

EXPLORING OCCUPATIONAL INTERESTS OF ENTERING SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AND THEIR PREFERRED ACADEMIC TRACKS IN K-12 PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine the Occupational Interest and their Preferred Academic Tracts of Grade 10 students. The study considered 103 Grade 10 students of St. Paul University Philippines for the Academic Year 2015-2016. The data gathering tools include the Level 2 Career Interest Inventory and the Senior High Survey Questionnaire on Students' Preferred Academic Tracks. Results reveal that the top 5 career interests of students are in areas of Mathematics and Science, Health Services, Educational Services, Sales and Management. Among the top 5 specific career areas that the students like are on Mathematics or Sciences, Health Care, Computer Technology, Marketing or Sales and Electronics or Electric Traders. The Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics track (STEM) was the most preferred academic track which comprise 50.5% of them, followed by the ABM track. Data confirmed that 68.9% exhibited match on their career interests and degree of likeness to the course, 72.8% of the students have career interests that match their preferred academic tracks, and degree of likeness to specific career of about 68% of the students match with their preferred academic track. The data further reveal that about 30% of the students indicate that still a significant percentage of students would like to take courses where they are not interested in and they least prefer. A career guidance program for senior high school students was developed to address this concern.

Keywords: *Career interest, career preference, academic track, senior high school, occupational interest*

INTRODUCTION

The meaning of life for most people is strongly linked with career goals (Kosine, et. al., 2012). Choosing a career path can help one sets his professional goals and develops a strategy for getting where he wants to be. Part of choosing an appropriate career path involves making an honest self-evaluation of talents, abilities and interests (Mc Query, 2016). While elements of career path may change over time due to choice or circumstance, having an overall professional objective with which to guide oneself will help make critical decisions with greater clarity. When one has an idea of the career path he or she wants to pursue, it can help make the best decisions about his or her training and education. Understanding the requirements of a chosen path enables one to plan and to prepare for the career. Understanding the chronological steps of a career path will help make decisions about how to go about building experience.

Most students when it comes to making career choices, some of them are certain about their choices whereas others are less certain. Selecting a career is one of the most important decisions a person makes. Whatever his choice be, dictates how he will spend a major part of each day. It will also spill over his other aspects of his life, including lifestyle, his satisfaction about himself and quality of life.

Many students nowadays change career because of various reasons such as mismatch, new opportunities and cannot bear challenge in present job. When students make decision regarding career options they have manifested poor decisions because they have inaccurate or dysfunctional thought about their career interest, they like and what they prefer.

Thus, in today's world choosing the right career can be incredibly a hard task or it can be a tedious process that may eventually lead to disappointments. Many requires an ever changing demands for skills and talents because today people should expect to make multiple career changes throughout their lives and continually upgrade their skills. Often, the youth today question about their careers and most of the time they do not know where to seek for assistance in order to provide them relevant career information on how to help identify the proper career options and

choice of course they have to pursue in the future.

Another difficulty in making a career choice is the wide range of careers to choose from. Too often, only after a student has made sustainable commitment in time, energy and money or has cut off other opportunities by taking steps to enter a career, does he or she find that it is not what expected or wanted. In addition, students are not properly oriented as to what course to choose out of their interest and skills but because of the thought that these courses will provide jobs in the future so, students opt career they think will give them better paying jobs in the future (Pascual, 2014).

A person is successful in his career if he is satisfied with his work and produce quality results. Quality outputs are made possible when workers' interest and skills match with the required skills in the workplace when they enjoy and like what they are doing. With this, one should assess his/her current interest and there which he/she likes most for him/her to choose the appropriate career path. Several tools have been developed for this like testing, counseling and career guidance seminars. Aside from this, career guidance is necessary to the context of the study of K – 12 program.

The first batch of the G11 students will enroll subjects under their preferred academic tracks. Prior to this enrolment, this study was proposed to determine the occupational interests of the students and their preferred academic tracks. This is to ensure that they will be enrolled in their appropriate academic track.

For AY 2015 – 2016, the first batch of G11 students that will enrol on their respective tracks for them to acquire the basic skills they need to successfully pursue the course they wish to finish. To ensure that these students will enrol on the right track prior to enrolment, the researcher deemed necessary to conduct a study to assess the occupational interests of the students and their preferred academic tracks. This information would serve as a significant input to direct the students towards the right career path.

Conceptual Framework

The conduct of the study will be anchored on the following paradigm:

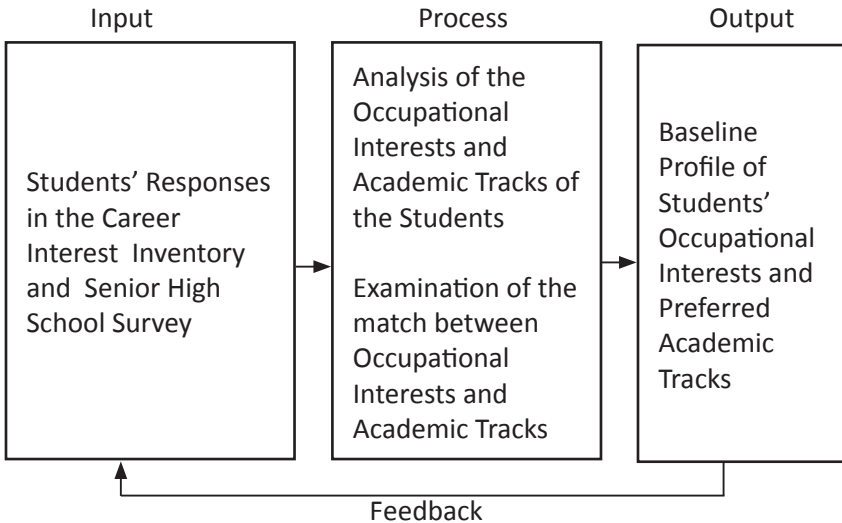


Figure 1. Paradigm of the Study

The study takes into account the students' responses on the survey questionnaires administered to them, namely, the Career Interest Inventory (CII) and the Senior High School Survey. Based on the item responses in the survey questionnaires, the researcher identified the profile of the participants in terms of their occupational interests and academic tracks. The participants' occupational interest involves their career interest and their degree of likeness to specific career. Classification of students' preferred academic tracks was patterned from the tracks defined in the K – 12 context. The study had further determined whether a match is observed on the students' occupational interest and their preferred academic tracks. A baseline information on the students' occupational interest and the preferred academic tracks is the expected output of the study.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to explore the occupational interest of entering senior high school students and their preferred academic tracks in the K – 12 Perspective.

More specifically, the study aimed to answer the following sub-problems:

1. What is the occupational interest/s profile of the students in terms of the following:
 - 1.1 career interest;
 - 1.2 degree of likeness to specific career?
2. Are the students' career interest consistent with their degree of likeness to the specific career?
3. What is the students' preferred academic track?
4. Are the students' occupational interests consistent with their preferred academic tracks?
5. What career related activities can be undertaken to direct with their appropriate academic tracks given their occupational interests?

Scope and Limitation

This study is focused on the profiling of students with respect to their occupational interests and preferred academic tracks based on their responses in the Career Interest Inventory and Senior High School Survey, respectively. Career Interest was classified based on the specific occupation defined in the Career Interest Inventory while students' preferred academic track is based on the K-12 defined tracks. Analysis of the match was obtained by determining corresponding pairs on the obtained students' occupational interests and their preferred academic tracks.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study utilized the descriptive survey method since it focused its investigation on profiling of students with respect to their occupational interests and preferred academic tracks and obtaining an observed match between these students' characteristics.

Participants of the Study

The study involved 103 Grade10 students in the Basic Education Unit of St. Paul University Philippines for the school year 2015-2016. These participants is a random sample taken from the population of Grade 10 students.

Instrumentation

There were two data gathering instruments used in the study, namely, Career Interest Survey (CII) and Senior High School Survey. The CII, which is a standardized test, is a career guidance instrument designed to assist students in making decisions concerning their educational and vocational plans. The test consists of 169 items, 150 job activity statements designed to determine students career interest and 19 items to determine their degree of likeness to the specific career. The test was produced by the Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc. The test was copyright by the Psychological Corporation. The CII results were obtained based on the defined scoring scheme.

The Senior High School Survey was used to determine the preferred academic track of the students. These tracks were categorized based on the defined K-12 academic tracks.

Data Gathering Procedure

Prior to data gathering, permission was sought from the University President, the Vice President for Academics and the Principal of the Basic Education Unit. For ethical considerations, informed consent was

obtained from the participants before the administration of the CII and the Senior High School Survey. The two instruments were administered on two separate days. The Senior High School Survey was administered first before the CII. The Senior High School Survey was administered by the researcher himself while the CII was administered by the high school guidance counselor. Results of the CII was obtained from the guidance office.

Data Analysis

The data gathered were treated, summarized, interpreted and analyzed by using the following statistical tools. The frequency count and percentage distribution were utilized to obtain the profile of the students in terms of the following which were expressed in percentage equivalents, career interest, degree of likeness to specific career, and academic tracks. Determining the match was done by observing whether the students' specific career interest agree with their degree of likeness to the specific career. This is likewise done to determine whether their career interest and degree of likeness with their preferred academic tracks. Frequency was also used to present the number of students whose career interest match with their degree of likeness, career interest with their preferred academic track as well as those whose degree of likeness to specific career match with their preferred academic track.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Career Interest

The results of the CII which was obtained from the guidance counselor revealed that a student have more than one career interest.

The highest frequency of students have career interest on occupation related to Mathematics and Science areas, followed by occupations on health services as supported by the percentage of 63.11 and 62.14, respectively. Furthermore, the top 5 career interests among the students include the following: Mathematics and Sciences, Health Services, Educational Services, Sales, and Management. The data indicate that students' career interests deal with computations, logic, investigations

and health. Students' having these career interest must have to take up courses such as Engineering, Education major in Mathematics, Biology, and Health-related courses. In terms of the K-12 academic track, students having these aforementioned interests are suited to take STEM (Science, Technology Education and Mathematics) courses.

Degree of Likeness to Specific Career

Majority or 69.90% of the students like specific career related to Mathematics or Science areas. Moreover, 66.99% of them like specific career on Health care, 61.17% like career on computer technology while 52.43% have degree of likeness to career on marketing or sales. The top 5 most-liked career among students are those related to Mathematics or Science areas, health care, computer technology, marketing or sales and electronics or electrical trades.

These obtained data run consistent with the result regarding the career interests of students which signify that the prevalent occupational interest exposed by students match with the specific career they most like.

Consistency Status on Students Career Interest and their Degree of Likeness to Specific Career

By carefully scrutinizing the different career interests of each student and matching them with their degree of likeness to specific career, results show that students' career interest jibes with their degree of likeness to specific career. This is an indicator that students like courses that are within their interests. Since the students' degree of likeness to specific career match with their career interest, making career decisions will be easier. This is supported by the idea that "when a person can link what they like to do, with jobs that fulfill those interests, they can make better career decisions" (Shawn Bakker & Donald Macnab,2004). He further stressed that occupations best suited for them people can pursue careers that are more likely to be enjoyable and satisfying. Research shows that people working in careers that match their interests are happier and more satisfied than people who are not.

The data further show that about 31% of the students have career interests that do not match their degree of likeness to specific career. This calls for guidance to help them focus their career search on areas which relate to their interests and hold the best promise for a satisfying and rewarding career.

Preferred Academic Tracks

The data reveal that the cluster of courses for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) are the most preferred academic tracks as evidenced by the highest frequency of 52 or 50.5%, followed by those students who preferred the Accountancy, Business and Management (ABM) courses which comprise 39 or 37.9 % of them. Very few of them preferred HUMMS cluster of courses which comprise about 8% and lastly the TechVoc which is 4 or 3.9%. The data further imply that occupations/courses related to STEM is the most appealing among the Grade 10 students. This means that the students preferred to take courses in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

Consistency Status on Students' Career Interest and their Preferred Academic Tracks

Students' preferred academic tracks coincide with one of their career interests. This means that the students' choice of probable course track in the Senior High School is within their field of interest. However, about 27.2% of them have preferred academic track that is not consistent with their career interest. These groups of students need to be guided to redirect them with the tracks that match their career interest.

Consistency Status on Students' degree of likeness to specific career and their Preferred Academic Tracks

As to the students' degree of likeness to specific career interest, 68% of them have preferred academic tracks that coincide with the specific career they like while 32% of them have preferred academic tracks and specific career that do not match. This finding suggests that majority of the students preferred academic tracks that they like. This result would mean that students would not find difficulty in choosing what course to pursue since they prefer courses that they like.

Noteworthy are the 32% students whose specific career interest do not match the specific career they like most. If not properly guided, these students might find difficulty in choosing what course to pursue. This brings to attention the role of guidance counselors in career counseling to redirect these students to courses that go with what they like most.

CONCLUSION

Students' occupational interests go with their degree of likeness to specific career and preferred track is a connotation that they are directed towards their desired career path. Students will not find difficulty in pursuing their respective career goals since these are within their interest, degree of likeness and their level of preference. Career counseling is needed by students whose career interests do not match their degree of likeness to specific career and preferred K-12 tracks so as to redirect them so that they will pursue courses that are within their level of interests. Thereby, making them effective and efficient in the field they have chosen.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are offered:

Occupational interest test may be administered to entering senior high school to guide them in determining their desired career interests so they can arrive in a sound and more coherent choice of course.

Senior high school students are highly inclined to Science, Technology and Engineering-related career, therefore, the school may require more courses related to it.

Career counseling is important to realign the senior high school students according to the most coherent and appropriate courses in consonance to their specific personality, interests and abilities, thereby, it is helpful to facilitate a thorough and practical career exploration.

Teachers who have strong influence to student development may act as "teacher-counselors" working in tandem with the guidance

personnel. Thus, teachers' referral, coupled with constant follow up from the guidance counselors with regards to students' scholastic performance, can aid students to understand further their capabilities and interests and more importantly, this will further bolster the efficacy of the guidance program.

The guidance counselor may not only be limited to educational and personal issues and needs of the students. They may facilitate regularly Parenting Skills Training about career exploration of their children because parents are a determining factor in the choice of courses for their children. The Parenting Skills Training seeks to provide parents to appreciate the value of job fit in the world of employment.

Seeing the influence of occupational interests to the future work performance the guidance office is urged to devise regularly an updated guidance program so that teachers and administrators are guided in the formulation of intervention programs that are not only to improve students' performance but are also in the array of a career development.

Career Guidance program may be strengthened in the University to ensure that they are tracking the best course, with their specific interest inclinations. This also strengthens the applicability and efficiency of students' career exploration.

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