

Career Awareness and Mentoring for Youth Integration in a Recessed Economy

Muhammad Sani Umar Kulumbu

School of Languages

A.D. Rufa'i College for Legal and Islamic Studies, Misau

Bauchi State, Nigeria

kulumbuinc@yahoo.com, sumarkulumbu@gmail.com

Abstract

Command aspect of communication is highly regarded as an important aspect to be considered in creating awareness. Hence, this paper attempts to advocate the use of effective language in creating awareness to youth through mentoring method. Unemployment of youth in Nigeria is greatly on alarming stage in this period of recession. Most schools supplied students with inadequate career orientation, awareness and information that could help in skill-oriented for vocational skills. The study examines the impact of career awareness, mentoring and vocational skills acquisition for youth integration in a depressed economy. The paper explains the concept of career awareness and mentoring, and highlights the importance of career awareness, mentoring and vocational skills, It also recommends proper use of language in imparting information and vocational skills to enrich educational policy makers for preparing youth to live in the new economic dispensation. Counselling service is also needed to mentor youth in both school and non-school settings through seminars, symposiums and conferences.

Keywords: Career awareness, language, mentoring, youth and integration.

Introduction

The prime aim in effective language use is to express and establish cordial relation in communication between two parties. Ipaye (1983) stated that communication is concerned with the operation of human minds as reflected in its interaction with self, with others and within objects and actions in the outside world. Effective application of communication skills in career talks is the basics for creating awareness among the youth in every aspect of educational discussion.

Nigerian society is often surrounded with cases of economic and political uncertainty due to religious and ethnic intolerance, terrorism, insurgency, armed robbery and kidnapping among others. An average Nigerian youth is faced with these kinds of daily challenges that undermine his/her opportunities for academic success, career awareness and development. It is with the understanding that

limitations such as lack of educational and career psychologist in schools, parental career stereotype owing to limited exposure led youth to depressive conditions (Usman, 2012).

National Population Commission (2018) shows that more than half of the estimated 198 million Nigerians are youths. Usman (2012) stated that youths are confronted or gasping with the realities of poverty, unemployment, diseases and conflict. Nigeria spent billions of naira on different projects yet the youth remain poor, hungry and depressed. Federal, state and local governments' revenues declined at the same time demand of public services went upwards. Spending particularly on vital services has been slashed tremendously. Tertiary institutions are frequently graduating young professionals that government has no resources to employ. Therefore, career awareness and mentoring youth into vocational skills would enhance and improve self-efficacy, belief and independence.

Since depression and mentoring are important terms used in the paper, it is pertinent to explain them as follows:

Depression: Mental or moral disorder that is characterized by prolonged feeling of extreme sadness or despair that interferes with activities of daily living such as working, eating or sleeping (Spencer, 2004). It is a state of feeling helpless and hopeless as the aspect of good governance, implementation of goals of sustainable education, continuous policy formation and Stakeholder's responsibilities are rarely fulfilled.

Mentoring: The term mentoring refers to a system in which an individual provides intellectual, moral and social supports and assistance for another person perceived to be in need of these things (Spencer, 2004). The sole aim of mentoring is for the mentor to assist in achieving social and emotional stability to the youths as well as making appropriate career selection adjustment. It is a tool for positive youth integration into Nigerian economy.

Types of Mentoring

Mentoring is a positive tool which would lead to adjustment and promote the ability to cope with everyday challenges as experienced by individual. Mentoring has three distinct streams as opined by Rhodes (2002). These are the youth mentoring, academic mentoring and career mentoring.

Youth Mentoring: Youth mentoring is a relationship between a caring, supportive adult and child or adolescent; youth mentoring helps to enhance personal, emotional, cognitive and psychological development among youth. This is achieved by the development of social skills, personal self-identity and self-worth, as well as anger management.

Academic Mentoring: Academic mentoring is the apprentice system of education where a teacher imparts knowledge, provides supports and offers guidance to students on academics and moral issues. Academic mentoring would facilitate socio-psychological adjustment and foster a sense of professional identity among students owing to the exposure experience it provides.

Career Mentoring occurs within an organizational setting with focus on personal and professional growth of the project. It assists in building career awareness or identity of individuals who are in particular profession.

In all the streams mentioned above are socio-psychological supports. Furthermore, mentoring enhances social, cognitive, emotional and psychological well being and career focus among youth, which greatly serve as preventive measure of crime, unemployment, while improving national stability and self-reliance. This paper has its focus on career awareness and mentoring as a socio-psychological tool for youth integration in a recessed/depressed economy.

Language Usage in Career Discussion

The use of language intelligibly is a major attribute that differentiates man from other animals. Fromkin, Rodman and Hyam (2003) stated that language is the essential feature that distinguishes human from other species and regarded as a purely human and non-instinctive way of conveying ideas, emotions and desires. Therefore, inappropriate use of communication methods in mentoring will jeopardize the essence of creating awareness to the target audience. There has to be a sound knowledge of communication skills that will help in mentoring the youth into brighter future in the society.

Career Awareness and Mentoring for Youth Integration

The term career awareness and mentoring youth integration refers to the socio-psychological support and enlightenment training an older or more experienced individual who is an established professional or a counselling psychologist gives a youth who has little or no knowledge about available careers, the careers merits and the challenges involved. This process of transferring of ideas and experience which defines career mentoring makes it a system of semi-structured guidance where one person shares knowledge, skills and experience to assist youth progress in academics, lives and careers (University of Cambridge, 2012). What this means is that, career mentoring would assist the youth prepare for the next step of career training with adequate knowledge and understanding of careers after secondary school. It is believed that this preparedness through practical mentoring exposure and understanding will promote confidence, self-belief and motivate the youth for

academic success in order to become skilled and qualified professional with the intention of adding value to their chosen career.

Scope of Career Information Awareness

Career information includes currents, accurate, usable materials related to the world of work. Career Information is used in lieu of the more frequently encountered term Occupational Information, which sometimes interpreted as excluding the material related to the preparation process of entrance into work and concentrates instead upon the job itself. Occupational information is a means to an end, the end being occupational choice, selection, preparation, placement and adjustment. A happy life for youth depends on the choice of a suitable career. Theory of vocational development is useful in this regard.

Vocational skills according to Spencer, (2004) are:-

- People differ in abilities, interest and personalities.
- Individuals are qualified by virtue of their characteristics for a number of occupations.
- Each of these occupations requires a characteristic pattern of abilities, interests and personality traits, with tolerance wide enough.
- Vocational preferences and competences, the situation in which people live and work, and hence their self concepts change with time and experience making choice and adjustment as a continuous process.
- The process may be summed up in a series of life stage characterized as those of growth, exploration, established maintenance and decline, and these stages may in turn be subdivided into:-
 - a. The fantasy, tentative and realistic phase of the exploratory stage.
 - b. Trial and stable phase of the establishment stage.
 - c. The nature of the career pattern is determined by the individuals' parental socio-economic level, mental ability, and personality characteristics and the opportunity to which he is exposed.
 - d. Development through the life stages can be guided, partly by facilitating the process of maturation of abilities and interests and partly aiding in reality testing and in the development of the self-concept.
 - e. The process of vocational development is essentially that of developing and implementing a self-concept.
 - f. The process of compromise between individual and social factors, between self-concept and reality.
 - g. Work satisfaction and life satisfaction depend upon the extent to which the individual finds adequate outlets for his/her abilities, interests, personality traits, and value.

In view of this, youth exposed to effective and appropriate career mentoring would have enhanced self-efficiency belief and can make meaning out of their career aspirations influencing their level of determination to become achievers. Of importance also is the fact that youth with natural and volunteer mentors have found to be more likely to graduate from high school and attend college (Klaw, Fitzgerald & Rhodes, 2003) and less likely to take part in delinquent problem behaviours.

Approaches in Career Awareness and Mentoring

The approaches to mentoring as cited by Jekielek, et al (2002) in Keller, Liang and Noam (2006) includes the following:

School Based: Under this system, the mentor meets with the students in the school and facilitates school work and career training while serving as a supportive role-model. Activities he/she develops with the students may also include games, crafts or things that do not take an academic form.

Community-based: In this setting, a mentor meets youth in the community such as church, community facility, or by inviting the youth to community events. This allows for culture-based mentoring which could be in individual form as against community based. For instance, there are some communities in Nigeria that an open form of mentoring with an individual who shares a common belief or ethnic background is the only option that would be considered.

Individual: This is a one-on-one setting where there is one mentor who would repeatedly meets with the same youth for the duration of the programme. These partnerships can be found in both community and school-based programmes. Individual mentor relationships or mixed with some group meetings could be more effective than solely group mentoring, as the youth understands and accepts the fact that the mentor is making a huge lot of sacrifice to provide the needed support and assistance for him/her. That is, this form of mentoring carries a much more personal touch than the group mentoring.

Group: Small Group mentoring can be beneficial in places where there is a shortage of mentors; youth would be able to learn collectively in a group setting. It is especially useful when the focus is to encourage future success of the individual by bringing in successful professionals as mentors.

Stages in the Career Awareness and Mentoring Relationships

According to Keller (2005), there are some important stages in the development of the mentoring relationships. These stages include:

- **Anticipating and preparing for the impending relationship:** At this stage the youth is informed of the programme, as well as the aim and objective of the programme. In the same vein, professionals in various fields are

chosen as career mentors. Their support and responsibilities in assisting the youth are highlighted.

- Initiating the relationship and becoming acquainted: A date is fixed to start off the program with the initial day being in form of introduction of the career mentors and youth to one another. This is all done with the aim of building familiarity and trust between the career mentors and the youth who are going to be their mentees.
- Growing close and sustaining the relationship by negotiating roles, establishing patterns of communication and developing familiar routines: At this stage, a contractual agreement would include knowing that career mentoring is a team work and should be done, understanding that the programme is a serious business and should be treated as such, not skipping on fixed appointments without prior excuse and the duration the mentoring relationship is expected to last.
- Eventually contending with the decline or dissolution of the relationship: At this final stage, a career mentoring pattern has been established and the career mentor and mentee can confidently claim that the relationship has been successful or conclude between the two of them that the career is not a suitable fit for the youth who is the mentee.

Importance of Career Awareness and Mentoring

Kennelly and Monrad (2007) highlight some importance of career awareness and mentoring as follows:

- Career mentoring would provide adequate integration and career awareness. The introduction of career mentoring in schools will challenge students to desire academic excellence and prepare them effectively in making the right career selection. In so doing, it makes transition from classroom learning to practice and life skill easy.
- It provides effective hands-on professional skills that would make the youth career training and practice effective. Youth who are mentored benefits from exposure to practical aspect of their careers and can easily develop good social skills and understand that there would be career challenges but are already prepared to manage it independently.
- Career mentoring provides a sense of belonging improve youth- self-concept, identity and self-efficacy belief thereby motivating them to develop a resiliency for success.
- Career mentoring would boost the present vocational and entrepreneurial training inclusive in the senior secondary schools curriculum.
- Also, the practical experiences the mentors share with the students would assist in improving classroom learning as what take place during teaching

and learning can be related to daily interactions and knowledge gained from these mentors.

- In addition, career mentoring assists youth in building a beneficial social network and professional group. This means that some of the career mentors may maintain the relationship developed with the youth they had mentored and might be useful in securing the mentees employment or establishing them professionally.

Conclusion

On the whole communication is seen as social interaction through messages in its own way while career awareness and mentoring as tools for youth integration in a depressed economy emphasized on creating career awareness and mentoring youth on vocational skill acquisition for capacity building into entrepreneurship. This article believes that effective career awareness and mentoring youth empowerment through various means of counselling as the basis and vocational capacity to engage them into vocational and skill building strategies for self-employment. Mentoring youth on vocational and skill acquisition will prepare them to face the present and future challenges of unemployment and assist them to live a more productive and satisfying life in the society.

Suggestions

From the foregoing, the paper therefore, suggests the following:

1. Career specialists and mentoring professionals should do their best to accomplish the aim of education by engaging gainful activities in career selection that will make youth self employed instead of looking for white-collar jobs.
2. General attitude of some parents on restricting their children on certain professions like medicine and engineering as science students should be discouraged.
3. Parents should seek information on various careers and share the information with their children to widen their career horizon.
4. Guidance Counsellors should be organizing group counselling for youths both at school and non-school setting. This could be done through workshops, seminars, conferences and symposium. By so doing, youth could be enlightened on various aspects of life with more emphasis on entrepreneurship educational skills.
5. School administrators and educational policymakers should develop a curriculum that will not restrict students on various options available in vocational courses.

6. The Nigerian government at federal, state and local levels should put effective educational policies that embrace practical teaching and should be appropriately implemented by teachers and all those that are involved in the policy implementation.

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