



Impact Of Vocational Guidance On Career Choice Of Secondary School Students In Sikkim

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INTRODUCTION

According to Wrenn (1963) "vocation means commitment", a sense of purpose for the total activities of one's life and career choice is a part of this larger vocational purposes. In Sikkim, Vocational education was initiated in the year 2004 by Human Resource Development Department, Government of Sikkim in collaboration with SiBin group, a private firm, with 8 main subjects - Automobile, Dairying, Hotel Management & Catering Technology, Horticulture, IT Application, Travel & Tourism, Poultry and Office Management. Initially, it was introduced only at the senior secondary level for classes XI and XII with 40 senior secondary schools. In 2014, this was extended to secondary level for classes IX and X. The number of schools thus, expanded from 40 schools to 52 Government Senior Secondary Schools. During the expansion, only three vocational subjects were retained keeping in view the needs of the state students. These subjects were Information Technology, Travel and Tourism and Retail Trade. Further, in 2015-2016, 12 more new Government Senior Secondary Schools were added under the scheme "Vocationalisation of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education" thereby making a total of 64 schools in total. However, it was assumed that the rapid expansion to secondary level would result in problems among students in seeking admission for further studies as the vocational subjects had not been mainstreamed yet. Similarly, there has also been a misconception of Vocational education as a stream of studies for students who are weak in studies or are likely to drop-out.

The National Education Policy 2020 has strongly envisaged that Vocational Education needs to be re-imagined and a steadfast progress is made so that by 2025 at least 50% students get exposure to at least one vocation. Several recommendations have also been made by the policy to accomplish vocational education from the early age of children. The introduction of various vocational subjects in a phased manner both in schools and higher education would cater to the need of the people and nation. Likewise, vocational guidance also becomes immensely important for this.

The word “guidance” is as old as man and originated back in the 1530s, and is defined as the process of directing conduct. Career guidance can be defined as a comprehensive, developmental program designed to assist individuals in making and implementing informed educational and occupational choices. Super and Critics (1962) defined vocational guidance as “the process of helping the individual to ascertain, accept and understand and apply the relevant facts about the world which are ascertained through exploratory activities”. It is guidance given to individuals to help them acquire the knowledge, information, skills and experience necessary to identify career options, and narrow them down to make one career decision.

According to Pearson (1908), “the term vocational guidance should be referred to as the process of assisting people to choose a vocation for attainment of efficiency and success”. The definition was however amplified in 1924 by the National Vocational Guidance Association, India (NVGA) whose version states that vocational guidance is the giving of information, experience and advance in regards to choosing an occupation, preparing for it and entering into it and progressing in it. Supper (1857) pointed out that “it is one 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 into reality with satisfaction to himself and benefit to the society. Danga (1986) also supported this simply by indicating that, vocational guidance in school is concerned with assisting students to make realistic and appropriate vocational decision.

Vocational guidance in school also helps parents to have a better perspective about children to choose a better way for their career and pave the way for an employment in locality. It will certainly help students to determine self-interests, strengths and weaknesses and also enable in taking appropriate courses right at the secondary level to qualify them for a particular occupation. Majority of the students leaving secondary school may not have received any vocational guidance and this may affect their choice of career. This study aims to investigate the extent of the impact of vocational guidance on career choice of secondary school students. In the long term, an understanding of the effect of vocational guidance will positively help to solve unemployment issues in Sikkim.

OBJECTIVES

Following are the objectives of the present study:

1. To find out the extent to which vocational guidance provide adequate career choice among secondary school students.
2. To find out the extent to which vocational guidance can reduce the level of unemployment among secondary school students.
3. To find out the extent to which vocational guidance influence career choice among secondary school students.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent does vocational guidance lead to adequate career choice among school leaver?
2. To what extent can vocational guidance reduce the level of unemployment among school leavers?
3. To what extent can vocational guidance experience help student to choose a better career?

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted based on primary and secondary data. It is a descriptive study. Data was collected through a self-developed questionnaire from the students of Secondary Schools who have taken up one vocational subject in their school.

The Questionnaire mainly contains question items in areas of student's own interest, family influences, school influences, peer influences and vocational guidance. This was administered using Google Form which was sent through WhatsApp and email to the sample schools. The online administration of the questionnaires was mainly due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation. A total of 20 schools were selected as sample schools in the present study. An equal number of schools were drawn from all the four districts namely, South, East, West and North districts of Sikkim with a total of 911 students.

The data thus collected in the Google Form was scrutinized and analyzed in MS-Excel and presented in percentage.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The data gathered from the students in areas like individual interest, family factors, peers, seniors, teachers, schools and career guidance received during the schools were analyzed, interpreted and presented as under:

i. Students' own interest towards vocational choices

In the present education system, student's interest, their ability and preference to particular subjects have been given very high importance. It was seen that unless and until the students have interest on a particular subject/course, it is not possible to expect good outcome. Therefore, motivation of the self, interest level, etc., forms the pre-requisite of anything.

Table 1: Students' own interest towards vocational choices

Factors	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The environment of the student and the career choice	18	56.1	20.8	4	1.1
Student's own perception and interest	13	42.9	25.9	15.5	2.7
The ideal job mindset held by individuals	13.6	58.4	21.7	5	1.3
Social class and background of the students	10.1	48	25.3	13.6	3
The subjects I like influenced my career decision	12.5	53.6	22.5	9.7	1.7

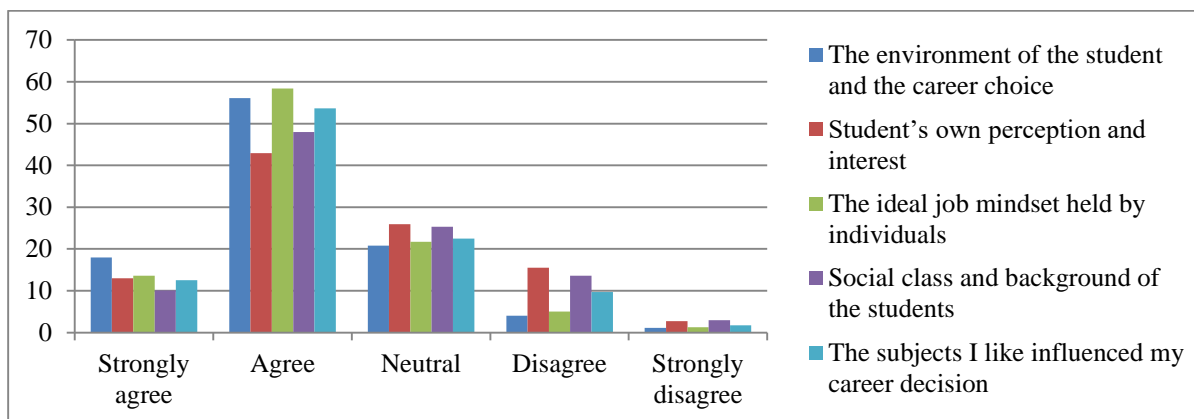


Fig. 1: Students' own interest towards vocational choices.

It is evident from table 1 that more than 75% students agree that home and school environment and friend circle are very important in the life of students while deciding subjects in their career. However, about 25% students disagree or are neutral in their response. This, in some way, indicates that environment does not have any effect while choosing subjects especially the vocational subjects as their career subjects.

With regard to the personality and the student's own perception about the choice of vocational subject as their career subject, more than 55% students agree that it students own interest is important while around 45% students are either neutral or disagree with it.

Around 72% students believe that job opportunities are very important in their life and it determines what subjects they need to choose during their school education. Whereas the remaining students opine that subjects they take in their school and job opportunities do not have much inter-linkage.

About 60 % students opine that their social class and the background that they belong to also determines their choice of vocational subjects for a career.

Similarly, 65% students, respond that the subject they like the most would determine the career decision and subjects they prefer to take in the school and vice-versa.

ii. Family influences towards vocational choices of the students

The education of children always begins from their home. When it is a matter of education of children, parents always want their kids to do well in their studies and make their life successful and prosperous. However, the education of the children is greatly affected by the status of the family, economic condition of the parents, education of the parents, etc.

Table 2: Family influences towards vocational choices of the students

Factors	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Father's influence towards the career I want to pursue	9.1	44.1	18.5	18.2	10.1
Mother's influence towards the career I want to pursue	8.4	45.3	18.2	16.6	11.6
The family business pressure in choosing a particular field of study	8.1	29.3	23.4	34.9	4.3
The dominant profession in the family is also my preferred career	7	29.4	26.5	34.4	2.7
Information I got from my parents helped me to choose a career	3.6	51	20.7	11.7	13
My father's career had an impact on my choice of career	5.2	31.7	22	33.9	7.2
My mother's career had an impact on my choice of career	5.3	30.1	22.4	34.7	7.5
An extended family member had an impact on my choice of career	7.3	33.1	26.1	29.3	4.2
The economic condition of the student's family	11.9	44.8	29.5	12.2	1.6

From table 2 it is inferred that the economic condition of the family and the information that children get from their parents decides the subjects that they take up in their studies, which accounts for 56.7% and 54.6% respectively. This is indicative of the affordability of student's studies especially in higher education after finishing high school. There are subjects that require higher investment of the parents and students find it difficult to put themselves at risk due to financial constraints of their parents. In this situation, the choice of inexpensive and easier subjects becomes the best alternative for those groups of children.

About the influences of father and mother in relation to the subject choice among the children, both have same amount of influence (53.2% and 53.7% respectively) and it is found that both father and mother do influence the subject choice of the children in the school.

It is also revealed that family business and parents' occupations do not have a major relation to the kind of career subjects especially the vocational subjects that children take in their school. However, an extended family member does have some degree of impact (40.4%) on the choice of career among the students. This might be due to the competition complexities among the siblings of the extended families.

iii. School influences towards vocational choices of the students

School is always considered to be the centre of knowledge, values, dispositions and development of human resources. Apart from the regular curricular and co-curricular activities, school also helps students to identify their strengths and weakness, their potentialities and motivate them to propel ahead with dignity, aspiration and confidence.

Table 3: School influences towards vocational choices of the students

Factors	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
School influenced my career choice	5	54.3	24.3	12.7	3.7
School career guidance cleared career confusion that I had	7	45.4	28.4	15	4.2
The school head was influential to the career I want to do	3.5	34.3	32.1	24.1	6
My class teacher has influenced to the career I want to pursue	8.2	44.4	26.7	16.1	4.6
The career guidance counsellor have influenced to the career I want to do	4.6	44.4	31.6	14.8	4.6

School always has a pivotal role to play in the life of children. They not just help in ensuring quality education to students, but also in helping students to recognize their potential, motivation, decision making and to take appropriate subjects as their career subjects so that they can yield the best out of it to lead a productive life later on.

It is revealed from table 3 that, 59.3% students agree that their school influenced their career choice, 52.4% students agree that their school provided career guidance and cleared career confusion that they had, 37.8% students agree that their school head was influential in the career they wanted to do, 52.6% students agree that their class teacher has influenced the career they wanted to pursue, and 49% students agree that the career guidance counsellor have influenced them in the career they wanted to take up.

iv. Peer influences towards vocational choices of the students

Peers act as a source of positive inspiration to many especially during the adolescent period. Peer relationships provide a unique opportunity to children where they learn a wide range of socio-emotional skills like cooperation, problem solving, empathy, communication and critical thinking. However, in many instances this also plays a negative role that becomes detrimental to them.

Table 4: Peer influences towards vocational choices of the students

Factors	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Former students' careers had a positive influence on my career choice	5	44.4	30.4	15.35	4.9
Peer influence regarding career choices	7.3	43.2	35.8	12.2	1.5

From table 4, it is revealed that peers have a very strong role to play while deciding what particular subject a student has to take as career subjects. During the Secondary School period, when most of the students are at the age of adolescence, they greatly trust their peers than their elders. In such a state of confusion, the right guidance from their peers serves a very vital process. The above table clearly depicts that 49.5% students agree that their former students' career had a positive influence on their career choice. Similarly, 50.5% students

agree that their peer influence regarding career choices is significant in their life. The result also shows the amount of disagreement among the students with regard to the peer pressure in choosing vocational career in their school life is very negligible. However, considerable proportions of students are neutral in their responses. More than 45% of the students agree that peer advice on career guidance was helpful to the learners. And more than 33% are neutral, but more than 12% disagree that peer advice on career guidance is not helpful. It can be concluded that peer advice on career guidance in the learning stage is more helpful in the secondary level.

v. Vocational guidance towards vocational choices of the students

Vocational guidance in school is the process by which the various factors affecting individual occupational choices are resolved and by which the children are helped to develop their own potentials. It also enables parents to have a better perspective about children to choose a better way for their career and pave the way for an employment which benefit all.

Table 5: Vocational guidance towards vocational choices of the students

Factors	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Vocational guidance helps students make career choices	19.7	65.8	12.1	1.4	1
Vocational guidance helps students to build confidence to decide what they want to do in future without fear or doubt	21.2	60.4	14.8	2.6	1
Vocational guidance helps students to explore various other occupational fields apart from popularly known ones	16.7	60.1	18.7	3	1.5
Vocational guidance provides occupational information that is relevant to the choice of students	16.4	60.2	18.4	4	1
Career guidance is comprehensively offered at our school	5.5	49.7	29.5	9.8	5.5

As per the above table, 65% students agree that vocational guidance helps them to make career choices in the line of their interests, aptitude and abilities. This mainly helps while taking admission which is very important for them to take appropriate subjects according to their interest, ability and future opportunity. 21% students strongly agree and more than 60% agree that vocational guidance would go a long way in giving the students the confidence to decide what they want to do in the future without fear and doubt. More than 17% students strongly agree and 63% agree that with vocational guidance they can relate their education with employment opportunities in the future. This means that a proper vocational guidance right during their secondary stage of schooling would help them in choosing the right vocational subjects so that they do not just complete their education but can also become self-employed easily. More than 60% students agree that vocational guidance

helps students to realize that they can explore other occupational fields apart from popularly known ones. More than 60% students also agree that vocational guidance creates occupational information that is relevant to the career choice of students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Following are the major findings and recommendations of the present study:

- Career guidance counselling should be conducted at an early age for learners to develop positive self-concept. This will give them the sense of direction they need in order to focus on their academic activities.
- Career related seminars, workshops, campaigns, career fairs, Education week, job shadowing, taking a child to work, alumni, career talk days, whole schools career day programmes are essential and therefore such activities should be organised and invitation be extended to all role players in the education system and all other interested groups.
- Career guidance should be given importance at the school level so that students can take appropriate subjects as per their needs and abilities. It will give learners the knowledge they need in career planning and choice.
- The government should provide subsidies, grants and scholarships for educators and potential tertiary students to specialize in Career Guidance to add more qualified career guidance practitioners as it does with others scarce careers.
- Each school in the rural area should have a well-resourced library with career guidance materials, and computers which are connected to the internet to encourage a culture of reading and searching for career information.

CONCLUSION

Self-knowledge is a serious component for an individual learner to choose the correct career based on goal envisioned; potentialities; competencies and natural talents. It is of utmost importance to ensure that a learner is followed right from home to pre-school, from pre-school to primary school, then to secondary school and ultimately from secondary school to post school institutions. The study on the impact of career guidance for career choice in the secondary schools of Sikkim is a critical exercise to explore many aspects of the phenomenon in gaining ample knowledge on career decision making processes. The understanding is that career guidance is not linked adequately in the Sikkim education system to be seen as a fundamental instrument for the recognition of the goals of the education system. There is a high need of intervention that needs to be done slowly, piece by piece to solve the problem of attitudes and crunch management. With all the findings, career guidance should be taken as the core of all school subjects, and therefore must be allocated time as a full subject to fortify learners' ability to make informed career choice decisions which will inspire them to proceed to post-secondary education.

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