

Topic: Social and Economic Benefits of Career Development in Education, in Jamaica

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Abstract

At present in Jamaica, many of the graduates of secondary institutions enter the job market ill-equipped to access the opportunities available to them. For some, there is inadequate basic academic preparation; for most, there is inadequate career education. The world of work has grown very complex and numerous career options are open to students. Educational decisions made rather early in the school life of students will have a decisive influence on their access to careers of choice later on. It is important that career awareness, career exploration and career preparation activities be incorporated into their early education and this article makes an argument for such.

Introduction

It is generally accepted that Career Development is a lifelong process, which incorporates general education, occupational training, and work, as well as one's social and leisure life. According to the National Career Development Guidelines (Kobylarz, 1996; NOICC, 1989), a career guidance program.

- Enhances the career development knowledge, skills, and abilities of all students by establishing program standards.
- Supports the delivery of the program through qualified leadership; diversified staffing; adequate facilities, materials, and financial resources; and effective management.
- Is accountable with evaluation that is based on program effectiveness in supporting student achievement of the career guidance and counselling standards. (NOICC, 1989)

Career education in Jamaican schools mainly entails provision of information about specific occupations. We believe that career education goes beyond providing information about occupations and the world of work. Career education should include planned out of classroom experiences, as academic and social development are inexplicably important to nation building.

Early career exploration experiences are important to promote diversity even though they may not have specific career path implications. Career education is developmental and should provide opportunities for all to develop and demonstrate the knowledge and skills necessary to read, write, solve problems, think critically, apply technology, and communicate throughout their daily lives.

Schools should address the career as well as the academic dimensions of children's lives; however, the wider community's involvement and support are essential for career education to be successful. To ensure the effectiveness of career education, the support of resources within and outside the school environment is necessary. To this end career, academic, and social developments should be equally represented in program planning beginning in early school years.

This paper seeks to identify strategies, which aids in Career Development in Education leading to positive social and economic benefits. It presents a case study outlining a program and possible strategies that could be employed to arrive at the desired positive outcomes. Identified also are suggested tools aimed at developing careers through educationn.

Background of Career Development in Jamaica's Education System

Jamaica, the third largest island of the Greater Antilles in the West Indies has a population of 2.6 million people of African, Afro-European, and established minorities such as East Indians, Europeans, and Chinese. Its official language is English although many Jamaicans speak a local dialect incorporating African, Spanish, and French elements. Jamaica maintains education as one of its highest priorities, based on the premise that development is linked to the educational levels of its people. Public primary and secondary education -provided by religious groups- became available around the end of the nineteenth century, however much emphasis has been placed on vocational training and career education.

The Ministry of Education, Youth, and Culture has overall responsibility for policy direction of education. Tuition is heavily subsidized at the primary and secondary levels. Churches and private groups run a number of schools and many receive subsidies from government.

Students at the primary level formerly gained access to secondary education either by automatic promotion to secondary schools, all age, junior high, new secondary and comprehensive high or by selection to secondary high or comprehensive high schools through the Common Entrance Examinations (CEE). This examination was phased out in 1998 and was replaced in 1999 by a curriculum based National Assessment Programme (NAP).

Tertiary education is offered by the University of the West Indies (a regional institution); the University of Technology; the Edna Manley College for the Visual and Performing Arts (which combines schools of art, dance, drama and music); College of Agriculture, Science and Education; G. C. Foster College of Physical Education and Sports; Northern Caribbean University (formerly West Indies College) and twelve teacher training colleges. There are also fourteen community colleges, a dental auxiliary school, a Vocational Training Development Institute, twenty-nine vocational training centres and six Human Employment and Resources Training (HEART) vocational training institutions organized by the Human Employment and Resources Training Organization.

Since the 1970s, the Jamaican Movement for the advancement of Literacy (JAMAL) has been working to eradicate adult illiteracy. Over the last seven years, some 113,878 persons have enrolled in its classes island wide. Its programme is organized by a core of professional workers, supported by a network of volunteers. The success by JAMAL and other educational programmes was reflected in a survey done in 1994, which revealed that 75.4% of all Jamaicans were literate.

In Jamaica's Five Year Independence Plan (1963-68) the Government's aim for education was expressed as follows:

- The Government affirms its belief in education not only for its inestimable social value in enabling every individual, for his own sake, to develop his personality and his talents to the fullest extent, but equally that each individual might be enabled to make a maximum contribution to society in every respect.

This aim was translated into policy in the 1966 New Deal for Education. Among its goals was that of: Gearing the education of students so that a greater percentage of students would be

able to continue formal education - academic, vocational or technical – and benefit from the education, while those who do not will be better able to serve Jamaica’s manpower needs.

Values of Education

- Education has a big impact on both economic welfare and social inclusion. High quality learning is strongly linked with higher earning; reduce chances of becoming unemployed, better health, and reduced crime.
- Education helps governments to achieve better economic and social objectives. Education is playing a vital role in the cycle of inter-generational deprivation and addressing social inequalities. Education is associated with important wider benefits such as health and crime.
- There is clear evidence that receiving a high quality education is generally a profitable investment for an individual, as on average it leads to higher earnings and employability.
- Education is also a crucial factor in enhancing international competitiveness and creating the right climate for strong and sustained economic growth.
- Education reduces the national burden of dependents on state benefits.
- There is a wealth of evidence linking education with outcomes such as better life expectancy, lower infant mortality, and reduced crime.

Rationale

Many of the graduates of Jamaica’s secondary institutions enter the job market ill equipped to access the opportunities open to them. For some, there is inadequate basic academic preparation; for most there is inadequate career education.

In some cases, career education was (to a lesser extent now) perceived as being solely for the technical or vocational students, who will not progress to college or further education. That notion must be discredited, as part of their general education all students need guidance in making sound career decisions.

The world of work has grown very complex and numerous career options are open to students. Educational decisions made rather early in the school life of students, will have a

decisive influence on their access to careers of choice later on. It is important that Career Awareness, Career Exploration, and Career Preparation activities be incorporated into their early education. If, at this stage of their education students come to grip with their own aptitudes and interests and are able to match these to career possibilities; the process of making appropriate career choices will be simplified. Useful attitudes and skills for success at work can also be transmitted during the student years.

Career Development and the Curriculum

Based on a study in 1983 by a UNESCO team on the status of secondary education in Jamaica a recommendation of the provision of a common core curriculum for all students in Grades 7-11 was made.

The new curriculum was designed to be among other things:

- Responsive: developed in response to national goals and student needs, by teams of teachers, education officers, and specialists.
- Broad and Balanced: centred around five core subjects (Language Arts; Mathematics; Resource & Technology; Science; Social Studies) plus Career Education.

Career education is the process of assisting persons with general information about training, higher education, and experience of jobs and the world of work. Its aim is to equip persons with competence to seek information, become self-aware and be capable of decision-making.

Career education across the curriculum is progressed through three stages of career development:

- Awareness – which covers self, career, educational and economic awareness
- Exploration – which engages youngsters in activities to explore their own interests, abilities and values as well as explore careers, and
- Preparation – which builds upon the totality of experiences and learning as the student prepares to succeed in a meaningful and satisfying career.

Career Development Education is not a school subject. It must be seen as:

- The link that joins career development learning with the world of work earning, and
- The tool that prepares students to make realistic career decisions as they acquire new experiences, values, and goals.

It must be based on the students needs, must employ a team approach to teaching and learning and must include the infusion of Career Education elements into the entire curriculum.

The Elements of Career Development Education

Central to Career Development Education are eight general elements that are used as the model for students' goals or outcome statements. Each of these represents one facet of the total career education concept. (See appendix).

- **Attitudes and Appreciations:** the development of positive attitude towards possible career life goals.
- **Self-Awareness:** the students' awareness of their own aptitudes, abilities and values, and their ability to relate this knowledge to possible career and life goals.
- **Career Awareness:** the students' awareness of the broad range of occupations and career patterns available to them.
- **Educational Awareness:** the students' awareness of the relationships between education and career life roles.
- **Economic Awareness:** the students' awareness of the economic process and how they relate to personal and societal goals, decisions, and actions.
- **Basic Competency:** the students' awareness of the relationship between skills and career/life roles and their competence in basic skills.
- **Employability Skills:** the students' development of employment skills applicable to their developing career patterns (related to Basic Competency).
- **Decision-Making:** the students' understanding that decision making includes responsible action in identifying alternatives, selecting the alternative most consistent with personal goals, and taking steps to implement a course of action.

These elements are introduced at age appropriate levels through activities and or information that will meet the career educational and social needs of each student. As a result successive

grades of students are exposed to each element at an advancing level. At the end of the Career Development program students should be adequately prepared for transition into the world of work.

Career Development Education governs and provides disciplines the entire life span and is therefore necessary for life, personal and national optimal standards of living.

Methodologies and Strategies Used For Implementing Career Education

Combinations of simple strategies were implemented for delivery of career education, with special concern not to burden the classroom teacher or guidance counsellor.

The main strategies are:

1. **Infusion:** this is the major delivery system and the process by which education concepts are introduced or reinforced in the entire school curriculum thereby becoming an integral part of all its programmes – academic, practical, aesthetic etc.
2. **Career Counselling:** Career counsellors will engage in progressive, international counselling through the career education stages.
3. **Other strategies:** There are many programmes, projects, and activities which when properly planned and implemented, provide for students of all ages, the values and qualities of a productive career education experience. Among these are:
 - The use of home room/form/ classroom time
 - Mini-projects/mini business
 - Work experiences
 - Inter-generational programmes
 - Exploration of the environment.
 - Career Day/Fair

Resulting Benefits

A general assessment of the benefits of Career Education proves the following social and economic benefits:

- Opportunities for all students to progress according to attainment, aptitude, and ability.
- Equity, quality, productivity, and relevance of the education to the labour market.
- The creation of a competitive work force through quality education and training.
- Satisfying national manpower needs.
- Higher levels of worker satisfaction.
- Because of the guided process of career education, younger workers will enter the world of work having detoured the time wasting process due to indecision.
- Lower national health care cost. Each individual is prepared to be self-reliant.

The Current State

Jamaica does not boast a perfect education system or an ideal assimilation of career development in education. There are concerns and complaints from varying sectors of the society for improvement in education. Students are still slipping through the cracks, employers are not satisfied, the country has a high level of unemployment and the accompanying social ills such as crime, and there are still gaps in the delivery of career education. (See editorial appendices):

- Education and economic progress – Appendix A
- More Guidance Counsellors needed in Schools - Appendix B
- Obstacles to quality education - Appendix C

The reality of the situation however, is that the intended target has not been achieved for several reasons. Included in the drawbacks is implementation, compliance with the program design, resource material, and administrative acceptance/attitude towards the program, funding, and personnel. We suggest that the strategies employed should be revisited, the weaknesses identified and steps should be taken to amend them.

Strategies for Advancing Career Development in Jamaica

Career Development is both a social and economic policy issue and it is the foundation of the school-to-work process. Career development issues must be debated at the national level if we are going to articulate that the education system has primary responsibility for preparing graduates for constructive employment or for further study or training.

In response to the current state we propose the following strategies for advancement:

1. Creating a career development culture: our culture needs to promote lifelong learning for career development and instil an emphasis on individual responsibility for provision of career education. The idea of managing one's career, and of obtaining advice and information on a regular basis (not just in a crisis situation), should be instilled throughout life.
2. Policy directives from Ministry of Education to incorporate Career Development as an integral part of education, rather than an optional possibility, as is currently the case in many schools.
3. Mandatory inclusion of career development studies and training for teachers at Teachers' colleges.
4. The establishment of a recognizable association of professional Career Development Practitioners to be responsible for policies, programmes, delivery systems, qualifications and ethics & guidelines of the profession.
5. Campaign to change the stigma attached to certain fields of study. In some cases career education is perceived as being solely for technical or vocational students who will not progress to college or further education.
6. Distinguishing the differences (in function, training and need) between guidance counsellors, career counsellors, and practitioners.
7. Developing an alliance with national and regional educational bodies such as University Council of Jamaica (UCJ) and Caribbean Area Network for Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education (CANQATE) for strong partnerships and sharing of resources to achieve shared goals.
8. Making use of public libraries as resource centres fully equipped to meet the challenges of career information needs.
9. Accountability for results in career development service; e.g. is PROGIS making an impact and how much compared to the resources? – The need for evaluation and accountability of service providers.
10. Providing access and training for adult clients: highly skilled or educated clients whose only barrier is labour market opportunity.

11. Including career education as part of the remedial education system for prisoners.
12. Making use of technology – computer services are central in most service areas in our economy, including the provision of career development services a good information base.
13. Promoting Career Development as a vehicle for education reform in Jamaica.
14. Sensitise principals and school boards about Career Development as a part of the teaching and learning process.
15. The necessity of Career Education in producing better workers and citizens.
16. Staffing community network agencies such as Parent Teachers Associations, Church groups, The Jamaica Information Service, Police Youth Clubs, Jamaica Junior Chambers, Kiwanis clubs, neighbourhood watches, strata societies and other community service agents, career specialists to meet the diversity of needs for adult clients. These include mid-career changers, dislocated workers, long-term unemployed persons, older workers, women entering or re-entering the labour force, persons with disabilities, incarcerated adults, and retirees.
17. Ensuring evaluation and improvement of existing internship programmes at the technical and community colleges, with a view to administer career intervention through specialized staff members.
18. Conduct industry workshops to attract the sponsorship of the private sector in investing in Career Development Education.

Conclusion

The mission of Career Education in schools is to facilitate the lifelong holistic development by providing the right climate to enhance optimum growth in students. A carefully developed Career Education Programme can provide the guidance which students need as they identify their values and interests, explore their potential and determine their lifelong roles within society. We believe that implementation of proposed strategies for advancing Career Development in Jamaica, through education; will yield benefits long desired for the country. Such benefits may include:

- A workforce trained and certified to international standards,

- Stimulating employment - creating investments contributing to improved productivity, competitiveness, and prosperity of individuals and the nation.

In order to achieve these benefits the use of strategies, which are comprehensive and effective, will certainly guide Jamaica on the road to development. We believe that it is crucial that this process commence at the most basic and fundamental stage in a human's life. Well-designed early childhood care and education programmes can produce significant benefits to the participants' development. This will influence the individual's school performance and social outcomes, which prepares them for adulthood. Many studies also reported benefits to the mother that helped them to play a more supportive role in their children's development and also benefits to themselves, such as better self-esteem and a sense of self-worth.

There are concerns, which may impact on the effectiveness of Career Development programmes. For example, in developing countries the quality of the primary school education is poor. In many instances, they are likely to erode the benefits gained in the early childhood programmes. Another concern is the high cost of implementing such schemes, finding low cost ways of implementing them is essential. These concerns must be taken into consideration so that the probability of success is higher.

Glossary

Career Development: The total combination of psychological, sociological, educational, physical, economic and chance factors that influence the nature and significance of work. In the total lifespan of an individual; it encompasses career guidance (the intervention), career counselling (the communication), career education (the teaching and learning) and career coaching. It is a process, and not a one-time event that takes one through certain stages to a level of maturity and into retirement.

Career Intervention: Any activity designed to enhance a person's career development or to enable that person to make more effective career decision.

Career Education: The totality of experiences by which persons acquire knowledge and attitudes about self and work and the skills with which to identify, choose, plan, and prepare for work and other life options potentially constituting a career.

Social: of the welfare of society/community.

Economic: of financial viability, cost effectiveness, efficiency, and the appropriate of wealth.

Benefit: promoting/effecting advantage/gain

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