Information Age and Career Education

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Abstract: The aim of this research study is to investigate the importance of career education and examine the career education process as to be included as course content into the education programs. The research comprises an examination of how educational systems can develop the quality of a career education that information societies require, keeping in mind the past and present criteria. Data have been collected through an analysis of official documents, reports and the programs or curricula of education related institutions and organizations. Research findings show that in the information age it is the students' needs that have to be focused on career education. The processes of construction of healthy developmental spaces and meeting unique needs of each child signal the importance of vital skills to be given at school. Career education needs to be planned and programmed as a course while each child strives to become an individual. Thus, the child gains the ability to know himself/herself and to name *what he/she wants and what he/she doesn't want* in the process of getting ready for life, while he/she is also trying to understand his/her skills, wishes, personal characteristics, steadiness of mind and sensitivity in the process of getting to know himself/herself. The course of choosing a career, which is one of the most important and effective decisions of one's life, should not be coincidental, random and/or spontaneous, as is usually the case.

Key words: Information age · Career education · Virtual Career · Cognitive skills

EDUCATION AND CAREER

The precondition of each innovation's success is, in essence, related to its success in the field of education. In turn, the success in education is only possible by continuously updating instructional programs based on current social life and meeting the requirements of the requirements of information age. Today, the expectation from education is to endow one with skills to be used in different living spaces. When instructional programs are analyzed in the broadest sense of the term, career education emerges as an area that is increasingly becoming important. Education begins with cognizing children (students). In this sense a child should be taken into consideration with his/her physiological, psychological, cultural and intellectual developments as well as intelligence level, parental and environmental considerations regarding socio cultural position in order to acquire effectiveness and productivity in the educational process. Without understanding those attributes no effective communication can be established and no motivational techniques can be applied to achieve educational goals [1].

Career development is related to how spare time is used, hobbies, responsibilities of studying at home, value of studying, knowing about occupations, economy, positive study habits, course contents and their relations to work, occupational awareness, self-awareness, social development and other related subjects. School activities have a significant impact on the development of these variables.

The important thing here is to take into account and keep on the agenda the needs and skills that need to be developed as behaviors in relation to career development and allow for experiences that exemplify the development of related behaviors [2].

In order to be a contributing member of a group, children need to have various characteristics and display various behaviors. If we want to teach children to develop positive and healthy social relationships, then we need to teach them the socially acceptable inter-personal skills and create opportunities for them to practice these skills. Learning to live socially can be taught as any other academic subject. These subjects, however, are so important and attention calling that they cannot be left to be learnt randomly or coincidentally. Children need to be

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informed of these issues to act appropriately and responsibly in social environments and their self-confidence needs to be developed. Self-confidence depends on the amount of student's experiences through which she/he has learned to see himself/herself as talented or not talented, likable or not likeable. The more positive their experiences are, the more positive their self-esteem will be [3].

Socialization is a difficult process through which children learn to communicate well with others (other children and adults) in an effective manner. Social development, which can be regarded as a borderline in education, affects what and how much each child learns. Components of a classroom or any other cognitive environment can create a case that would affect learning positively or negatively. "Social development is about the skills to share, take turns, listen, initiate, acquire friends, obey in-group rules, follow instructions, give and receive feedback, manage feelings and take responsibility, as well as body language and verbal communication'' [4]. Therefore, social development and career development have features that might affect and trigger one another. Children who are socialized according to directed objectives become individuals who can set realistic objectives and tend to choose careers that match their personal characteristics.

Although it is believed that the career education should start in secondary education, nowadays it is widely accepted that it should start in primary education. There are different views about the place of instruction for career education. Some authors consider career education as a distinct section, apart from the curriculum. Another view is that career education must be a complementary part of the curriculum and not apart from it [4].

This study focuses on the idea that career education should be taken as a discipline interconnected with many other developmental fields. Consequently, children must be provided with cognitive skills that need to be developed in pre-school. According to Bandura [5], these skills are as follows:

Listening Skills: Although many children spend their days listening to others at school, very few of them receive assistance on how to develop effective listening skills. Activities that are directed towards developing listening skills can be entertaining, can help students develop social skills and increase their academic success.

Thinking Skills: To be able to be successful at school, children need to have high level cognitive skills such as analysis, logical thinking and problem solving. Thinking skills are to be developed from the easiest to the hardest.

Operational Skills: Children need the skills that would allow them to use the information they learn according to their own needs. These skills can be developed through practice.

Personal Expression Skills: All children need opportunities that would allow them to express themselves using written and verbal communication. Development of writing and reading behaviors triggers the development of better personal expression skills.

Setting Objectives and Decision Making Skills: Starting in nursery, setting objectives and decision making skills need to be developed. Children need to go through these processes as appropriate for their ages.

Decision making is selecting from the possible alternatives for the person who makes the decision. The decision maker needs to find and pick the best alternative. Decision making, which is a stressful process, is part of everyday life. Everyday decisions are easier. However, in complex cases, systematic ways of making decisions are sought. To be able to deal with the existing alternatives, processes such as analysis, sysnthesis, evaluation, etc. are employed. Wales, Nardi and Stager [7], suggest the following four stages for the process of decision making:

- Setting objectives,
- Developing thoughts,
- Planning,
- Action.

These can further be explained as definition of the problem (analysis), forming ideas (synthesis) and reaching a decision (evaluation) [6]. According to [4], career education at primary level focuses mainly on the following three areas:

Self-Awareness: Most of the activities at primary school level are directed towards increasing the students' self-awareness. Through these activities, the child becomes aware of his/her strong and weak points, feelings and interests and gets to know himself/herself better.

Becoming Aware of Careers: During primary education, children start to become aware of the diverse jobs and professions that exist in the society that they live in. They realize that there are professions that are valued by the

society and by their families. It is important at this point not to categorize professions as specific to men and/or women.

Becoming Aware of the Process of Decision Making:
Children gain decision making skills by making indefinite preferences. To allow children to develop related skills, activities that facilitate the development of decision making skills inside and outside the classroom should be designed [6].

"The concept of self is to put a cognitive value on our physical, social and academic competencies. Self-respect is our affective reactions to our concept of self" [8].It is expected that children will gain the following behaviors with respect to self [6]:

- To understand and know the self;
- To accept the self;
- To have a personal value;
- To believe in one's abilities;
- Self-confidence;
- To be able to solve problems related to developmental responsibilities;
- To guide one's self;
- To see the alternatives;
- To make decisions and develop responsibilities for one's decisions;
- To be able to change false concepts and opinions;
- To gain affective sensitivity.

If children grow up by understanding and being aware of themselves, they can develop a positive self concept. According to Beana, Lipka and Ludewig [9]:

- Children should not see themselves in the way others see them because their values may be different.
- In general terms, self-awareness is fairly stable. Therefore, continuous positive feedback is much more effective than ordinary compliments.
- Adults can affect children in pre-adolescence period more easily than in adolescence because while adolescents value their peers' opinions more, children value what adults think more.

In this manner, starting point of career education is very important. In the pre-school period it is open that children who meet creative thinking and pedagogical creative drama are going to give their parents, educators on behalf of qualification and to the teachers various clues about interest, desire and ability. Classroom

teachers have fundamental roles as the child who comes to primary education feels to have adult support openly and as well as trust. However, children at this level have more chance to be observed, known, understood and to express themselves rather than the middle school level students do. This situation provides students with special personal qualifications to meet their special needs and to know their focus. The foundations of a career education should be based on the process of identifying how and in what ways the student's qualitative and quantitative characteristics should be shaped in order to maximize personal gain.

In the first stages of primary education, children may often express their opinions and may also often change their opinions about their careers. These temporary choices may be considered as *a transit process of self-awareness* for the child who is in pursuit of a career. Primary education intend to have a child perceive himself as a valuable being with certain interests and talents and to bring him up wth strong personality with moral and ethical values.In secondary education, it can be said that children make more selective choices and start to clarify what is more meaningfully suitable for them. Children may have the desire to be taken seriously and may try to produce serious ideas in this respect.

It should be considered that the process of career education provides opportunities for teachers as it provides for students. According to Hoyt [4], some of the opportunities that career education activities provide for teachers are as follows:

- Teachers see how students can learn better and observe their capacities.
- It is a means of sharing between teachers.
- Changes in society are discussed in class and children's awareness of these changes increases.

In career education, like in any other educational stages, in career education, the development of the concept of self is very important. School plays a vital role in helping children develop a positive self concept. Wrenn [10] emphasizes the following three behaviors that are perceived as relevant to this development:

- Emphasize evaluation on a personal level and make it recognized;
- Develop positive thoughts in relation to life and other people;
- Develop the behavior of taking others into account.

"One of the important aims of school is to help students feel themselves good. However, this is not something that can happen by itself. Students' valuing school, courses and themselves is achieved through reinforcement within instructional activities" [3].

According to Clemens and Bean [11], the following four factors affect children's concept of self:

Connections: Establishing positive relations with others and others' approval and respect for these relations are signs of development of children's sense of belonging. This situation is affected by the interaction in class during group-work activities.

Uniqueness: When others realize children's personal strengths and characteristics, children feel that they are "unique and special". All children need to feel special and unique. Children are affected by the fact that others may recognize their personal features and characteristics.

Power: Children should feel through their behaviors that they are in control of themselves. They can feel the personal power that they use to survive when they use it to control their behaviors. Children should believe in the personal power that guides and maintains their lives.

Being a Role Model: Being a role model, being taken seriously and being shown as an example to others is very significant.

The objectives of career education are to develop important features in children. Worzbyt and O'Rourke [4] set these objectives as follows:

- Discussing the Relationship Between What Is Learnt in Class and Children's Future Lives: Teachers often hear children complaining "Why are we learning these?" If we inform children about what they are learning and why, then they become more motivated towards learning.
- Defining Interests for Spare Time Activities and Possible Future Career: What do children do in their spare time? What do they like doing? What do they find pleasure in? Answers to these questions may help define the possibilities of a career field for children.
- Realizing the Dependant Relationship Between People in Professional Positions: Many people do not often think about why people need to work. An important aim of career education is to help children answer this question.

Children should have the opportunity to get to know not only prestigious professions but also everyday, low profile jobs.

In this respect, it is clear that there are student needs that must be focused on in career education. By trying to address and cater for these needs carefully, we can help students to understand, interpret and conceptualize careers, their importance, their effects on future life and functionality of the processes of choosing a career [4].

- Being Aware of the Self: The child should be aware of his/her strong and weak sides and things that he/she likes or dislikes.
- The Need to Be Aware of Diversity of Professions: Information about different professions should be gathered using different methods and the information collected should be shared.
- Making a Connection Between a Career and its Respective Education in That Field: in establishing this link, it is important to discuss questions such as, "Why are we learning this subject?" and "Why are we here?"
- The Need To Be Aware Of The Importance Of Free Time
- The Need To Realize The Dependency Among Professions: Besides being aware that working people are dependent on each other, children need to know that professions are in dependent relationships with each other.

Students' developmental zones, which affect the teaching and learning processes, are developed based on a systematic classification of needs that are indicators of developmental zones, skills that need to be developed and the socio-economic changes in the society in which the student lives.. Socio-economic variables are the quality of educational environment, health care services, level of demographical, political, legal and technological development and the level of education in the general society where the child lives [4]. Thus, there should be an understanding of developmental/comprehensive guidance in guidance services for children. This understanding takes the individual as a whole. Decisions should be made based on the principle that the individual needs to be able to reach the proximal developmental level with all of his/her cognitive, affective, social, psychological and physical aspects and capacities in a natural developmental process [12].

Career education is directly related to other developmental areas through its content and scope and

in terms of the needs that it focuses on in instructional terms. The developmental areas where mutual interaction is dense are the development of the concept of self and cognitive development. When considered as rings of a chain, a deficiency and/or inefficiency in any developmental area will create a gap in the chain. If this gap is not spotted in time and precautions are not taken, it may cause irreversible problems in the process of the child completing his/her personal development.

There are skills that need to be developed in the process of developing the concept of self. These skills are as follows [4]:

- Self Definition Skills: When children come to school, they define themselves using adjectives such as the best, the fastest, the nicest. But later, they start to compare themselves to others and they realize that they are not the best in all cases. Among the skills of self definition, there are skills of understanding their abilities, their strengths and weaknesses, their interests, values, likes and dislikes.
- Value Skills: Children need to have the opportunity to decide what is best for them. Most of the basic values that the child possesses comes from the family. As opposed to that, the child needs to have the skill to decide what is important for him/her and what is not.
- Decision Making Skills: Decision making skills need to be developed in early ages in all children and they should be applied throughout their school lives. Children who have opportunities to make decisions for themselves are those who have the experience of decision making and who can develop self-awareness.
- Skills Of Defining Emotions: Although children are aware that everyone has emotions, they can only define their emotions in four ways: Sad, happy, angry or scared. Children need to learn words that can help them define and explain emotions.
- Agile Skills: With their aspirations and hopes, children feel the need to estimate future.

As can be understood from this list, while the primary stages of the child's development are completed, career education for the child is also systematically started. One of the simultaneous processes of the development of the self is cognitive development. According to Worzbyt and O'Rourke [4] cognitive development is about skills such as thinking, decision making, setting objectives, clarifying values, information processing, communicating, problem solving and cognitive reconstruction''.

In today's world, as the place of career education in information age is understood, undeniably accepted and worked on to be developed further, the processes of every child going through the developmental stages healthily and identification of unique needs of every child signal to the importance of vital skills that need to be taught at school. In children's struggles to become individuals, career education should be taken as a course to be planned and programmed. Carrier education needs to be planned and programmed as a course while each child strives to become an individual. Thus, the child gains the ability to know himself/herself and to name what he/she wants and what he/she doesn't want in the process of getting ready for life, while he/she is also trying to understand his/her skills, wishes, personal characteristics, steadiness of mind and sensitivity in the process of getting to know himself/herself. The course of choosing a career, which is one of the most important and effective decisions of one's life, should not be coincidental, random and/or spontaneous, as is usually the case.

Another important concept that will be faced often in the future must be addressed here. Based on today's conditions, it is best to name this concept as Virtual Career. Emergence of the concept of the internet and the fast spread of its use around the world bring along a number of new concepts with it. Opening up to new structures and researching about their careers or other things lead people to new horizons. By engaging in different and various activities online such as writing in e-newspapers, being virtually active in poetry, painting, music, caricature, science and politics, attending e-courses, collecting, shopping and following businesses, the Internet users have formed a virtual society. A real community that is involved in and/or that observes, evaluates and shares comments in these virtual structures has the opportunity to meet each other and exist in the virtual world by means of being aware of each other. In this sense, people who produce in the virtual environment acquire careers in the virtual world and develop a popular name in this virtual structure. It can be said that the concept of virtual career is possible within a country's own network formation or among countries. Many active attitudes such as guidance, building up, suggesting, informing and distributing by multiplying create opportunities for people to have virtual careers in areas that they are interested in by helping them to become prominent in that field. At this point, people who are known in the virtual settings are introduced to the real world. In the future, developing a career in the virtual world may become a reference point for opportunities to

develop a career in the real world. Taking this point into consideration, it will be a good idea to think of career education in terms of today's conditions and without isolating it from the virtual world. To go further than just mentioning the concept of career education within the contents of the relevant course (Career Education Course), it might be necessary to explain it with examples and inform students of its positive and negative consequences. This might also help students to perceive their Internet related activities in a causal framework. In turn, this can lead to possibilities of understanding and interpreting young people, who are increasingly becoming familiar the Internet at early ages, their behaviors, attitudes and perceptions in relation to informatics. New generations can reach up to levels where they can reflect their existence on new settings without rumbling virtually in the independent structures of the Internet.

RESULTS

In our era where knowledge is increasing and is becoming obsolete at a great pace, learning mainly takes place through mass communication channels and technological tools. Schools' expectations of success from students in terms of grades do not match with students' expectations. This leads to the fact that individuals gain information by themselves in areas that they prefer or are interested in. It can be observed that some students, who may be described as passive, silent and inattentive in the classroom setting, may turn out to be respected people in their area of interest with qualities such as leadership, counseling and management. In this respect, education needs to be renovated considering the prevalent conditions in today's world.

"Today's educational planners replace rigid and central planning strategies with flexible educational plans with those that can be updated and do not have much detail. These collect data continuously, evaluate and measure the effectiveness of current programs, are wide reaching and investigating" [11]. "There isn't only one way of organizing, modeling and planning education" [13].

To be able to make plans in a subject, first of all, information produced especially in the recent past about that subject must be gathered and examined and then an analysis of the situation must be made. As a result of this analysis, detailed objectives for the future must be set. In other words, to be able to decide how to go somewhere, one has to determine where he/she is first and then analyze how and from where he/she came to his/her present location. In any process of planning, at the stage of deciding how to go to the destination, by being able to put forward possible alternatives requires a very good vision and, increasing the possibilities of realizing this vision requires choosing the optimal alternative through a process of decision making based on the existing conditions. In this process of decision making, it is vitally important that those executing the planning work are able to think analytically and are creative in reaching the designated vision [14].

It must be understood that from planning requirements to course contents, from teaching methods and techniques to changes in learning paradigms, there are a lot of qualitative changes to be made. In this respect, educational planning must consider strategies of adaptation and application based on processes of educational change. Planning information has strategic importance because if the most important value in the information age is *information* then the most important skill is *to know how to reach information.* Reaching information means reapplying problem solving processes in a cycle. It can be said that people who are able to solve problems cognitively are aware of the practical bases of problem solving. Individuals use the stages of problem solving in reaching information. In addition, in this process they make use of the information they have gathered earlier in their minds in trying to solve the problems they face. Taking into account possible future developments, planning information, structuring and teaching it systematically must be interpreted as laying preparing the foundations necessary for facing the changes of our time. In this respect, processes of acquiring a career, which is extremely important in people's self-development, self-realization, self-perception, self-respect and social respect, is too important to be left to coincidence, faith or uninterested people and/or institutions. Therefore, this study underlines the fact that career education should be considered and planned as a course on its own in educational systems and should aim to inform learners and raise their awareness in stages based on their educational levels starting from the pre-school level.

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