



CHAPTER 28

CAREER GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

**E. O. Egbochuku Prof.
Kingsley O. Oaikhena M.Ed**

*Department of Educational Evaluation and Counselling Psychology,
University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria.*

Introduction

Career in modern society is a propelling force for fulfilling self-actualization. Career refers to a chosen occupational path undertaken by an individual for sustenance during the period of their life with opportunities for progress. Depending on a person's qualification for performance, a career path could be knowledge-based, skill-based, entrepreneur-based or freelancing. The significant difference between a "job" and a "career"; is that a job refers to activities for which one engages to earn a pay check. This could be public, private or contracts and appointments; while a career means a lifelong endeavour for which experience and training program aids advancement in pay and responsibilities. Conceptually, a career can be defined as the sequence and variety of paid and unpaid work, learning and life roles undertaken throughout life (Szymanski & Parker 2010).

Disability refers to impairments that interfere with certain physical, mental or psychological abilities to effectively interact and function socially or materially. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2018), defined disabilities in three dimensions; what are they? impairment in a person's body structure or function or mental functioning (such as loss of limb, vision or memory), activity limitation, (such as difficulty seeing, hearing, walking, or problem solving) and restricted participations in normal daily activities (such as working, engaging in social and recreational activities and obtaining health care and preventive services). According to the National Policy on Education, (FRN 2014), the categories of disabilities include visual, hearing, physical and health, intellectual, emotional and behavioural, speech and language, learning, multiple disabilities, gifted, talented albinos. They may be present from birth or acquired during a person's lifetime as a result of diseases, infections or accidents. Despite the provision of inclusive education in age and general services in schools with normal persons and special education to cater for specific needs; myths, stereotypic stigmatization, discrimination, isolation and exclusion limits people with disabilities (PWDs) from quality education, career development and employment opportunities.

Guidance and counselling is as old as man and plays a central role in helping challenged person. It is a compound word; guidance as the word implies, is a pervasive activity where persons and organizations take part in guiding,



supervising or directing a person for a particular course of action. This could be by superiors or experts in educational, industrial, social, and religious press broadcasting and briefings on vital information. Counselling, on the other hand is a democratic interactional process meant to enhance redefinition of stand for positive adjustment on particular issues of life. Counselling is not just giving advice or making a judgement, but helping the client to see clearly the root of their problems and possible solutions.

Substantially, there is much overlap in the definitions of guidance and counselling; notable definition of the compound term includes. Akinade (2012), who defined guidance and counselling as a process of helping an individual become fully aware of his/her self and the ways they respond to environmental influences. Oviogbodu (2015), perceived it as a number of procedures in assisting challenged individuals to solve problems. Guidance and counselling is a trust-based interaction or relationship between two or few individuals, usually client(s) and a counsellor (Adebowale, 2012). In summary, guidance and counselling refers to the process whereby a counsellor helps an individual or individuals learn and understand self, environment and their position to choose the right behaviours for meaningful growth and progress in educational, vocational and persona-social aspects of life respectively. To achieve these goals, the professional uses inventories and psychological therapies to uncover the area of challenges and possible solutions for both 'normal' and 'people with disabilities' as a helping services.

These services and activities assist individuals of any age and at any point throughout their lives as well as their careers. Such services may be rendered in formal and informal settings such as in schools, universities and colleges, in technical training institutions, in public and private skills acquisition centres, workplace, voluntary or community sector among others. They are designed to induce positive functionalities into abilities, interest and attitudes and at the same time turn around weaknesses.

The perceived weakness of people with disabilities reduces their employment opportunities; this is reduced for those with higher educational qualifications (Bell & Mino, 2013). This is because of the stigma and discrimination that exists in our society with the perspective that only individuals who are highly educated have abilities. In addition, personal experiences within the family and immediate environment with a negative attitude toward PWDs are often a hindrance for them to get a job. While people with disabilities stands a chance of development and commitment to the Nation's building, guidance and counselling remains central in helping them actualize their academic potentials and make appropriate career decisions.

Career guidance and counselling provides the lens to reflect on ambitions, interests, qualifications and abilities. The responsibilities of encompassing career guidance and counselling should be undertaken by Counselling Practitioners Council of Nigeria (Counselling Association of Nigeria). They should be imposed with the responsibilities of providing information about the labour market,



organise accessible and applicable educational opportunities, detailed systematisation and availability on when and where people need it. This chapter therefore focuses on career guidance for PWDs, career counselling for PWDs as well as challenges and implications of providing career guidance and counselling for PWDs to live a robust life.

Career Guidance for People with Disabilities

Career guidance for PWDs refers to services and activities aimed at assisting PWDs of any age make choice of education or training on a chosen career for a lifelong. Career guidance is central to the society and provides opportunities for self-development and skill acquisition necessary for psychological wellbeing. This could be within or outside the school settings or both, depending on the service providers. They include career information provision (in print, ICT-based and other forms), assessment and self-assessment tools, counselling interviews, career education programmes (to help individuals develop self-awareness, opportunity awareness, and career management skills), taster programmes (to sample options before choosing them), work search programmes, and transition services (Akinyemi, 2016).

In Nigeria, the practice of career guidance should cater for PWDs from birth, acquired during their working lives (to get back to gainful employment and to facilitate job seekers) and those on transition from one job to another. They can constitute a reservoir of synergy and dynamism for any national struggle when correctly guided, mobilized and fully integrated into the social fabric of the nation. On the contrary, national struggle for survival and instability may ensue when they are allowed to drift into unemployed status, undisciplined and moral bankruptness. Career guidance for PWDs could also facilitate the recruitment, advancement, job retention and return to work of persons with disabilities. These services rest on the shoulders of professionals who at one point or the other were an apprentice. Some of these services include; fashion designing, sales, repair and maintenance of electronics and accessories, automobile and civil engineering, small scale businesses and trades among others.

Career Counselling for People with Disabilities

Career counselling for PWDs refers to the processes of providing appropriate counsel and resources to effectively strategize, adjust, develop, transit and contribute meaningfully to their society and nation building. Some authors and researchers described career counselling as career rehabilitation especially when working with PWDs (Strauser, 2014). Career counselling is the identification of appropriate training and education on a given occupation or career choice for greater sense of empowerment. Empowerment within this context refers to the pathway or assistance given to PWDs to set and achieve a career goal. According to Strauser, O'Sullivan and Wong, (2012), counsellors' serves as the primary facilitator/advisor in addressing the fundamentals necessary in making



meaningful career decisions, developing the needed abilities to navigate systems and manage the complex interaction between work, society, and the individual's abilities.

In working with PWDs, early development and support are crucial to career counselling. To achieve this, notable steps for career counselling are in two phases. First, a goal or problem must be identified, clarified and specific. This entails forming a working alliance, gathering of information, understanding and hypothesizing a client's information and behaviour. The second and final phase is goal or problem resolution, this includes taking action steps to develop a career goal, evaluation, referral and termination of the relationships. Regardless of the severity of a disability condition, using age appropriate language and techniques, placing emphasis on client's strengths and respect for values and beliefs yields appropriate result.

Prior to special education and career development, some members of the public often believed that PWDs were not employable. However, today, there are records of individuals with significant disabilities working in their local communities through supported employment. According to Burgess and Cimera (2012), supported employment means competitive employment in an integrated setting with on-going support services for individuals with a disability. This could be persons who have never been employed, intermittent or interrupted work as a result of disability and those who because of the nature and severity of their disability needs intensive supervision to perform specific duties. The shift in values within SE disability services in the society has strengthened the emergence of supported employment. Career guidance and counselling for people with disabilities are to help them focus on their abilities, improve customer services; reduce financial dependence, social integration and functioning. This is because PWDs are not all that different from anyone within our society except for their disabilities (Wehman, Lau & Molinelli, 2012).

Challenges in Providing Career Guidance and Counselling to People with Disabilities

The stance of disability in present society is as old as mankind and the causes could be traced to biological, environmental or by accidents. The expanding perspective of disability assistive technologies and innovations few decades back has broadened the need for career guidance and counselling. With this evolution in technology, the contemporary problems have rapidly evolved from what it used to be and the ones previously learned to resolve. The peculiarity of two people with similar disability is their experiences and this could be at the family, school or learning institutions, place of employment or host community. Although not all, persons with disabilities experiences unnecessary discrimination, isolation and exclusion from full participation among peers and in the society, but a good number are victims.



Till date, the challenges that have persistently halted the provision of career guidance and counselling for PWDs are career choice, development and employment problems. Due to disability; age, gender, education level, family, employment policies among other factors influences career decision, capabilities and job positions offered in the labour market. This has made the employment for people with disabilities more scarce or limited, increased their dependency and reduced social functioning.

The challenge of stigmas and discriminations against PWDs would continue to be a major constraint to career development except there are career guidance and counselling interventions. Specifically, this makes them feel inferior, not fit for a career and limited in decision making. Consistent stigmatization and discrimination creates disturbing foundational beliefs and destabilizes self-concept. This could make PWDs look down on themselves as the name-calling syndrome persist either directly or indirectly against personal preferences. They mostly experience depression, rejection and helplessness especially when there is no role-model with similar disability in their choice area of specialization. These negative notion and remarks discourages their career decisions and thereby settling for lesser training and opportunities.

The dependency rate among PWDs is increasingly alarming; this could be owned to the reality of broken education system and malpractices in Nigeria. This has a direct effect on the prevalence of poverty and people living below the socioeconomic benchmark. Depending on their disability, some could depend on others for movement despite the provision of wheelchairs and access ramp, beg for arms when they can acquire new skills and earn a better living, settle in help-homes when they can actually be a bread-winner for themselves and make contributions to nation building. The dependency rate becomes appalling when some prefers to ask for arms than to acquire skills.

The trauma and mental perception of being disabled in one aspect of function could be a major factor for reduced social functioning and boundaries for PWDs. This self-denial makes it difficult for people with disabilities to be less proficient in the acquisition of entrepreneurial skill, training and education in a school system. With the increasing rate of impatience among the youths compared to humans depleting nature and resources management, it becomes over-tasking for PWDs to associate and build relationship with others. In career selection, this halts the process of smooth study when compared with others. This could be owed to lack of honesty or reluctance to engage in self-examination to determine self-values and interests. The social experiences encountered by people with disabilities could restrict the array of career options they perceive, impede decision-making ability, and impair future career development. Sometimes there could be a mismatch of the client's strengths, needs and personality. Therefore, finding a good fit for career guidance and counselling for people with disabilities in the helping relationship can be a challenge especially with multiple disability condition.



Implications for Equipping People with Disabilities with Robust Career Guidance and Counselling for Productive Living

The severities of disabilities as well as socio-demographic, psychological and economic factors are key predictors of career choice for PWDs. Due to the ever-changing nature of work and trends of globalization in technology, increasing population and economic shifts, assisting people with disabilities in career guidance and counselling for productive living could be a difficult task but achievable. Currently, with the increasing rate of economic challenges, people with disabilities constitute a large proportion of those living below the poverty line. This could become worse if not properly addressed.

Professionally, guidance and counselling remains central to schooling and career development. Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) should extend their services beyond the school settings in guiding and helping people living with disabilities. The sustenance of this core in the profession should target the development of strengths. Presumably, good self-concept, setting achievable goals and career decisions, skills acquisition and information on employment opportunities should be prioritized. Notably among others, if achieved, it would improve the efficacy of inclusive education systems, boost economic growth, innovations and small scale businesses, refine the objectives for key policies, advance lifelong learning for social equity and rights, build human capital, and improve self-dependency and employability throughout their lives.

These services could be organised along with long-term special or inclusive education and training within and outside the school depending on the applicants. An example is the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs, 2030) agenda, which moves beyond past trends and limitations of the Millennium Development Goals (United Nations Sustainable Development Goal, UNSDG, 2020). It would enwrap the most influential actors in the society, such as government officials, non-governmental organizations and business owners and cooperate companies. This new development agenda claims to focus on challenged people living below the poverty line and PWDs within the society. It would empower them to be more dynamic, creative, innovative, self-dependent and equality. Evaluation studies shows that career guidance and counselling for PWDs can increase their motivation for education to satisfy labour market exploration and activities (Woods & Frugoli 2002, Osakinle, 2010).

As policies are vital to education, more so, labour market and social influences are currently shaping career guidance and counselling for people with disabilities. Therefore, as spelt out in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2014), education for PWDs should be a customized programme designed to meet their unique needs that the general education cannot cater for. It is assumed by some researchers that policy makers need strong evidence of the economic impact of career guidance and counselling for PWDs. However, this would be underachieved with little or no evidence as most school guidance counsellors are engaged as core classroom teachers. The constitutional protection for the rights of people with



disabilities jurisdictions highlights the essential framework for the protection, enforcement and promotion of equality of opportunity for all citizens in any society (National Disability Mentoring (NDM), 2022). There is a replacement benefits with active approaches to assisting unemployed people with disabilities for early intervention in the cycle of unemployment.

Conclusion

Conclusively, the purport of this study is career guidance and counselling for people with disabilities in Nigeria. From the highlights, PWDs can achieve career restructuring through special intervention education from guidance and counselling. The curriculum, learning technologies, physical structures and training centre within and outside the schools must be tailored to meet the demands of different disability groups.

Specifically, career guidance, counselling, challenges, and implications of equipping PWDs to live a robust life were the considerations. This could be achieved in one-to-one or group sessions for improved education, information on labour markets, supports key policy objectives and lifelong learning training for social equality, equity and rights. This would enable people to build human capital and employability throughout their lives as well as become self-reliance.

Suggestion

This includes that:

1. there should be equal opportunities for all irrespective of their abilities or disabilities.
2. counselling practitioners under the umbrella of Counselling Association of Nigeria (CASSON) should extend career services beyond schools.
3. government should organize seminars, and workshop to re-orientate parents and family members on the need to help people with disabilities discover their potentials and develop a career.
4. career guidance and counselling should emphasize the possibilities and advantages of self-reliance in career development.
5. classrooms, laboratory, library among other buildings should be design and constructed to accommodate people with disabilities.
6. instructional facilities meant for training people with disabilities should be updated with modern and applicable facilities.

References

- Adebowale, E. K. (2012). *Practical Guide to Effective Teaching*. Enugu: Hallmark publishers.
- Akinade, E. A. (2012). *Modern Behaviour modification, principles and practices*. Ibadan: Bright Way Publishers.



-
- Akinyemi, E. O. (2016). Entrepreneurial empowerment of People with special needs in Ondo and Osun States, Nigeria. *Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 5(11), 26-38.
- Bell, E. C., & Mino, N. (2013). Blind and visually impaired adult rehabilitation and employment survey. *AFB AccessWorld Magazine*, 3(1).
- Burgess, S. & Cimera, R. E. (2014). Employment Outcomes of Transition-Aged Adults With Autism Spectrum Disorders. *American Journal on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities* 119(1), 64–83. doi10.1352/1944-7558-119.1.64
- Federal Republic of Nigeria, (2014). National Policy on Education section 10: Special Needs Education Abuja, Nigeria NERDC.
- National Disability Mentoring, (NDM) (2022). Disability Resources, Disability Career Development and Disabled Person. www.aapd-dc.org/mentor.html.
- Oviogbodu, A. C. (2015). *The Role of Guidance and Counselling in Effective Teaching and Learning in Schools: The Nigerian Perspective*.
- Strauser, D. R. (2014). *Career Development, Employment, and Disability in Rehabilitation*. From Theory to Practice. Springer Publishing Company, LLC
- Strauser, D. R., O'Sullivan, D. & Wong, A. W. K. (2012). Five-Factor Model of Personality, Work Behaviour Self-Efficacy, and Length of Prior Employment for Individuals with Disabilities: *An Exploratory Analysis*. doi.org/10.1177/0034355212437046
- Szymanski, E. M., & Parker, R. M. (2010). *Work and disability: Basic concepts*. In E. M. Szymanski & R. M. Parker (Eds.), *Work and disability: Contexts, issues, and strategies for enhancing employment outcomes for people with disabilities* (pp. 1–15). Austin, TX: Pro-Ed, Inc.
- United Nations Sustainable Development Goal, (UNSDG, 2020). *SDG Report, 2020*. Department of Economic and Social Affairs. www.sdg.un.org
- Woods, J. & Frugoli, P. (2002), Information, Tools, Technology: Informing Labour exchange participants. Paper prepared for the conference on Job Training and Labour Exchange in the U.S., Jointly organised by the W.E. Upjohn Institute and the U.S. Department of Labour, Augusta, Michigan, September.
- World Health Organization, (WHO, 2018). International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) external icon. Geneva: 2018, WHO.
- Wehman, P., Lau, S. & Molinelli, A. (2012). Supported Employment for Young Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder: Preliminary Data Show all authors. *Sage Journal* 37(3) 160-169. doi.org/10.2511/027494812804153606