

BUILDING A NATION: INCORPORATING CAREER COUNSELLING IN COUNTRY'S EDUCATION SYSTEM**Divya Joseph¹,**

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INTRODUCTION

Highlighting the significance of a teacher in student's life, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on the occasion of Teacher's Day 2014 addressed the country's teachers and said, "Teaching is not just another profession. It is a divine responsibility to guide and enlighten. The influences and experiences you share with your students will remain with them for a lifetime. You are also laying the foundation and the building blocks of the society. This is a responsibility of great significance because on this depends how our present and future generations will thrive." US's 16th president and a self-educated lawyer, Abraham Lincoln once said, "The best way to predict your future is to create it." These statements are way more pragmatic than mere abstract idealistic situations. They might sound like just another clichéd academic kind of statement that is overstated in its claim that 'children are the future of our nation', but seldom do we realise that the whole philosophy of this approach is rooted in the concrete fact that it **is** indeed the students who have the power to translate this dream into reality.

Basic primary education is a must for all but every student has a distinctive competency or interest which needs to be developed. Being truly self-motivated is imperative to succeed in a

career. Choosing a field purely on the basis of interest is the biggest source of motivation over any other external influence which might temporarily appear enticing. The hard realization that today's classroom environment does not cater to the student's affiliation or passion towards an area of interest mirrors the exacerbating existing relevancy crisis in our education system. An ideal education system must aim to nurture every child and help all students discover their talents, realise their full potential, and develop a passion for life-long learning. This research gives voice to a new genuine "student vision" for education and the need for incorporating career counselling as a mandatory part of our Education System to aid students in every possible manner for choosing the right career path that leads to their progress and consequently a progressing Nation.

The National Policy on Education formulated by the Indian Government promotes elementary education, universal access and enrolment, universal retention of children up to 14 years of age, substantial improvement in the quality of education etc. In addition, we are making all attempts to develop faculties of education in diverse ways like maximising literacy, funding education, sophisticated use of emerging technologies etc. and trying to revamp the course of education by focussing on imparting knowledge over mere assessment of student's memory. Numerous efforts are being made to drive student achievement, teacher effectiveness and overall educational productivity so that nothing is holding back education or disengaging students from learning. And yet, an astonishing unpleasant fact is that, every year we are just adding to an increasing number of people, working in profiles they feel they weren't meant to be in, leading to job dissatisfaction, low productivity, job hopping and other related adverse issues. The occurrence of such situations can be traced back to inappropriate career decisions taken years back. In addition to affecting the satisfaction in an individual's career, somewhere down the line this also affects our nation because a country is what its people make it. Arenas where the country's potential is capable of excelling are suffering because of the inability to realise that the reasons of choosing a career need to go beyond succumbing to aspects like expected pay, family or peer pressure or society's high perception of a particular field of work. Although these factors are significant in an individual's life, they cannot sustain the arduousness of this era's intricate work-life, as sooner or later they are hit by the realisation that it is only a passion that can endure the hardships and complexities of today's work-scenario and help them thrive in a particular field. Another factor that contravenes sound career decision is that where there is no influence, there is a high probability of an individual in their teens to form an idealistic view of what he/she would like to be instead of what reality is. A decision like that of choosing a career affects one's life forever in addition to the

nation's progress and therefore cannot be overlooked. So it is inevitable that students be led to determine their fortes and weaknesses based on the lines of their rational thinking patterns, personality, values, interests, and work style preferences through a structured process to come to decide their career path. A sound education must subtly involve the process of invoking in students, a deep sense of belonging and interest in their field of passion. And only after this significant instillation must education follow to equip them to plug into a globalised world.

The findings of this research paint an intense picture of this continuing disconnect between the career path chosen by students and their passions and interests in life and exposes the need of career counselling as a part of our education system to maximise the potential that abides in our country. It advances the premise that by leveraging the interests of students we can start to build a new vision for 21st century education that is more reflective of the needs and desires of today's learners and will consequently drive increased productivity in their learning, forming a nation that is developing, reigning and capable of mastering in all domains.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Rodgers defines student development as "the ways that a student grows, progresses, or increases his or her developmental capabilities as a result of enrolment in an institution of higher education" (Hamrick, 2002, p. 31). It is built from a foundation of psychosocial, identity, and lifespan development (Hamrick, 2002). Many life events, life stages, perspectives, issues of transition, and other factors play into a student's development (Hamrick, 2002). Their social environment has a strong bearing on their development, such as decisions of parents, actions of friends, tragedy, or extracurricular activities. A growing number of students are having to address ethnic, gender, personal, or other identity development questions. Each student has unique career aspirations and job interests which they must explore and develop while in college. Career choices and social experiences can be largely explained through social learning theory, which considers genetic factors, special abilities, and environmental factors as part of the learning experience. Cognitive-structural theories also explain how students interpret life's experiences. The challenge for counsellors is to understand each individual student, and then provide programs, tools, and directions that address their individual development. Learning style theory points out that there are many styles and approaches to learning (Hamrick, 2002). Learning styles may be based on a person's extroversion, introversion, sensory perception, and intuitive perception (Komives, 1998). For many students, experiential learning is a great asset in their education (Hamrick, 2002). Career

development includes an element of reflection, requiring a student to engage in self-reflection, self-realization, and self-awareness. Self-reflection occurs where the student looks back onto his interests, likes, and goals, rather than looking at those of his family and friends (Ellis, 2000). Students are consumer oriented, and as free agents, managing their own career (Opengart, 2002). By building a resume, they are marketing themselves as the best thing for an organization. The focus is not on employment security, but rather on employability security.

Ginzberg analyses career choice from a developmental perspective (Zunker, 2002). Individuals move through three stages of occupational choice in life. These are the fantasy stage, the tentative stage, and the realistic stage. During these, the individual identifies likes and dislikes, becomes aware of personal capacities, identifies perceptions of occupational styles, and the individual becomes aware of career choice and the responsibilities of that choice. Finally, career exploration ends in making a college choice and choosing a focused occupational goal.

Krumboltz's learning theory of career counselling is a social-learning approach to career choice (Zunker, 2002). The process of career choice and development involves four factors: genetic endowments and special abilities, environmental conditions and events, learning experiences, and task approach skills. Genetics represent those abilities or biological traits we are born with. Environmental conditions are the experiences of life, such as family and factors that serve to develop the individual and give him a particular view of the world. Learning experiences consists of instrumental learning, such as through reactions to consequences; direct observations, such as the reactions of others; and associative learning experiences, such as negative and positive reactions to previously neutral situations. Tasks approach skills are those skills that a person has learned, such as problem-solving skills. This theory sees an individual as learning and developing through observations, experiences, and training. The cognitive information processing theory holds that individuals make a career choice based on information in career problem solving and decision making (Zunker, 2002).

In understanding students, an advisor needs to learn of the student's current condition and family circumstances (Zunker, 2002). This requires the counsellor to look for appearance, attitude and behavior, affect and mood, ask about demographic information, obtain work history, ask about medical and educational issues, and learn of family issues that affect the student. It is also important to understand the student's perception of the role of work. The obvious perception is to make money, but it is also important to know about their quality of life concerns or job satisfaction they expect in a job. Some desire personal and family time, want time for leisure, or need to be in a

certain workplace environment that is quiet or air conditioned. Some students must consider their dual role, such as being a parent. Some individuals want time for other civic duties, such as volunteer work. For the counsellor, this is an opportunity to recommend similar and relevant activities and experiences.

Career counselling is an act of support (Niles, 2002), countering the feeling of otherwise falling apart. Students often have feelings of hopelessness, confusion, and uncertainty. Everyone needs some supportive advice and direction from a well-placed mentor or counsellor, preferably one who has been there and has pertinent knowledge. In the event of unemployment, clients have to normalize reactions to unemployment by identifying their accomplishments and transferable skills. Self-conscious clients may be assisted by allowing a counsellor to help them identify and remove self-defeating beliefs. Supportive acts may be limited to encouragement and emotional support.

Advising should be more involved than just helping with course selection (Frost, 1991). Advising can serve as a means to achieving success. Advisors have a wealth of knowledge, resources, and experience that can be used to aid the student. Having advisors, mentors, and other well-placed helpers, a student can stay ahead of the game. Without advisors and mentors, the student makes more mistakes and learns through the school of hard knocks.

NEED FOR THE STUDY:

Socrates said, "He who enjoys what he does, never works a day in his life."

According to research done by Accenture in March 2011 it was found that only 41% of South Africans are actually satisfied with their jobs. Yet, the same survey also shows that very few of those who are unsatisfied with their jobs take any steps toward a career change. According to Natalie Rabson, Marketing Manager at Boston City Campus & Business College "One of the main reasons why so many South Africans are unsatisfied with their careers and now find themselves stuck is simply because they made the wrong career decision initially".

An academic institution is an organization the primary constituents of which are the students. These students who join different academic institutions are the future of our country. The progress and achievements of our nation would be determined by the milestones achieved by these students as they grow in their respective careers. They are the foundation of our economy. But students at the age of choosing their stream of higher studies might not be mature enough in their thinking. Unrealistic fantasies, peer pressure or family imposition, influence of media, misleading

perceptions of careers etc. often hinder and adversely mislead their decision making process. Moreover, every human being is designed in a very different manner. The tastes, preferences, skills, capabilities etc. of an individual cannot be generalized and therefore neither can education be. This is why proper guidance and counselling needs to intervene to conquer the vulnerabilities that can possibly delude student's decision and lead them onto a path that they wouldn't regret choosing later in their lives.

Gone are those days when careers in photography, animation, wildlife, media, writing etc. were thought to be respectable and pragmatic only in the foreign countries. Thanks to Globalization, today we are presented with a career range of countless new specialities and ample opportunities provided by educational institutions in all these previously skepticized, unexplored and niche fields and professions. Yet, the occupational choices of most of Indian masses, irrespective of their interests, seem to be typically predominant in certain areas and are largely pursued in a limited range of professions. What we are lacking in is in opening the eyes of our entire population to the above mentioned facts. We need to work to help individuals go beyond the barriers of social norms or being typical conformists and instead be audacious enough to choose a career that resonates with their interest instead of an "ideal" career because a career decision stays with a person for the duration of his/ her life. If career decision isn't based on personal conviction, later on the intricacies of career often choke the motivation needed for perseverance. Not only does it affect an individual's personal life, but their development, growth and the organization they work with in terms of productivity of the employee. So it is indispensable to acknowledge the effectiveness of career guidance and counselling in enriching our lives, in enhancing the future of the field and in having an impact on the development or maintenance of diverse field interests.

The dedication and commitment to create an intentionally diverse student body should start at the faculty and staff level. To maintain and grow in our relevancy as an institution of the 21st century, we must examine how we measure outcomes. We need to focus on why it's more important than ever that education be in accordance to the student's area of passion, why it's critical that students be encouraged in the most niche of fields, according to their assorted academic ability and why our education must mirror the complexity and diversity of the work world these students are interested in and capable of joining and achieving milestones in, when given the opportunity and guidance. It is through these steps that we can collaborate to shape and build our nation's nonpareil future by really helping today's students become tomorrow's leaders

and securing economic prosperity. Efforts need to be made to preserve the opportunity to gain the vital skills needed to launch our nation forward into the world, excelling in every domain and embracing all diverse vocations with due respect and value. An educated workforce is not only proven to have more earning capability, but the ability to truly contribute to the society we desire to create.

To work for 35 long serviceable years ruminating about past career decisions is the last thing one wants as a consequence of an inappropriate career choice. But the existing scenario paints a very shocking picture. There is an increasing and appallingly large number of people who find themselves pursuing a wrong career path. Making a correct and informed career choice is one of the most crucial decisions a person has to make because it affects what they will do for the rest of their lives.

Of course there is another way to look at it. Even a wrong career choice may school you with knowledge and experiences that are completely relevant and valuable to future steps in your career-you just don't know it yet. Additionally, person can change their career at any stage in life by attaining the required qualifications as age is no bar in doing so. But this will be at the cost of loss of valuable years that could otherwise be dedicated to cultivate an interest and grow in the respective field, of course combined with the satisfaction it would draw.

This study investigates factors that might influence a student's career choices and investigates the relationships among the predicting variables and the outcome variable (choice of graduation subject) for 86 college students. Variables investigated are availability of school counselling, reason of subject choice, clarity in understanding of the course before joining, realisation and acceptance of error (if applicable) realization of the need of school counselling, barriers in pursuing subject of interest. It was hypothesized that career choices are influenced by the predicting variables in such a way that influencing factors over pure interest tend to be the foundation for the choice of a more typical occupation. The results generally support the factors in majority of career choices. Students are influenced by availability of school counselling, reason of subject choice, clarity in understanding of the course before joining in choosing occupations.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To identify the need of Career Counselling within the Education System of our Country
2. To identify different factors that influence students in choosing the stream of their graduation.
3. To identify the main challenges in a student's decision of an apt career.
4. To recommend appropriate suggestions to empower education system to cull out the best from the student potential of our country.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This study used qualitative method to examine the perceived influences on college students' selection and implementation of career choices. Data collection involved convenience sampling design. 86 students of a university participated through a structured questionnaire examining (a) factors that influenced their choice of occupational field, (b) barriers to pursuing their choice of graduation subject (c) their opinion on lack of guidance and counselling prior to joining college etc. Secondary data has been collected through scholarly and research articles on career counselling. In addition, the bibliographies of books related to career counselling were reviewed.

INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

The study was undertaken by distributing questionnaires to 100 students from 9 different fields currently in the different years of their degree in Andhra University. Out of 100, only 86 cases could be furthered for evaluation. The sample consisted of 37 female and 49 male students. Following were the observations from the data :-

1. 58% students made their decision to pursue a specific stream only after completing their school education, 22 % made it in between 10 and 12th Standard while 6% students said the decision was taken by somebody else for them. Clearly, figuring out what one's passion or interest is not easy, but childhood and schooling period is the best time to brainstorm, build, process and narrow down likes/interests which can be parlayed into possible career choices in the future. Schooling via diverse activities must aid the students in having an early clarity of their likes, aptitude, dislikes so that decision making is based on pure interest relevant to the student. This early realization is mandatory because when a student moves out of school into college and further, the mind is clogged with different notions

existing all around; about the best college and the best course available in that college and majorly the placement percentage of that college etc. Amongst all these criteria, nobody (neither the student, nor the family) ponders over the likes, dislikes, passions or interests of the student. On the other hand, if a child is made to be more determined about a passion before he reaches that stage, then such external influencing factors do not come in the way on his/her making the right decision in a career choice.

2. 58% students said that they had never received any sort of guidance or counselling before they selected their respective fields. 31% said that their school teachers played a role in influencing their decision of graduation subject selection. 7% reported that both school teacher and career counsellor guided them in their decision, while a meagre 2% reported that they were counselled by a professional career counsellor. These 58% of students represent a majority of the population who stand at the risk of regretting a career decision because of the lack of counselling provided about the different satisfactory career options that they could have had by choosing a field of their interest.
3. When students were asked the reason why they selected a particular stream, following were the responses.
 - 16% - Purely based on Passion, interest and understanding of the subject
 - 3% - Under influence of family or friends
 - 13% - Through career counselling by an expert in the field
 - 13% - Demand and Popularity of subject (from social perspective)
 - 44% - Because Job opportunities are plentiful and well paid in this field.
 - 9% - For Dignity, Social Esteem and Social Status
 - 1% - Others

This stirring statistic shows a very alarming and disappointing fact that has been overlooked by our entire education system. A meagre 16% of population has had the courage to pursue their interest in life. A more shocking observation is that 44% of students

have chosen a particular stream keeping in mind “purely the plentiful well-paying job opportunities”. 3% students chose their subject under the influence of family or friends, 13% because of the demand and popularity of subject (from social perspective) and 9%, for Dignity, Social Esteem and Social Status related to the profession.

If we exponentiate this number to meet the population of graduates today in our country, we will be looking at a vast population of our nation which has compensated every important aspect of a dream job to ensure employment. How sad is it to see artists, musicians, photographers, dancers nip their talents in the bud and seek a job just for being employed. Or is it absolutely their fault? The probability of this 44% figure to have excelled in some other fields related to their interest/passion is very high. Yet, they are pursuing a degree with the main target of being employed and paid well in future. So is the case with the rest of 25% who gave reasons like family pressure, popularity of the subject, dignity from social perspective etc as reasons for choosing their respective course in graduation. This clearly reflects the kind of atmosphere we have created in our ‘developing’ nation where there is actually no freedom of choice, wherein majority individual’s career choices still get limited because of influencing factors. It’s an irony that in spite of all the ease with which we have global information displayed at the click of a mouse, we are still hesitant to go beyond our previous limitations which existed solely because of lack of information and ignorance. So ultimately, fact remains that a place where a person spends over a third part of his/her life is not where they really should be. Students even in this era are convinced that their talents can be kept aside and they must pursue a degree for a job not realising that the disconnection between their passion and the monotony of their job finally causes discontent in due course of time.

Another astonishing observation is that not one among these 44% students said that they had any idea of the subjects that they will be taught during graduation. Neither did one of them say that they really liked the subjects in their courses. Is it natural to not be interested in subjects of learning or is it because the sole reason that these students enrolled under specific courses was employment? This clearly implies that employment has become a driving force of an entire education system of our country. Children are forced to limit their talents to free time hobbies or extra-curricular activities because singing or painting or photography is not a popular profession or should we say that most Universities don’t have courses or rather 100% placements for them. With uncountable number of

schools and Universities being opened in every nook and corner of our country, we are still pressurizing our children to become either doctors or engineers. When we really have the wealth, place and man power to have such infrastructural facilities, then it is time for considered authorities to intervene and direct this inventory to form a better education system and let go of the sole 'business purpose' of education. It is just about an effort to think over and make a change.

4. 67% students mentioned that the course content of their degree is not what they expected and that the subjects are not of their particular interest. 10% of students replied that they were absolutely unaware of the course contents in their respective subjects before admission. Just about 13% students said that the course is as they expected and subjects are of interest to them. 9% students said that course is different from what they expected yet they found the subjects interesting. This data portrays why it is important to have career counselling in schools because 87% of student respondents did not have any idea of what they were delving into when they chose their course. Career Counselling in schools can ensure that they inform students about the primary courses that they will study. At least a glimpse of their upcoming 3, 4 or 5 years of graduation must be provided.
5. 13% students felt that after joining and understanding the course, they always felt that they should have selected a different stream of graduation suiting their preference and capabilities. 20% said that they sometimes felt that they made a mistake. Whereas a bold 57% said that they never desired to change their field. Here 10% students said that they don't ponder over such a thought.

Here we have a clear 33% figure who are unhappy about their choice of graduation and will either change their stream in post-graduation and pursue something else or will end up continuing and will join an organisation that they wouldn't be able to give their 100% in. Again here the 57% who are sure of having made a right decision **might** also have many who, later, after getting into a working environment realise that they didn't make the best decision.

6. 88% students said that if they were given a chance to change their graduation subject after 1st year (without losing an year), they still wouldn't have changed it. 3 % said yes and 8% said 'may be', as they weren't sure.

This is yet again an amusing piece of data which tells us that in spite of regretting their choice of subject, just 3% students want to change their field if they are ensured that they wouldn't lose their years of study. Again it is a point to ponder as to why a student who wishes to change his career course is hesitant to do so in this country of ours. The response includes social stigma, family pressure, lack of guidance, uncertainty of different kinds, etc. This is where again career counselling has a main role to play. From provoking a student to think of what are his likes and areas of interest, related vocations, establishing the course to reach related goals, overcoming manipulative influences and so on, counselling can provide assistance through a myriad of solutions.

7. When students were asked if they think they would have made a different and better decision about the choice of their graduation stream, if they had more information and guidance from experts about availability of diverse fields, the subjects that will be taught under those specializations, the job opportunities in those fields, the prestigious colleges (and other details) running the courses, etc., 20% agreed. 7% student thought 'may be' they would have whereas a majority of 73% students felt that they couldn't have made a better decision. Here this data depicts how lack of counselling adversely affected the decision making of different students.

Undoubtedly, most of these students will go on to do jobs in their respective chosen fields while some might change their career sooner or later. But in doing so, our deserving nation will remain deprived of a majority of these students' 100% contribution towards the field of their passion, which could have also become their forte and helped us in building a better world. Consequently, lack of career counselling in schools is leading to holding back of a developing nation from maximising its full potential and growing as a better economy?

Counselling can act as a front line defense, averting a student's departure from life's right stage of making career decisions before a stage where a change seems practically impossible. What decides the course of career of an individual begins before college and extends beyond graduation into the student's work career. Therefore, it would be productive to delve further into the needs and aspirations of students. By re-evaluating the student's strengths and interests, counselling can assist the student in streamlining their career options based on a new found understanding.

SUGGESTIONS

If we scrutinize the general perception of Indian masses towards the counselling with respect to education, we find it being frequently used but coupled majorly with admission processes at different colleges and universities. And the so called Admission Counselling is merely the guidance to go through the process of admission in a course at an institution, being led from one window to the other, than the guidance of making the right subject related decision.

Academic Institutions need to undergo a paradigm shift and a total metamorphosis, refocusing their priorities on students and their interests. They should go beyond serving faculty and staff and focus on students. The institutions must strive to attain a reciprocally beneficial concerted relationship with students, where their needs, desires, and expectations can be simultaneously fulfilled.

In a culture nurturing strong family support system and rigid religious quintessence, counselling is perceived as a child of the western countries and carries a stigma towards this service. Counselling needs to be imminently understood as a vital instrument required to bridge the gap between a student's aspirations and his/her right choice of career.

The findings of this study highlight several key variables that could be targets for intervention.

At the outset, we need to make sure that the term is understood as intended and not looked down at as some stigma

- Counselling programs need to be made interesting for students' participation. This includes addressing the stigma that the word carries in a country like ours. Career Counselling needs to be understood as an opportunity to empower a student to take control of his future, with only assistance from the advisor and not as a solution to a child with some problems.
- Academic institutions need to design, implement and evaluate the counselling interventions through follow ups to ensure productivity. Additionally, a counsellor must assess if a student needs to seek supplementary assistance for personal concerns and then the school must make arrangements for the same.

- Counselling programs must be engaging enough to keep the students actively involved in planning their own career. Students should be convinced to comprehend counselling as a golden opportunity to assist them in making one of the most important decisions in life.
- One way of dealing with students' hesitation towards the service is by providing it online. To ensure accessibility, academic institutions should mediate the execution, so that students who cannot afford the service personally are not devoid of the benefits of counselling.
- A counselling programme must maintain an extensive database of standard information on diverse courses and careers. Counselling must be steered based on individual personality assessment, intellectual ability and interest inventory. Based on the assessment of such factors, students must be guided to the most lucrative vocations suiting their interest to develop the right skill sets, leading in a successful career that offers job satisfaction.
- Counselling interventions must include informing the parents about their child's choice of career and how they could foster the child's progress in the chosen field.

EPILOGUE

The onus of education 'reform' is upon us. A suggestion that can be worked upon to revamp the education system is to have schools devoted entirely to specific fields of study for the students enrolled in Higher Education. Instead of having students go through 2-3 sets of general education courses (primary, secondary, college) students should be exposed to the different fields and have them enroll in schools that devote entirely to that field or study; that increases the number of years a student is versed in one subject to prepare them for the careers ahead.

Over the past few decades, a lot of research has shown that our decision making in general is influenced to a great extent by cognitive biases clouding our judgements and negatively influencing career decisions. What is required is to go beyond this awareness to take a more systematic and evidence-based approach in making a career choice.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

It is important to start with the correct frame of mind. An education system needs to go beyond grades 'A' and 'A plus' into aiding students with honing the existing talents/skills, career choices and employment connections. Not only are students the bosses and the customers of educational institutions, they are also building the future of our nation. Counselling at schools should make students intentional in determining what they want as their career and plan their course of further higher studies accordingly.

Educational Institutions will be fulfilling the real purpose of their existence only when the focus will be on the development of the student in a specific and correct direction deciding his/her future.

Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life - think of it, dream of it, live on that idea. Let the brain, muscles, nerves, every part of your body, be full of that idea, and just leave every other idea alone. This is the way to success. ~Swami Vivekananda

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