
Vocationalization of Curriculum at Lower Secondary Level of Schooling in India: An Analysis through Review of Related Literature

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Abstract

There is a strong felt need for high school students to enter the higher-secondary stream with a clear understanding of vocational field which they wish to choose. This need fits in very aptly in the present state of unemployed youth in the country and lack of proper implementation of different schemes related to vocationalization of secondary curriculum. The present paper tries to analyze the present state of vocationalization of school curriculum through review of related literature, especially during lower secondary classes when curriculum is still undifferentiated and students need proper guidance and counseling on selection of their higher secondary streams out of traditional academic and vocational streams. The authors suggest that there is a serious lack of implementation of vocationalization of lower secondary curriculum which results in very little percentage of students entering this skill based field. Moreover, the country had been witnessing the gradual under-popularization of vocational courses since independence. However, the latest National Education Policy, 2020 is very precise in laying down the modalities of the vocationalization of curriculum right through early intervention in school education in order to enroll more students to various vocational courses. The educational stakeholders must understand what are the factors that really motivate students to take up vocational field as their career and why the traditional academic streams still hold a major attraction for students during higher secondary streaming. Hence it is advisable to improve students understanding about vocational education through proper vocational guidance and counseling services for students and understand their aspirations for future.

Keywords: *Vocationalization of curriculum, Lower secondary level of schooling, Review of related literature*

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Introduction

There is a strong felt need for high school students to enter the higher-secondary stream with a clear understanding of vocational field which they wish to choose. Vocational education helps the students to acquire readiness to enter the world of the work while they are in the world of studies. It also helps them to visualize their future ahead, in terms of benefit of vocational education over traditional academic subjects. So, it is very necessary to introduce the importance of vocational education at an early age to get the child for building up his future. The need of vocationalization of curriculum fits in very aptly in the present state of unemployed youth in the country and lack of proper implementation of different schemes related to vocationalization of secondary curriculum.

Vocational guidance and counseling at school itself aims at helping the person select a proper vocation and prepare for it. Deciding on a career/vocation is crucial as it involves lots of time, effort and money. Entering into a career which turns out to be inappropriate for the person will lead to job dissatisfaction, unhappiness and maladjustment in work life. All these will affect negatively the personal life of the individual. Hence deciding on a vocation is very important task. Vocational counseling facilitates this decision by providing appropriate counseling to the individual. Guidance provides information, suggestion and direction for future action. Vocational guidance consists of collection, classification, filing and dissemination of occupational information by use of several media of communication such as bulletin board, career corner, career pamphlets, films, documentaries, individual and group discussions. Vocational counseling is more remedial in nature with a goal to help the person deal with the conflicts and problems in life, everyone being different and unique, blessed with individual strengths and weaknesses. This is reflected in the choices one make, decisions one take and plans one make for his/her life with regard to the educational and vocational aspects. The educational stake holders therefore must understand what are the factors that really motivate students to take up vocational field as their career and why the traditional academic streams still hold a major attraction for students during higher secondary streaming. Hence it is advisable to improve students understanding about vocational education through proper vocational guidance and counseling services for students and understand their aspirations for future. Thus the present paper tries to analyze the state of vocationalization of school curriculum in the country through review of related literature, especially during lower secondary classes when curriculum is still undifferentiated and students need proper guidance and counseling on selection of their higher secondary streams out of traditional academic and vocational streams.

An Analysis of the Existing Status of Vocational Education through Review of Literature

“The history of Indian education is testimony to the fact that the need for introduction of occupational education for students was highlighted as far back as in 1854” (Fifth Survey of Educational Research, 1988-1992). It was Wood’s Dispatch (1854) that suggested for the provision of practical education to Indians which may help them in contributing the sphere of national development. The Hunter Commission (1882) analyzed the status of

secondary education and recommended the introduction of diversified courses at the secondary stage and categorically mentioned that in the upper classes of high schools there should be two diversions- one leading to the entrance examination of universities, and the other of a more practical aspect, training the youths for commercial or other non-literary pursuits. But the suggestion did not receive any appreciation from the government and public and it was completely ignored.

Hartog Committee (1929) suggested for the diversion of more boys to industrial and commercial career at the end of middle school stage and adding more courses to impart special instruction in technical and industrial schools. However, these suggestions were not seriously carried out because of the growth in the number of educated unemployed greater attention was paid to the problems of practical and vocational education.

Furthermore Mahatma Gandhi also had a concern for manual and productive work in his scheme of Basic Education (1937). The idea behind the scheme was to provide education through some form of craft or productive work. It was to relieve the child from the tyranny of purely academic and theoretical instruction and to break down the existing barriers of prejudice between manual and intellectual work.

After independence, the Secondary Education Commission (1952-53), recommended for implementation of the diversified courses at the secondary level and establishment of higher secondary schools only to vocationalize the education at the secondary level. As a result, a large number of existing high schools were converted into higher secondary multipurpose schools and the number is keeping on increasing year by year. But still it can be seen that society give much emphasis on general education at higher stages and it is still in a rush making vocational education a subsidiary position. As per 1960-61 national data, nearly 4.22 lakhs students enrolled in varied vocational schools in the country against an enrolment of 31.59 lakhs in general secondary education. This clearly shows that only 12% students of secondary education level were enrolled in vocational courses while 88% of students are in general education. Although vocational education across the country does not receive enough support and attention till then, there were several countries by that time in which vocational education is being utilized by the people and successfully implemented. Countries like northern European countries reach the highest position in providing adequate educational opportunities and thereby producing maximum skills for its citizen. The most comprehensive suggestions towards vocationalization of higher secondary education came from recommendations of Education commission (1964-66), which presented a complete blueprint for complete transformation of educational system in the country (Fifth Survey of Educational Research, 1988-1992). These recommendations received due acceptance in National policy of Education, 1968 and 1986 and finally Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS), 1988 was widely implemented across nation for providing diversification of educational opportunities so as to enhance employability, reduce the mismatch between demand and supply of skilled manpower and provide an alternative for those pursuing higher education (Fifth Survey of Educational Research, 1988-1992). As per NVEQF (National Vocational Educational Quality Framework), 2012 provided by All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), the main goals and

objectives on vocational education is to remove the imbalances upon the demand and supply of skilled workforce, increase employment rates among the youth and to establish and maintain more vocational schools and stressed that vocationalization should be introduced and implemented right from Class IX – XII standards. It envisaged that vocational courses would ordinarily be provided at the higher secondary +2 stage, but flexibility was provided to start vocational education after class VIII.

So far the share of vocationalized courses available at lower secondary level is much less in comparison to higher secondary level, and even if they are implemented they are just for name sake. There is a highly felt need for guiding and counseling students at lower secondary level for choosing their future stream of education, with special emphasis on vocational courses which remained a neglected avenue of prospective higher education until very recently where its importance is reiterated (NVEQF, 2012). As per the Fourth Survey of Research in Education it is revealed that research in vocational and technical education was undertaken only from 1960 onwards, which gathered momentum after 1970 and stabilized after 1980 (Fifth Survey of Educational Research, 1988-1992). Table 1 depicts the various themes which emerged as an area of research in this field during the 80s revealing that most of the researches gathered data from higher secondary stages of diversified curriculum and higher education institutions. The trend report on research in context of our country suggests that very few handful of studies have been taken at lower secondary level owing to lack of proper implementation of various schemes of vocational education all this time.

Table 1

Research in Different Thematic Areas of Vocational Education

Sl.No.	Thematic Areas of Vocational Education
1	Evaluative studies of the ongoing governmental schemes of vocational education
2	Work experience programmes of schools
3	Study of students' educational and vocational aspirations
4	Attitude and behavior studies
5	Role of industries in promotion of vocational and technical education
6	Entrepreneur and entrepreneurship
7	Students' performance
8	Vocational interest and occupational choices
9	Students' future-problems and priorities
10	Issues related to policy, management and planning
11	Issues related to curriculum and instructional materials
12	Issues related to teachers and their training

13	IssuesrelatedtoSchool-industrylinkages
14	Othermiscellaneousstudies

Source: *Fifth Survey of Educational Research*

During the periods of 80s and 90s many studies were documented on students' vocational and occupational interest which generally develops between 13-15 years. Jayapoorani (1982) found that majority of higher secondary students preferred natural sciences, mathematics and English language over other subjects, with boys having interest in engineering and girls in being a doctor. Gautam (1988) found that students at delta stage (class VIII & X) varied in their vocational preferences significantly with regard to gender. Makhiza (1988) found that risk-taking and vocational interest were significantly related, self esteem was positively related to social jobs over constructive and agricultural jobs and family status was found to be a significant determinant of artistic and agricultural interests. Robert (1988) further found vocational interest of higher-secondary students depended upon socio-economic status, with no difference with regard to gender except for preference of house-hold work by girls. In a similar study Sodhi (1988) found that amongst the girls of class X very few adolescent girls were able to make correct occupational choices. Also urban higher-income group girls were comparatively better in taking congruent decision than their counterparts. Pattinsthr (1989) found that parents' income and expenditure is the main determining factors of a student's vocational interest. Bhatnagar & Gulati(1989) in their study proposed a framework on vocational behavior of creative adolescents and suggested that they are more vocationally mature than their less creative counterparts; however lack of sufficient empirical evidence could not support their findings immediately. Further, Choudhary (1990) conducted a survey to find out the vocational, occupational and academic choices of class IX students in Pune and found that about 40% of students aspired to become doctors or engineers. Majority of them preferred science stream over other streams. Javed (1990) found that rural students were disinterested in vocations based on agriculture and more in science based vocations. Students of all streams preferred white collared jobs over social jobs which demand more physical labour, with arts and commerce students showing more inclination towards persuasive and executive vocations. Mohan & Gupta (1990) identified interest, motivation, personal concerns, values, level of self-concept, attitudinal aspect, career maturity and future prospects of vocation as the major factors related to the choice of vocational courses. Bhatnagar (1991) found in his study sampling students, teachers and parents in Haryana, that more girls were keen to learn about modern trades but due to lack of systematic training, textbooks, scholarships and human resource development policy there were many hurdles in pursuing it. Bhargava (1991) studied the interests of students studying in Rajasthan and found in spite of students' interest in vocational courses because of their employment- preparatory nature, lack of trained teachers, non-release of funds in time are the major short comings of these courses. From the teachers' perspective Das (1991) found that female primary teachers had higher vocational interest than the males. Further Saraswathi (1992) found that personality dimensions and vocational interests of class X students did not match. Further the vocational interests are also not related to their academic achievement.

With regard to technical education some study revealed that vocational and technical education was not in good shape right from its inception stage. Nakatana & Srinivasan (1988) found in their study that combined mean score for the students performance in monotechnic diploma courses was not better than their school final examination indicating an underperformance of student in vocational trades of commercial practice, chemical technology and printing technology.

Natarajan & Mukhopadhyay (1988) in their study on women's polytechnics for diploma in commercial practice in Kerala found that a total of 90% students felt that curriculum was difficult and lengthy, lacking demonstrative method with few practicums, lack of infrastructural and instructional materials. Nearly 60% of students were disinterested in the course mainly because of meagre unemployment opportunities.

In the field of vocational guidance and counseling very few studies have been documented with more recent studies in this field compared to last decades. In this regard one of the earliest study by Kochar (1984) depicted the rapid dynamic educational and occupational scene which lead to conflicts and grip of personal adjustment problems among the youth. The study reveals that the students need some mentor and guide, and the need for strengthening guidance programme in the schools to canalize the energies of the youth in productive channels. The study also recommends ensuring separate discussion upon guidance and counselling programme in order to make it successful. Arulmani, Van Larr & Easton (2003) studied the situation on career psychology that focuses on the importance of comprehending how socio-economic backgrounds and social- cognitive environment affect career development. It studied the interaction between career beliefs and socio-economic status among the sample of Indian high school students. The findings revealed that there is a significant difference between socio-economic statuses with lower socio- economic status students showing higher levels of negative career beliefs. Kumar (2010) studied how secondary school students face problems during adolescent stage in their mental and physical aspects. The findings revealed the importance and need of proper guidance and counselling services to tackle their own problems and to assist them in achieving self direction and educational, vocational and personal adjustment individually and help them to take positive steps in light of new orientations. Henry (2012) conducted his study on principals, teachers and students from schools of ICSE, CBSE, SSC aided and unaided schools finding that there is an urgent need of introducing and strengthening vocational guidance services to meet the various requirements of the students, administration, and educational system for optimum development of the individual, society and most importantly for national development. Sirohi (2013) in his study of vocational guidance and career maturity among secondary school students, examined the career maturity of secondary students according to gender, type of school and vocational guidance provisions. The findings revealed that females possess higher career maturity than males, private schools show higher career maturity than government school students, and lastly students belonging to school with vocational guidance and counseling provision show much higher career maturity attitude than the underprivileged counterpart. Chaudhari (2015) in her study of guidance needs at secondary school level revealed that majority of students pursue higher education without proper planning that leads

to hamper proper selection of career choice, it further results in wastage of human services. She recommended assisting students to identify their abilities. Upadhyaya & Sisodiya (2016) conducted an investigation on Interest of secondary students in selection of subjects in Mandsaur (Madhya Pradesh), revealing that most students are interested in fine arts subjects and students are very much in need of guidance for selecting the subject. Nivedita & Singh (2016) in their study determined the guidance needs of secondary school students in Sirsa District of Haryana and found that guidance needs of female secondary school student are more than that of male secondary school students. Moreover, the guidance needs of rural secondary school student are more than their urban counter parts. Venkata Rao (2017) in his study on guidance needs of high school students highlighted the need of guidance in areas of physical, social, psychological, educational and vocational needs. The findings revealed that both boys and girls of high school students have almost the same guidance needs. Mishra & Chaudhary (2018) reviewed the guidance and counselling at school across India in order to have better perspective of this field and aims to find orientation solutions to Indian rural contexts. The study analyzes various works done on the importance of establishing guidance at schools and found that India is still deprived of the true spirit of guidance, counselling and lack of vigorous research. Guidance has not been paid proper attention and has not yielded desired objectives as compared with other countries. Zafar (2019) in his study on career guidance in career planning among secondary school students found correct decision in students life will help them to acquire success in choosing right profession. The findings also states that parent's educational level made a huge impact on career selection.

Conclusion Drawn from Review of Related Literature

Therefore, from the above mentioned reviews, it is clear that vocational education definitely reduces unemployment among the school leavers and there is an urgent need of introducing and strengthening vocational guidance services and the establishment of a full-fledged career guidance at the same time. Similarly, there is lack of adequate infrastructure and facilities and research done in these areas and majority of students across the country needs guidance in the selection of subjects for choosing their profession. Majority of students and counselors felt the need to develop and strengthen guidance needs and intervention programs and adequate infrastructure for a smooth functioning of the services to help the students and there is also a strong suggestions of appointing a well-trained and qualified counselors whom the students can trust to tell all their problems and help to solve their problems in order to have a bright future. The review also suggested that guidance and counseling programs help young adolescents in their adjustment problems and help them to cope with their mental, emotional, physical and sociological aspects. Students at this age face a lot of adversities and difficulties in their environment, the most common problems may be peer pressure and family problems which may lead to wrong career choices. Negligence of guidance and counseling programs also blinded the students ability and their talents which lead to choosing subjects which do not suits their abilities and this results in failure of education and again results in increasing the rate of unemployment among the youths. This causes a huge depression among the young adults who are the foundation and economic backbone of the country.

India has been not able to in-cash the advantages of vocational and technical education in spite of having a clear vision laid down at the very outset of post-independent era by great visionaries and leaders of the time. Be it University commission (1948), Secondary Education Commission (1952) or the Education Commission (1964-66), all did not forget to measure the impact of vocationalization of school curriculum especially through lower to higher secondary stages but lack of proper implementation in the top-down model of Indian administration things collapsed. Of lately with the introduction of decentralized policy of education things have started to come in order, however there is still a strong felt need of vocationalization of curriculum right through middle years of schooling, as proposed recently through national campaign of NISTHA (National Initiative for School Heads and Teachers Holistic Advancement), to support pre-vocational courses in school curriculum. The latest National Education Policy, 2020 is very precise in laying down the modalities of the vocationalization of curriculum right through early intervention in school education in order to enroll more students to various vocational courses. The 12th Five-Year Plan (2012-2017) estimated only a small percentage of the Indian workforce in the age group 19-24 (less than 5%) receiving formal vocational education (National Education Policy, 2020). On the contrary in the latest scenario West-Germany, the percentage of students in vocational schools was 70%, while in general education it was 30%. In Japan this percentage was 60% and 40% respectively. It is surprising to mention that the ratio of enrolment in vocational and technical courses in high and higher secondary schools of India was only 5.5% as compared to 17% in China, 24% in France, 29% in Italy, 59% in USSR, 65% in U.K and 80% or more in Switzerland, Denmark and Germany.

The main reason derived for the imbalance in secondary education in India was the traditional attraction for the white collared professions and the general aversion among educated people to work with their hands. Moreover general education institutions were much cheaper to establish and easy to maintain than vocational education. Lack of infrastructure and inadequate facilities are the major problems face by vocational education which leads to imbalances in education resulting in the growth of unemployment rate among the youths. So, it is suggested the provision of trained and professional qualified career guidance teacher for successful implementation and for acquiring over all quality education for achieving goals in education. It will also save the lives and future of young adults who will lead the coming generation and enable them to become a productive citizen. The authors suggest that there is a serious lack of implementation of vocationalization of lower secondary curriculum which results in very little percentage of students entering this skill based field. Moreover, the country had been witnessing the gradual under-popularization of vocational courses since independence.

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