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Strategies of Imparting Vocational Guidance to Pupils- An overview

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Abstract

In the present era there are varieties of educational streams as new occupational opportunities are coming every other day. As there are varieties of occupational opportunities available to the students, it is not always possible for students to meet the requirements of the available opportunities as all individual differ in the abilities, interest, attitude and skill from each other. Thus, it is very much necessary to know about one's own abilities, skills etc. to choose the suitable occupation. To help in this process the role of vocational guidance becomes very important. In the contemporary society, many young people have to face the problem of the career choice; this can often lead to offhand and wrong decisions, with negative consequences for the single individual as well as for society, either from an economic and a social point of view. In order to cope with these problems, there is a need to established vocational guidance units and centres in educational institutions to provide careers advice for students. Students need to be helped before they venture into embarking on any vocation in life so that they can make a right choice. Vocational guidance is the assistance given to students in choosing and preparing for a suitable vocation. This paper highlights the need and importance of vocational guidance in schools and different methods of organizing vocational guidance programmes.

Keywords:- Vocation; Career; Occupation; Vocational guidance; Vocational counselling

Introduction

The choice of a vocation or occupation is one of the most important decisions an individual has to make, since it affects virtually every aspect of his or her life. Vocational choice is a long process rather than a simple incident. The selection of a wrong vocation leads to unhappiness, discontent and ultimate failure. The occupation that a person follows is not merely a means of earning a livelihood, but also a way of life. Through occupation the individual tries to realize his needs for self enhancement and self-realization. One of the most important functions of education is to guide the students while he/she is still in school for a right vocational choice which would accord well with his/her abilities, aptitude, interest, personality, qualities and present circumstances. Since every vocation needs certain background, preparation and aptitude, only those having them can succeed. Hence, we see a need for guidance. Many youngsters drift into their occupation, shift aimlessly from one wrong choice to another yet others struggle with their anxieties and indecision. Sadly, some wear themselves out becoming frustrated and defeated by the strain – n – struggle for a place in an occupation they are not suited for.

The youth, right from his or her school days, particularly at the secondary level, needs guidance in areas of planning for and in eventually entering into 'work'. This is because it is now well known that children's activity interests, likes and preferences in primary school and their interests in and preferences for subjects in secondary school have vocational implications. Thus, schools in most countries of the world today play a major role in providing vocational guidance services. One of the functions of vocational guidance in schools is to facilitate individuals' clearer understanding of the self and the roles which they have to play in the world of work. Such guidance should be rendered to the learner, taking cognizance of his or her abilities, interests, values personality, and attitude traits. Every student requires advice as to what kind of work will be most suitable for him or her keeping in view his abilities and aptitudes. Vocational guidance programme may consist of advising the student as to what type of job he or she should select (John D. Crites, 2000).

The vocational guidance includes; i. Creating the awareness about world-of-work. ii. Providing students with necessary occupational information. Preparing the student for skill acquisition for possible occupation and placement at the end of all levels of education. Encouraging the student in entrepreneur pre-vocational activities, e.g trade/entrepreneurship, arts and crafts. v. Guidance for students and parents on vocational choices, combination of subjects/courses and assisting them in resolving conflicts in such matters.

Generally, the aim of vocational guidance is to help students make decisions based on their interests, passion and abilities, while taking into account current and future career opportunities. Students are encouraged to learn more about the world of work across different industries so that they may take right steps to obtain their objective and goals/aspirations (Watts AG. 1977). Vocational guidance is not only limited to provide information on jobs and guides students in their decisions but it also helps the youth in selecting their skills needed for developing and executing their long-term goals as a fundamental element of human capital. Vocational guidance effect on active approaches to assisting unemployed people requiring individual action plans to be constructed that involve job search, education and training, stressing the ability to find and keep a job, and the personal capacity to adapt to a changing labour market and new job requirements. Career management skills appear to play an important role in the formation and use of human capital and in the development of employability (Collin A and Watts AG. 1996).

Yet another important role of vocational guidance in schools is to prepare students for the world of work by equipping them with the right kind of skills so that they may stay relevant and fit in the world economy while leading a purposeful life. As revealed by research that education in corroboration with vocational guidance have positive impact on the students' academic performance and well-being for they help them make good decisions regarding their education career. Education and career guidance set out the following goals, to (1) foster students' self-awareness, self-directedness as well as skills to determine workable goals, and to learn consistently in order to value-add to their future workplace; (2) assist students to explore and make decisions based on valid information towards their education and career oriented directions. (3) Instil in their minds the value of utility for all sort careers and how all these contribute towards the smooth and well-functioning of society; and fourthly, equipping students with the skills and means, so by means of which they may be able to positively engage their parents and other career influencers (Orndorff RM, et al. 1996).

There is an urgent need for introducing and strengthening the vocational guidance services in the school to meet the varied needs of students. For optimum individual, social, national development, vocational guidance service must be made a regular and continuous activity woven in the educational fabric.

Strategies/Techniques for vocational Guidance

A well-organized system of vocational guidance readily available to students and a setup which encourages students and trains them to find out the available information about vocation from the basis for the choice of vocational guidance procedure. Students may face many difficulties in the choice of vocation, vocational persuasion and vocational adjustment. This often lead to several ills such as students not getting proper jobs, encountering difficulties in getting on well with the job and so forth. This implies that students should discover their capabilities. They must relate the information they acquire about their vocation or career to their own capabilities.

In highlighting the procedure and techniques of vocational guidance the first step to take as some writers have opined such as Walton, (1966), Bojuwoye (1986), Iwuama (1991), Barki & Mukhopadhyay (2007), is an Analysis of the individual or self-appraisal. Extensive knowledge of self helps the individual to realize his/her uniqueness as a person, knowledge of needs, interests and abilities will enable the student to judge future alternatives and define his/her vocational goal, understanding his environment and acquire decision – making skills.

A person or students understanding of himself/herself would enable him/her to develop a more accurate concept and perspective of the world and facilitate his/her eventual adjustment. Time-wasting and indecision in important issues of life, will also be prevented. Appropriate technique for this foremost task include questionnaires, aptitude tests, achievement tests, rating scales, home vests reports, behaviour descriptions, personality and interest inventories and autobiographies. The variety of information derived from the self-analysis provides the broad outlines of a blue print for the occupational search, Bojuwoye (1986).

Some important strategies or techniques of vocational guidance are briefly discussed as following: -

1. Individual and Group vocational counselling: - Here, the counsellor can use either the individual or group vocational counselling technique to disseminate vocational information to students.

The use of individual vocational counselling presupposes that no two individuals are exactly alike in their personality patterns, interests, aptitudes, backgrounds and situations. Consequently, individual will enjoy the advantages of having a one-to-one interaction with the counsellor or other career experts who helps him attain vocational adjustment that is satisfactory from his society's point of view. Bojuwoye (1986) recommends that the counsellor's major focus in this relationship is upon the need to help the student from realistic picture of himself/herself to

possess self-understanding and self-acceptance and thereafter proceed to make an intelligent occupational selection and satisfactory preparations what would enable him to adjust well to the occupation.

Other aspects of career information could then be disseminated to him such as types and varieties of occupations, duties performed in each job, entry requirements, condition of service, job hazards, prospects for advancement, social benefits as a worker and so forth.

Group vocational counselling: - on the other hand involves the counsellor in a counselling relationship/interaction with more than one student who have similar vocational needs/problems. The aim of the relationship is to help members of the group to individually and severally resolve their vocational problems. One of the advantages of this approach is that if well organized, members of the group learn from one another about careers and equally help one another to overcome some vocational/career problems. If properly organized, the counsellor can disseminate vocational information to a good number of students at a time ranging from types, nature of works, entry requirements, duration of training, personality traits needed, conditions of services, retirement benefits, hazard of the work and so forth. From the research in Iwuama (1999), he discovered that group vocational Counselling was relatively more effective than Bibliotherapy and career day in fostering realistic vocational choice of students in Owerri, Imo state of Nigeria.

2. Bibliotherapy: - This is a vocational guidance technique for fostering career awareness through the use of reading materials. Here, vital vocational information are packaged and made available to individuals to read as a guide in making valid vocational decisions. After reading, the student could have a discussion with a counsellor or teachers for further clarifications and encouragement. According to Okon (1983), bibliotherapy is the use of books, printed materials, written manuals as effective process for growth, development and specific positive personality and specific positive personality changes including career expressions. Sheridan (1984), in his study shows bibliotherapy as a technique is more effective in enhancing student's realistic vocational expressions than individual vocational counselling technique.

3. Careers Day: - This is sometimes called careers' week, careers forum, careers consultation, careers seminars, careers' workshop, careers' symposium, careers' debates, careers film shows careers demonstrations or role playing and teaching on different careers. No matter the names labeled, all of them have a common goals or purposes. Baer and Robert (1964) see careers day/conference as group meetings held with representative of occupations from the community. In essence, this vocational activity involves inviting people from various work places to speak to students, perhaps, teachers, parents and other people about occupations.

This is an awareness creating exercise about existing jobs or careers that represent a number of activities for a whole day or week. Through this, the students become aware of

existing careers and thus are enabled to make realistic occupational choices. Experts or professionals from different fields are invited to speak to students.

For example, a medical doctor or a teacher could speak on Medicine or teaching as profession, like while, a lawyer could speak on law, a hair dresser could speak on hair dressing, a computer operator on computer programming or processing and so forth. These professional workers could highlight on their occupations with regards to what they do, the advantages and disadvantages of such occupations, method and requirements for entry, conditions of service, promotion and so forth.

The students are exposed to various occupations their peculiarities. Career days offer first hand and accurate information about occupations to students as well as act as supplement to their courses through the provisions of audio visuals aids, projectors' devices and instructional materials. Careers day could be organized for a school, schools, a class and so forth.

Okon (1983), identified three broad purposes of a career day viz:-(a) It serves a public relations purpose for the school. (b) To broaden the horizons of pupils, parents and teachers as far as vocations are concerned. (c) To provide opportunities for in depth studies and comparison of particular vocations/careers. Student will be able to select particular careers which they would study thoroughly after the programme.

Meanwhile, in organizing careers day has its own operational problems. In specific terms, Egbochuku (1997) citing okon (1983) Iwuama (1999) and Ogbodo (2013), highlighted the following problems, areas in organizing a careers day.a, Funding:- the scope and success of the careers day may depend on the available funds. Often funding poses a serious threat to the success of the exercise. b, Time and Effort:- Enough time is needed to plan and organize a meaningful career day. Logistically, the principal and staff may disappoint the organizer with the excuse that their primary assignments in the school could be affected by their being asked to do one thing or the other during the planning period and therefore many not be willing to cooperate. This will make the counsellor/planner to do almost everything alone.

4. Career Convention: - These are more like Trade fairs where information on job requirements and documents that could be browsed through at the convention are made available.

5. Excursions and Field Trips: - Excursions and field trips offer good opportunities for the students to observe workers on the job thereby gaining firsthand knowledge and experience of the requirements, specific duties and possible training opportunities offered in various jobs.

6. Occupational or Career Files: - The need for students to have career files cannot be over emphasized. Counsellors and teachers should encourage students to keenly study the jobs of their parents and other successful people in their community and open files where such information could be stored, and later used for career exploration and planning. Okon (1986) suggested the

following headings for each job description: a Job title b. Office plant or industry where jobs may be viewed in action c. Contact person d. Brief description of job qualifications with respect to education, physical aspect, age and experience.

7. School Clubs: - School clubs are equally important means of offering opportunities to students to gain information about various vocations, especially in secondary schools. Through the clubs, planned visits/excursions, seminars, workshops, film shows, debates and discussions, occupational surveys and exploratory activities, members are exposed and encouraged to make appropriate vocational choices.

8. Career Information Centre: - Such centres in every secondary school could be used in many ways to effectively help students understand and appreciate various careers. It would serve as a “mini career library” as well as for practical sessions, and depository for occupational information and career planning (Okon, 1986). Posters, newspapers or magazine –cuttings could be pasted or displayed on the walls, shelves or notice boards. Files, pamphlets, bulletins and reference books containing valuable vocational information and materials are made readily available there. Also, current update happenings in the job market or world-of-work are also kept there.

9. Role-Playing of different occupations could be done in such vocational information centres. Role-playing technique could be effective ways of making the students feel and live through the jobs as actors and observers, and understand the various responsibilities and expectations involved in the jobs.

10. Career Games and Fiction: - which give account of the experiences of some fictional characters help in stimulating the vocational interest and aspiration of students.

11. Audio Visual Aids like films, slides, tapes/cassettes, television or radio help in generating career thoughts in the students.

12. Books including biographical accounts of the life of successful people in their careers, journals, telephone directories, computer-based system storage retrieval mechanized system, internet services and counsellor bulletin are very useful. For instance, the classified telephone directory is used to identify telephone numbers of companies, industries and government establishments. University brochures are equally important.

13. Newspaper Publications and in fact the mass media are powerful means of offering vocational guidance to students. For example, some national dailies run weekly columns that discuss careers or they carry paid advertisements on vacancies in occupations.

14. Work Experience Programmes: - These programmes give individuals the opportunity to work in an organization or industry in order to have vocational exposure and acquire competence. The Industrial Training (I.T.) programme has helped in alleviating the difficulty of

students choosing jobs. The I.T. programme aims at exposing students to the conditions, experiences, requirements and the sociopsychological conditions of work which help to broaden their work experience (Anagbogu, 1988).

15. Old Students Association Day: -Inviting old student of a school, on a particular day scheduled by the school, give current information about their careers to inspire and challenge the current students. They are also assured of the worth of making educational plans and pursuing those plans relentlessly.

16. Parent Conferences whereby parents are invited to give an insight into the capabilities of their children's academic achievement. They also familiarize themselves with the available courses offered in the school and expected careers resulting from these. The parent conferences afford the opportunity for parents and teachers/counsellors to jointly plan suitable educational and vocational future for the students.

17. Teaching of vocation/occupation as a course or subject in the school: -This provides opportunities for students to be exposed to different types of occupations and available opportunities. The students in their classes would feel free enough to ask questions for more understanding. Activities such as class debates, storytelling and discussions, symposium and so forth are carried out to facilitate gathering of information practical sessions could include collection of materials from books, pamphlets in the library in the library, newspapers, magazines and so forth.

18. Career Conferences: - are continuous, periodic and special sessions or talks through which students get a series of exposure to occupational information (Ipaye, 1986, Onyejiaku, 1987). This involves inviting professionals from various work places to speak to students about their occupations. It differs from career day/week in the sense that the speakers/professionals on specific occupations are scheduled to speak to the students for different days throughout the year. Career conferences give students the opportunity to meet with, listen to and ask questions of professionals and heads of various fields of work and endeavour. Students are able to know the various available career openings in the society. Occupational awareness and interest are created through the career conference. The organization of a career conference is however easier and students are expected to benefit more, than in the career Days.

Conclusion

Vocational guidance refers to services and activities which assist students, make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers. Many secondary schools in India often lacks of efficient guidance services and support. Schools should work towards providing a well-organized vocational guidance service to students. Students' career success can be best attained if proper vocational guidance is given in choosing the right occupation which suits for their abilities, interests and talents. Vocational guidance is assuming responsibility in every direction selection of educational courses, profitable occupations, jobs,

placement, next stage of education, training, improvement of study skills, personal adjustment, even identifying gifted and backward students and helping them to achieve the maximum. Collaborative effort of school administrators, guidance counsellors, teachers and parents should be made to come up better future plan about vocational choice of every individual student.

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