

ABSTRACT

This study attempts to investigate possible factors influencing vocational preferences of Grade 9 students in two New Secondary Schools in Jamaica, one urban and the other rural. Some factors investigated are:-

- (1) socio-economic conditions in their immediate environment and in the wider community
- (2) students' perception of rewards from occupations
- (3) parents' vocations and socio-economic status.

Students' vocational preferences are considered against the background of their educational achievement and aptitude for receiving basic training the quality of socio-cultural stimulation and motivation given in homes, schools and communities, and the availability of jobs.

It is theorised that learning is related to interests and goal perception and that therefore, considerations regarding pupils' vocational preferences and their drive to achieve cannot be separated from the type of economic activity with which they are surrounded.

Four research questions investigated revealed the following:-

- (1) Adolescents are influenced in their choices of vocations by the type of rewards they see coming from vocational areas. Among such rewards are - improved socio-economic status, prestige and satisfactory peer group relationships.
- (2) Socio-economic activities in different communities influence adolescents' vocational preferences.

The influence of business in the rural sample appears to be far less than in the urban sample where there is a wide variety of related choices, especially skills of artisans.

- (3) There is no straight answer to the question of whether there is more phantasy when adolescents do not know what their choices entail. Some vocational preferences seem unrealistic from an academic point of view but consideration has to be given to students' levels of vocational awareness and maturity, and levels of esteem that they attach to vocations, before coming to any definite conclusion about the phantasy or realism of their selection.
- (4) There is not sufficient evidence from this study to prove or disprove conclusively the point that students are more highly motivated to achieve when they know what to choose from and where it will lead. However, there is the indication that there is a positive relation between high vocational orientation and high achievement motivation. There is need for further research.

This study has important implications for the quality of education offered in our schools especially in the areas of curriculum planning, counselling and guidance, vocational orientation and expenditure on education. There are implications too for the whole situation surrounding pre-employment training, provision of jobs and socio-economic planning for better standards of living in this country. Further research in these areas is recommended in order to help give direction to adolescents in improving themselves individually and consequently the nation.

Mavis Irwin,
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