



# Impact of vocational guidance on career choice and employability of vocational and technical education students in a public university in Anambra State

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**Abstract:** This study investigated the impact of vocational guidance on career choice and employability of vocational and technical education students in academic institutions in Anambra State. Two hypotheses were tested. This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The study was carried out in Anambra State. Two hundred and twenty-seven (227) students of technical and vocational education in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka in Anambra State, Nigeria participated in the study. The instrument used for data collection was a thirty items questionnaire. Specifically, there were ten items on employability skills adapted from Rothwell and Arnold (2007), ten items on career choice adapted from Osipow and Winer (1996) and ten items on vocational guidance adapted from Lawrence (1993). The validity and psychometric properties of the scales were already established by the developers; hence no further evaluation was carried out on the scale. Simple linear regression was used to analyze the data at 0.05 level of significance. It was found, among others, that vocational guidance does not predict career choice of technical and education students which is contrary to popular findings of similar studies.

**Keywords:** Vocational, Guidance, Career, Choice, Employability, Vocational, Technical, Students

## 1. Introduction

Public universities serve as the foundation of literacy and play a crucial role in fostering human and societal development. Public universities, like colleges of education and polytechnics, hold a significant position in society as they serve as the bedrock of literacy and development. They provide the necessary platform for individuals to acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are essential for personal growth and success. By offering formal education via structured learning environments, public universities empower individuals to develop their intellectual critical thinking skills, and problem-solving abilities. Pointedly, one of the disciplines in public universities that have aided in the development of skills for employment is technical and vocational education since it affords the trainees the opportunity to acquire knowledge, attitude and skills that make one self-reliant or employable in the labour market.

TVE is a career education that enables learners to adapt to the evolving demands of specific industries and the broader economic sectors (Uzohuo, 2022). Similarly, Okoro (2016) described vocational education as a practical form of education that equips individuals with the essential skills required for productive employment and poverty alleviation. In the same vein, Asogwa and Diogu (2014) described vocational education as a type of education or training that prepares individuals for occupations primarily focused on manual or practical activities. It can be formal or non-formal in nature. It is directly related to a specific trade, occupation, or vocation. In the context of this study, vocational education refers to the kind of education that equips learners with the necessary knowledge, attitude and skills to create job opportunities and adapt to changing work environments.

According to the National Policy on Education, TVE pertains to the realm of learning that emphasizes the acquisition of hands-on and applicable abilities, coupled with essential scientific understanding, intended for use in real-world scenarios (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2019). Okoro, as cited in Ejiofor and Ohanu (2013) opined that vocational education encompasses any form of education aimed at preparing individuals for employment in recognized occupations. This form of education plays a crucial role in equipping individuals with specific knowledge, attitude, and skills necessary

for self-employment as entrepreneurs, teaching vocational subjects/courses in technical colleges and higher institutions as vocational education teachers, or working effectively in various industries. Additionally, vocational education is helpful for providing vocational guidance to learners.

Vocational guidance may be described as the support given to individuals in resolving issues related to vocational planning, choice of occupation/career, considering their peculiar characteristics and their relevance to available job opportunities. Vocational guidance refers to teaching students the competencies needed for a vocation (Magee et al, 2022). Similarly, Momoh (2018) defines vocational guidance as a process that assists clients in selecting a suitable occupation, preparing for it, entering it, and progressing within it. Within any academic major, learners must be properly guided to transit smoothly from school to work; especially in the present time where career development has become very crucial (Chukwuedo et al, 2022). This guidance should be tailored to the individual student, considering factors such as their personality traits, interests, abilities, values, and more. Such guidance profoundly influences their lifestyle, including their dietary choices, clothing preferences, living arrangements, social circle, and even the type of vehicle they drive, among other aspects. In the context of this study, vocational guidance entails providing advice to individuals regarding the most suitable line of work based on their abilities and aptitudes.

Vocational guidance services, as outlined by Uwaifo (2019), encompass various activities aimed at assisting individuals in their career development. These services involve raising awareness about the world of work, providing students with relevant information about different occupations, preparing them for skill acquisition necessary for potential employment and placement at various educational levels. Moreover, vocational guidance encourages students to engage in pre-vocational activities related to entrepreneurship, trades, arts, and crafts. It also involves guiding students and parents in making vocational choices, selecting appropriate subjects or courses, and resolving any conflicts that may arise in such matters. The provision of these guidance services has proven beneficial in facilitating career choice among numerous individuals.

Career choice, as defined by Nuru (2017) is the act of selecting a specific occupation, typically influenced by factors such as parental guidance, vocational guidance, admiration for certain individuals, engaging in trial or part-time jobs, available training opportunities, personal interests, and aptitude assessments. Similarly, Oranu (2020) explains career choice as the process of deciding on a career path, which may involve considerations regarding education and training required for a particular profession. A career can encompass a wide range of occupations, including professions like builders, mechanics, teacher, electrician, and many others.

Career choice involves increased level of understanding and knowledge about various career options, industries, and professions. Career choice means making decision about which career path and job are to pursue among the available alternatives rationally and undertaking the proper strategies for career readiness (Md. Roknuzzaman & Shahanaz, 2021). It also involves gaining a broader perspective and deeper insights into the diverse range of career paths available to individuals. When individuals have career choice, they are exposed to information and resources that allow them to explore different careers in a comprehensive manner. They become more knowledgeable about the qualifications, skills, and experiences required for specific occupations, as well as the potential job prospects and growth opportunities in those fields. Career choice goes beyond surface-level knowledge, it involves a deeper understanding of the intricacies and nuances of different careers, including the day-to-day responsibilities, work environments, and potential challenges or rewards associated with each profession.

Vocational guidance plays a vital role in assisting students to make informed and suitable career choices by providing them with guidance, support, and tools to assess their skills, strengths, and interests. It aims to align their individual characteristics with potential career options, ensuring that they make well-informed decisions about their future paths. Uzohuo (2022) added that vocational guidance empowers students to make informed career choices by providing them with tools for self-assessment, exposure to career information, experiential learning opportunities, and guidance from professionals. By aligning their skills, strengths, and interests with potential career options, students can make decisions that are well-suited to their individual characteristics, enhancing their chances of finding satisfaction and success in their chosen paths and employability.

Employability, as defined by Ojimba (2015), encompasses a collection of accomplishments, including skills, knowledge, and personal qualities, that enhance graduates' prospects of obtaining employment and achieving success in their chosen careers. This not only benefits the individuals themselves but also contributes to the overall workforce, community, and economy. Similarly, Eze (2013) characterizes employability as the qualities possessed by an individual that enable them to secure and sustain employment. However, the term employability is often used interchangeably with other terms such as soft skills, generic skills, 21st-century skills, generic attributes, transferable skills, generic competencies, and holistic competencies.

From the foregoing, vocational guidance has played a significant role in enhancing the employability of numerous learners. As noted by Uzohuo (2022), vocational guidance has improved employability by recommending measures to enhance the employability of individuals or specific groups, aiding individuals or groups in making career decisions, adapting to occupational life, and evaluating individual strengths and weaknesses to align them with job requirements. Additionally, vocational guidance helps create awareness and appreciation of the employment market realities within the community, fosters collaboration with other guidance agencies to stimulate joint efforts, and promotes

self-employment as a viable option. Through these various means, vocational guidance has effectively contributed to the improvement and advancement of learners' employability.

Regrettably, it seems that Vocational and Technical Education in Anambra State public universities have been unable to effectively provide vocational guidance on career choices and employability to students. This might be due to inadequate Vocational and Technical teachers, lack of instructional materials, inadequate funding among many other hindrances. This lack of guidance seems to have discouraged prospective students from enrolling in the programme. These challenges seem to have also dissuaded potential investors from investing in the state due to the adverse consequences arising from this situation. Based on the researcher's observations, it appears that the government faces constraints in improving the programme, possibly due to inadequate funding for education in the country. Consequently, unqualified teachers may have been employed, leading to a shortage of qualified instructors in Vocational and Technical Education. This, in turn, contributes to a perceived lack of vocational guidance on career choices and employability, ultimately exacerbating the state's unemployment rate. The current study therefore, seeks to determine the impact of vocational guidance on the career choices and employability of vocational and technical students in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka of Anambra State. To achieve that, the following null hypotheses were formulated and tested:

$H_1$ : Vocational guidance has no significant impact on career choices of vocational and technical students.

$H_2$ : Vocational guidance has no significant impact on employability of vocational and technical students.

## 2. Method

### 2.1 Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. According to Nworgu (2015), a descriptive survey research design is a research methodology that aims to describe and analyze the characteristics, behaviors, or opinions of a specific population or group. It involves collecting data from a sample of individuals or units to provide a snapshot or overview of a particular phenomenon or situation. This design is deemed suitable for this study since it has to do with the systematic collection and analysis of data collected from a specific population or group.

### 2.2 Area of Study

The study was carried out in Anambra State. The state is known for commercial activities that might focus much in business activities and it becomes important to review impact of vocational guidance on career choice and employability of vocational and technical students in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka Anambra State

### 2.3 Participant

The population was all the 227 students of technical vocational education in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka in Anambra State, Nigeria.

### 2.4 Data Collection and Analysis

The instrument used for data collection was a thirty items questionnaire. Specifically, there were ten items on employability skills adapted from Rothwell and Arnold (2007), ten items on career choice adapted from Osipow and Winer (1996) and ten items on vocational guidance adapted from Lawrence (1993). The validity and psychometric properties of the scales were already established by the developers; hence no further evaluation was carried out on the scale. Simple linear regression was used to analyze the data at 0.05 level of significance

## 3. Results and Discussions

The results on the data collected to determine the impact of vocational guidance on career choices and employability of vocational and technical education students in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka are presented in this section. The discussions of findings are also presented under this section.

### 3.1 Impact of vocational guidance on career choice of vocational and technical students in public universities

The data on Table 1 show the relative impact of vocational guidance on career choice of vocational and technical education students.

**Table 1: Summary of Linear Regression on the impact of vocational guidance on career choice of vocational and technical education students**

					R <sup>2</sup>	B	t	Sig	Decision
<b>Model</b>	<b>SS</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Ms</b>	<b>F</b>					
Regression	.508	1	.508	3.843	.019	.137	1.960	.051	NS
Residual	26.726	202	.132						
Total	27.234	203							

**Note:** NS= Not Significant

The data on Table 1 reveals the summary of linear regression on the impact of vocational guidance on career choice. The table shows that the impact of vocational guidance on career choice is not significant:  $F=3.843$ ,  $B=.137$ ,  $t=1.960$ ,  $P=.051 > 0.05$ , hence the null hypothesis is accepted. This means that vocational guidance has no significant impact on vocational and technical education students' career choice in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Nigeria.

Though, vocational guidance plays a crucial role in helping students in public universities in their career choices, findings from the instant study indicated that the impact as it affects vocational and technical education students in Nnamdi Azikiwe university may be insignificant. According to Ejiofor and Ohanu (2013), vocational guidance increased understanding of career options because vocational guidance provides vocational and technical students with a comprehensive understanding of the diverse career options available within their chosen fields. Through career assessments, counseling sessions, and exposure to real-world examples, students gain insights into various occupations, industries, and job roles. This knowledge empowers them to make informed decisions based on a deeper understanding of the opportunities and pathways available to them.

Vocational guidance also has the ability of making sure there is alignment of interests, abilities, and goals. As opined by Chukwuedo et al (2022), learners must be properly guided to transit smoothly from school to work; especially in the present time where career development has become very crucial. Thus, vocational guidance helps students identify and align their interests, abilities, and career goals. Career counselors assist students in exploring their passions, strengths, and skills, and then guide them in selecting career paths that match their unique attributes. This alignment ensures that students choose careers that resonate with their personal aspirations and have a higher likelihood of long-term satisfaction and success.

On the other hand, Ejiofor and Ohanu (2013) stated that exploration of educational and training requirements. Vocational guidance provides students with essential information about the educational and training requirements for their desired careers. Career counselors guide students on the specific academic programs, certifications, or skill-building opportunities necessary to pursue their chosen vocations. This guidance ensures that students are aware of the qualifications and competencies needed, enabling them to plan their educational journeys effectively.

Momoh (2018) added that access to industry information and labor market trends. Vocational guidance keeps students updated on industry information, labor market trends, and emerging opportunities within their chosen vocational fields. Career counselors provide insights into job market demands, skills in demand, and emerging career pathways. This information equips students with the knowledge to anticipate and adapt to changing industry needs, ensuring that their career choices align with market realities.

For Uwaifo (2019), Vocational guidance ensures there is development of decision-making skills. Vocational guidance helps students develop effective decision-making skills related to their career choices. Through counseling sessions, career assessments, and discussions, students learn how to gather and analyze information, evaluate options, weigh pros and cons, and make informed decisions. These decision-making skills are transferable and can benefit students not only in their career choices but also in other aspects of their lives.

In addition, Nuru (2017) posited that Vocational guidance boosts confidence and self-efficacy. Vocational guidance boosts students' confidence and self-efficacy in making career choices. By providing them with the necessary information, support, and guidance, career counselors empower students to take ownership of their career decisions. This increased confidence allows students to approach their vocational and technical education with a sense of purpose and conviction, knowing that they have made informed choices based on their unique circumstances and aspirations.

Oranu (2020) stated that Vocational guidance supports long-term career planning. Vocational guidance supports students in developing long-term career plans. Career counselors help students map out their career trajectories, set short-term and long-term goals, and create action plans to achieve those goals. This strategic approach to career planning ensures that students have a clear direction and are prepared for the steps they need to take to reach their desired career outcomes.

### 3.1 Impact of vocational guidance on employability of vocational and technical students in public universities

The data on Table 2 show the relative impact of vocational guidance on employability of vocational and technical education students.

**Table 2: Summary of Linear Regression on the impact of vocational guidance on the employability of vocational and technical education students**

Model	SS	df	Ms	F	R <sup>2</sup>	B	t	Sig	Decision
Regression	.469	1	.469	2.564					
Residual	36.957	202	.183		.013	.132	1.601		NS
Total	37.426	203						.111	

Note: NS= Not Significant

Table 2 reveal the summary of linear regression on impact of vocation guidance on employability of vocational and technical education students. The table shows that the impact of vocational guidance on employability is not significant:  $F = 2.564$ ,  $B = .132$ ,  $t = 1.601$ ,  $P = .111 > .050$ . Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted. This means that vocational guidance has no significant impact on vocational and technical students' employability in Nnamdi Azikiwe university Awka, Nigeria.

The roles of vocational guidance in shaping the employability profile of students have been aptly recognized, however, findings from our study shows that, its impact in the anticipatory career trajectory of vocational and technical students in in Nnamdi Azikiwe university may be insignificant. This finding is at variance with Uwaifo (2019) who stated that vocational guidance assists the skill development of vocational and technical students in public university. Vocational guidance assists students in identifying and developing the specific skills required in their chosen vocational or technical fields. Career counselors provide guidance on the essential technical, practical, and transferable skills that employers seek. By aligning their skill development with industry demands, students enhance their employability and become more competitive in the job market.

Nuru (2017) added that vocational guidance helps students gain industry knowledge and awareness. Vocational guidance helps students gain in-depth knowledge and awareness of the industries they are interested in. Career counselors provide insights into industry trends, emerging technologies, and changing market needs. This information equips students with the understanding of industry expectations and helps them stay updated with the latest developments, making them more attractive to potential employers.

More so, Oranu (2020) stated that vocational guidance supports students in resume and interview preparation. Vocational guidance supports students in creating effective resumes and preparing for job interviews. Career counselors provide guidance on structuring resumes, highlighting relevant skills and experiences, and tailoring them to specific job opportunities. They also conduct mock interviews and provide feedback, enabling students to enhance their interview skills, present themselves confidently, and effectively communicate their qualifications to potential employers. Also, Okoro (2016) asserted that vocational guidance assists students in networking and job search strategies. Vocational guidance assists students in developing effective networking and job search strategies. Career counselors provide guidance on building professional networks, utilizing online platforms, attending industry events, and accessing job search resources. By learning how to effectively network and search for job opportunities, students increase their chances of connecting with potential employers and accessing hidden job markets.

Uzohuo (2022) added that vocational guidance helps students explore and secure work-based learning and internships. Vocational guidance helps students explore and secure work-based learning opportunities, such as internships, apprenticeships, or cooperative education programs. Career counselors provide information on available opportunities and guide students in selecting and applying for relevant placements. These experiences allow students to apply their skills in real-world settings, gain practical experience, and develop industry-specific knowledge, enhancing their employability.

Ojimba (2015) posited on a different note that vocational guidance supports students in developing personal branding and professional development. Vocational guidance supports students in developing their personal brand and professional image. Career counselors provide guidance on building a professional online presence, developing a strong professional identity, and demonstrating a commitment to ongoing learning and development. Students are encouraged to participate in workshops, seminars, and industry events to continuously upgrade their skills and knowledge, making them more attractive to employers.

Eze (2013) posited that vocational guidance assists students in career transition support. Vocational guidance assists students in navigating career transitions, such as moving from education to employment or changing careers within their vocational field. Career counselors provide guidance on job market realities, transferable skills, and strategies for

successful transitions. This support helps students effectively navigate the challenges of transitioning into the workforce and adapt to new roles and environments.

By providing students with the necessary guidance, resources, and support, vocational guidance significantly enhances their employability. It equips them with the skills, knowledge, and confidence needed to enter and succeed in the job market, increasing their chances of securing meaningful and rewarding employment in their chosen vocational or technical fields.

#### 4. Conclusion And Suggestions for Further Studies

Based on the findings of the study, it can be seen that vocational guidance is a crucial catalyst that shapes the career awareness and choices of vocational and technical students. Through personalized support, it fosters realistic insights, and bridges educational pursuits with practical aspirations, equipping students with the necessary tools for successful and fulfilling careers. By demystifying career prospects and empowering informed decisions, vocational guidance propels students towards successful and gratifying paths. Furthermore, this guidance significantly enhances the employability of these students by offering personalized support, revealing professional opportunities, and seamlessly connecting education with practical goals, thereby driving them toward prosperous and rewarding careers.

One of the areas of strength of this study is that, quantitative design was adopted in the conduct of the study which enables the researchers to collect data through the use of existing scale whose validity and reliability has been established through a rigorous statistical evaluation. That approach availed the researcher the opportunity to also use a relatively high statistical tool to analyze the data obtained from the respondents. However, there are inherent weaknesses which may limit the generalization of the findings; these include the areas covered and the sample size. Overall, the study has provided a basis for further studies on the impact of vocational guidance on career choice and employability of vocational and technical students especially in other jurisdictions.

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