

Career Preference of Education Undergraduates in University of Port Harcourt: Implications for Teaching Manpower Development

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ABSTRACT

The main thrust of this study was to identify the implications of the career preference of students studying education as a course in university of Port Harcourt, Rivers State Nigeria on teaching manpower development. The research design was descriptive survey with a population of five hundred and eighty four (584) final year students of the faculty of Education in 2016/2017 academic session. Using proportionate stratified sampling technique, a sample size of 292 (50%) was got. A researcher-structured instrument titled “Teaching Manpower Development and Career Preference Questionnaire” (TMDCPQ) was used to gather data. The instrument was structured in line with the modified Likert four-point scale. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The questions were answered using mean and standard deviation while the hypotheses were analyzed using z-test at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that an average of three-quarters (219) of these students studying Education as a course do not have interest to teach on graduation. Their preferred careers are those with perceived high social value and attractive remuneration. One obvious implication is that the knowledge and skills acquired will not be utilized in the development of the teaching manpower. Recommendations include the need for proper counseling of the students and improved teaching working conditions to attract and retain in the education system many graduates of the education faculty as those from colleges and universities of education in the education system.

Keywords: Teaching manpower development, career preference, Education undergraduates.

INTRODUCTION

It is in the purview of the education system to produce the desired skilled manpower of any nation. No wonder the Nigeria National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) asserted that education is a vital tool for national development. For any nation to achieve high level socio-economic development there must be an improvement on her stock of manpower resource hence the need for manpower development. Ebong (2006) explained manpower development as a function of education. There is no gainsaying that manpower development is an important prerequisite for national

development since the economy of any nation and its rate of growth depend on adequate supply of skilled workers. Woodhall and Ward (2000) posited that the educated manpower is a very important element in economic development. However, in Nigeria as a developing nation, there seem to be a prevalence of status inconsistency where people occupy high level jobs that are inconsistent with their training.

One of the functions of universities and in fact all tertiary institutions are to train skilled manpower for the national economy. Universities are expected to produce high

level manpower; therefore, their programmes are supposed to be in tandem with what is expected for such high level jobs. The most important of the many functions of the educational system is to produce the desired skilled manpower for a nation's economic growth. In fact, the two main issues are that students in tertiary institutions are at liberty to choose any course of study resulting in some courses having far more number of students than others. The next most important issue is also that most students study courses that are not related to their preferred career which manifest in their obvious lack of interest. Okon and Archibong (2015) opined that career aspiration is significant because an individual's happiness depends on choosing an acceptable career.

Peter in Okon and Archibong (2015) explained that an acceptable career is not just one that is suitable but a career which affords an individual the opportunity to have a palatable livelihood and fulfilled ambition in life. In the opinion of Adana in Okon and Archibong (2015), parents do interfere in their children's career choice often wanting them to take after their own profession or choose a supposed "influential" career. In the absence of parental influence, a child's choice of career could be borne out of sheer interest or peer-group influence or even the desire to emulate a person the child sees as a role model. The effect of parents' social status cannot also be ruled out.

When students choose to study education as a course because they have no other option for instance, after being trained as teachers, on graduation they would not wish to teach. Meanwhile it is incontrovertible that education is the most vital tool for social and economic transformation of any nation. This is made possible through teaching and learning. Therefore the teacher plays a strategic role. No wonder Ohia and Obasi (2015) penned that the teacher is an indispensable instrument that propels educational activities towards achieving national development. Corroborating the assertion

about the importance of the teacher, Unachukwu, Okereke and Nwankwo (2009) posited that the quality of the education system of a nation is a reflection of the quality of people produced to serve as teachers in the system. All these are to buttress the justification for the seriousness put into producing adequately skilled manpower for the education system. The faculties of education in universities, including Universities and Colleges of Education in Nigeria are well-committed to doing this. On the contrary, the students show apathy in taking up the actual teaching on graduation. It is essential therefore to find out the mindset of those being trained to become teachers.

According to Nte and Amadi (2005, p.90) "One of the specific applications of the Human Capital Theory is in the explanation of career/ course choice in higher education". It becomes pertinent that the students have knowledge about their own abilities, interests and values; otherwise, there will be the difficulty of relating personal characteristics to the requirement and demands of their preferred career. As a matter of fact, it is observed that many students after leaving in school find out that the knowledge and skills they acquired were not what they really needed to participate in the economic and social development of their society. Worthy of note is the fact that with the introduction of universal, free and compulsory basic education in Nigeria, the enrolment of school children increased; consequent upon this, it becomes exigent to produce adequately trained teaching manpower to sustain the scheme.

Theoretical Perspective

This study is hinged on the Human Capital Theory in manpower planning by Adams Smith (1776). In addition to the assertion of this theory that the human being is the most active agent in the production process, it also has explanation for career choice. This is predicated on the Marshallian dictum which according to Nte and Amadi

(2005 p. 216) explained that “if the advantage of any one occupation is above the average, there is a quick influx of youths from other occupations”.

Statement of the Problem

There is a seeming decrease in the number of professionally trained teachers in the national education system despite the large number of students graduating each year from faculties of education in Universities and Colleges and Universities of Education. Many students are studying education as a course unenthusiastically with the result that after acquiring the teaching skills, they do not show any willingness to go the classroom to teach, why? They would rather opt for “juicy” jobs, in the absence of which that prefer to even stay idle still searching than take up a teaching job. The resultant effect of this is dearth of qualified skilled teaching manpower.

Purpose of study

The main purpose of this study is to examine the implications of education undergraduates career preference on teaching manpower development in Nigeria. Specifically, this study is poised to determine if the students’ course of study is in anyway related to their preferred career and also the implications of these students’ preferred career on the provision of adequately trained teaching manpower for the nation’s education system.

Research Questions

The two research question that guided the study are:

1. What are the career preferences of undergraduates studying education as a course in University of Port-Harcourt?
2. What factors influence the choice of career of undergraduates studying education as a course in University of Port- Harcourt?

Hypotheses

These two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance

Ho₁: There is no significant difference between education students course of study and their preferred career.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference in the students opinions about the factors that influenced their choice of course and their preferred career.

MATERIALS & METHODS

The research design was descriptive survey. The population comprised of all final year students studying education as a course in University of Port Harcourt, 2016/2017 academic session. The numerical strength was five hundred and eighty-four (584) students. The sample size was two hundred and nine-two (292) students got using proportionate stratified random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a researcher-structured questionnaire titled “Teaching Manpower Development and Career Preference Questionnaire” (TMDCPQ). This questionnaire has validated by measurement and evaluation experts in the faculty. Test-retest was used to ascertain the reliability of the instrument. The responses were analysed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient which yielded a reliability index of 0.80. The instrument is structured in line with the modified Likert four- point scale of strongly agree (4), agree (3) disagreed (2) and strongly disagree (1). The criterion mean was 2.50. On computing the mean scores of the responses, statements with weighted mean scores below 2.50 were rejected while those above 2.50 were accepted. z-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULT

Research Question 1: What are the career preferences of Education undergraduates in Universities, Fort Harcourt? (2016/2017)

The responses got for Research Question 1 are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: *Weighted Mean and SD of Responses of the Students on their Preferred Career. N= 363*

S/N	Questionnaire items	Mean	SD	Remarks
1.	Teaching	1.58	1.06	Reject
2.	Business	2.66	0.71	Accept
3.	Working a finance house	3.12	0.38	Accept
4.	Civil service job	1.97	0.87	Reject
5.	Work in a company	3.33	0.60	Accept

The results in Table 1 clearly show that the students in faculty of education do not intend to teach on graduation in spite of the fact that they are being trained as teachers. Weighted mean (\bar{x}) for teaching job is 1.58 which is below the criterion mean of 2.50, and taking up civil service job also has a weighted mean of 1.97 which is equally below 2.50 were rejected. Working in a finance house, company and going into business have weighted means of 3.12, 3.33 and 2.66 respectively. These values are above the criterion mean of 2.50 and are therefore accepted.

Research Question 2: What factors influenced Education Students choice of career?

The students' responses are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Weighted Mean and SD of Students' Responses on Factors that influenced their Choice of Career.

S/N	Questionnaire items	Mean	SD	Remarks
1.	Personal Interest in career	2.00	1.60	Reject
2.	Career preferred by parents	2.58	1.34	Accept
3.	Career with high job prospects	2.70	1.90	Accept

Table 3: z-test Analysis of the difference between the students' opinions above their course of study and their preferred career

Students' opinion about their	Mean	SD	N	df	z-cal	z-crit	Decision
Course of Study	2.44	0.90	292	290	1.24	1.96	Accepted
Preferred career	2.68	1.02					

The null hypothesis is accepted at 0.05 level of significance and 290 degree of freedom (df) since the calculated z-value is 1.24 which is less than the z-critical value. There is therefore no significant relationship between the course the students are studying and their preferred career. The implications of this in the development of teaching manpower are that a large number of students produced by the education faculty will not teach on graduation. This of course

Table 4: Statistical analysis of the students' opinions on factors that influenced their choice of course and their preferred career

Students' opinion about their	Mean	SD	N	df	z-cal	z-crit	Decision
Choice of Course	2.46	0.70	292	290	2.41	1.96	Rejected
Choice of career	2.07	0.64					

There is significant difference between the factors that dictate the students' choice of course and their choice of career. This null hypothesis is rejected since the calculated z-test value is 2.41 which are higher than the

4.	Lucrative career	3.21	2.00	Accept
5.	Natural talent	2.42	1.24	Reject

It is clear from the results in Table 2, that students' choice of career is influenced by the lucrative nature of the preferred career, extent of job prospects associated with the career and also parental influence. These have weighted means of 3.21, 2.70 and 2.58 respectively. These values are all accepted because they are higher than the criterion mean of 2.50. Surprisingly, factors like personal interest in career and natural talent for preferred career have weighted mean of 2.00 and 2.42 respectively. These values are below the criterion mean of 2.50 and are therefore rejected.

Null Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference between the students' course of study and their preferred career

The z-test analysis is presented in Table 3

will result in ever increasing lack of trained manpower in the teaching field. The resources utilized in training such manpower are wasted resulting in unskilled and untrained manpower being eventually employed to teach.

Null Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the factors that influence students' preferred choice of course and their choice of career

critical z-value of 1.96. The students study courses that are not related to what they wish to do on graduation. The implication is that there exists status inconsistency which is a situation where job positions are

occupied by people that are not trained for the job.

DISCUSSION

The study discovered that many of the students, in fact about 84% of them studying education as a course are not interested in practicing the skills acquired. This is evident from their preference for careers in companies and finance houses. This is in line with the assertion of Marshall in Nte and Amadi (2005) that any occupation that has comparative advantage above average experiences a quick influx of youths from other occupations.

The remunerative index of any job is very vital, afterall, individuals are utility maximizers. Whenever skill shortages are signaled through what is known as “wage incentives”, there seem to be quick responses to the signal by the choice of course in the relevant field. However, the extent to which it is right that these students should choose course of study or career based on the remunerative value without considering their capabilities is debatable. In the opinions of Nte and Amadi (2005), students ought to have knowledge of their abilities and interests so as to accurately relate their personal characteristics to the requirements of their preferred career.

Parents’ influence on the career choice of their children is much, and this is evident in the result of the analysis that has a mean score of 2.58. Parents who ought to know the capabilities of their children even right from childhood seem to be carried away by the wind and caprices of the societal negatively skewed value orientation which is tilted towards wealth acquisition. This is supported by the observation of Adana in Okon and Archibong (2015) that parents interfere a lot in their children’s choice of career. It is worthy to note that parents who are even teachers themselves do not seem to encourage their children to take up teaching as a career. The result of this study is shown in the fact that teaching had the lowest mean score of (1.58) of all the job options.

Meanwhile it is the education sector of any nation that produces skilled manpower for other sectors of the economy. The teacher therefore is the driving force. This is corroborated by Ohia and Obasi (2015) that the teacher is an indispensable instrument propelling the educational activities towards the ultimate attainment of national development.

CONCLUSION

These students’ negative mindset about teaching as a career, as is evident from their responses portend not favourable implications for teaching manpower development in Nigeria. This study has revealed that a good number of the students are studying education as a course without having the intention or zeal to teach on graduation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Appropriate counseling programmes should be put in place to help in the reorientation of the students’ value system and mindsets. There is the need for the government to improve the teacher-conditions of service generally to attract and retain the young education graduates.

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