



**Vocational Guidance: A nexus for Career Choice and Employment of Secondary School Students in Imo State**

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**Abstract**

*The world of work faces continual changes and secondary school students in Nigeria maybe shortchanged if not adequately prepared. In the light of the above, this study sought to investigate the role of vocational guidance on career choice and employment of secondary school students in Imo State. The descriptive research design as adopted for the study and a study of a related literature, two research questions were answered and two hypotheses, the instrument were validated and reliability coefficient of 0.80, and 0.84, were obtained at 0.05 level of significance. The entire population of business study teachers in 469 public secondary school in Imo State were studied. Hence, there was no need for samples he researchers, constructed a 21-item questionnaire titled Vocational Guidance, Career Choice and Career Employment questionnaire (VGCCEQ). Five research assistance assisted the researcher in administering the questionnaires. The data collected for the study was analyzed. Findings of the study showed succinctly that vocational guidance play roles in senior secondary school career choice and career employment. It was therefore recommended that vocational guidance should be properly implemented in secondary school to aid student make choices of career that can enable them to be gainfully employed after secondary education or higher education.*

**Keywords:** vocational guidance, career choice, career employment

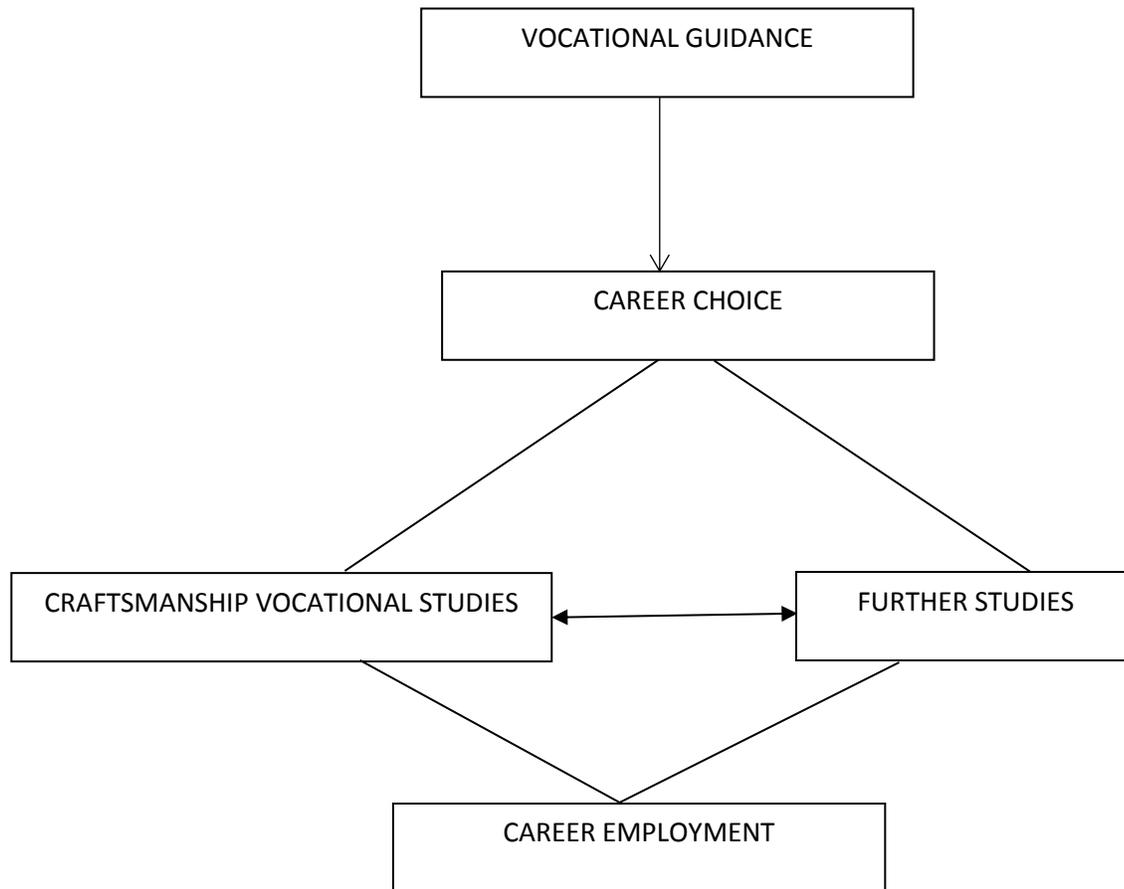
**Introduction**

The roles or functions of vocational guidance with respect to career preparation of secondary school students cannot be overemphasized. For the purpose of the present study, the roles or functions of vocational guidance in career preparation of secondary school students are reviewed in clusters of vocational guidance and career choice, and career employment. A career includes all types of employment ranging from semi-skilled through skilled and semi-professional to professional. Dimensions have been altered in the 21<sup>st</sup> century changes or modifications in employment occur during the foreseeable future. Career guidance can assist in the maximum development of professional potential of people in accordance with their aspirations, abilities; reduce academic dropout and transition of young people between different educational levels. At



the long run employability is facilitated. The situation was not like this, in the 1970's where secondary school graduates could easily gain employment, take to craftsmanship or opt to further education

The conceptual framework for this study is illustrated with the diagram below:



**Figure 1.** Conceptual framework of vocational guidance (Ebenezer-Nwokeji 2022)

### **Business Subject Teachers**

Business subject teachers according to Emeh and Enukeoha (2011) refer to those required to transmit knowledge and skills in business and office procedures to learners. They direct the affairs of the class in order to bring about the desired change and goals. For the purpose of the present study, a business subject teacher is ne who in addition to being vast in terms of knowledge of principles of teaching and learning business skills and knowledge, should be able to provide vocational guidance to students.



## **Vocational Guidance and Career Choice**

Career choice is a significant issue in the developmental life of youths because it is reported to be associated with positive as well as harmful psychological, physical and socio-economic inequalities that persist well beyond the youthful age into an individual's adult life (Robertson, 2014). The complexity of career decision-making increases as age increases (Gati & Saka, 2011). Secondary school students are more likely to offer answers about their ideal careers which may represent their envisioned utopia and phenomenal perceptions about what they want to do when they grow up (Howard & Walsh, 2011). As students get older and advance in age, they become more likely to describe their career choice as a dynamic interplay of their developmental stages and the prevailing environmental circumstances (Howard & Walsh, 2011). Students career decision-making is required to go through a process of understanding by defining what they want to do and exploring a variety of career options with the aid of guidance and planning Proper handling of the process affirms individual identity and fosters wellbeing, job satisfaction and stability (Kunnen, 2013)

Vocational guidance does not stop there because many other considerations are made when deciding on a career direction such as the type and number of years of education, salary and working conditions, which foster attitudes, beliefs and competencies that facilitates mastery of vocational development tests, and the ability to plan and adapt to work. Ogundele and Feyisetan, (2014) opined that 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 financial capability. Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, and Pastorelli (2010) on their part submitted that each individual making career choice is influenced by several factors including the context in which they live in, their personal aptitudes, social contacts and educational attainment. Ginzberg in Ogundele, and Feyisetan, affirmed that factors influencing career choice can either be intrinsic or extrinsic or both. The author stated that most people are influenced by careers that their parents favour while others follow the careers that their educational choices have opened for them.

According to Benson in Nguyen (2013), the main objective of vocational guidance is to help many more students obtain much higher standard of academic proficiency and also to gain a considerable level of occupational proficiency such that they enter easily and quickly into productive, rewarding and interesting careers. Vocational choices preparation focuses specifically on issues related to the world of work.

According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013), vocational training and development of students is designed to ensure acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific



knowledge to solve problems in society. Vocational and technical education play tremendous role in reshaping the lives of youths because it remolds their lives to be useful to themselves and the society where they live, guide them to reduce juvenile delinquency and wrong choices of careers, help them to shun crime if not totally eradicated and reduce unemployment rate in the nation. The relevant occupational skills acquired through vocational education can bring about job creation, self-employment, which in return, reduces the rate of crime, kidnapping, human trafficking, poverty and corruption in Nigeria (Ochong, 2013).

In view of this, vocational guidance is considered to be a vital part of education as it gives direction to the kind of job/employment to venture into. As a career counselor, one is able to detect the strength and weaknesses of an individual. In today's world of rapid technological and economic change, uncertainty about skill requirements in the workplace and abundant learning and vocational paths, vocational planning is more difficult than ever. Nevertheless, where youths have the relevant skills that match their interests and abilities, they tend to have saleable professions. The essence of career guidance among youths cannot be undermined because according to Kerker (2010), (a) it will help youths to develop knowledge and skills they need to determine a career path, (b) youths can make informed decisions in developing careers through the study of various occupation tools that will facilitate learning through hands-on training in conjunction with academic subjects and (c) career education will provide a means of developing the youths' knowledge, understanding and experience of opportunities in education, training and employment.

Gesinde in Ogundele and Feyisetan, (2014) submitted that when students are exposed to different careers in their early lives which arouse their curiosity and interest. By so doing, it can facilitate:

- (i) inviting professional experts and business people to address youths on job opportunities that are available;
- (ii) assigning activities to explore their talents in future careers;
- (iii) matching individual personalities and considering how they fit particular careers with their make-ups which involve their temperament;
- (iv) considering socio-economic and ethnic values of the community and how they relate to careers in the community where they live; and
- (v) inviting male and female role models in different fields to address youths of different gender (Gesinde in Ogundele, & Feyisetan, 2014).

The importance of vocational guidance in the life of students cannot be overemphasized especially in this 21st century where technology is taking the lead. Ogundele and Feyisetan (2014) agreed that some of such importance of vocational guidance include the fact as it is arranged



- (a) It helps students to understand the problems of unemployment and its causes.
- (b) It empowers students to understand the process of making choices and the possible consequences of their decision. (i) It enables students to acquire knowledge of the practical procedures needed for getting jobs and progressing in them.

According to Ochong (2013) affirmed that vocational guidance helps to prepare students for specific careers at various levels of work and to prepare them for future so that they can be useful to themselves and the society where they belong.

### **Vocational Guidance and Career Employment**

Vocational guidance is intended to aid young people to choose an occupation, prepare them for it, find an opening in it and build up a career of efficiency and success. Kochhar (2013) noted that in addition to the role vocational guidance plays in career employment of graduates of secondary schools it helps students to know themselves. (Santilli, 2017), Marilyn (2018) held that employability is all about being capable of getting and keeping work done as required. According to the author, employability is the capacity to deploy self-sufficiently within the labour market to realize potentials through sustainable employment. Employability consists of four important elements- a person's employability assets which consists of knowledge, skills and attitudes; deployment which includes career management skills and job search skills; presentation which is concerned with job getting skills, (for example CV writing, work experience and interview techniques) and finally, a person's ability to make the most of his employability assets, A lot depends on a person's circumstances (for example family responsibilities) and external factors (for example the current level of opportunity within the labor market), employability of competencies such as ability, aptitude and qualities developed in context that can be applied to an occupation or career are also personal skills.

The competencies in soft skills needed by students can be acquired not only through teaching and learning process in training institutions but also through career counseling and vocational guidance. The skills help the graduates to be competitive and valuable in the labour market (Anindo & Matula, 2016).The job market now expects that trainees should have know-how about the skills before taking proper admission in the institute.

Vocational guidance is interlinked with employability of graduates. To gain the out- of-school graduates, employers are joining hands with universities and training institutes in developed countries to train and equipped students to meet the needs and expectations of employers upon graduation. These developed countries are arranging seminars, workshops and industrial tours for students to gain awareness about the work place (Seung, 2014). This idea of industry and school partnership is vaguely implemented in most educational institutions of both governmental and non-governmental set up in developing countries. It is noteworthy that training institutes need to



provide career counseling and vocational guidance services to their students to be adequately equipped with employability skills.

(Aluko & Aluko, 2012). The concept of career counseling and vocational guidance is critical for students in secondary schools.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Principally, preparation of student's early bed because adolescents have a challenge in making the right choice. They have two major choices attached to education before them; In what area to continue schooling and Filling job gap either as an employee or self-employed. At this time, technological industrial develops social and economic demands have created a problem shift in the world of work. Training for a career may entail preparing for series of job. Okonkwo (2011) shows that in Nigeria, students lack adequate vocational guidance before they enter into occupations such that concern themselves with reading courses with or without due regards to the marketability and employment of the graduates in the field. One of the contributing factors to unemployment and underemployment is choice of career among school leavers. it is on this premise that the study seeks to probe on why schools and government policies are not able to guide secondary school students make choice in subject which are relevant in filling existing employment gaps either as entrepreneurs or employees.

Plant (2012) emphasized that awareness of different study options can prevent early school dropouts which social exclusion of individuals and poor employment trends.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of the study is to ascertain a nexus for vocational guidance in career preparation of senior secondary school students in Imo State.

Specifically, the study determines the rating of business subject teachers on the role of vocational guidance in:

1. Career choice of senior secondary school students in Imo State.
2. Career employment of senior secondary school students in Imo State

## **Research Questions**

The study was guided by the following research questions. In the rating of business subject teachers:

1. What are the roles vocational guidance on career choice of senior secondary school students in Imo State?



2. What are the roles of vocational guidance on career employment of senior secondary school students in Imo State?

### **Null Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. Business subject teachers do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the roles of vocational guidance on career preparation of senior secondary school students in Imo State on the basis of gender.
2. Business subject teachers do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the roles of vocational guidance on career choice and career employment of senior secondary school students in Imo State on the basis of teaching experience.

### **Methodology**

This study adopted descriptive survey design to identify vocational guidance on the career choice and career employment of secondary schools' students in Imo State. The population comprises 909 Business subject teachers in all the 469 public secondary schools in Imo State whose responses were received. The entire population was studied since the size was manageable. Thus, no sampling was done. The study utilized a structure questionnaire titled "Vocational guidance and career preparation questionnaire (VGCPQ) developed by the researchers as instrument for data collection. The instrument consists of two parts; A and B. Part A contains two items on respondents' demographic data while Part B has two sections of B1 to B2, with career choice and career employment forming a total of 20 items. It was structured on a 4-point rating scale of strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). 909 questionnaires administered were returned. The research instrument was face-validated by two experts in business education from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, and one expert in measurement and evaluation from Imo State University, Owerri. Copies of the questionnaire were administered for the purpose of obtaining the internal consistency of the instrument, Cronbach Alpha method for establishing a reliability coefficient was used. The result of the analysis yielded co-efficient 0.80, and 0.84, B1 and B2 respectively.

The researcher administered 994 questionnaires with the aid of five assistants but retrieved 909. The mean and standard deviation were used to analyze data for the research questions while T-test was used to test the hypothesis raised at 0.05 level of significance.

**Research Question 1:** What are the roles of vocational guidance on career choice of senior secondary school students in Imo State?



**Table 1:** Mean and Standard Deviation of Business Teachers Ratings on the Roles of Vocational Guidance in Career Choice

SN	Vocational Guidance in Career Choice	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	Choose occupations that match their behavioural personality traits	3.91	.314	Agree
2	Understand the demands and requirements for entry advancement in vocational careers	3.31	.505	Agree
3	Maintain focus and direction in their students life pursuit	3.63	.538	Agree
4	Ensure that energy limited resources are properly channeled to right areas that will guarantee vocational success	3.47	.540	Agree
5	Obtain greater insight in-depth knowledge of their chosen area of study	3.56	.553	Agree
6	Handle peer pressure influence in the choice of vocational career	3.39	.534	Agree
7	Understand, relevant facts about occupational world	3.48	.564	Agree
8	Accept integrated picture of oneself role in the world of work	3.39	.541	Agree
9	Understand vital factors forces for an informed career choice	3.50	.572	Agree
10	Understand the survival trend in the career world	3.39	.582	Agree
	Aggregate	3.50	.183	Agree

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of business subject teachers' ratings on the role of vocational guidance in career choice of senior secondary school students.. The Table shows that the mean ratings for the 10 items are roles of vocational guidance career choice ranges from 3.31 to 3.91, while the standard deviation range from .455 to .705. The teachers' mean ratings reveal that they agreed that the 10 items are the roles of vocational guidance on career choice of senior secondary school students. The relatively low aggregated standard indicates that there is relative homogeneity in the mean responses of the teachers. From the table, the aggregate mean ratings of 3.50 reveals that vocational guidance plays roles in senior secondary school students' career choice.

**Research Question 2:** What are the roles of vocational guidance on career employment of senior secondary school students in Imo State?



**Table 2:** Mean and Standard Deviation of Business Teachers Responses on the Roles of Vocational Guidance on Career Employment

SN Vocational Guidance on Career Employment	Mean	SD	Remarks
11 Easily secure job placement that match their abilities	3.68	.484	Agree
12 Be familiar with employment situation in the society	3.29	.483	Agree
13 Keep up-to-date on best methods to use when searching for job	3.44	.550	Agree
14 Understand occupational job requirements	3.29	.485	Agree
15 Follow job specification for good performance	3.45	.558	Agree
16 Maintain office interpersonal relation skills	3.32	.532	Agree
17 Improve their life and general economy through vocational skills and practices	3.45	.568	Agree
18 Increase capacity development and improve performance	3.33	.525	Agree
19 Obtain greater job satisfaction as a result of effective performance and quality service delivery	3.43	.569	Agree
20 Enjoy progressive career growth and advancement with much struggle	3.34	.559	Agree
<b>Aggregate</b>	<b>3.40</b>	<b>.277</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Table 2 depicted the mean and standard deviation of business subject teachers' responses on the role of vocational guidance on career employment of senior secondary school students.. The table shows that the mean responses for the 10 items on career employment ranges from 3.29 to 3.68, while the standard deviation range from .483 to .569. The teachers' mean responses reveal that they agreed that the 10 items are a nexus for vocational guidance on career employment of senior secondary school students? The relative low aggregated standard indicates that there is relative homogeneity in the mean responses of the teachers. From the table, the aggregate mean responses of 3.40 reveals that vocational guidance plays roles on senior secondary school students' career employment.

**Null Hypothesis 1:** Business subject teachers do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the roles of the vocational guidance in career choice of senior secondary school students in Imo State on the basis of gender.

**Table 3:** t-test Summary of Business Teachers Ratings on the Roles of Vocational Guidance on Career Choice based on Gender Difference

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	p-value	Decision
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Male	393	3.53	.192	907	3.775	.000	S
Female	516	3.48	.174				

Note. S = significant, SD = standard deviation

Data in Table3 presents the t-test on the difference between the mean ratings of male and female business subject teachers as regards the roles of vocational guidance in the career choice of senior secondary school students. The aggregate mean ratings of male and female teachers are 3.53 and 3.48 respectively; while the corresponding standard deviations are .192 and .172. Testing at 0.05 level of significance, the difference between the mean ratings of male and female business subject teachers on the roles of vocational guidance in the career choice is significant ( $t = 3.775, p = .000 < .05$ ). Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, business subject teachers differ significantly in their mean ratings on the roles of the vocational guidance on career choice of senior secondary school students in Imo State on the basis of gender.

**Null Hypothesis 2:** Business subject teachers do not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the roles of the vocational guidance in career employment of senior secondary school students in Imo State on the basis of gender.

**Table 4:** The t-test Summary of Business Teachers Ratings on the Roles of Vocational Guidance in Career Employment based on Gender Difference

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	p-value	Decision
Male	393	3.36	.306	907	- 4.111	.000	S
Female	516	3.43	.248				

Note. S = significant, SD = standard deviation

Table 4 showed the t-test on the difference between the mean ratings of male and female business subject teachers as regards the roles of vocational guidance on the career employment of senior secondary school students. The aggregate mean ratings of the male and female teachers are 3.36 and 3.43 respectively; while the corresponding standard deviations are .306 and .248. Testing at 0.05 level of significance, the difference between the mean ratings of male and female business subject teachers on the roles of vocational guidance in the career employment is significant ( $t = - 4.111, p = .000 < .05$ ). Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, business subject teachers differ significantly in their mean ratings on the roles of the vocational guidance in career employment of senior secondary school students in Imo State on the basis of gender.



## **Discussions of Findings**

### **The Role of Vocational Guidance in Career Choice**

Table 3 showed the mean and standard deviation of business subject teachers' responses on the role of vocational guidance on career choice of senior secondary school students. The table reveals that vocational guidance plays roles on senior secondary school students' career choice which includes to: choose occupation that matches their behavioral and personality traits, understand the demand and requirements for entry and advancement in vocational career, maintain focus and direction in their students and life pursuit, ensure energy and limited resources are properly channeled to right areas that will guarantee vocational success, obtain greater insight and in-depth knowledge of their chosen area of study, handle peer pressure and influence in the choice of vocational career, understand and apply relevant facts about occupational world, accept integrated picture of one's self and one's role in the world of work, understand vital factors and forces for an informed career choice and understand the survival trend in career world.

This result of the study is in line with Ogundele and Feyisetan (2014) who conducted a study on the impact of vocational guidance in addressing the choice of vocational and technical education among Nigeria youth and discovered that vocational guidance plays an integral role in the choice of a career among youths. This result also agreed with the position of Robertson (2014) who opined that career choice is a significant issue in the developmental life of youths because it is reported to be associated with positive as well as harmful psychological, physical and socio-economic inequalities that persist well beyond the youthful age into an individual's adult life. The author posited further that choosing a career and entering into profitable employment after graduation is one thing that every individual desires especially at this technological period through a well-coordinated vocational guidance process.

### **The role of vocational guidance in career employment**

Table 4 showed the mean and standard deviation of business subject teachers' responses on the role of vocational guidance on career employment of senior secondary school students. From the table, the aggregate mean responses of 3.40 reveals that vocational guidance plays roles on secondary school students, career employment which include to: easily secure job placement that match their abilities, be familiar with employment situation in the society, keep abreast on best method to use when searching for job, understand occupational job requirements, follow job specification for good performance, maintain office interpersonal relation skills, improve their life and general economy through vocational skills and practices, increase capacity development and improve performance obtain greater job satisfaction as a result of effective performance and quality services delivery, enjoy progressive career growth and advancement with much struggle.



Muhammad, Asma, Muntaz and Abdul (2018) conducted a study on impact of career counseling & vocational guidance on career employment in TVET sector. The findings of the study support the argument that career counseling is important for employment in TVET sector. Santili (2017) noted that the role of career counseling and vocational guidance services is precious in empowering students to select the best fit with abilities, interests, personalities and in the long run a satisfied life.

## Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that vocational guidance plays roles on career choice and career employment of secondary school students in Imo State. It means that career stagnation and failure common among many adults today which is traceable to people going to vocational occupation that do not match their personality can be addressed when concerted efforts and emphasis are put into vocational guidance in secondary school. This result implies that the high rate of unemployment in our society today is attributable to the fact that students are not receiving the type of vocational guidance and training that will prepare them for success careers in a globalized world. Hence, a closer attention needs to be paid to the vocational guidance activities in secondary schools in the state and nation at large.

## Recommendations

Based on the finding and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Vocational guidance should be properly implemented in secondary schools to enable secondary school students decide early on vocations to follow.
2. The general training of teachers should incorporate vocational guidance so that form teachers, subject teachers will be empowered to always update their awareness on employment gaps. This will assist them help he students.
3. Schools should always create a link with the labour market to gain knowledge of current trend of employment. Examples of such links may include; celebration of career days, internet employment gap base.

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