Students’ Awareness and Choice about Vocational Education at Secondary Level

Sobia Nazakat,* Syed Afzal Shah† & Syed Munir Ahmad‡

Abstract

This study focused on investigating awareness about and choice of secondary school students towards vocational education. Objectives of the study were to explore students’ awareness about vocational education, investigate students’ choice of selecting vocational education after completing their secondary education, and explore students’ views on parental desire about their children to join vocational education as a profession. Data was collected from 400 secondary school students of District Haripur by using stratified random sampling technique. A survey questionnaire was used for the study; the reliability index for the questionnaire was 0.79. Percentage, frequency, and t-test have been used to analyze the data. Findings show that a majority of the students (86%) considered vocational education as essential for future job, but did not recommend it for female students. Teachers’ guidance was considered as the major source of awareness about vocational education. As perceived by the students, more than half of the parents (i.e. 65.5 %) strongly agreed that their children should join vocational education and nearly fifty percent (i.e. 48.1%) of the students showed their willingness to select vocational education in the future. However, no significant difference was found between male and female students regarding their awareness about and choice of vocational education at secondary level.

Keywords: Awareness of Students, Choice of Students, Parental Choice, Teachers’ Guidance, Vocational Education

Introduction

Vocational education is an important area of education, which is concerned with the preparation of skilled human resource. In vocational education, emphasis is more on manual work and preparing individuals for performing work in industries, thus equipping them with certain skills required for different sectors of the economy (Azubuike, 2011). Vocational education thus focuses on the provision of human resource, having relevant skills for various applied fields, for playing their significant role in economic, industrial

* Postgraduate Research Student, Department of Education, University of Haripur
† Assistant Professor, Department of Education, University of Haripur
‡ Associate Professor, Institute of Education & Research, University of Peshawar
development and attracting foreign investment (Valerio, Parton and Robb, 2014; Awang et al., 2011). Therefore, vocational education needs to be adopted for effectively addressing problems of unemployment and providing skilled employees (Day, 2001), by making it an integral part of general education.

Thus, awareness about and motivation towards vocational education is essential in Pakistan because the unemployment rates have remained a nagging problem for most governments. In the year 2012, the recorded unemployment rate was 7.8% whereas from 1985 to 2015, Pakistan’s unemployment recorded rate was 5.4% (Statistical Bureau). One of the major reasons of unemployment is that, Pakistan lacked an established technical and vocational education training system until the establishment of the Technical Education & Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA) in July 1999 (Shah, Rehman, Ajmal & Hamidullah, 2011). This need was felt because the current system of general education does not meet the need of market demand (Yusuff and Soyemi, 2012). Additionally, there is a need to teach technical skills to the younger generation from the secondary level, so that the vicious circle of poverty is broken.

Therefore, it is essential to explore the extent to which secondary students are aware about the vocational education and have inclination to opt for this education. This research is an effort to explore students’ awareness and choice towards vocational education at the secondary school level.

**Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Explore awareness of the secondary school students about vocational education.
2. Find out secondary school students’ choice towards vocational education.
3. Explore the gender differences in awareness about and choice towards vocational education.
4. Explore students’ views on parental desire about their children to join vocational education as a profession.

**Research Questions**

1. What is secondary school students’ awareness about vocational education?
2. Do secondary school students plan to opt for vocational education?
3. What are the gender differences in awareness about and choice towards vocational education?
4. What are students’ views on parental desire about their children to join vocational education as a profession?
Significance of the Study

Providing skilled and technical human resource for trade, industry, commerce is one of the key requirements of successful economies and this could only be possible through a well-structured and quality vocational education programme. In the context of Pakistan, it would appear that there is more emphasis on general education than on technical and vocational education. While general education has its own importance, vocational education prepares young people for earning a livelihood and supporting the many impoverished families that are below the poverty line. This study and similar studies are important not only for exploring the various social-cultural issues underpinning the topic in question but also this could lead to creating awareness amongst the various stakeholders for sending more young people to world of work and vocation. Moreover, policy makers and curriculum planners would take stock of planning to diversify vocational education and including courses, subjects and trades that are important for helping the local and national economy.

Review of Related Literature

Awareness is the collection of information regarding a situation, person, or experience (Ngogo, 2014). It is considered as a favorable or unfavorable judgment about some objects whether abstract (e.g. technology) or concrete (e.g. internet) (Elias et al., 2012). Thus, individuals remain inclined either positively or negatively towards something based on varying information (Bohner & Dickel, 2011). While availability of this information is derived from various approaches such as approaches of conditioning and modeling, the principles of classical conditioning state that the choice and attitude of a person towards something is formed and changed due to the repetition of reinforcement to the stimulus. Similarly, according to principle of operant conditioning, the favourable or unfavourable attitude and choice is linked with positive or negative consequences of pleasant or unpleasant experience. Therefore, awareness and choice of students towards vocational education is also created and formed based on available information and future consequences of this type of education.

Awareness of Students and Parents towards Vocational Education

Through technical and vocational training, individuals acquire practical and manual skills for different sectors of the economy such as trade and industries (Azubuike, 2011). The capability of arriving at alternative solutions equips them with physical and mental abilities, skills and competence to enable them to become productive members of the society (Okocha, 2009). This awareness about alternatives and making a choice amongst them is possible either through formal or informal education (Ngogo, 2014). Formal education has systematic, organized education model, having set laws and rigid curriculum (having clear objectives, content, and methodology), whereas informal education encompasses any type of learning taking place outside the educational settings,
such as learning from experience and observation within a social environment (Dib, 1988).

Students with practical abilities are better off with vocational education than having general academic education (Meer, 2007), which helps them in avoiding unemployment (Sloan, 1994). Vocational education helps in using “hand” and “mind,” thus stimulating the concrete (practical) and abstract thinking of the individuals (Grubb, 1985). Thus, the skill-culture and attitude towards manual work is developed in the society as a whole. This skill and attitude is a life-long learning process and individuals can improve their work opportunities and qualification levels (Dellaert & Stremersch, 2005). This type of education makes a person independent as he/she can earn his/her earnings and at the same time continue their higher studies (Saito, 2003).

**Vocational Education in Pakistan**

Technical and vocational education is important for the prosperity and economic development of a country (Tripathi, 2003); yet, since independence in 1947, Pakistan inherited a weak vocational educational base (Shah et al., 2011) despite being rich in raw material resources (Riaz & Haider, 2010). There are different types of technical and vocational educational institutions established and working in Pakistan such as Technical Educational and Vocational Training (TEVT) institutions. In Pakistan, in national educational policies of 1972, 1978, 1998, 2009, certain recommendations have been made to promote vocational education in terms of developing curriculum for dropouts, inclusion of technical subjects at different levels, promoting research in these subjects, and establishing technical universities.

**Research Methodology**

Underpinning a quantitative research methodology, the research design included designing and conducting a survey tool for gathering data for the research.

**Population of the Study**

All students of grade 9 and grade 10 of public secondary schools of the District Haripur constituted population of the study.

**Sample of the Study**

The sample included 400 students, who took part in the research and shared their awareness and choice about the vocational education. The sample of students was taken from 20 (10 male and 10 female) secondary schools of the district Haripur. Furthermore, 20 students each were randomly selected from each school.

**Sampling Technique**

Stratified random technique was used to for selecting the respondents for the study and gathering data from them.
Research Instrument

This study was carried out using a questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed after a thorough review of related literature and expert opinion. The instrument was validated after using the experts’ opinion. The questionnaire was pilot tested on 50 students for checking whether they understood items of the questionnaire, after which improvements were made in the questionnaire. The Cronbach reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was 0.79.

Data Collection

The questionnaire was personality administered to collect the data. One of the researchers visited the selected public secondary schools (both male and female), distributed the questionnaires amongst students and personally gathered the filled questionnaires. The respondents were assured that the information provided by them would not be disclosed and would be used for research purposes only.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage were used to collect responses of the students regarding their awareness and choice of selecting vocational education as well as students views on parental choice of vocational education of their children. T-test was used to find the gender difference in awareness and choice of vocational education.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 Awareness of Secondary School Students about Vocational Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>DA</th>
<th>SDA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I know that how many technical colleges are there in our District.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5.8%)</td>
<td>(32.0%)</td>
<td>(35.0%)</td>
<td>(27.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know Vocational education is useful for me.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4.0%)</td>
<td>(31.8%)</td>
<td>(8.2%)</td>
<td>(56.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is wastage of time for girls to get Vocational education.</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(28.2%)</td>
<td>(39.8%)</td>
<td>(17.5%)</td>
<td>(14.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study in technical colleges at the evening can be managed with a job in morning.</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(38.5%)</td>
<td>(40.8%)</td>
<td>(14.8%)</td>
<td>(6.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of the girls don’t opt for Vocational education.</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(11.2%)</td>
<td>(31.5%)</td>
<td>(33.0%)</td>
<td>(24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls are not able to produce good results in Vocational education.</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(21.0%)</td>
<td>(42.5%)</td>
<td>(20.8%)</td>
<td>(15.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational education is essential to get a good job in future.</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(60.2%)</td>
<td>(25.2%)</td>
<td>(9.8%)</td>
<td>(4.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational education plays important role in the development of country</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(59.0%)</td>
<td>(27.8%)</td>
<td>(8.5%)</td>
<td>(4.8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 presents the level of awareness of the students about vocational education in the form of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (DA), and Strongly Disagree (SDA). A majority of the students (140+109= 249 i.e. 62%) did not know about the number of existing technical and vocational educational colleges in their District. A considerable number (33+224=357 i.e. 64%) of the students agreed that vocational education was useful for them. This result indicates that vocational education has the potential for students to support themselves and their families financially and materially (McMahon, 1999). Yet, a majority of the students (113+159= 272 i.e. 68%) was of the view that the time spent by girls in getting vocational education is a wastage of time and is unproductive. Furthermore, a majority of the students (154+163= 317 i.e. 79.3%) agreed of the potential job opportunities creation through vocational education. Furthermore, a majority of the students (132+179= 311 i.e. 57%) shared that girls do not opt for vocational education. In addition, the respondents (84+170= 254 i.e. 63.5%) were of the view that girls cannot produce good results in vocational education. These findings resonate with the findings of Kissim, Omolade, and Rachael, (2011), who contend that it is difficult to fill the gap between vocational education and industrial development through joining of girls in vocational education and this gap can be filled through the efforts of Government and Non-Government organizations. A majority of the respondents (241+101=342 i.e. 85.4%) viewed that vocational education is essential for getting employment in the future. Furthermore, a majority of the students (236+111= 347 i.e. 86.8 %) believed that vocational education plays an important role in the development of the country.

Table 2 Sources Leading to Awareness about Vocational Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Teachers’ guidance</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>30.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>30.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Seminars</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Vocational subjects</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>400</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 highlights the sources leading to awareness among the secondary school students about vocational education. As can be seen in the Table, predominantly, it is the teachers (140 i.e. 35%) that provide awareness about vocational education. Since teachers’ job is to impart knowledge to the students, vocational education programs should be implemented by taking teachers into confidence (Olaitan, 2007). Similarly, 244 students (i.e. 61 %) shared that they got awareness about vocational education through print (newspapers) and the Internet, respectively. These results indicate that internet play an important role in creating awareness about vocational education as well and students remain engaged in online activities within and outside the school (Bull et al., 2008). Only three percent (14) of the students were of the view that they came to know about vocational education through seminars. According to the information provided by the students, no subjects about vocational education are taught at the secondary level.
Table 3  Choice of Vocational Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>Students’ choice</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Strong willingness</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>(48.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Agree to some extent/ as last resort</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>(34.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Total unwillingness</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>(17.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>400</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 highlights that 48.5% of the students had a strong desire and were willing to opt for vocational and technical education after the completion of their secondary education. Of the 400 students, 136 (i.e. 34 %) students shared that they would opt for vocational and technical education as a last resort. This indicates that if there were no other options available, they will then join vocational education. However, only 60 (i.e. 17.6%) students completely disagreed to join vocational educational institutes. Results of Reddy, Devi, and Reddy (2011) are also in line with these results; they found that a majority of the students had positive awareness about vocational education in their higher years of schools. These results indicate that around 50% of the students had a strong desire to join vocational education in the future as new skills are acquired in order to compete in the global arena (Murnane and Levy, 1996). Therefore, only 17% had complete unwillingness towards vocational education.

Table 4  Students’ Views on Parental Choice of Vocational Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>Parental willingness</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Strong willingness</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Agree to some extent/ as last resort</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Total unwillingness</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>400</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 presents students’ views on parental willingness/desire about their children to join vocational education as a profession. 45.2% of the respondents were of the view that their parents would show a strong desire for them to select vocational education after completion of their secondary education. This shows that parents are aware of the value of vocational education in terms of getting employment opportunities (Maria, 2009; Okocha, 2009). For socioeconomic reasons also, parents desire and influence their children to opt for vocational education (Lavendets, Sitikovs, and Uhanova, 2012). Twenty-six percent (26%) respondents considered it as a last resort indicating that when no other option is available, their parents would let them go for vocational education. However, compared to students’ total unwillingness (60, i.e. 17.5%) data in Table 3, student respondents were of the view that their parents (115 i.e. 28.8%) would not be willing for them opting to go into vocational education.
Table 5 highlights the gender differences in awareness and choice towards vocational education. The calculated value \(t = 0.368\) indicates no significant difference between male and female students regarding awareness about vocational education. Similarly, the calculated value \(t = 0.88\) indicates no significant difference between male and female students regarding choice towards vocational education.

### Conclusion

Vocational education is considered important for the development of the country by becoming reasonably good source of creation of jobs. This awareness among students is created mainly because of teacher’s guidance coupled with the strong desire of parents. It implies that both teachers and parents are aware of the benefits associated with vocational education. The strong desire of parents to send their children to vocational education also implies that the socioeconomic status of parents is not good and vocational education in terms of technical skills enables individuals to earn a livelihood for the families. This is probably why a majority of the students had inclination towards continuing vocational education in the future, without any profound differences between male and female.

### Recommendations

In order to create awareness among students about the existing choice of technical and vocational education colleges, and potential benefits associated with expertise in technical and vocational education, seminars should be arranged. As it is clear from the results that a majority of the students are not aware about the existing vocational institutions in the region, study tours of vocational institutions should be arranged for these students to inform them about the existing vocational institutions. Since a majority of the students has vocational education in their priority list, vocational subjects should be made a compulsory part of their study at secondary level so that they become aware about basics of the vocational subjects, making it easy for them to making a choice at their post-secondary studies.
References


