about their career concerns.

Ho<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant difference in the opinion of Christian and Muslim students about needs for effective career counselling.

### **Research Design**

Survey research design was adopted in executing this research work. A representative sample of the population was selected for the study.

### **Population**

The population for the study comprised all the senior secondary school students in Lagos state, Nigeria.

### **Sample and Sampling Technique**

The sample for this study consisted of 900 senior secondary school students in Lagos state. A multi-stage sampling technique was adopted. Lagos state has three senatorial district that is Lagos West, Lagos East and Lagos Central, a local government each was randomly selected from each of the senatorial district. One senior secondary school was also randomly selected from each of the local government. Three hundred (300) participants were sampled (150 SS1, 150 SS2 students) from each schools to participate in the study.

### Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument used for the study was a questionnaire made up of two sections (A & B). Section A contained four items that sought for personal information from the respondents including gender, age, school, and religion. Section B is the Vernon Career Counselling Checklist (VCCC). The scale was originally developed by Vernon (2008) and was adapted by the researcher. It was designed to help students think more thoroughly about their career concerns and to help counsellors to understand them better. 21 items out of the 42 were adapted and were used to seek information to test the hypotheses. It was further broken down into other two sub sections. Hypothesis one (items 1-11) are students opinion about their career concerns, while hypothesis two (items 12-21) sought for students opinion about need for career counselling among secondary school students. Each of the items was made up of an opinion statement followed by four options. The options include Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The respondents were instructed to tick the most appropriate option as far as they were concerned.

### Validity of the Instrument

The instrument was subject to face and content validity by the researcher with the assistance of experts in measurement and evaluation, and counselling psychology. To do this, the researcher submit the initial draft to the expert, they were given the topic, purpose of the study, the research questions and hypotheses as a guide. These experts made very useful suggestions and corrections were reflected in the final modification of items of the questionnaire.

### Reliability of the Instrument

To estimate the degree of reliability of the instrument, it was pilot-tested on 120 respondents that were not part of the sample size of the main study. The data generated from the pilot study were correlated statistically with the use of Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.92 was obtained.

### Method of Data Collection

The instrument was administered by the researcher and the assistants of counsellors' in the three selected schools. There was a preliminary visit to the schools before the administration of the instruments, this is to acquaint the researcher with the schools, get permission from the school management and educate the students about the purpose of the study. Copies of the instrument were later taken to the schools on later days. They were completed and collected the same day. All the copies were submitted without missing.

### Method of Data Analysis

The data obtained were analysed through the use of descriptive statistics that is frequency, mean, standard deviation, t-test and inferential statistical tools of SPSS. The mean of 2.50 shall be used as a benchmark for acceptance or rejection of a statement. A mean score of 2.50 and above signifies acceptance of a statement while a mean below 2.50 signifies rejection of a statement.

### Presentation of Result Based on Hypotheses

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents**

S/N	Variables	Frequency (N = 900)	Percent (%)
1	<b>Name of School</b>		
	School I	300	33.3
	School II	300	33.3
	School III	300	33.3

2	<b>Gender</b>		
	Male	426	47.3
	Female	474	52.7
3	<b>Age (in years)</b>		
	10-15	334	37.1
	16-20	566	62.9
4	<b>Religion</b>		
	Christian	530	58.9
	Muslim	370	41.1

The participants' demographic results revealed that 300 (33.3%) represented each of the three sampled schools. The male participants were 426 (47.3%) while female were 474 (52.7%). Respondents within the age brackets of 10 and 15 years of age were 334 (37.1%) while those between 16 and 20 years were 566 (62.9%). Five hundred and thirty (530, 58.9%) were Christian while remain three hundred and seventy (370, 41.1%) were Muslim.

**Table 2: Perception of Male and Female Students about their Career Concern**

S/N	Statement	Strongly Agree (SA)	Agree (A)	Disagree (D)	Strongly Disagree (SD)	Mean	Remarks
		Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)		
1	My Physical ability may greatly influence my career choice	135 (15.0)	181 (20.1)	322 (35.8)	262(29.1)	2.21	Disagree
2	I know what I want my career to be, but it doesn't feel like a realistic goal	268 (29.8)	316 (35.1)	180 (20.0)	136 (15.1)	2.80	Agree
3	I feel like the only one who does not have a career plan	268 (29.8)	322 (35.8)	180 (20.0)	130 (14.4)	2.81	Agree
4	I tend to be a person who gives up easily	120 (13.3)	527 (58.6)	12 (1.3)	241 (26.8)	2.58	Agree
5	My age may influence my career choice	40 (4.4)	259 (28.8)	476 (52.9)	125 (13.9)	2.24	Disagree
6	I don't have idea of what i want in life	134 (14.9)	193 (21.4)	311 (34.6)	262 (29.1)	2.22	Disagree
7	I have difficult completing things	140 (15.6)	527 (58.6)	12 (1.3)	221 (24.6)	2.65	Agree
8	I am afraid of making mistake	476 (52.9)	263(29.2)	41 (4.6)	120 (13.3)	3.22	Agree
9	My gender may influence my career choice	120 (13.3)	217 (24.1)	334 (37.1)	229 (25.4)	2.25	Disagree
10	My race may greatly influence my career choice	117 (13.0)	181 (20.1)	322 (35.8)	280 (31.1)	2.15	Disagree
11	I have lot of interests, but I do not know how to narrow them down	119 (13.2)	265 (29.4)	476 (52.9)	40 (4.4)	2.51	Agree

The analysed data in table 2 shows the extent of career concern among secondary school students. It shows that 35% agreed that their physical ability may greatly influence their career choice, 65% know what they want their career to be, but it doesn't feel like a realistic goal, also 65% feel like the

only one who does not have a career plan, 72% tend to be a person who gives up easily, while just 32% agreed that their age may influence their career choice, 36% do not have idea of what they want in life, 74% have difficult completing things, 82% are afraid of making mistake while 37% agreed that their gender may influence their career choice, 33% agreed that their race may greatly influence their career choice and 42% agreed to have lot of interests, but do not know how to narrow their interest down.

**Table 3: Need for Career Counselling among Secondary School Students**

S/N	Statement	Strongly Agree (SA)	Agree (A)	Disagree (D)	Strongly Disagree (SD)	Mean	Remarks
		Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)		
1	I am afraid of making a serious mistake with my career choice	122 (13.6)	532 (59.1)	12 (1.3)	234 (26.0)	2.60	<b>Agree</b>
2	I do not feel confident that I know in which areas my true interest lie	351 (39.0)	260 (28.9)	173(19.2)	116 (12.9)	2.94	<b>Agree</b>
3	I feel uneasy with the responsibility for making a good career choice	334(37.1)	215 (23.9)	125 (13.9)	226 (25.1)	2.73	<b>Agree</b>
4	I lack information about my skills, interests, needs and values with regard to my career choice	126 (14.0)	527 (58.6)	12 (1.3)	235 (26.1)	2.60	<b>Agree</b>
5	I lack knowledge about world of work and what it has to offer me.	471 (52.3)	259 (28.8)	55 (6.1)	115 (12.8)	3.21	<b>Agree</b>
6	I have great difficulty making most decisions about my life	332 (36.9)	213 (23.7)	131 (14.6)	224 (24.9)	2.75	<b>Agree</b>
7	I have be unable to see a connection between my college work and a possible career	330 (36.7)	213 (23.7)	152 (16.9)	205 (22.8)	2.74	<b>Agree</b>
8	My religious values may greatly influence my career choice	105 (11.7)	157 (17.4)	378 (42.1)	259 (28.8)	2.12	<b>Disagree</b>
9	I do not real know what is require from a career for me to feel satisfy	329 (36.6)	217 (24.1)	144 (16.0)	210 (23.3)	2.74	<b>Agree</b>
10	I feel that problem in my personal life are hindering me from making a great career choice.	322 (35.8)	178 (19.8)	130 (14.4)	270 (30.0)	2.61	<b>Agree</b>

Table 3 contains the analyses of data about the opinion of secondary school students about the need for career counselling in their respective schools. It shows that 73% are afraid of making a serious mistake with their career choice, 68% also do not feel confident that they know in which areas their true interest lie, 70% feel uneasy with the responsibility for making a good career choice, about 73% lacks information about their skills, interests, needs and values with regard to their career choice, while 81% lacks knowledge about world of work and what it has to offer them. 60% have great difficulty making most decisions about their life; also 60% were unable to see a connection between their secondary school work and a possible career, just 29% agreed that their religious values may greatly influence their career choice while about 61% do not real know what is require from a career for them to feel satisfy and 55% feel that problem in their personal life can hindering them from making a great career choice.

**Table 4: There is no significant difference due to gender in the opinion of students about their career concerns.**

Factors	Category	N	SD	Mean	df	P	t-cal	t-crit	Remarks
Career Concern	Male	426	6.05	25.45	898	0.05	0.641	1.96	H <sub>0</sub> Accepted
	Female	474	5.87	25.20					

The first hypothesis stated that there is no significant difference due to gender in the opinion of students about their career concerns. The result as shown below gave a t-calculated value of 0.641. The corresponding critical value is 1.96 at 0.05 levels of significant and 898 degrees of freedom. Since the critical value is greater, the null hypothesis was accepted. This implies that there is no significant difference in the opinion of male and female students about their career concern.

**Table 5: There is no significant difference in the opinion of Christian and Muslim students about needs for effective career counselling.**

Factors	Category	N	SD	Mean	df	P	t-cal	t-crit	Remarks
Need for Career Counselling	Christian	530	6.53	23.62	898	0.05	1.878	1.96	H <sub>0</sub> Accepted
	Muslim	370	6.29	22.80					

The second hypothesis stated that there is no significant difference in the opinion of Christian and Muslim students about need for effective Career Counselling. The result as shown below gave a t-calculated value of 1.878. The corresponding critical value is 1.96 at 0.05 levels of significant and 898 degrees of freedom. Since the critical value is greater, the null hypothesis was accepted. This implies that there is no significant difference in the opinion of Christian and Muslim students on need for career counselling.

### Discussion of Findings

As regards the answer of the research questions, it was established through the study that setting a realistic goal is a major problem. This implies that for an effective change there should be a collective learning to change students perceptions about the purpose and role of education towards a system based and sustainability oriented paradigm (UNESCO, 2002). Since career counselling is an integral part of education program, its major goal is establishing realistic career goals and deciding what criteria may be desirable in attaining the set goals. The study reveals further that giving up easily, having difficulty in completing things, being afraid of making mistakes, and not knowing how to narrow down interest are the major concerns of the participants about their career. The observation corroborates the report of the National Career Development Association (1993) that the

vital foundation of career development is to increase self-understanding of their abilities, interest, values and goals, and making informed decisions. The finding indicates that education alone cannot bring a creative, competitive economy without career counselling and prepare student for better tomorrow.

In line with this is the finding of Adomeh and Ojugo (2013) that career is defined to assist individuals to identify their interest, abilities, develop the capacities to continue to learn and profit from work. Their study also indicated that career counselling in Nigeria has to be seen as an aspect of education and training which helps the individual to develop the fullest capacity their potentialities in order to utilize their capacities for the benefit of the society.

On whether physical ability may greatly influence career choice or not majority of the participants disagree with it, this is contrary to the findings of Ayannuga (2008) that ability refers to one's own physical and mental power or skills needed to cope with a career and that ability should influence a person's career. This result could be due to the fact that 99% of the participants are normal students and not the disabled students who may physically need some assistance before they can perform well.

The findings of research question two is in agreement with the findings of Vernon (2008) that career counselling was created to meet the needs of society during transitional period of change. Oye et al (2012) finding shows that the essence of incorporating guidance and counselling into the school system was to eliminate overwhelming ignorance of many young people on their choices of career prospects and personality maladjustment among school children. It becomes very glaring that there is need for career counselling in secondary schools. When student make use of career counselling in schools, there will be a well-defined educational system that would be instrumental in affecting national development.

Among other things, The study reveals that there is no significant difference in the opinion of male and female students about their career concern, despite the fact that gender stereotyping promotes the believe that women should be traditionally feminine and men are to be traditionally masculine. This may be due to the fact that women in this generation believe that whatever a man can do a woman can do it better. This is in line with Vernon (2008) that women are re-arranging their career priorities-planning for a lifelong career in a wide range of occupation has becoming the highest priority for many.

Another outcome of this study also reveals that there is no significant difference in the opinion of Christian and Muslim students about need for career counselling, this means that their religious value will not influence their career choice. This is contrary to general believe in Nigeria that your religion may ban you in taking up some job.

## **Conclusion**

The first purpose of this study was to find out if secondary school students show any concern about their career concern. Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that gender notwithstanding, all the students shows concern about their career. It can be concluded further that both male and female students agreed that gender, race and physical abilities may not influence their career choice.

Another purpose of the study was to determine the need for career counselling among secondary school students. Based on the result of this study it was concluded that majority of the participants are afraid of making mistake with their career choice, not having confident in which areas their true interest in, lack of information about their skills, interest, needs and value with regard to career choice is an indication that there is need for career counselling in our schools.



It was also concluded that religious values should not be allowed to influence career choice. If student's religion affects their career choice, it will affect their relationship with other students and society at large. Therefore to transform education for a creative, competitive, and sustainable economy, to reduce the stress, anxiety, depression, and all other maladaptive behaviour as a result of wrong career choice and unemployment. Career counselling is essential because it will equip the students with the knowledge, attitude behaviour and skills required in the performance at the labour market, to create competitive and sustainable economic development.

### Recommendation

Arising from the findings of the study, the researchers therefore recommend the following:

- Effective career counselling should be promoted in our secondary schools to bring changes in the attitude and behaviours of students concerning their career.
- Government policies should be made flexible to encourage career counselling for education to be creative, competitive and sustain the economy.
- Counsellors should be sponsored for retraining programs to update their knowledge on general counselling and specifically on career education so as to give the students current information needed to pursue their career.

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