Catch Them Young: Importance of Career Planning in Indian School Education Systems

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Abstract: Higher Education Systems receive a lot of attention from the researchers on identifying good teaching practices in higher education to make it student attractive since it is the nearest point of education towards career and early life education is often ignored. But the primary factor in the choice of higher education in India is the current popularity of the stream (on the basis of the mass and media opinion) and not the aspiration and interest of the students. The lack of systematic student profiling to understand their strengths and encourage them in the correct career path is the major drawback of the Indian School Education System. This paper provides a framework for the steps to be followed to introduce life career planning education in schools and the various factors to be considered while profiling the students.

Keywords: student profiling, SWOT analysis, school education, career and life planning

I. INTRODUCTION

Career guidance is an important and necessary part of education system and in any country the goals of the education system is also interwoven with the economic growth, industrial and agricultural expansion, resources available and manpower required. Having a common education system for all does not cater for a healthy economy where it is necessary to have a balanced supply and demand of workforce with sufficient skills and training to carry out operations from ground execution to higher management. One reason for this imbalance is that the career guidance is always considered to be part of higher education and the students are made to think of their future only after their schooling is over. Ironically, the choice of the higher education stream is based on the specialisation chosen by the student during the higher secondary education in schools and so it is meaningless to think about the career guidance after school education where there is little or no choice. Unemployment of graduates has become a serious issue in many eastern countries and recently the Ministry of Human Resources in India has taken steps to improve the quality of intake in Engineering and Medical Streams through competitive exams. Out of many reasons for the unemployment of engineering graduates in the country, which is reportedly 60% every year for the past five years, turning out too many unskilled engineers who have no creativity tops the list[1]. Explosive growth of information Technology has paved the way for knowledge being available to a person on a certain topic at the click of a button. But the students have not been trained to identify their own interests and improve their skills on the basis of their strengths. This lacuna cannot be addressed while they are getting prepared for their jobs. Rather, the school education should have been in such a way to create a platform for the students to assess themselves and focus on their strengths.

The school education system should aim to develop not only the knowledge of the subject but attitude towards adaptability and learning, and skills of creativity and independent thinking. This will be the part of life planning education that is expected of the school education. Unfortunately there are no such life planning education developed for the school children in India. Such an education would target on the student learning outcomes being related to the whole person development of the students in academic, personal, social and career fronts. This paper provides a framework for developing life career education in schools taking into consideration the diverse factors at play.

The paper is organised as follows:

- A overview of the various education systems in Indian schools
- SWOT analysis of the systems based on whole person development
- factors to be considered while implementing life career education
- framework for the life career education implementation.

II. EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN INDIA

There are mainly three different streams of school education systems in India - Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE) and State Schools governed by the State Department of Education. The curriculum framework and teaching methodologies are provided by the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT), which prepares a national curriculum framework and the state counterpart is the State Council for Educational Research and Training (SCERT). The school system in India has four levels - the lower primary, upper primary, high school and higher secondary. The subjects taught are languages, mathematics, sciences and social sciences in all levels except in higher secondary level, the social sciences is replaced by a practical training in sciences[2].

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In all types of schools, the primary focus of the learning outcomes is on making the student attain the necessary knowledge on the mathematics and sciences while languages and social sciences are pushed to the back seat. This has given rise to an uncommon pressure on the students to compete with each other in gaining marks in the mathematics and science subjects bringing in the imbalance in the knowledge gained by the students. Though the teaching methodologies and assessments differ in the various streams, the curriculum is kept more or less common to facilitate all students compete on the same level after leaving higher secondary school. The schools can be categorised as government schools, government aided schools and private schools based on the management. The different categories are characterised by variation in school fees, infrastructure, teaching remuneration and management policies on development and change.

III. RELATED WORK

The Indian Education System has been vastly studied by various researchers and compared with that of developing and developed countries. Kamlesh Gakhar et al., compares the education in Haryana state with that of the neighbouring states and finds that the Gross Enrollment ratio varies state by state and is lowest in Haryana but the performance of Haryana is better in drop out rate in comparison with that of Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. They have compared the literacy level of seven states near Haryana and come to the conclusion that the female literacy rate and the rate of the children who can read English and languages need improving in Haryana[4].

Gretchen Rhines Cheney et al., provides a complete profile of the Indian Education System and according to them, school attendance is the factor that is considered to measure the success of school education in India, particularly in state run schools and not the measure of expected learning. Though private schools are a little better, the high fees charged by them prohibits most of the middle and lower class families securing admissions for their children. The paper also describes the actual status of the financial, management and academic issues in each of the systems including the higher education systems. According to them, the organised employment is only 10% of total employment which accounts for the pathetic situation where the educated unemployed workforce is six times that of the uneducated unemployed workforce[5].

Mohan Gautam et al., use the Capability Approach to evaluate the education systems and their success. They mention that the low rate of employer satisfaction is the result of the quantitative growth in educated workforce which are unemployable due to lack of practical expertise. The learning style in Indian Education System is Assimilating type where theose who learn do it through watching and thinking. This kind of rigidity is also seen in the choice of the subject where the student is forced to choose the stream of study before they enter the college. this leads to uninformed decision making on the students' part which most of the students regret after a while. The inflexibility in the system does not allow for the student to make choices in the later stage thus increasing the unsuccessful and unemployable degree holders [6].

According to Urvashi Sahni, though primary school enrolment is a success story the sustainability is threatened by the increasing drop out rates and low levels of learning. The drop out rates during primary and upper primary levels being 29 percent and 43 percent respectively, India is among the top five nations for out of school children of primary school age. In addition, the quality of learning is also very low where the author points out that reading and arithmetic are not achieved at class appropriate learning levels. One solution given to change this abysmal level of learning is increasing the teacher accountability. The other things that can be improved are the teacher attendance, assessments and the general management system [7].

The above research articles give an idea on the issues clouding the primary, secondary and higher education systems in India and it seems imperative that employability assessment should start at lower level of education. It is obvious that the students have no clue on how they can plan their future based on their own skills and strengths even during the higher education and a major revision of the teaching, assessment and transition system is required. The following section includes a SWOT analysis of the various school systems available in India.

IV. SWOT ANALYSIS

SWOT analysis helps us understand the areas that need developing, areas that are growing fast, areas which need to be looked at as emergency and areas that can ruin the future. SWOT analysis is usually done to improve the understanding of the current situation and to create a better direction for the future operations [8], [9]. The various streams mentioned above differ in a number of factors for us to compare them. This lack of uniformity among the streams can be analysed by considering the most important factors in determining the success of education :

- infrastructure
- human resources
- financial support
- curriculum planning and management
- teaching and learning

Table 1 shows the various factors considered for doing the SWOT analysis for the various school systems. It compares the various education systems prevalent in primary and secondary levels in India.

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TABLE I. SWOT ANALYSIS

Sl. no	Type of school	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
1	CBSE	• common curriculum and timeframe • quality oriented curriculum and teaching • advanced assessment methods • outcome based education	• less number of schools • considered as "tough" by parents and students • low percentage of graduation	• increasing demand for more schools • increase in awareness among parents and students • paradigm shift in higher education towards quality	• increase in number may lead to poor management • decrease in quality if focused towards increasing percentage of graduation • lack of accessibility for rural and poor community
2	ICSE	• common curriculum and timeframe • quality oriented curriculum and teaching • advanced assessment methods • whole person development	• very less number of schools • feared as tough by parents and students • low percentage of graduation • Accessible to only rich and affluent people	• paradigm shift in higher education towards quality • Increase in affluent community • increase in movement of international students towards India	• lack of accessibility for rural and poor community • less importance for culture and value education
3	State	• Easy curriculum and high percentage of graduation • Regional language medium of teaching available • supported and monitored by the State Government • culture based value education	• Book Exam oriented teaching and assessment • Lack of high level teaching and assessment methods • outcomes not assessed properly	• accessible to all communities including rural • high level of trust and popularity among the masses • state support for extracurricular and cocurricular activities	• student incompetency in terms of independent thinking • students not able to perform well in higher education • lack of training towards creative thinking, innovation and entrepreneurship • mass movement towards other streams
4	Rural	• catering for the nearby communities • state support in infrastructure development and management • non monetary support from the rural communities	• lack of trained teachers • students drop out high owing to poverty • difficult to develop and maintain infrastructure • lack of interest in cocurricular activities	• government schemes supporting students of rural community • platform for innovative thinking • huge potential for collaboration with philanthropic NGOs supporting rural education	• Resistance to adapt new methods of teaching • Lack of demand from the people for education • non availability of resources for extensive cocurricular and extracurricular activities
5	Urban	• mix of culture and status creating a platform for learning for students and teachers • availability of trained and good teachers • parents ready to adapt to change and support children in extracurricular activities • accessibility to resources for cocurricular and extracurricular activities	• high cost of running the school • monotonous and book oriented teaching and learning • interference from parents and authorities • inability of the teachers to cater to the demands of the brilliant children	• possibility of collaborating with higher education institutions • possibility of fund raising for infrastructure development • increasing customer awareness on the life planning and career guidance • accessibility to teacher training programmes and centres	• high competition owing to availability of more schools • pressure to produce more percentage of graduation resulting in reduced learning outcomes • lack of planned and tested life planning and career guidance programs
6	Government/ Aided	• financial support for infrastructure • availability of teachers • low fees • high quality students leading to increased percentage of graduation	• requires policy approvals from Government for curriculum change or new activities • self satisfied and complacent teachers	• chance to contribute to the curriculum framework • opportunity of serving as a model for other private and rural schools • opportunity of serving as a training centre for teachers of other schools	• inability to cater to the changing demands of customers • lack of motivation among teachers for self improvement
7	Private	• freedom to introduce new curriculum and subjects based on customer demand • infrastructure development • cocurricular and extracurricular activities • disciplined and dedicated teachers	• high fees deterring good quality poor students from enrolling • pressure on teachers to produce high results with low quality intake • result oriented and not outcome based education for students	• high public trust based on past success • mostly affluent parents supporting the activities • opportunity to immediately correct issues based on parent feedback	• fund raising for activities creates dissatisfaction among parents • movement of teachers owing to the pressure leading to instability

V. LIFE PLANNING EDUCATION

Life planning education and career guidance support are necessary parts of school education. The above SWOT analysis shows that each school system has benefits as well as drawbacks. For example, a central government school run on CBSE curriculum will be suitable for students with modest financial background but it also follows that a self motivated student can succeed in the true sense of the word. Similarly rural population will find state run government schools accessible but the teacher motivation has to be very high to make the system turn out graduates with learning outcomes satisfied. Hence it follows that having a view of the future and working towards it will increase the motivation of the student and identify the correct career to be chosen based on their strengths and availability of resources.

This section concentrates mainly on the factors which contribute to the effectiveness of student learning outcomes, factors which are important for the life planning and career guidance. The two human elements in the life planning education are the students and teachers and those who are involved will be evaluated on the basis of some criteria to ascertain the choice of career. Table II shows the criteria with which they should be evaluated.

TABLE II. MAPPING OF CRITERIA

S.No	Human element	Evaluation criteria
1.	Students	strengths aspirations interests affordability accessibility
2.	Teachers / Mentors	training experience upgradation of knowledge empathy motivation

According to [10], the career guidance should be implemented using "backward mapping technique", i.e., begin with the end in mind and work backwards. But without assessing the strengths and understanding the interests of the students it is impossible to fix the end. Hence the SWOT analysis for the student should be performed first and based on the assessment, the expected student learning outcomes should be fixed. Based on these outcomes, the learning processes, teaching methods and curriculum organisation should then be planned. It is also possible to improve career prospects through community based service learning, as proved by [11].

Fig 1 shows the steps in curriculum planning based on the learning outcomes

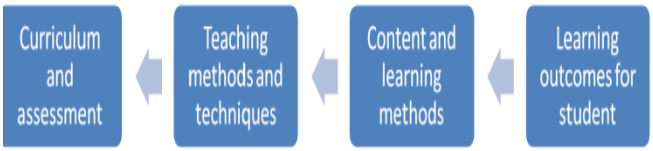

Fig 1: Curriculum and Outcomes Mapping

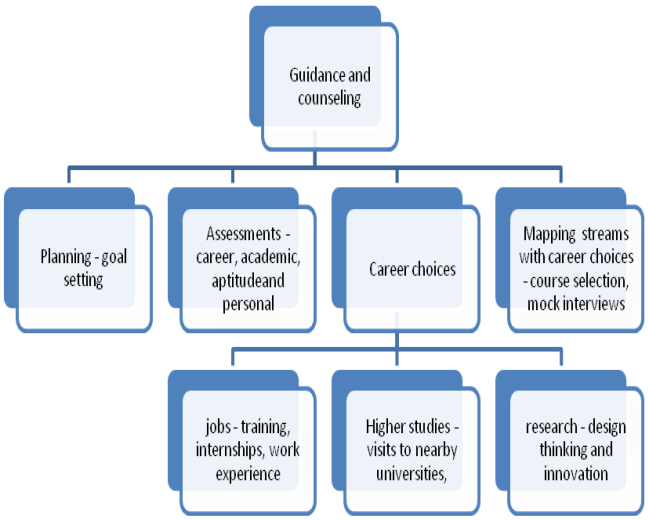

Fig 2 : Life Planning and Career Guidance Steps

Fig 2 shows the steps in the counselling towards life planning and career guidance.

VI. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The paper describes the necessity for early introduction of career guidance program in the schools. Choice of education is greatly influenced by economic need and creating jobs in all sectors balances the supply and demand and prevents the drainage of human resources in one sector leaving the other sectors with lack of human resources. The schools play an important role in bringing this knowledge to the students and developing their motivation to pander to their aspirations and interests balancing the economic requirements.

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