

EXPLORING REINCARNATION AND LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE IN CAREER COUNSELLING AND CHOICE

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Abstract

As a follow up to a study carried out by the 1st author on reincarnation and linguistic competence, where a proposition was made: to involve parents and teachers in the process of nurturing and mentoring children, this joint paper now tried to explore the role of the Guidance counselor in the choice of career while seeking to remind parents, counselors and educationists that academic competence and career success may not be related but focusing on the areas of strength of the students during counselling may well lead to a fulfilling career later in life.

Keywords: Reincarnation, competence, counselling, career guidance and success.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

Maama is believed to be a product of reincarnation owing to her linguistic prodigy. Neighbours and family members are the ones that identified her to be the reincarnee because they actually were living witnesses of the present person's past life wish. The summary of the story is that her paternal grandmother made a wish in her lifetime to be educated to the level of "sakramenti". A word she heard for the first time during her catechism classes prior to her conversion to Christianity. What could have prompted such a wish? Maama's family members and villagers alike called her 'Nnenma', which is the name of her paternal grandmother whose greatest handicap was 'illiteracy'. Nnenma said she was going to come back in her next life to "be educated". Not just to study but that she would master 'the white man's language' and, coincidentally...Maama, who is her reincarnee, even though a bright science student in secondary school ended up studying French up to PhD level.

The present study builds on previous work in many important ways. First, it is based on longitudinal data collected from an individual from childhood to adulthood. Second, it considers the effects of career counseling and subject domain. In contrast to most other studies examining career orientation, perceptions of the classroom learning environment (classroom goal structure) and indices of motivational orientation (personal achievement goals) are assessed separately for a particular subject area- French language.

1.2 Method

The method of this study is narrative approach but, it discussed neither Nnenma's linguistic incompetence nor Maama's linguistic competence from the psychoanalytic point of view. The reason being, that neither of them experienced the difficulty from childhood. At the time Nnenma experienced the embarrassing event in Port Harcourt (1949), she should be around 70 years old. Psychoanalysis therefore cannot be applied to this study either as a treatment, theory or research tool.

The present study makes mention of students' perceived academic competence, a measure of which was included in this study because expectancy constructs are important educational outcomes that are related to motivational orientation and academic achievement (e.g., Allen,

Leadbeater, & Aber, 1994; Bandura, 1982, 1993; Schunk, 1985; 1989). In addition, a number of studies indicate that expectancy constructs are related to students' goal orientations, and that expectancies change as students move from lower to middle grade schools. For example, Harter *et al.* (1992) found that changes in perceived academic competence over the middle school transition were related to changes in motivation, affect, and anxiety.

1.3 Hypothesis

Academic competence may not be determined by high examination grades, rather early detection of a child's strength and motivation by parents and teachers may eventually be the determining factor for career choice and success.

1.4 Objective of the study

The purpose of the present study is to examine the limit of what the counselor can discuss or advise the student when it comes to decision making concerning his/her future career choice.

2. Points to consider before and during career counselling

2.1 Science/psychology/reincarnation

Collective unconscious: The discussion on science and psychology as drawn from the Jungian theory of 'collective unconscious'. Though a practising clinician and scientist, Carl Jung spent most of his time exploring philosophy, astrology, sociology, literature and the arts. Known for his theories on self, archetypes and the psyche, his theory of 'collective unconscious' was influenced earlier by his *childhood experiences* and later his professional experiences.

According to Nwosu (2014:9), *synchronicity*¹ seems closest in association to the manifestation of Maama's linguistic competence. The 'psychic' event or state being Nnenma's wish and aspiration for excellence in her former incarnation, while the 'physical' is the reincarnation of Nnenma's soul in Maama, manifesting in Maama's 'excellent' performance in a foreign language of which she had no previous knowledge or qualification.

¹ The meaningful coincidence of a psychic and a physical state or event, which have no causal relationship to each other.

2.2 Competence

According to Atherton J S (2013), competence is the simple ability to perform the requisite range of skills for practice. As represented in this paper, it has a broad base. In all areas of practice there will be some skills in which experts are "merely competent. Dreyfus and Dreyfus introduced a language of the levels of competence in competency development. The five levels proposed by Dreyfus and Dreyfus were:

Novice, Experienced beginner, Practionner, knowledgeable practionner and Expert. (ibid. p.4)

These levels have been summarized into four general areas of competence which we have carefully adapted to educational context. They are-:

- **Meaning Competence:** This deals with identifying the circumstances related to the birth of a child to understand his/her purpose on earth and act in accordance with the values of the community.
- **Relation Competence:** Creating and nurturing connections to a child ahead of primary tasks.
- **Learning Competence:** As a teacher, create and look for situations that make it possible to experiment with the set of solutions that will enable the learner to complete the primary tasks and reflect on the experience.
- **Change Competence:** Being able to act in new ways when it will promote the purpose of the organization or community and make the preferred future come to life.

It has been proven that *competence* is shown in action, in a situation and in a context that might be different the next time one has to act. That is to say that competent people will react to situations following behaviours they have previously found to succeed, hopefully to good effect. This is exactly what Nnenma did. She analyzed the situation and drew a plan of possible action to take. Furthermore, in this incarnation, Maama's success in undertaking them depended on bringing to bear a range of cognitive and affective components of competence, such as turning one's emotions into the task and persisting over a long period of time. Note, again, that these

components of competence cannot be assessed except the environment permits, as in Maama's case, her elder brother and father acted in line with the first two levels of competence.

2.3 *Reincarnation*

The word "reincarnation" derives from Latin, literally meaning, "entering the flesh again". The Greek equivalent metempsychosis (μετεμψύχωσις) roughly corresponds to the common English phrase "transmigration of the soul" and also usually connotes reincarnation after death, as either human, animal, though emphasising the continuity of the soul, not the flesh. **Alulo uwa** according to the Igbo view is a widely acclaimed socio-cultural belief, that the human spirit inhabits successive physical bodies to accomplish a desire in an individual's former life. It is widely believed that after death, the dead person's soul is reborn into a new physical human being, thereby making it possible for the person to accomplish his/her past dreams and strong wishes as a new person. At different times and places, this doctrine or belief is manifested both in Greek philosophy, Hinduism, Buddhism and in African traditional religion (the Dogons of Mali, the Hausas and the Ibos of Nigeria). Concerning Maama's competency in French language, it is still a prodigious achievement though she did not achieve this feat before 18 years. Nevertheless, continuation is part of prodigy. After all, progress is not achieved by the confirmation of hypothesis, but by adopting them to existing and future exceptions (Arce 2000: 88, in Aito. O 2010: 10). If one believes in prodigy as a manifestation of past life, then it is not false to say that 'Nne Nma had already prepared the ground for this life by returning to the family where her dreams will be actualized.

3. **Case study**

3.1 *Mama's story*

Mama had always wished to be a medical doctor. She is good in science subjects but displays an admirable flair for languages. This is quite unusual for a science student as it is believed that brilliance in sciences makes up for non fluency in languages. She speaks more than 5 dialects of her mother tongue, and was always called in to solve some grammatical problems in the senior primary classes while she was only in primary two. She could read and write her mother tongue before primary 3 and started reading 'James Hardley Chase' novels at the age of 9. What a child!

In the first 3 years of her college, she was lucky to have a French language teacher which enabled her to learn how to read the French alphabets and to complete already drilled

conjugation exercises. At the end of her junior secondary school, she came out as the best science student and was optimistic to continue in sciences. However, one of the brothers suggested to their old father (she was born when the father was 70years!) to send her to a model school as a boarder. This was done and she started school as a science student. At the end of the first term, her father noticed that her highest grade was obtained in English language. This prompted the old man to visit her school. He spoke to the Guidance Counsellor and requested that a French teacher be employed in the school on his own expense. The school did not buy this idea as they felt that a government school could not be run by parents. At this stage, the father got furious and threatened to withdraw his daughter from the school where she could not study French language.

Unfortunately, months later, Mama's father died. She completed her secondary education without learning French. Upon graduation, she curiously failed chemistry and Biology but did very well in the arts subjects. This was hard for her older siblings to accept because they all agreed that she was brilliant enough to study medicine. She decided to study Engineering and sat for the University qualifying examinations but her name was missing on the list. Three months later, it was decided that she would sit for another qualifying exams to study liberal arts in the College of Education. One of her brothers suggested she apply for French language; this was the same brother that suggested her move to a boarding school (environmental factors were stable). Everybody frowned at such an idea. Why French language when she hardly knew how to say her name in the language? At the end of the day, she sat for the exams and came out as the best candidate! Note that the only admission requirement at that time was just to 'have an interest in the language'. This was how Mama started her journey of learning a foreign language without previous knowledge. Today she teaches the language at the University.

3.2 Discussion

According to the story, Nnenma's exact words were "*n'uwa m ozo, agam agu akwukwo buru sacramenti. O nweghi onye ga-eji asusu bekee nyem mkpari*" (In **my next world**, I will be educated to the highest level that no one will insult me in white man's language). Nnenma was very realistic. She admitted the fact that she was too old to go to school and therefore HOPED to achieve such a feat in her next life (repression). Contrary to psychology which works on the principle that all of peoples' problems stem from childhood and that parents are to blame for whatever their children cannot achieve in life, Nnenma had the ability to deal with life's problems. This passion for language was traced back to an embarrassing incident that occurred in her lifetime:

It was around 1949, on her visit to her second daughter who was married and lived in "township". She was delivered of a baby boy, being her first child, and as custom demanded, the mother was expected to spend some time with the new mother to help put her through motherhood (Omugwo). Since the daughter lived in the township, Nnenma had difficulties fitting

into “township life” where people spoke in foreign tongue- pidgin/English. Every morning when the neighbours were going to their various places of work, they would greet Nnenma ‘good morning Ma’. She always replied them in tears saying “A biaram abia, ndi nwe ulo anoghi ya”- I am a visitor; the owners of the house are not around. This went on for days that at the end she decided to return to her village humiliated.

Talking about competence, it englobes *motivation, intelligence, expertise*. For this particular case, modern psychology and contemporary religion may not have an answer to the credibility of Maama’s linguistic competence. Some people may dismiss this as ‘over-reaction’, but remember that for a counselor to have the desired results, what the child will become in future or the course a child will study in the university should not be based on year-end grades prior to adolescence. (see Miller’s explanation on happenstance). Rather, every child, student should be assessed in order to match personal characteristics with occupational characteristics. Of course this interpretation might raise arguments in favour of destiny. If that is so, then it may not be wrong to believe that reincarnation is a proof that people are born to actualize their inadequacies.

4. Conclusion and recommendations

In this paper, Maama’s linguistic competence is not happenstance, rather it is predestined. Though the manifestation may have been prevented if, her family did not identify her disposition at the appropriate time. The linguistic competence attributed to reincarnation is yearning for reactions from readers/researchers from other fields because competence is not only manifested in ‘language studies’. Of course this may well be applied in other fields, but the authors only depicted the scenario from pedago-lingual² point of view.

The following are recommendations for parents, guidance counsellors and Teachers.

Parents

If African scholars are to appropriate this belief in reincarnation and use it, two major stakeholders must be involved in order to stabilize the environmental factor: parents and teachers. First, it is the duty of parents to identify the first two levels of competency mentioned above while the teachers need to be more ‘imaginative’ and ‘creative’. In order for a child to be competent in academic pursuits, parents first should recognize the passion of their children; like Maama’s father and brother did. The guidance counsellor in her High school assessed her through the processes favoured by [psychometrics](#) which almost prevented her from studying a course she was pre-destined to succeed in. This is a neglect of Maama’s motivation based upon her innate abilities and pre-destination for language studies.

² Author’s word.

Counsellors

For purposes of career counselling, guidance counsellors are encouraged to get as much information as necessary from the student, and even from her parents or sponsors, in order to understand his/her areas of strength or weakness and thereby identify which discipline better suits his/her background, increase his/her employability after a college degree and get the required exposure or experience for various occupations. The Strong assessment (SII) may be ideal for every counsellor.

Teachers

According to Vygotskian historical dialectics, there is a relationship between the teacher and the student (projective resonance). In other words, what the teacher has within his or her reflexive system later becomes materialized in the student's behaviour. Two things make a good teacher: the ability to provide an enabling environmentⁱ for his/her students to understand better and take pleasure from the learning, and planning curriculum content in his or her subject area which will stimulate the aim. The American educator, Kieran EGANⁱⁱ claims that children come to school loaded with three cognitive tools:

1. Tools for oral language (story, metaphor, rhyme)
2. Tools for literacy (a sense of reality and wonder, and a literate eye)
3. Tools for theoretical thinking (a sense of abstract reality, agency, search for truth).

According to him, any teacher loaded with these cognitive tools can tap into the imagination of his students and influence them in a positive and unique way. In this paper, reincarnation has been the major factor to justify Maama's linguistic competency.

Endnotes

ⁱ Dickens and Flynn model (2001) argued that the "heritability" figure includes both a direct effect of the [genotype](#) on IQ and also indirect effects where the genotype changes the environment, in turn affecting IQ. That is, those with a higher IQ tend to seek out stimulating environments that further increase IQ. In their model an environmental stimulus can have a very large effect on IQ, even in adults, but this effect also decays over time unless the stimulus continues. This model could be adapted to include possible factors, like nutrition in early childhood, which may cause permanent effects.

ⁱⁱ Kieran Egan (1989), Teaching as story telling: An alternative approach to teaching And curriculum in Elementary School. 140 p

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