

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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Introduction

1. The optimum adjustment of people to work (human resources utilisation) depends upon many things: primarily, the productive resources available, or likely to become available; training facilities; the geography of transport and living accommodation; and other material factors. But it also depends upon how people think about work. If people do not know what needs to be done, or will not do it, or want to do things which they cannot do, then many will find themselves in work they cannot do well, or in which they are unhappy, or will be unemployed even when there could be work for them, whilst the country will suffer from work done badly and without pride, or from the loss of national wealth when work which could be done remains undone.

2. Vocational guidance is about this thinking that needs to be done if the best use is to be made of a country's human resources - often, in a newly developing country, its main source of national wealth.

3. Vocational guidance is usually defined in terms of its meaning to the young people with whom it is concerned. It may be defined alternatively as the process of influencing thinking so as to optimise the adjustment of people (usually young people) to work.

4. In technically advanced industrial and commercial societies, it has evolved principally as a means of helping young people to think realistically about their choice of employment, to plan their careers and to execute these plans. Since it focuses attention upon the various capabilities and interests displayed by different young people and encourages realism about these, it may take the form of only one aspect of a broad approach to guidance, aiming primarily to encourage the adolescent to mature through sensible approaches to problems of all kinds; or it may be viewed more narrowly, mainly as a means of enabling young people to choose and find work or training which they will enjoy and do well.

Unemployment and vocational guidance

5. In a developing country with a population explosion and high unemployment amongst youth, such aims may seem academic or even frustrating. The role of a young person's choice may be very limited. There may simply not be enough employing enterprises to provide employment for the high numbers of young people. Even when there is work, lack of experience in personnel selection, or misjudged training, may vitiate even the most sensible choice.

6. In countries with plenty of employment, with opportunities for training related to work needs, and with planned selection, the main "think-factor" which may be left for vocational guidance to influence may well be the young people's choice. Where the situation is different, however, and the role of choice is less important, it is likely that vocational guidance may not seem to have such relevance if it still operates with the same aims and by the same methods as in the countries where it evolved.

Other problems

7. Added to this, there are likely to be important differences in educational systems - the multi-faceted, richly equipped institutions of the technically developed countries, with opportunity for interest and experiment in many practical activities and social relationships, as against the concentration upon book work in many schools in developing countries; in information - the comprehensive statistics, jobs descriptions, research and experience on the one hand, as against, perhaps, a complete absence of occupational statistics; and in resources - the ability to train and provide large cadres of professional guidance workers, as against difficulty in allowing for even few hours a week of a teacher's time.

Aims and methods

8. If vocational guidance in a developing country is to serve its essential purpose of influencing thinking so as to optimise the adjustment of young people to work, it will have to have different aims and to adopt or emphasize different methods from those of "classical" guidance in technically advanced countries.

9. These aims and methods cannot as yet be confidently stated - there is not enough experience to go by. It is necessary to analyse the economic needs and plans, the educational system

and the population trends in each country; to consider how their interaction and their interaction with other factors, especially social values, traditions or external influences, create a divergence between what people are likely to think and what they need to think, what they know and what they need to know, and so on. Only such an analysis can reveal what thinking vocational guidance could most usefully attempt to influence, and in what ways and by what means it might do this.

10. This paper, however, suggests some tentative approaches which may be worth taking into account in such analyses.

11. The central aim may be to make young people aware, as early as they can understand, of the nature and extent of the labour market, i.e. the number of openings in each occupation, by comparison with the competition for entry, i.e. population and education statistics. They need to be made responsive to the possibility of self-employment and, where appropriate, to occupations (e.g. agriculture, building, catering) which offer prospects but which they do not like. Many may have to be accustomed to the idea of participation in special work schemes (if available) or self-help projects, instead of normal economic employment.

12. Young people must be helped to understand the ratio of competition to opportunity in popular employment occupations, and to accept the situation of selection. In the Caribbean, they will probably need to be helped with information about the kinds of work overseas for which they could prepare, and perhaps to weigh the personal gain of emigration against the national gain if the most talented and experience do not emigrate.

13. Vocational guidance would then act largely as a public relations wing of manpower and educational planning, to adjust people's thinking to the needs of the situation, and to bring to the fore those manpower problems which cannot be solved by normal economic processes, so that people will be ready to consider what unorthodox methods may be necessary to evolve solutions.

14. In a depressing employment situation, vocational guidance must not take a form which raises unrealistic hopes. The only hope for young people facing trouble is to help them to see and deal with their difficult situation maturely and objectively.

15. Young people may need to be helped to appreciate that only some, with the requisite effort to qualify, are likely to realize their talents and interests in modern attractive occupations of their choice, whereas others will find their fate determined more by chance and circumstances than by planned and appropriate use of their capabilities.

16. The normal role of vocational guidance in technically advanced countries with full employment - to help individual young people to develop and implement careers plans - will probably relate only to a minority of fortunate young people: for many, vocational guidance will more usefully take the form of an information service with a purpose, the purpose arising from the need to reconcile hopes with realities and reveal areas where new solutions must be sought.

Direction and methods

17. Vocational guidance may also need to be directed to different people. Much of its work may need to be directed less to students and their parents than to employers, selectors, trainers and educationalists, in the form of advice based on knowledge and interpretation of the content of jobs, the needs of the labour market, and the consequence in work opportunities of various developmental schemes. This in turn may shift the emphasis from the personal relationships of classical counselling to the organisational needs of creating a body of informed opinion capable of enlightening and influencing such people.

18. Methods and means will also need to be carefully judged. For example, it may be personally rewarding for a highly trained guidance worker to help a group of young people to solve their problems; but if there are only a few such experts available, their time may be much better used in training, organising and stimulating other people to carry out the kinds of guidance which their time and training will permit, and in devising and evaluating field projects of data collection and research into methodology. Where placement, selection, manpower planning and other services, normally taken for granted in technically advanced countries, are absent or inadequate it may be necessary to enter these fields, or to collaborate closely and actively with those who are concerned with them. One of the main tasks of the guidance worker may prove to be the involvement of teachers, trade and welfare organisations and pupils, particularly in the collection of information and its preparation for publication.

Action Research

19. The general strategy also needs sober assessment. Usually, we hope in vocational guidance to provide a service. But in the early stages of vocational guidance work, the main feature will be a lack of essential knowledge and experience. The primary needs, therefore, are to :-

- (a) collect facts on which authentic guidance can be based;
- (b) publish basic information so obtained;
- (c) discover what kinds of activity in guidance will achieve what affects, and how to undertake them most effectively.

20. This means that the emphasis, perhaps for a period of two or more years, may need to be on Action Research. Service, no doubt, will be rendered, and increasingly as time goes on. But this will be less important, at first, than the accumulation of information and experience. Later, on a sound foundation, a sound service may be hoped for.

21. Activities which it may be useful to undertake include :-

- (a) Compiling a complete register of employers (agents: teachers, training instructors, university students, staff of Labour Ministries, Rotary and Lions Clubs, Chambers of Commerce, senior school students, guidance staff.)
- (b) Preparing a general guide to employment opportunities - range of choice, volume of employment in each, and as far as possible the likely number of openings (agents: teachers, guidance staff, material from Labour Ministry, etc.). A similar guide to training opportunities could be produced.
- (c) Compiling a list of sources of information, and collecting a library of information and study material at central and other suitable places.
- (d) Preparing visual material to illustrate relationships between employment growth, population growth and educational expansion; also to illustrate trends in employment opportunity and the immediate need to envisage self-employment, agricultural

resettlement, etc., and, in the long term, population stabilisation.

- (e) As a starting point for judging the aims of a vocational guidance programme in each school, introducing follow-up surveys of work outlets of ex-students as a standard duty within the schools. This could be done experimentally, using senior students as interviewers to make them aware of the problems.
- (f) Programmes of job studies by teachers, both to collect information for (a) and (b) above and to equip them with the necessary understanding to discuss careers information with students.
- (g) Projects carried out by students about jobs as experiments in methods of inducing logical thoughts on careers - e.g. job studies, work experience, occupational surveys, maps of local businesses, plant tours.
- (h) Collection of ideas and experience about the possibilities of earning a living in self-employment and small cooperative employment.
- (i) "Group conferences" using ex-students, or representatives of occupations, to discuss their experience (including interviews in front of the class).
- (j) Preparation of "case histories" on careers of ex-students for use as discussion and training material.
- (k) "Career days".
- (l) Exercises (essays, "ambition census", questionnaires etc.) to discover what ideas students have about their future (possibly at different stages of a programme).
- (m) Similar exercises for "self measurement" to help students see their interests and capabilities by comparison with a group.
- (n) Development of discussions about jobs and careers with groups of students, in the light of information

collected as above. (Use of ex-students may be investigated here also).

- (o) Use of school magazines and other local publications.
- (p) Cooperation with press, radio and television for publicity, especially to reach parents.
- (q) Discussion with appropriate agencies (employers, personnel selectors, cooperative departments, education authorities, trade unions, training authorities etc.) on matters relevant to optimising movement of young people into productive work (agents: guidance staff and teachers).
- (r) "Role-playing" - especially in regard to selection interviews and preparation for field work in guidance.
- (s) Writing letters of application for jobs, etc., and practice of filling in forms.
- (t) Where circumstances indicate a real possibility of students' using their choice, individual consultation (agents: guidance staff, selected teachers, members of professions and occupations willing to assist);
- (u) As experience accumulates from consultations, preparation of "census of student problems", and case-studies arising from them.
- (v) If appropriate, publicising National Youth Services and other opportunities or requirements for special work schemes.

22. It will be seen that, in accordance with the earlier assessment of aims, most of the activities suggested are connected with making young people aware of their situation, or with discussion of new forms of productive work, rather than with counselling on individual choice. Indeed, on account of shortage of professional full-time staff, it is envisaged that even where individual counselling for choice could reasonably be undertaken, group counselling and reference to consultants representing different fields of work will have to be emphasized.

23. As mentioned earlier, in all such activities, however useful their results may be, the most important thing in the first stages will be to discover the most effective and efficient ways of carrying them out, so that a body of authentic training material may be gathered quickly. It is important that different ways of doing things should be planned; that the aims of each kind of activity should be carefully considered and ways (however simple, however subjective) should be considered of judging how well these aims are being achieved. Much attention could well be given to "writing up" these experiences, as the basis for a future training handbook for guidance workers and career teachers.

Organisational structure

24. The organisational structure of vocational guidance work will also need to reflect this strategy. Thus, the basic unit is not likely to be characteristically the individual professional worker, providing service to a group of young people, even though some of the work may take this "shape". On the contrary, it may be envisaged as a local group of full-time guidance workers and part-time career teachers, who can plan projects, distribute tasks, arrange for reciprocal observation of work, collectively evaluate, etc. The regular meetings for these local groups would be not merely a means of continued in-service training, but the essential "factory for manufacturing experience"; this form of organisation would reflect the self-training nature of the research involved in the development of a programme of vocational guidance in its early phases.

Conclusion

25. With such an approach, on the basis of real knowledge and proven experiences, vocational guidance will be able before long to help many young people to see where they could realistically aim to find themselves in the existing labour market. But, even more important, as the nation grapples with the problems of economic development, if emerging solutions reveal the need for jobs to be done which are unfamiliar, unexpected, or even unwanted, it should be capable of serving as an effective instrument of developmental policy and human resources development by spreading information, giving explanations, and, above all, rousing discussion, so as to help young people to see and accept the demands of the situation, and to participate willingly and actively in the growth of their nation's prosperity.