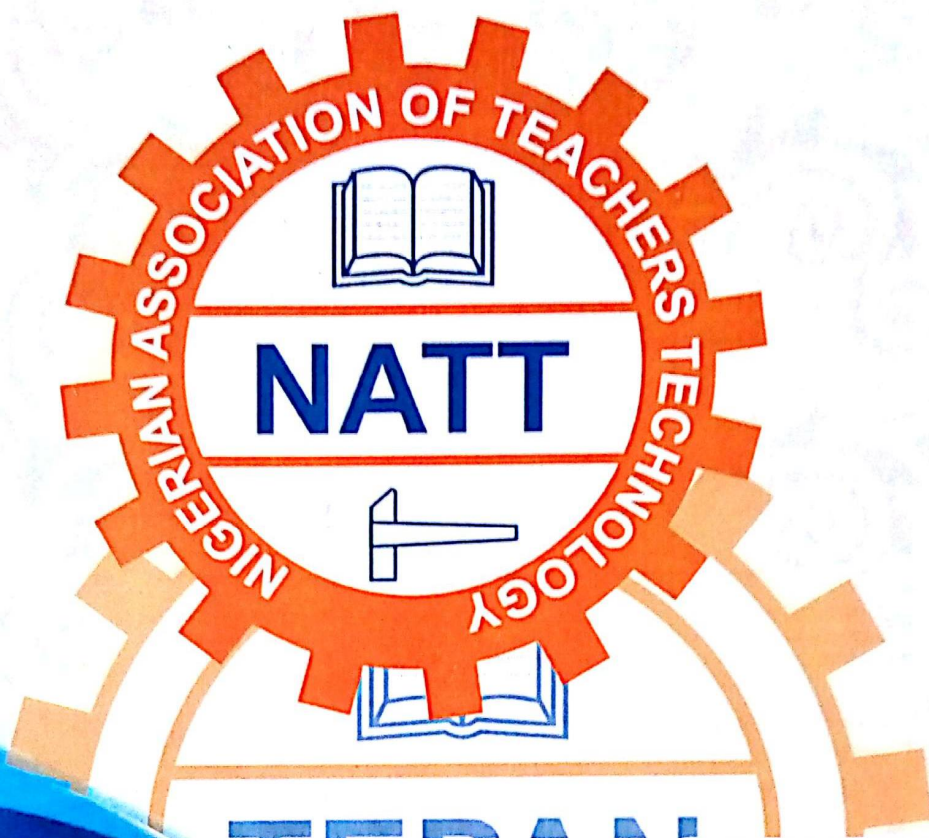


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The Need to Apply SODA for Effective Career Choice and Development in Pre-Vocational Level in Basic Education Programme in Nigeria

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Abstract

Forcing students to read courses by parents, friends and some higher institutions has made many of them to be jumping from one course to another without focus. Many of the Nigerian students have neither the understanding of themselves nor the diversity of vocations of interest that are available as well as the necessary prerequisites for progress and success in various occupations. A number of the students manifest lack of interest in various vocations and ability to cope with the courses they are studying due to wrong career choices. The researcher describe the concept of vacation, career development and rationale for effective career choice among students at the pre-vocational level in Basic Education programme in Nigerian. The Federal Government of Nigeria reason for creating Basic Education as well as its objectives was unveiled. The researcher therefore propose the need to apply SODA to assist career guidance counselor ,parents, guardians, teachers, family members and other educated individuals or student advisers in guiding students in Nigeria in making appropriate career choices to enhance their active participation in the world of work, promote job satisfaction, rapid career development and a better Nigeria in the 21st century.

Keywords: Career Choice, SODA, Development, Pre-Vocational Level, Basic Education Programme.

Introduction

In Nigeria school system, Basic Education is the education given to children aged 0-15 years. According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) in her National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013), Basic Education encompasses the Early Childhood Care Development and Education (ECCDE) (0-4) and 10 years of formal schooling. ECCDE however is situated in the hands of the private sector and social development services, while ages 5-6 are within the formal education sector. The FRN (2013) revealed that, for the purpose of policy coordination and monitoring, the Federal Government of Nigeria instituted a Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme with the following objectives:

- a. Develop in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion;

- b. The provision of free universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school age.
- c. Reducing the incidence of drop-out from formal school system through improved relevance , quality and efficiency;
- d. Catering through appropriate forms of complementary approaches to the promotion of basic education, for the learning needs of young persons who for one reason another have had to interrupt their schooling ; and
- e. Ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, moral, security and civil values heeded for the laying of a solid foundation for lifelong learning.

It was further revealed that Basic Education to be provided by the Federal Government of Nigeria shall be free, compulsory, universal and qualitative. It encompasses: one year of Kindergarten; six years of Primary school and three years Junior Secondary School Education

According to FRN (2013), the specific goals of Basic Education programme are to :

- a. Provide the child with diverse basic knowledge and skills for entrepreneurship development, wealth creation and educational development;
- b. Develop patriotic young people equipped to contribute to social development and in the performance of their civic responsibilities’
- c. Inspire national consciousness and harmonious co-existence irrespective of differences in endowment, religion, ethnic and socio economic background.
- d. Provide opportunities for the child to develop manipulative skills that will enable the child to function effectively in the society within the limit of the child’s capacity.

Effectively achieving the goals of Basic Education demand that students make appropriate career Choice at the Pre-Vocational Level in Basic Education Programme. In Nigeria school system, Pre-Vocational Level in Basic Education Programme refers to the junior secondary education level where students are expose to varieties of career opportunities in various trade areas.

In today’s modern and dynamic society, choosing a career by an individual is one of the most important, yet, difficult decisions to make in a life time because it has a long lasting implications on the individuals future in terms of life style, status, income, security and job satisfaction. It is the career choice of an individual that determines the extent of career development, self

actualization and self fulfillment within a life time. Career development can only be feasible when a good career choice has being made. Career refers to an individual's job, work, vocation, occupation or an activity undertaken as a means of livelihood. The term career choice, vocational choice and occupational choice are some times used interchangeably to mean the same thing. Vocational choice or career choice refers to the work , job or occupation a person chooses to go into over a period of time to earn a living. Career development is a life long process that encompasses career choice and progresses made in a chosen career.

In standard formal school system, theories in educational psychology are used by career guidance counselors to guide students towards making sound career choices. Bandura(1997) defined a theory as a principle or set of principles that explains the relationship between two or more observable facts. To Leong(1993),a theory is a rationalized set of assumptions that allows an individual to explain the past and predict the future. A theory is a set of underlying assumptions , propositions or accepted facts that attempts to provide rational explanations of causes-and-effects relationships among a group of observed phenomenon (Holland,1997).From the several definitions, a theory can be defined as a fact-based framework for describing an observed phenomenon in real life to enhance progress.

Holland (1985) defined the proposition of a theory as a statement of the theory which expresses an opinion upon which explanations can be based. The proposition (basic features, facts,or underlying assumptions) of a theory is a fact-bearing statement or sentence of a theory which expresses opinion from observed phenomenon in real life and have the quality or property of either being true or false. To distinguish proposition from proponents, Holland went further to state that the proponent of a theory refers to a person (persons) who proposes , propound, initiates or supports a theory. Proponents are also called advocates of a theory since they support the ideas contained in the propositions of the theory.

There are many theories on career aspirations and choice, each emphasizing the organized and systematic provision of information needed to help individuals evaluate their personal experiences and aspirations so as to make an intelligent career choice. Holland (1997), for

instance, holds the view that people in a particular profession have peculiar characteristics regarding social and developmental needs. These motivate them to create an environment reflecting not only their needs and personalities, but also one in which their skills, abilities, attitudes and values are accepted. Six occupational environments and six matching models of personal orientation namely the Realistic, Intellectual, Social, Conforming, Artistic and Enterprising were proposed. These underscored career interests and preferences as parts of the total personality of the individual.

To understand the role of occupation in the life of the individual demands a prior understanding of that particular individual and his needs. Adeyemo (1999) posits that an individual chooses more effectively if he knows his abilities; that fulfilment of his needs are crucial in job satisfaction and that occupational choice reflects one's personality and needs. This stresses the influence of psychological, social and economic factors in occupational choice. The individual chooses an occupation which best meets his strongest needs ranging from social, psychological to economic. This choice improves once he is able to predict how well a prospective occupation can satisfy his needs. Job satisfaction depends on the extent to which an individual's occupational needs meet those needs that he considered most important.

Thus, an individual's need is one of the determining factors in career choice. Other factors include important people in our lives, parents, admired works, working experiences and peer influence. The occupation makes possible the playing of a role appropriate to the self-concepts since every occupation requires a characteristic pattern of abilities, interest and personality traits with tolerance wide enough to allow a variety of occupations for each individual and a variety of individuals in each occupation. Self concept is an organized pattern of perception of one's own characteristics. The selection of an occupation constitutes an implementation of the self-concept construct, requiring a person to recognize himself as a distinctive individual and to be aware of the similarities between himself and others. Thus, knowledge of self is crucial in making an adequate and wise choice; suggesting that career choice is developmental in nature; and not an event, which occurs at a particular point in time.

Career choice can also be influenced by interest; as students often indicate that they would like an 'interesting' job. Interests are, of course, very personal; to the extent that two people may be interested in the same activity for quite different reasons. Such features as mental stimulation, sense of achievement, excitement and using one's abilities are central to the description of a career that is interesting. Some effects of interests on career choice are that an interest may be significant in itself and therefore be vital to career choice. It can also point to jobs where similar satisfactions can be derived. Indeed, occupations can be grouped together where they have common interest elements, though one does not need to satisfy all of one's interests in a job; since some will be achieved through external activities.

An individual's skills and interests are, however, only a part of the picture when making choices about what to do in future. Other factors influencing choice include one's values and temperament. An individual's scale of value is usually based on his belief and attitudes about what he considers as important in life. Thus, if one's values match closely those of his work or colleagues', one is likely to feel a sense of pride in the chosen career and therefore be happy to devote time and energy to it.

However, it is important to note that value systems do change over time such that what is considered as appropriate today may cease to be so in five or ten years' time. At any rate, values do become more important as one gets older. Examples of values include autonomy, authority, variety, services, economic reward, prestige, social interaction and creativity. Temperament is the aspects of an individual's personality usually expressed by the style in which he deals with people and approaches tasks. It does not only influence one's feelings and emotions, it also determines how one reacts in various situations. Thus, career choice is a complicated process while the concept of career is changing.

Students all over the world are usually faced with the Herculean task of career decision taking. The choice of careers, subjects and courses of study in schools and of subsequent paths to follow are always difficult problems facing prospective undergraduates. Often, choosing the right subject combination leading to the right profession can make the difference between enjoying and

detesting the career in future. Dedicating oneself to career choices that are unattainable leads to frustration. Thus, many Nigerians regard work either as a mere source of livelihood or as a means to an end rather than an end in itself, one which has its own in-built satisfaction and satisfactoriness, and as an opportunity for expressing one's talents or creative potentialities. Bad attitude to work and its attendant problem of minimum productivity becomes rampant. The net effect of this unpleasant situation results in the crippling of the nation's economy.

In fact, it has been observed that many Nigerian youths go into unsuitable careers because of ignorance, inexperience, peer pressure, advice from friends, parents and teachers or due to the prestige attached to certain jobs without adequate vocational guidance and career counselling (Salami, 1999). Consequently, many youths are most unsuited for their careers as they usually find themselves in jobs where they could not satisfy their value needs. When this occurs, they constitute nuisance to themselves and their employers. They are usually unable to contribute meaningfully to the society and ultimately become liability to the nation.

Close contact with new entrants into the Department of Industrial and Technology Education of the Federal University of Technology, Minna showed that some of the entrants would have preferred other courses of study to Industrial and Technology Education. It seems also that many fresh students in this Department offered to study Industrial and Technology Education only after being rejected by the department of first choice owing to low scores obtained at the University Matriculation Examination and the Post University Matriculation Examination. They probably have tried in vain to secure admission into other choice courses and opted to study Industrial and Technology Education only as last resort. It has been observed that only about half of the population of the fresh students usually apply to read Industrial and Technology Education as a first choice course.

This implies that many of the admitted students came from subsequent lists, consisting of candidates who, perhaps, could not meet up with the cut-off requirements of their preferred courses. Discussion with some lecturers in the department showed that this trend is common in the department. In fact, some of the students often express readiness to defect, to other

professions on completing their programme in Industrial and Technology Education. This phenomenon among others is caused by wrong career choices and consequently brings about job dissatisfaction, poor career development and overall reduction in numbers of technical teachers produced. It is on the basis of this premises that I deem it necessary to propose the need to apply SODA for effective career choice and development in pre-vocational level in Basic Education programme in Nigeria to assist career guidance counselor ,parents, guardians, teachers, family members and other educated individuals or student advisers in guiding students in Nigeria in making appropriate career choices to enhance their active participation in the world of work, promote job satisfaction, rapid career development and a better Nigeria in the 21st century.

Relevance of Career Choice to Individuals

Career choice is one important decision that every human being makes sometimes in his/her life. It is a decision that nobody should make a mistake about, since what a person does for a living affects him in the present, as well as for the rest of his life. One's career determines the kind of friends one keeps, where one stays, how one spends his spare time, where one works and other related variables. From the economic stand point, it is a well known fact that one's take home pay at the end of the month (or any time period) is determined by the nature of work one does. Appraising this situation, Denga (2001) asserts that choosing an appropriate career is one of the most difficult or serious decision which a man or woman makes. In the same vein, Kinanee (2004) opinions that the most complex problem confronting youth today involves choosing a realistic and appropriate occupation, preparing for it, liking it and keeping it.

In the old traditional system in Nigeria according to Agbor (1990) in Kinanee (2004) occupational preference was not often a problem since an individual has to take up an occupation trusted on him or her by their fathers and mothers after a review of the situation surrounding the family. Boys were encouraged to take to their fathers' occupation while girls took to their mothers' occupation. In this modern era such practices are not in force, in the present day Nigeria. The practice of dictating careers by parent and elders to their young ones has ceased to be functional and effective. This is because the Nigeria economy has become so complex in nature to the extent

that making occupational choice is a great problem and complicated issues among the youths (Agbor 1990 in Kinanee 2004).

The difficulty in career decision making among the youths coupled with the confusion and helpless disadvantages on the young ones faced with such responsibilities has necessitated the formalized career counselling practices as introduced by the educational system (Denga 2001). Although career counseling practices in most Nigerian schools are not fully active, functional or effective due to poor attitude and ignorance on the relevance of career guidance counseling services to the future of children. It is therefore necessary to equip individual students with adequate and vital information about the world of work that can lead them into making appropriate career decision.

Theoretical Assumptions among Students in the Society as Observed by the Researchers

This theory is based on the underlying assumptions prevalence in Nigeria:

- a. That most students rush into a career for the sole purpose of huge monetary reward.
- b. That most students enter into a career without considering the requirements and conditions for success.
- c. That most students make career choices without considering the dynamic nature of societal demands for skills.

Explanation of Theoretical Assumptions among Students in the Society

- a. That most students rush into a career for the sole purpose of huge monetary reward.

This theory presumes that some students or youth in Nigeria rush into a career for the sole purpose of huge financial reward. Most students in senior secondary school and those entering into tertiary institutions usually make vocational choices solely because of the huge monetary gains involved. A lot of students choose to study oil industry related courses like petroleum engineering, chemical engineering among others because they believe the oil industry pay high salary. Some other study accounting and banking and finance because they feel bank pay high wages.

Others study political science and law for the purpose of embezzling huge amount of government fund and manipulating judicial cases for personal monetary reward. Some even study medicine, pharmacy, nursing and other medical related course because of the

financial reward. There are even cases where people study pharmacy because an unprofessional pharmaceutical drug dealer is solely interested in using the pharmacy certificate for full pharmaceutical business to pay financial commission in return to the certificate holder. (Agbase, 1986, Okorie and Ezeji, 1988).

- b. That most students enter into a career without considering the requirements and conditions for success.

In Nigeria today a lot of parents and guidance force their children and wards to write the final senior school certificate examination conducted by WAEC, NECO and NABTEB in schools in villages or in schools in the cities with special centres where malpractices are allowed and the students usually come out with excellent results. Parents, guidance and even teachers, then make vocational choices and choose course of study for these students base on the excellent results gotten through malpractice without considering the actual requirements and conditions for success in the chosen career or course of study. (Abdulwahab, 2010).

A common phenomenon now in Nigeria is that most students preparing to enter tertiary institutions still contemplate on the course to study even on the day of registering for the JAMB examination. This lack of career preparation even made many students to register wrong subject combinations and eventually could not secure admission into tertiary institutions. Most female students at secondary school level also, chooses career in banking profession and industries without being aware that bank jobs and oil industry relative jobs require longer working hours and shifts duties that usually have adverse effect on child rearing, and marriages.

Due to lack of appropriate counseling, some students in studying mathematics education in tertiary institutions even hate mathematics and therefore cannot teach it. This lack of career preparation causes boredom in work places, hinders career development and bring job dissatisfaction in several work environment in Nigeria.

- c. That most students make career choices without considering the dynamic nature of societal demands for skills.

Some parents and guidance in Nigeria still mislead their children and wards into vocations that are obsolete without considering the changing societal demand for new skills. In some

rural areas youths are still undergoing apprenticeship training on obsolete skills such as clay making, basket weaving, manual type writing, training on obsolete brands of motor vehicles among others.

Even in advance countries there is a shift from the study of pure mechanical engineering into electromechanical engineering and mechatronics because of the new innovations in mechanical engineering that have made many mechanical systems to be fully automated and infused with electronic gadget and microcomputer chips to enhance their performance and reduce weight.

Since career development is a lifelong process, therefore guidance counselors and parents need to counsel and guide youths towards acquiring relevant and new skills needed for success in today's world of work. Relevant skills such as computer skills, skills in automobile mechatronics and vehicle fault diagnostics, chemical machining/electronic machining and advanced welding to mention a few.

Implications of the Theoretical Assumptions among Students in the Society as Observed by the Researchers

- a. Knowing "that youths rush into a career for the sole purpose of huge monetary reward", will go a long way to help the guidance counselor, parents, guidance teachers and educated individuals who could be career advisers to make good judgment about an individual's future needs and values so as to make appropriate career choice in life. This proposition will assist the guidance counselor to direct the individual or client to understand himself well, as well as the complexities of the society and individuals. This information helps the individual to adjust appropriately according to the society so as to make good vocational choice that will positively affect his life, give him job satisfaction and also enable him to progress rapidly on the job.

A proper application of this proposition will enable people to know that "money is not everything" so that their rush for careers paying high salaries can be controlled. Dignity of labour, job satisfaction, self-actualization and fulfillment, and rapid career progress should be emphasized. Students should be made to understand that there are prospects in all careers only if one is ready to study and work hard to succeed diligently.

- b. Knowing that people enter into a career without considering the requirements and conditions for success, will help the guidance counselor, parents and teachers to carry out a good analysis of a student or client that will help the student get the facts about himself from his test results, cumulative records and other means of identifying potentialities, interests and values that will sum up to make judgment on the appropriate career choice.

A critical and good analysis of this proposition would give the student being counsel, the basic information and facts about his environment, particularly about the subject combinations to master for a particular educational programme and opportunities, requirements and conditions for success and rapid progress in a particular career chosen.

This proposition would greatly enable female students to make appropriate career decision that will not affect their marriages or child rearing responsibilities. Students should be made to understand that a lack of knowledge of the requirement and conditions for success in a career will create job dissatisfaction, boredom and hinders career development.

- c. Knowing “that societal demand for skills is dynamic” will positively, enhance the guidance counselor, parents and teachers on how to analyze labour market demands for skills so as to guide students and clients on the appropriate skill to acquire. The detail analysis and application of this proposition will enable guidance counselor to appropriately place individuals on the skill training needs that are in demand in the world of work.

This would enable the trainees to acquire relevant work skills and be functional in the world of work. It will also guide students and clients to run away from obsolete skills and forms of education and to pursue a career that will make them useful and relevant in the current technological world where skills is the sine qua non for livelihood, survival and relevance in the 21st century (Balogun, 1981) to enable them achieve happiness in their career and also attain rapid career development and success.

SODA and Vocational Planning Process

In addition to theoretical assumptions among students in the society as observed by the researchers, guidance counselors, parents, guardians, teachers, educated individuals/student advisers, and other family members should utilize SODA in guiding children towards vocational preparation to enable them make a sound career choice in life. According to the University of Dublin (2005) SODA is an acronym on how an individual can discover his or

her mission in life and it is a four stages vocational planning process to assist individuals through college and life. The acronym that formed the four stages are:

- a. **S = Self-Knowing Yourself** : Assess your interests, strengths, values and abilities. Knowing yourself is a key factor to happy vocational sound decisions.
- b. **O = Opportunities - Knowing your Opportunities**: Assess your options from different angles; options that lead from your degree, that suit you, and that the labour market presents.
- c. **D = Decision – Making Decision**: Informed by discussions with friends, family, Professional, graduates, academics, and a vocational adviser you reach your decisions on the best goal for you, be it work, study or timeout.
- d. **A = Action – Taking Action**:The time comes to make your goal a reality. Complete the necessary application forms and curriculum vitae and get to interview stage to get the job or go to school to study the course you aim for.

Strength of SODA

The strong points in the application of SODA in making career choice includes:

1. Choosing a career solely because of monetary reward most often cause students to make wrong career choices, brings about job dissatisfaction and hinders career development. Therefore shunning financial reward and making career choice based on desire for job satisfaction, self actualization, service to humanity and rapid career development will greatly help Nigeria students and better our economy.
2. Making career choice without considering the requirements and conditions for success in a career adversely affect student in future, especially female students in terms of job dissatisfaction caused by inconveniences in marriage and child rearing. It is therefore, very important to consider career requirements and conditions for success in a career before making a career choice to promote happiness on the job and happiness in marriages and child rearing. Female students should be counsel to go into career that gives them chance to rear children and enjoy their marriage.

3. Making career decision without considering the dynamic nature of societal demand for skills is dangerous to youths because it makes them useless in future due to job displacement as a result of possession of obsolete and irrelevant skills.

Evaluating the job market for the needed skills before making a career choice will enable youths to be functional, active, and productive and relevance in their places of work. It will bring about job satisfaction and rapid career development and success in life.

Advantages in the Application of SODA in Making Career Choice

- 1) It would assist career counselors, parents, guardians, teachers and other stake holders on how to guide students in making appropriate career decision in life.
- 2) It helps Nigerian students in making the best career choice that will have positive impact on their future.
- 3) It would enable students to make adequate career preparation to enhance appropriate choice, rapid career development, job satisfaction and a happy life.
- 4) It would create consciousness of traditional and cultural values in female youths to enable them choose careers that will not affect or infringe on their marriage, mother-hood responsibilities, job satisfaction and happiness.
- 5) It would enable students to know the requirements and conditions for success in various occupations to bring about rapid career development and job satisfaction.
- 6) It would guide students on the relevant skills to acquire to enhance their employability, functionality and relevance in the 21st century job market.

Recommendations

- i. Utilizing SODA in vocational guidance and counseling to enhance appropriate career choice.
- ii. Get information about job descriptions and requirements.
- iii. Get information about the salary and working conditions.
- iv. Get information about the education and training requirements.
- v. Source for information about the labour market, including industrial occupational trend.
- vi. That parents must not force their children to choose a vocation.

- vii. A student must not choose a vocation because he or she sees his or her friends choosing the vocation.
- viii. A student must choose a vocation where he or she has intellectual, ability, aptitudes, and interest.
- ix. Experts to make appropriate vocational choices e.g. a guidance counselor must guide that student.
- x. That if you are not opportune to further your education, you must have to learn a trade.
- xi. That the parents or teachers and even the child should detect his or her line of vocation from primary school by knowing his or her subjects of interest.
- xii. Finally, children should be informed that, there is no vocation that is not important but it depends on you as an individual to work hard and be able to put your resources together to succeed in a chosen career.

Conclusion

Just like other aspects of education of adolescents and youths, career choice and development which is a lifelong process, can be quite challenging. There could be attitudinal barriers in some careers. The issue of competition for preferred job is there. The self-concept of the adolescent may be low and this could hinder his or her perception and performance at work.

The age factor may count against an individual. Challenges may also arise as a result of cognitive deficits or other physical psychological issues. Thus career counseling becomes mandatory for every adolescent and young person who intends to succeed at school as well as at work place. It is therefore hoped that this theory will be critically analyze and adopted for use by guidance counselors, parents, guardian, teachers and the educated individuals who may be in positions to guide students in making the right career choice to better their future and the future of Nigeria.

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