CAREER GUIDANCE NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF BLACK SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE TRANSVAAL PROVINCE OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
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Abstract

This study investigates the career guidance needs of 600 Black secondary school students. It also examines how Black secondary school principals perceive the guidance programs in their schools. The results indicate sixteen categories of career guidance needs which should receive priority in planning guidance services for this population. The students consistently felt their needs were not being met. Not less than 60% expressed a need for additional help with finding jobs and careers, understanding the guidance program, developing self-understanding, career awareness, exploration and planning, interpersonal relationships, value clarification, selection of courses and acquisition of decision-making skills in sharp contrast to the help they feel they have received.

Career guidance in Black South African schools has not received proper attention for a long time. It has only been in recent years that this phenomenon has attracted the attention of educationists (Cloete and le Roux 1978). Students have always experienced difficulties when making decisions about their careers. Tenuous choices seemed to be a result of the students' lack of sufficient knowledge regarding themselves (i.e. their abilities, attitudes, interests and values) as well as vocational careers, school preparatory subjects and courses leading to those careers, educational and vocational opportunities available to them and financial assistance (Prediger et al., 1973).

Self-understanding is the single basic goal of school guidance programs. Through self-understanding, students can begin to know, appreciate and utilize their aptitudes, interests, values and limitations. It improves analytical and critical thinking, growth and development. Students who understand themselves are characterized by their ability to make more rational educational and vocational plans. McDaniel and Shaftel (1956) maintained that every individual should be helped to study and understand himself as a unique person and to respond to the pressures and stimuli of the time and place in which he lives; Holland (1973) suggested that one needs appropriate and accurate information
about oneself as well as the occupational field in order to make a realistic choice of vocation. Self-understanding and acceptance is a pre-requisite for the process of choosing an occupation. Super (1957) observed that along this road to self-knowledge every young person needs assistance and that success in understanding oneself is a sine qua non for the development of independence and decision-making skills.

Interests are important in that they can help students begin thinking seriously about educational planning, vocational exploration and eventually about career development. Ginzberg (1966) believed that many young people do not know enough about the world of work to be able to translate their interests and capacities readily into occupational choices. Hoppock (1967) holds the view that one develops interest in an occupation because one has been exposed to it before. The same is still true today. Many young people are unaware that the choices of subjects they make and the activities they participate in at school can influence vocational choices which will affect their future lives.

Super (1957) further contends that probably no other decision a young person makes is as crucial for happiness in life as his or her choice of work, including the educational preparation for it. Carlyle says that 'it is the first of all problems for man to find out what kind of work he is to do in this universe'. Illuminating the importance of work in one's existence, Karl Marx said 'man becomes man through his work'. Boy and Pine (1971) speak of work as 'a therapeutic and personally integrating experience'.

A careful look at the secondary educational system of South Africa reveals emphasis on an academic curriculum that is designed for college-bound students though not all Black students go to college. For most, secondary school is the terminal point in their formal education. This being so, the secondary school curriculum ought to provide them with sufficient self-knowledge concerning their aptitudes, interests, aspirations and skills to become successful and productive members of society. Napier (1972) contends that a society which fails to nurture the capabilities and talents of its youth fails in its obligation to them and to itself.

As Tyler (1970) has observed, high school students are generally concerned about becoming independent adults, getting jobs, marrying, gaining status with their peers and helping to solve the ills of the world. Generally speaking, this is also true for South African youth. To assist them with these concerns, career guidance is essential for Black South African secondary school students today. With the help of adequate career guidance, every student should leave the school system equipped with the ability to think critically and make realistic personal decisions and plans for their future. However, this need students have for career guidance in their schools is sometimes overlooked. It is also conceivable that the degree to which individual students need guidance should vary. Differences in need seem to depend largely on differences in physical maturity, socioeconomic and cultural forces, and personality characteristics. Available evidence suggests