

The Extent to which Admission of Students into Cameroon Opportunity Industrialization Centre (OIC) Relates to Holland's Theory of Vocational Choice

Sigala Maxwell Fokum, PhD

Head of Department of Counseling Psychology, Faculty of Education, The University of Bamenda

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of the study was to determine the extent to which admission of students into Cameroon opportunity industrialization centre (OIC) relates to Holland's theory of vocational choice. The study used two specific objectives, two research questions and two hypotheses. The study which was carried out in OIC Buea, adopted the correlational research design. The population of the study was made up of 605 students and 30 instructors. Using the simple random sampling technique, 178 students were selected to constitute the sample. Furthermore, the purposive sampling technique was used to select five instructors for this purpose for the simple reason that they were members of the admission board of the school. A modified version of the Self-Directed Search (SDS) developed by Holland and an interview guide were used to collect data from the students and instructors respectively. The instruments were validated and their reliabilities assured. The quantitative data was analysed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation, while the qualitative data was analysed using the thematic approach. The findings of the study revealed that there is no significant relationship between the chosen vocations of OIC students and Holland's persons-environment congruency theory. The results further showed that there exists a relationship between the admission policy of OIC and Holland's heuristic theory. It was recommended among other things that the authorities of OIC, especially those concerned with the admission of students should build a psychological test or borrow and adapt an existing test on career choice.

Introduction

As humans, we are constantly faced with the need to make decisions and choices. In most cases, the way this need is resolved is based on our view of the world, our feelings, and what we think are the beneficial outcomes of the choices we make. Supposedly, everyone will make choices that he/she believes will give him/her happiness and satisfaction. To be able to do this, the person ought to know himself/herself and his/her capabilities. It is this knowledge that the individual is expected to carry into the choice process; the content certainly varies from one individual to another and from society to society.

In Cameroon, people make choices for diverse reasons. In most cases, people choose areas in which they believe they might get high remuneration that will enable them to survive the economic hardship the country is going through. There are some people who believe that they are fit for any occupation and this is even made worse by the fact that there are very few job opportunities available. However, what they ignore is that a person's persistence and satisfaction within an occupation depends on how much that occupation fits his/her personality characteristics. Every person has some unique personality characteristics that make him different from any other person. Even when two persons are portrayed to have similar characteristics, one realizes that they still have differences in their work preferences and output. Such has been the result of longitudinal studies carried out on monozygotic twins. Here, it was realized that even though these people had similarities in nearly everything they did, when it came to choice of vocation, they made completely different choices. Even when they chose to go into the same profession, their output and degree of satisfaction were not the same.

It was this notion of the fundamental differences among humans, especially in the work environment, that drew the interest of some psychologists to the domain of career choice. These psychologists have studied, analyzed, and came out with theories on how people make choices to go into the different spheres of occupation. They have also built psychological tests which help people to understand themselves and to make appropriate career choices. Even though they acknowledge the fact that each individual is gifted with the ability to excel in a particular domain, they also highlight training or education as an important process that makes the individual to develop and fine-tune his abilities in any given domain. Therefore, it is not surprising to see the global society and Cameroon in particular clamoring to professionalize their educational systems. In Cameroon, priority is given to technical and vocational training, in which the citizens are enabled to develop and refine their natural talents in a manner that will make them to be more useful to the society.

There are different professional schools that train people for different vocations. For a person to go into any of these schools, the person must be able to make the appropriate choice. Because of this, John Holland (1985) put forward his person-environment congruency theory of vocation choice. There-in Holland predicts that people could function, work hard, develop best, and excel if they are placed according to their self-chosen areas of interest. To him, there are six people-occupational environments, which are the realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional. This theory has been very instrumental in making people to understand that the choice of a vocation is not a haphazard process, but one in which a person has to ensure that his personality characteristics fit that of the job environment. If this is not taken into consideration, it will be difficult for the person to have job satisfaction. To help people in the choice process, Holland designed two tests which he considered useful in the choice process, namely; the Self-Directed Search (SDS) and the Vocational Preference Inventory (VPI).

Considering the importance of appropriate choice to Cameroon students and how vital Holland's theory is to the process of vocational choice, the researcher then had some doubts about the vocational choices of some students in Cameroon. The doubt in this case was focused particularly on the choice of vocation by students of Cameroon Opportunity Industrialization Centre (OIC). This came as a result of a discussion the researcher had with one of his neighbors who was a student of OIC. The researcher noticed that this student hardly went to school but instead he spent time with friends at home or at the cybercafé. When this neighbor was asked why he did not like to go to school, the boy complained that he never wanted to be a welder but since his uncle has an engineering firm, his mother forced him to come to OIC and learn welding so that he could work in his uncle's company. Since he did not like to go to the school, he preferred to go to the internet to look for scholarship and if possible do some illegal on-line businesses to get money and travel abroad. This then provoked the researcher to find out if there were any choice processes or considerations undertaken by Cameroonian students before they embarked on their different disciplines in Cameroon OIC. If so, were their choices in line with John Holland's theory of vocational choice?

Furthermore, knowing that vocational choice is a complex process with its own modalities, the behavior of students as far as these are concerned was expected to provide vital information to educators and counselors in Cameroon. It ought to enable them to increase their knowledge on how and why students make vocational choices and then become enlightened on the importance of Holland's theory in the process of vocational choice selection.

Cameroon Opportunity Industrialization Centre (OIC) is a lay private professional school that trains technicians and other professionals like automotive mechanics and drivers, building constructors, furniture designers and builders, hotel and catering agents, and information technology experts. This institution is one of those institutions that strive to give a professional touch to education in Cameroon and to enable the country to realize its goal of professional education as recommended by the 1995 National Forum on Education (MINEDUC, 1995). Although this school trains professionals, who are supposed to have chosen their different fields of specialization, the researcher noticed two things as far as the school and its graduates were concerned:

- i. It was very common to see students of OIC lingering around the neighborhood during school hours when they were supposed to be in school, and
- ii. He also noticed that there were many graduates who stayed unemployed and idle, when one of the goals of the institution is to encourage students to gain self-employment as soon as they finish their training, using the least available financial resources.

The above made the researcher to start thinking how these students found themselves in OIC. He doubted whether they underwent any decision-making process, and if the decisions they made were in line with the dictates of Holland's theory of vocational choice. Furthermore, he had some doubts about the admission procedures of the school and this lay in the fact that the authorities might not be using the appropriate techniques when admitting students into the school.

The above observations also drew the researcher's interest on the in-take and training of students in OIC, particularly on the way students chose the different professional domains they went into. This was expected to give the researcher some ideas about the degree at which the students were prepared to work hard at school. Thus, the main question here was: Did students really undergo a choice process before going into the different specializations in OIC Cameroon and were their choices in accordance with Holland's theory of vocational choice?

Answers to this question had to enable the researcher to find out whether students of OIC reflected on the career choices they made on entering the school and whether the choices were in line with Holland's heuristic theory. The researcher also had to look at the school's admission policy to check whether it ties with Holland's postulates.

Objectives of the Study

- To determine the extent to which the chosen vocations of OIC students were related to Holland's person-environment congruency theory.
- To find out the extent to which the admission board of OIC considers Holland's theory when recruiting students to be trained.

Research Questions

- To what extent are the choices made by students of OIC Cameroon related to the person-environment congruency theory of John Holland?
- To what extent is the admission policy of OIC Cameroon related to Holland's heuristic theory?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were generated to give direction to the study:

- **H0₁**: There is a no significant relationship between the chosen vocations of OIC students and Holland’s person-environment congruency theory.
- **H0₂**: There is no significant relationship between the admission policy of OIC and Holland’s heuristic theory.

Methodology

The study which was carried out in OIC Buea, adopted the correlational research design. The population of the study was made up of 605 students and 30 instructors. Using the simple random sampling technique, 178 students were selected to constitute the sample. Furthermore, the purposive sampling technique was used to select the instructors who were interviewed. Five of them were selected for this purpose and they all were members of the admission board of the school. A modified version of the Self-Directed Search (SDS) developed by Holland and an interview guide were used to collect data from the students and instructors respectively. The instruments were validated and their reliabilities assured. The quantitative data was analyse using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation, while the qualitative data was analysed using the thematic approach.

Findings

Relationship between chosen vocations of OIC students and Holland’s person-environment congruency theory.

Table 1: Correlation between chosen vocations of OIC students and Holland’s person-environment congruency theory

		Chosen vocations OIC students	Holland’s person-environment congruency theory
Chosen vocations of OIC students	Pearson Correlation	1	.131
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.103
	N	178	178
Holland’s person-environment congruency theory	Pearson Correlation	.131	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.103	
	N	178	178

The table reveals that there is a low positive relationship ($r = 0.131$) between chosen vocations of OIC students and Holland’s person-environment congruency theory. The 2-tailed p-value ($p = 0.103$) further indicates that this relationship is not significant. This means there is no significant relationship between the chosen vocations of OIC students and Holland’s person-environment congruency theory. That is, the vocations chosen by the students of OIC are not in respect of the postulates of Holland’s theory.

Relationship between the admission policy of OIC and Holland’s heuristic theory.

The data for this objective was gotten through interviews that were carried out with some of the school authorities in charge of admissions.

Table 2: Presentation of some responses from the authorities of OIC

Question	% of Positive Responses	% of Negative Responses
Are there counselors in the admission commission?	100	0
Do you administer any placement test?	0	100
Have you ever heard of Holland's theory of career choice and the SDS?	0	100
Have you ever considered administering this test during admission of students?	0	100
Do you usually consider the choices made by the students?	100	0

From the table, all the persons interviewed (100%) acknowledged that counselors are present in the admission commission of Cameroon OIC. In fact, there is one counselor serving as the in-take counselor of the school, who is in charge of studying all application files from candidates wishing to come to the school, before carrying them to the admission commission. This is done to ensure that the documents are in conformity with the entry requirements of the school.

The interview revealed that entry requirements state that:

- a) The candidate should be 18 years and above.
- b) He/she must have at least the First School Leaving Certificate.
- c) Must be able to read and write either French or English languages.
- d) Must write an application in which the candidate has to specify the trade he/she wants to be trained in.

The school authorities who were interviewed told the researcher that they usually interview their students before admissions and they usually ask them questions like:

- i. Why have you decided to come to OIC?
- ii. What will you like to be trained in?
- iii. Do you think you will be able to undergo this training? Why do you think so?
- iv. How do you think this training will help you in future?

Even though these are probing questions to find out if the students are interested in the school, they are not good enough to determine if the student has or does not have a vocation for the chosen career. Despite these, the fact that most of the decisions lie with the students and the school authorities only try to verify whether these choices are in conformity with the demands of the school, shows a link with Holland's postulates.

More so, all the three counselors who are present in the admission board usually help to analyze the responses given by the interviewee to verify whether they are fit to come to the school or not. Since the school is out to help mostly the poor and underprivileged, there are situations in which certain cases are admitted for benevolent reasons and not because they really had the aptitude to come to the school. Such cases are those that will need the constant assistance of the counselors throughout their training. During the training period, the counselors usually move from class to class to counsel the students and listen to their problems.

Data from the interview also revealed that no placement test is administered to the students before they choose their disciplines in OIC. All the administrators (100%) who were interviewed said there was no test that could be administered to the students. One even went further to let the researcher

know that she had thought of using some tests with the students but she thought that the students might not give the right answers to the questions. Even so, she has never even tried to administer any instrument to them.

Furthermore, data from the field showed that of all the members interviewed, none (0%) has ever heard of neither Holland's theory of career choice, nor the Self-Directed Search. Consequently, they have never considered using it in the admission of new students into the school. This is so because they believe that 'their method of admitting their students is very efficient'. They also said there are career counselors who follow-up the students while they are undergoing the three months theoretical training, who can always detect students who might not have made the appropriate choices and then help them to choose another appropriate specialization.

All the members (100%) who were interviewed said they consider the choices made by the students because it is very important that the students make the choice themselves. Once more, this ties with Holland's ideas. However, the school authorities have noticed that there are some students who come to OIC and whose career choices are made by their parents. They realized that such students are usually not very comfortable within the school. It is for this reason that at the beginning of each academic year, the school organizes an orientation week, which targets mostly the freshmen or newly admitted students. During this orientation week, the heads of the different departments in the school come and present their departments, giving the advantages and disadvantages of each of the departments as well as the different possible job openings.

The career counselors also present themselves to the students informing them that they are available to help them when they have any problems. Hence, during the orientation period, students who are still feeders (still in the theoretical phase which lasts for three months), are free to change their units.

In cases where the parents influence the choice of student, such parents are invited to come to the school, if possible, to meet the counselors. These counselors then talk with them and enable them to see the advantages of letting their children to choose their careers themselves. There are situations in which the parents ask the children to change the specialization if they wish to; while others remain adamant and insist that they believe they made the right choice for their children.

There are also cases in which the choices made by the students are not appropriate and they might not be satisfied after their training. This happened to a female student who after receiving training in auto mechanics came back the next year to start all over in hotel catering. Such a situation ought to highlight the need for the choice processes of the students to be taken seriously in order to avoid wastage. Hence the need for a test of vocational choice which will help the students to choose careers that suit their personality, like Holland's SDS or Super's Career Development Inventory.

The analysis presented above shows that Holland's theory and the SDS, just like any other test of career choice, have never been heard of in Cameroon OIC. But this notwithstanding, the fact that students of the school know that they are supposed to choose their trades shows the link to an extent between OIC admissions and Holland's postulates. Furthermore, the fact that the first choice consideration of the admission board is that of the students shows that the school gives a primordial importance to the individual's choice. Hence, even though the school authorities might never have heard about Holland's postulates, their choice consideration is linked to a considerable extent to Holland's heuristic theory.

Hence, the second hypothesis is validated showing there is some relationship between the admission policy of OIC and Holland's heuristic theory. This means the authorities of the school indirectly are acknowledging the fact that only the individual can make choices that best fit themselves and under such conditions there is bound to be a match between the personality traits of the students with those of the chosen specializations.

Discussion of Findings

Relationship between chosen vocations of OIC students and Holland's person-environment congruency theory.

The study found that there is no significant relationship between the chosen vocations of OIC students and Holland's persons-environment congruency theory. This means that the vocations chosen by students of OIC are not in respect of Holland's (1959) assumption, which holds that individuals should choose a vocation based on the level of fit or interaction between the individual's personality types and the world of work. Looking critically at the choices made by these students, one is tempted to think that they consider other things apart from their person-environment match when they choose their career.

Under such circumstances, the individual's output will be low and job satisfaction will be absent; for as Dawis (1984) puts it, there is supposed to be a match between the individual and his chosen environment in order to encourage satisfactory career development. This is explained further by Dawis and Lofquist (1984) who say that satisfaction is "a function of the correspondence between the reinforced pattern of the work environment and the individual's values, provided that the individual's abilities correspond to the ability requirements of the work environment" (p. 64).

The situation seems worse when one considers the fact that all of the students of the school are already above 18 years of age. Ginzberg (1951) consider an individual above 18 years to be able to choose a career based on his interests, capacities, and values. In fact, the person is supposed to be realistic in his career choice. But this cannot be said to be the case with the students of OIC Cameroon.

A negative outcome of such misjudgement in career choice by the students lies in the fact that some students go through the training but come back later to be trained in a different domain in the same school. This is in line with the ideas of Palmar et al (2004), who hold that when an individual makes a wrong choice and is not able to confront the problem or is not ready for the stress, he resorts to the pause theory (stop the programme). All these could be avoided, and a high degree of satisfaction might be attained if the students could follow Holland's (1959) or Parsons' (1909) ideas on career choice.

Relationship between the admission policy of OIC and Holland's heuristic theory.

This hypothesis was analyzed using data collected through interviews. The results showed that there exists a relationship between the admission policy of OIC and Holland's heuristic theory. This is so because the school authorities make sure that the students choose whatever specializations they are willing to be trained in.

Even though those who were interviewed said they have heard neither of Holland's heuristic theory nor of the Self-Directed Search (SDS), the fact that they allow the students to make their choices and they take this into consideration when fitting the students into the different specialties shows that their recruitment policy is linked to a considerable extent to Holland's postulates. This is a very laudable effort for both the school and the students for as stated by Super (1976), Dawis (1984), and Holland (1992), it is very important for the individual to make choices for himself that result from an assessment of his personality characteristics and the demands of the work environment.

This notwithstanding, the authorities of OIC acknowledged that they do not use any other test during admission. When one looks at the questions they ask when interviewing candidates wishing to enter the school, one sees that these are not good enough to help them to find out if there is a match between the individual's personality and the chosen area of specialisation. This means students can easily make mistakes in their choices and find themselves where they were not really supposed to be. This also makes it difficult for students to understand themselves in a standardized way and to choose an environment based on the person-environment match recommended by Holland (1959).

The fact that six students in OIC have already changed their units since the beginning of this year

also highlights the consequences of a wrong vocational choice. This can be as a result of wrong choices made by the students which might have been avoided if they took a test of vocational choice. The presence of hundreds of tests on vocational choice (like the Vocational Preference Inventory, Super's Career Development Inventory, the Vocational Interest Inventory by Rothwell-Miller, and the Self-Directed Search) shows how important it is for an individual to assess himself in order to know the job environment that suits him most.

Hence, in order to reduce problems and stress within a person's chosen profession (Palmar, 2004), tests of career development are important to help the individual to make the appropriate choice. This can help to boost his morale and make him to be more motivated in the job (Crites, 1969). The lack of the use of tests before recruiting students in OIC Cameroon could be one factor that explains why students of the school are seen loitering around the neighborhood during school hours when they are supposed to be in school. This shows that they are not motivated enough to devote their time and interest on what they chose to do in the school.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has shown that the vocations chosen by the students of Cameroon OIC are not in line with Holland's person-environment congruency theory. It showed that when these students are choosing their specialization, they do not consider if it matches their personality characteristics. Hence, one can say that the person-environment congruency is not one of the considerations of the choice process of the students.

Furthermore, the study went on to show that the admission policy of OIC have some elements that are related to Holland's heuristic theory. The findings of the study showed that the school authorities do not administer any psychological test to their students in order to help in detecting their true vocational capabilities but they keep in line with Holland's ideas by allowing the students to make their choice based on their personal desires. The members of the admission board of the school confessed that they have heard neither about the person-environment congruency theory nor of the Self-Direct Search (SDS). An analysis of the school's entry requirements and procedures showed that there are some elements that could enable the school authorities to consider the choices made by the students and these tie with Holland's postulates.

The researcher put forward the following recommendations:

It was recommended that the authorities of OIC, especially those concerned with the admission of students should build a psychological test or borrow and adapt an existing test on career choice (such as the Self-Directed Search and the Vocational Preference Inventory) that they can be administered to students wishing to enter the school. This test should be one that will help to show the different aptitudes and interests of the students so that they can be placed in the units that suit them. This measure could reduce the influence of parents on the career choice of their children.

It was further recommended that the training programme should be improved upon so that, those students who are not really motivated to study for one reason or another, could find the training interesting. This will help them to develop love for the programme which can consequently improve on their motivation.

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