

# Effective Vocational Guidance and Counselling Programmes: Creating Opportunities for Harnessing Potentials of Street Beggars

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## Abstract

This paper discussed the need to promote vocational guidance and counselling programmes not only at schools but as regards the street beggars. It is observed that majority of street beggars have lots of potentials locked in them which need to be unlocked through vocational guidance and counselling programmes or services. The paper noted that task of counselling is giving individuals opportunities to define, explore, discover and adopt ways of living more satisfying and resourceful life within the social, educational and vocational groupings within which such persons identifies or finds him/herself. It also discussed the concept of vocational guidance and counselling services, and looked at street begging. Opportunities the vocational guidance and counselling programmes could bring to the beggars were also highlighted. The paper concluded by suggesting steps to meeting the challenges vocational guidance and counselling services face in order to harness the potentials of the beggars.

**Keywords:** Vocational Guidance, Counselling Services, Street Begging, Potentials

## Introduction:

This paper aims at discussing possible ways of harnessing potentials of beggars through vocational guidance and counselling programmes in Nigeria. The paper intends to provide innovative strategies for giving the targeted population opportunities to develop skills, confidence, awareness and understanding to become workforce of tomorrow instead of begging on the streets, motor parks, churches in major towns across the country. We intend to develop through suggestions and discussions, a purposeful and people-friendly policy programme by which the beggars will be gradually and systematically evacuated from the major streets; identify their potentials, develop and empower them through vocational guidance and counselling programme. The beggars have been an eye-sore on our major streets and roads as they tend to disfigure the image and pride of major towns in the country, Observations show that some of the beggars seem not to be citizens of Nigeria; they come from neighbouring countries. The paper aims at suggesting opportunities that abound through vocational skills training and development, such that the beggars, will be self-reliant, have skills for earning livelihoods and contribute to and at the same time benefit from economic growth. It is our hope that the outcome of this paper will proffer innovative strategies for imparting saleable skills to the beggars, who have lost hopes of survivals; it will educate the governments and the policy makers on the best approaches to harnessing potentials of the hopeless unemployed handicapped people by making them relevant in the society through skills acquisition and development etc. this is to ensure that our major streets and motor parks are free from beggars who sometimes are involved in accidents, violence and creates eye-sore; disfigures the image and pride of the nation.

## Street Beggars

It is a saying that beggars litter around major streets, cities, motor parks and other busy areas. This is evident as one will be confronted in the sight of beggars littering these areas asking for help, gifts, money etc to sustain themselves. Apart from littering the areas, beggars constitutes nuisance to physical and social environment of major cities in Nigeria. Their continuing reliance on alms seeking as a means of livelihood contributes to wastage of human resources as this group of people have the innate ability to contribute effectively to economic development of the country if rehabilitated. No wonder Jelili (2009) remarked that poverty reduction goal of millennium development goals may not be achieved if the increasing number of beggars is not effectively addressed. To eradicate poverty and extreme hunger, efforts should be geared towards discouraging begging occupation by equipping both existing and prospective beggars with vocational skills for inclusive societal development. In light of the above, training beggars in Nigerian major cities is a clarion call for economic development of the area.

Beggars as used in this paper are persons who solicit alms for a living, impoverished persons, paupers etc. Adedibu and Jelili (2011) posited that many persons engage in begging "occupation" for different reasons as some see it as a lucrative business while others take to begging as a way of disguising and diverting away the attention of people from all evils they wish to perpetrate. Be it as it may, a beggar is one who lives by begging

for money, food etc. According to priyanka (2015), many persons take to begging due to laziness, joblessness, physical challenge etc. From the above definitions, it therefore means that not all beggars are destitute as some beggars are into it as a shield of their evil intentions. Regardless of the motive, equipping beggars and destitute with vocational skills are imperative to reducing the nuisance they cause in the society. To reduce the nuisance caused by beggars in our society, assessing and developing their innate abilities is very vital. Every human is endowed with innate abilities for contributing to the advancement of humanities. Unlike the postulations of John Locke that human minds do not have pre-existing innate ability, it is believable that every human mind needs education and training for development and this is where the need for vocational guidance and counselling services are highly needed. It therefore implies that training of beggars will help in activating their innate abilities thereby harnessing their potentials for inclusive economic development. When equipped with vocational skills, their potentials will be revamped thereby helping them to establish and manage personal businesses to earn livelihoods. When this group of individuals are made to know that they have potentials to survive, pay their bills and take care of their wards, they will be encouraged to stop this degrading pattern of life. This is possible through effective vocational guidance and counselling programme, which the government must give the attention it deserves.

### **Vocational Guidance**

Vocational guidance, according to Parsons (1909) is the processes of helping an individual match his personal attributes and his background with suitable jobs and employment opportunities. Super and Crites (1962) expanded the above definition by saying that vocational guidance is the process of helping the individual to ascertain, accept, understand and apply the relevant facts about occupational world as ascertained through incidental and planned explanatory activities. Super (1957) defines the enterprise of vocational guidance as the process of helping a person to develop and accept an integrated picture of himself, and his role in the world of work, to test this concept against reality and to convert it into reality with satisfaction to himself and benefit to society. A definition of this kind, unlike that of Parsons' conceives vocational guidance as a task that should begin with a teaching function explicitly designed to locate for the individual the type of person he is; with a view to ushering in for the client, that required level of self knowledge he needs to be able to come to a decision about what to do in life. In line with the above explanation, Nwoye (1991) noted that through vocational guidance individuals are given universal attention in understanding the meaning of work in human life; including survival trends in the career world; vocations that are available; and those vital factors and forces one has to consider or way, to make an informed career choice.

Vocational guidance and counselling experts believe that each individual has certain abilities, interests, and personality traits and other characteristics. It is the confidence of these professionals that of these characteristics are known together with their latent values and where on the job-market these values can be put into appropriate uses, the individual is more likely to become a happier person, a more effective worker and a more useful citizen. According to Ipay (1983) knowledge of oneself and knowledge of the opportunities existing in one's environment and in particular, knowledge of what one can do that employers would be willing to pay for can help an individual make a good vocational adjustment. Also, self-knowledge and occupational knowledge are very important means of ensuring accurate and adequate occupational choice. There are innovative processes necessary to bring about these self and social understating which are so vital for good vocational guidance programme. These innovative processes are those of vocational guidance.

### **Counselling Services**

Counselling according to Njoku (2007) is a career education development process which captures the role of guidance and counselling as an educational service. It is capable of shaping the lives of individuals in the world of work. Counsellors are known for using their professional skills to encourage occupational adjustment for capacity building and national development. Counselling therefore, offer approaches to choices of occupation which later becomes the people's way of life through adjustment. Through counselling services, individuals are assisted to reach their occupational goals and retire happily. But our worry here has always been, how would these counselling services be extended to the beggars on the streets and motor parks of major cities in Nigeria? How do we capture the so called beggars, counsel them and at the same time, harness their potentials, empower them to be self reliant? The era of counselling services in the schools is gradually winding up; now, there is an urgent need to extend the professional services to the streets of Nigeria. According to Nweze, Okanume-Onah and Onyebu (2013), three central aims of counselling are apparent. First is to create a self-reliant person who understands his/her strengths and weaknesses and is able to make wise choices and decisions without the help of a counsellor. The next is to help individuals to adjust satisfactorily to their society and probably personal futures. The third is to ease the work of teachers in schools. In line with their suggested aims, it is clear that counselling is about working to know or get facts about where one is coming from and where the individual intends to go.

With the explanation, it is important for the counsellors to understand why a person is a beggar, the conditions that led to begging and how best to get such person understand that he/she has potentials, capable of fending for him/herself.

### **Challenges and Aim of the Paper**

In a bid to earn livelihood, many of these beggars are sometimes involved in criminal activities. They are unemployed, visibly idle; they sometimes congregate at bars and eating places to drink after begging, converse or smoke marijuana for substantial parts of the day in order to think less of the situation they are into. These types of situations and meeting places according to dedibu and Jelili (2011) promote development of street gangs and criminal activities such as making money through violence, armed robbery, drug trafficking, car snatching, illegal fuel sale, oil pipeline vandalization, kidnapping, and many more of which has reached alarming levels. It may also interest one to know that some of the beggars who are unable to secure legitimate and gainful sources of livelihoods set to acquire what they may consider their own share of their nation's wealth through illegal and criminal means. It has also been observed that majority of prison inmates in major cities of Nigeria are people who have cases of criminal activities that have connections with beggars. This is where the ideas in this paper would play wonderful roles. If vocational guidance and counselling programme is given the attention it requires, entrepreneurs among the beggars will be produced. And the empowered among them will be able to empower others through training-retraining programmes, become responsible, creative, productive citizens, become employers of labour, contribute to and benefit from the economic growth and development (Inclusive Growth).

In the context of this paper, we aim at up-scaling vocational and entrepreneurial skills for self reliance, jobs creation; enhancing sustainable economic development through harnessing potentials of beggars and empowering them to earning livelihoods in Nigerian; and by so doing, they are pushed away from begging in major cities of Nigeria. Specifically, the paper wishes to:

- To proffer innovative strategies for discouraging begging businesses in Nigerian cities.
- To challenge, harness and deploy the innate potentials in the street beggars for greater productivity.
- To promote businesses and small scale entrepreneurs through vocational guidance and counselling as well as vocational training.
- To build the spirit of entrepreneurship through targeted capacity building.
- To re-engineer and reposition the mindset of the street beggars by empowering them to be self reliant and employers of labour.
- To empower the targeted population to establish viable small scale businesses instead of begging on the road sides and motor parks etc.
- To educate the targeted population on packaging marketable business proposals to access fund.
- To stimulate a process and framework for continuing collaboration among the stakeholders for alleviation of unemployment and stimulation of wealth creation.

### **Strategies for Harnessing their Potentials**

For the potentials of the beggars to be harnessed, the following strategies or steps should be followed:

- Identify the beggars and provide them with counselling services depending on their needs and interests.
- Interview them to know their history in order to establish why they are begging.
- Sub-group them into two with one being the experimental group and the other the control group. Both groups will be guided by experts in vocational guidance and counselling from different vocational skills.
- The experimental group will be trained in different vocations and will be helped to access fund for establishing business ventures in relation to the skills acquired while the control group will be monitored to know if their behaviour will differ from that of the experimental group after training.
- A follow up service will be designed to ascertain viability of their new ventures, its implication to their development and difference in their contribution to the society.
- The last phase will be to evaluate successes of the programme by measuring the progress of trained empowered people who must have left begging businesses.

### **Results of the Vocational Guidance and Counselling Services**

The outcome of the programme if given the attention it deserves by the government of Nigeria will benefit this country and other countries with large number of beggars in many ways:

- The beggars, who are mostly seen in motor parks begging for money, will be made to have skills to earn a living, be useful to themselves and the society at large through harnessing their potentials, counselling them, training and empowering them.
- Depression brings bad mood, and bad mood encourages anger and other criminal ventures. Since they'll be trained and empowered to have sources of livelihoods, the issue of depression will be overcome.
- The outcome will promote economic growth and development, entrepreneurship and jobs creation. Many of the counselled and trained targeted population will be able to train others to apprenticeships.

### **Conclusion**

Begging indicates the failure of persons to adjust according to the societal setting. It encompasses inability of individuals to adjust to socio-economic realities. It is also observed that begging is of different types which include child beggars, physically challenged beggars, religion mendicant beggars, diseased beggars etc. all these beggars engage in this dehumanising activity as a source of livelihood. Like in child begging, many orphans and neglected children take to soliciting for alms for private orphanage homes. Also, children sometimes go as a group in an attempt to fend for themselves. In the same vein, some of the beggars in our cities suffer from physical deformities which exclude them from certain jobs and employments. But above all, vocational guidance and counselling services can do a lot to change things. Therefore, the governments are encouraged to invest in these experts through establishing functional effective vocational guidance and counselling programmes to harness the potentials of the beggars found on the streets of our major cities.

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