



Strategies for Improving Career Counseling in Agricultural Education in South East Universities, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The challenges facing the ever frontier of knowledge in various fields especially the department of Agricultural education which includes; students difficulties in trying to adjust to the new course of study some of them did not apply for, Occupational misconception, rating of agricultural related jobs low in terms of a secured future and earning power calls for proper improvement of career counseling services in agricultural education in Nigeria Universities. However, the study centered on strategies for improving career counseling in agricultural education in south east Universities using the universities located in south east universities, three research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study using a descriptive survey. The population of study is 139, consisting of 73 lecturers of Agricultural education and 63 counselors in the universities. The entire population was used for the study since the population was manageable. Instrument for data collection was a researcher-made questionnaire duly validated and the reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach alpha, which yielded a coefficient index of 0.83. The researcher and 3 research assistants administered and retrieved the questionnaire. 100% return rate was achieved. Mean and standard deviations was used to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The analyzed data identified administrative strategies, students related strategies and government strategies as a way of improving career counseling in Nigeria universities. It was recommended among others that there should be a regular supervision, monitoring and evaluation of the career counseling services in agricultural education departments.

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Introduction

It is no longer secret that majority of agricultural education students appear to not have applied for the course while seeking for admission and therefore are plagued by this question which are self-defined by their present status within the community and the world at large, by their position within their peer group and the ignorance of the positive promises of agriculture. Difficulties may come the way of new students especially trying to adjust to the new course of study they did not applied for and so they will find it hectic and feel inferior among other students who are outside agricultural related disciplines. The crises for me can be averted if counseling services are made more functional in this department since no course is judge more important than the other by the federal government.

The recent complex changes and education trends in the agricultural world, work and society calls for proper improvement of career counseling services in Nigerian universities particularly in Agricultural Education department; concern with equipping students with skills, knowledge and attitude to work effectively and efficiently in

vocation occupations which is life wire of any society or country (Fafunwa,2004). Various Problems are emerging in our society or country, occupational misconception marital problem, vocational imbalances, relationship problem, educational maladjustment and retirement issues still exist (Dyer and Brefa, 2003). Some other trends are unqualified agricultural personnel, poor academic performance, abuse, high risk of sexual exploitation, cultism, kidnapping etc, of latest concern to the government and stakeholders of education is the trend where some graduates of agricultural related careers are no longer fit into the labor market because of inadequate of knowledge, skills, and attitudes acquired from science and technology into agricultural production(Mogbo,2011).Also, the students misperceptions of the agricultural industry and agricultural career opportunities may negatively affect recruitment.

Many high school students are unaware of the range of agricultural careers and therefore rate agricultural jobs low in terms of stability, a secure future and earning power (Mailory & Sommer, 1986). More so, social cultural factors have been linked to students attitude, belief and enrolment in

agricultural courses and may differ by gender and ethnicity. For example, Bell and Fritz (1992) found that female faces barriers to enrolment in agricultural courses which includes lack of career information concerning non traditional roles, inappropriate school counseling services and lack of supportive network. Similarly, Nichols and Nelson (1993) determined that his panic students face a number of barriers to participate well in higher agricultural education activities because of misconception, family, cultural and financial factors. Furthermore, the federal government and the planners of education policy were also able to note that past experience of lack of proper vocational counseling is either fully or partially responsible for the type of poor attitude people have towards agricultural work this days and based on this, the National Policy of Education(2004), stated that it is desirable to provide career counseling in each post primary secondary schools in Nigeria to help solve the problems of ignorance of many young people about career prospects and personality maladjustment. Also, Fafunwa (2004) supported the idea of the Minister of Education by saying that a mandatory students career counseling service should be established in all Nigeria Institutions of higher learning because through such counseling service, the true conditions of Nigeria Economy and its ever increasing labor market demands will be met by the students as employees or employers of labor in both formal and informal sectors of the economy.

Counseling according to Nageswara Rao (2004) is aimed at helping the individual understand and accept themselves "as they are", and more so to help the students to help themselves. He further said that counseling main objective is to bring about a voluntary change in the client because of this purpose, the counselor provide facilities to help achieve the desired change or make their suitable choice. Carl Rogers (1957) viewed counseling as a process of assistance extended to an expert in an individual situation to needy person. He further said that it is a service of direct contact with an individual. This aims to offer him assistance in changing the attitudes & behaviors. Counseling is also the provision of professional assistance and guidance in resolving personal or psychological problems (Oxford Advance Learners Dictionary, 1998), and the do render the services through the help of agricultural education lecturers who indirectly or directly refer students to them. Generally, Guidance and Counseling service is needed to help students to deal effectively and efficiently with normal developmental tasks of adolescence and face life situations boldly. Counseling students therefore is crucial to prepare them for a diverse and rapidly changing workplace and assures an adequate cadre of students in vocational programs such as agricultural education (Thomas, 1994). Hence its improvement is paramount to not only to the students but the society at large.

Statement of the problem

Career counseling is fundamental not only to agricultural education students but to students' successful and meaningful living in general. Every students desire to be identified with good profession, but this could only be achieved through effective counseling on their choices of career in maximizing their potentials.

However, the recognition of the counselors and his role is still accorded more in theory than in practice because the few existing counselors lack opportunities or are ill-equipped to discharge their stated role (Ugbe, 2002). In some universities in Nigeria, one may find out that there is only one or no career counselors handling the career counseling role.

Olayinka (1999) stressed that the training of career counselors in vocational education in Nigeria need to be intensified because the present experience and number is inadequate to cope with the existing demands. The above observation is not exceptional to agricultural education; Thus, the career counselors role in agricultural education department is a paramount role in bringing about brighter agricultural future in our dear country, hence the need to identify the strategies for improving career counseling in agricultural education in South Eastern Universities, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify the strategies for improving career counseling in agricultural education in South East Universities, Nigeria.

Specifically, the objectives of the study were to identify;

- a. Government strategies for improving career counseling in agricultural education in south east Universities, Nigeria;
- b. School administrators strategies for improving career counseling in agricultural education in south east Universities, Nigeria; and
- c. Parents related strategies for improving career counseling in agricultural education in south east Universities, Nigeria

Research questions

1. What are the government strategies for improving career counseling in agricultural education in south east Universities, Nigeria?
2. What are the school administrator strategies for improving career counseling in agricultural education in south east Universities, Nigeria?
3. What are the parents strategies for improving career counseling in agricultural education in south east Universities, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The formulated hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

Ho1: There is no significant difference in the mean response of agricultural education lecturers and guidance counselors on the government strategies for improving career counseling in agricultural education in South East Universities, Nigeria.

Ho2: There is no significant difference in the mean response of agricultural education lecturers and guidance counselors on the school administrators strategies for improving career counseling in agricultural education in south east Universities, Nigeria.

Methodology

The study adopted questionnaire survey research design. This design was considered suitable because the opinion of a representative sample of respondents was sought using questionnaire and the finding was generalized on the entire population. The population of study is 139, consisting of 73 lecturers of Agricultural education and 63 counselors in the universities. The entire population was used for the study since the population was manageable. The instrument for data collection was questionnaire titled: Agricultural education career improvement strategies questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed from literature reviewed by the researchers and used for data collection. while the instrument was structured on a four point response scale of strongly agreed (SA), Agreed(A), Disagreed (D) and Strongly disagreed (SD) with corresponding values of 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. The instrument was face – validated by three university lecturers: One from Department of Agricultural education, one from Department of Psychology and

Guidance counseling and one from measurement and evaluation department-Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike. Their corrections and suggestions were utilized to improve the initial copies of the questionnaire to produce the final copies. Cronbach Alpha reliability methods were adopted to determine the internal consistency of the questionnaire items. A Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.84 was obtained, indicating that the instrument was reliable and the collected data was analyzed using mean for research questions and T-test For the tested hypothesis. Any mean response of 2.50 and above was considered positive or required while any mean response below 2.50 was considered disagreed, More so the hypothesis will be tested at 0.05 level of significant. However, the hypothesis of no significant was not rejected when the p-value was less than the alpha-value of .05 and vice versa.

Data presentation and Analysis

Research Question 1

What are the government strategies for improving career counseling in agricultural education in South East Universities, Nigeria.

Hypothesis 1

H01: There is no significant difference in the mean response of agricultural education lecturers and guidance counselors on the government strategies for improving career counseling in agricultural education in South East Universities, Nigeria.

The data presented in table 1 showed the mean rating of lecturers of Agricultural education and counselors on the 7 items in had their ranged from 2.50–3.78 were all above the cut-off value of 2.50 on a 4-point rating scale. These however indicated agreed. Therefore, the mean of 2.50–3.78 showed that the lecturers of Agricultural education and counselors are in agreement with the government strategies for improving career counseling in agricultural education in south east Universities, Nigeria. The standard deviation of all the 7 items ranged from .42 to 1.15, which showed that the respondents were not too far

from the mean and the opinion of one another in their responses on the government strategies for improving career counseling in agricultural education in south east Universities, Nigeria.

The p-values on all the items were all greater than the alpha-value of 0.05. With the forgoing, we therefore reject the null hypothesis for the items and accept the alternate hypothesis. Which means there is significant difference in the mean response of lecturers of Agricultural education and counselors on the government strategies for improving career counseling in agricultural education in south east Universities, Nigeria.

Research Question 2

What are the School administrative strategies for improving career counseling in agricultural education in South East Universities, Nigeria?

Hypothesis 2

H02: There is no significant difference in the mean response of agricultural education lecturers and guidance counselors on the school administrators strategies for improving career counseling in agricultural education in south east Universities, Nigeria.

The data presented in table 2 showed the mean rating of lecturers of Agricultural education and counselors on the 7 items in had their ranged from 2.68–3.40 were all above the cut-off value of 2.50 on a 4-point rating scale. These however indicated agreed. Therefore, the mean of 2.68–3.48 showed that the lecturers of Agricultural education and counselors are in agreement with the school administrators strategies for improving career counseling in agricultural education in south east Universities, Nigeria. The standard deviation of all the 7 items ranged from .40 to 1.45, which showed that the respondents were not too far from the mean and the opinion of one another in their responses on the school administrators strategies for improving career counseling in agricultural education in south east Universities, Nigeria.

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation on the government strategies for improving career counseling in agricultural education in South East Universities, Nigeria

S/N	Government Strategies	Mean	S	P-value	Decision
1	Establishment of standard guidance and counseling in every tertiary institution	3.78	.42	.88	Agreed, NS
2	Increasing fund allocation to tertiary institution for acquisition and maintenance of counseling centres	3.54	.57	.56	Agreed, NS
3	Recruitment of qualified guidance counselors for effective counseling services.	2.50	.72	.63	Agreed, NS
4	Provisions of adequate counseling materials for adequate counseling services.	2.73	1.15	.69	Agreed, NS
5	Retraining of counselors by the Government in order to be conversant with the basic skills required for effective counseling services.	3.40	.49	.38	Agreed, NS
6	Motivate students' interest in the use of counseling services	2.82	.78	.69	Agreed, NS
7	Regular supervision and evaluation of in counseling services in tertiary institutions	3.36	.80	.84	Agreed, NS

S= Significant, NS= Not Significant and Our critical $t= 1.968$, $Sig \geq .05$

Table 2. Mean and standard deviation on the school administrators for improving career counseling in agricultural education in South East Universities, Nigeria

S/N	School administrators strategies	Mean	S	P-value	Decision
1	Encouraging staff to develop themselves for effective counseling services	2.99	.40	.71	Agreed, NS
2	Provision of funds to the counselors to procure resources for counseling services	2.68	1.36	.42	Agreed, NS
3	Regular orientation new students on goals and objectives of counseling services	2.96	1.45	.83	Agreed, NS
4	Maintaining official relationship between the teachers and students for counseling services	2.96	.92	.72	Agreed, NS
5	Involving the parents' teachers Association in major counseling services	3.36	.80	.84	Agreed, NS
6	Regular supervision of counseling activities in schools	3.48	.54	.76	Agreed, NS
7	Enlightening the students on the benefits of participating in counseling activities in schools	2.82	.78	.69	Agreed, NS

S= Significant, NS= Not Significant and Our critical $t= 1.968$, $Sig \geq .05$

Table 3. Mean and standard deviation on the Parents strategies for improving career counseling in agricultural education in South East Universities, Nigeria

S/N	Students strategies	Mean	S	Decision
1	Encouraging students in participating in counseling activities in schools	3.34	.48	Agreed
2	Assisting schools in providing counseling materials in schools	3.57	1.40	Agreed
3	Adequate financial support to students for buying of counseling materials	3.71	.58	Agreed
4	Enlightening the students on benefits of participating in counseling activities in schools	2.99	.40	Agreed
5	Serving as a resources person to schools as it concern counseling activities	2.96	.92	Agreed
6	Regular consultation of counselors and teachers of agricultural education on the students' performance in school	2.93	1.51	Agreed

The p-values on all the items were all greater than the alpha-value of 0.05. With the foregoing, we therefore reject the null hypothesis for the items and accept the alternate hypothesis. Which means there is significant difference in the mean response of lecturers of Agricultural education and counselors on the school administrators strategies for improving career counseling in agricultural education in south east Universities, Nigeria.

Research Question 3

3. What are the Parents strategies for improving career counseling in agricultural education in South East Universities, Nigeria?

The data presented in table 3 showed the mean rating of lecturers of Agricultural education and counselors on the 6 items in had their ranged from 2.93–3.71 were all above the cut-off value of 2.50 on a 4-point rating scale. These however indicated agreed. Therefore, the mean of 2.68–3.48 showed that the lecturers of Agricultural education and counselors are in agreement with the Parents strategies for improving career counseling in agricultural education in south east Universities, Nigeria. The standard deviation of all the 6 items ranged from .40 to 1.51, which showed that the respondents were not too far from the mean and the opinion of one another in their responses on the Parents strategies for improving career counseling in agricultural education in south east Universities, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The data presented in table 1 showed the mean rating of lecturers of Agricultural education and counselors on the 7 items in had their ranged from 2.50–3.78 were all above the cut-off value of 2.50 on a 4-point rating scale. These however indicated agreed. Therefore, the mean of 2.50–3.78 showed that the lecturers of Agricultural education and counselors are in agreement with the government strategies for improving career counseling in agricultural education in south east Universities, Nigeria. The government strategies include among others Establishment of standard guidance and counseling in every tertiary institution, Increasing fund allocation to tertiary institution for acquisition & maintenance of counseling centres and Regular supervision and evaluation of in counseling services in tertiary institutions The finding of the study were in consistent with Mogbo (2011) who said among others that States should intensify training programmers to produce enough guidance counselors for all post primary institutions within the state, States should have counseling units/sections in the Ministries of Education headed by a trained qualified counselor and The implementation of guidance and counseling services in the state should be supervised, monitored and evaluated on regular basis.

The data presented in table 2 showed the mean rating of lecturers of Agricultural education and counselors on the 7

items in had their ranged from 2.68–3.40 were all above the cut-off value of 2.50 on a 4-point rating scale. These however indicated agreed. Therefore, the mean of 2.68–3.48 showed that the lecturers of Agricultural education and counselors are in agreement with the school administrators strategies for improving career counseling in agricultural education in Nigeria Universities. The school strategies include Encouraging staff to develop themselves for effective counseling services, Provision of funds to the counselors to procure resources for counseling services an Regular orientation new students on goals and objectives of counseling services This finding is in line with Odoemalam, A.M. & Uwam, Y.A (2009)) who posit that among the school way of enhancing career counseling includes; Orientation service/programme for new students and Remedial and referral guidance programmes etc.

The data presented in table 3 showed the mean rating of lecturers of Agricultural education and counselors on the 6 items in had their ranged from 2.93–3.71 were all above the cut-off value of 2.50 on a 4-point rating scale. These however indicated agreed. Therefore, the mean of 2.68–3.48 showed that the lecturers of Agricultural education and counselors are in agreement with the Parents strategies for improving career counseling in agricultural education in south east Universities, Nigeria. However, the parents strategies identified includes among others; Encouraging students in participating in counseling activities in schools, Assisting schools in providing counseling materials in schools and Regular consultation of counselors and teachers of agricultural education on the students' performance in school. The above finding is similar to the outcome of Mogbo (2005) who also identified among others that parents should support and encouragement of counselors to do their best, in implementing the programme.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is clear from all that the improvement of career counseling services and programmes in tertiary institutions, especially in Agricultural education department is an enormous task that requires concerted effort by all stakeholders. Stakeholders therefore should totally accept to do their best, be focused and committed to follow the principles and ethics of the profession, have mutual trust and respect for each other as a team in their working relationship. Encourage and support committee counselors to do their best as counselors. Encourage and support counselors, but have the courage to call them to order when they stray. Always maintaining a good working relationship with counselors, to be able achieve the counseling and guidance goal of assisting students to critically examine themselves to understand their positive and negative feelings of fear, anxiety, and value orientation for adequate personality development and growth which helps the school to be more productive. Counseling

service centres should be established and made functional in tertiary institutions, Orientation service/programme for new students, Organizing seminars, talks, workshops, conferences at least annually, this will help stakeholders to get adequate information for proper implementation of guidance and counseling services in all schools in the state and also support and encouragement of counselors to do their best, in implementing the programme. There should be a regular supervision, monitoring and evaluation of the career counseling services in agricultural education departments

Finally, all resources (physical, social, economic and human) needed for the implementation of the guidance and counseling programme in tertiary institutions, especially in Agricultural education department be provided by the stakeholders in and outside the school community for adequate economic recovery.

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