

CAREER-RELATED PROBLEMS AGAINST CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

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ABSTRACT

The special-needs school children like other “normal” children, need guidance for vocational choice and counseling and for their individual problems, to be able to participate fully in society. The disability-related problems that interfere with their choice of career are hereby highlighted. Also, problems faced by the special-needs children during the period of transition from school to the work place are identified. The paper asserts that career planning may be of greater importance to children with special needs than those who are not challenged. This paper therefore recommended that, guidance counselors must recognize the need to assume an advocacy role for special-needs students to help ensure that they are guided into appropriate educational tracks.

Keywords: Disabilities, Career, Children, and Special needs.

Introduction

Special-needs children are those children formally ascertained as needing special education. They are the physically deformed, maladjusted and severely handicapped. For the purpose of this paper, a physically disabled individual is defined as “one whose physical or health problems result in an impairment of normal interaction with society, to the extent that specialized services and programmes are required”(Cross, 2016) . In Nigeria, such children with special needs are identified and sent to special training institutions to cater for their individual problems. But just like other “normal” children, they need guidance for vocational choice and counseling for their individual problems, and to prepare them to participate fully in the society, where they reside and belong.

Special-needs children are disadvantaged in the search for work, and many of the most severely challenged, from special schools face particularly difficult problems in adjusting to the realities of the labor market. Career advisers also face acute difficulties in their interactions with them. After graduating from special schools where they have been prepared for various vocations, the disabled usually find it difficult to secure employment, and if they do, adjusting to the new working environment becomes a great problem to them because of the attitude of people towards them. But have they been prepared to face the society and the problems of the work environment? What are the attitudes of guidance officers towards the student with challenges? To start with, there are only a few guidance counseling unit staff in our schools and most of them have not been specifically trained for the special-needs children; this therefore, constitutes a problem. Hohensil (2017) argued in the same direction in which he indicated, however, in a special issue of the personnel and guidance journal devoted to counseling special needs-children and their families, that school counselors have not been trained sufficiently to deal with these matters.

Disability-Related Problems

One of the problems experienced by students with disabilities which reflect the possible disruptions of career awareness development is that the special-needs students arrive at adulthood with relatively few career options. They have very little options to choose from the very many careers because of their individual problems. Ginzbert, (2017), stressed

the importance of young people maximizing potential options. In effect, having a number of career options helps to endure career satisfaction and success because it affords the individual greater opportunity to seek out and find a satisfactory job. An understanding of the way children with disabilities may experience career related developmental discontinuities and delays, can be derived from an awareness of the differences between their world and that of their non-disabled peers. Every special-needs child, because of his disability, like blindness, deafness, and or orthopedic problems, may limit their interactions with their environment. The difference can be quite pronounced and may give them little or no chance to make a choice. Bowe (2010) stated that severe special-need students such as those disabled by cerebral palsy, often have a restricted number of early experiences which together with other disabilities leave them "boxed in" with regards to their career choices. They sometimes arrive at their career decision without having acquired enough related knowledge to make an appropriate choice. As a result, they may have unrealistic aspirations. They have little or no vocational guidance at all, and that makes the difference in their living.

Physically disabled individuals have often been viewed by others as being totally dependent on society, and are usually considered to be generally incapable of learning the skills necessary for participation in daily activities with their non-handicapped peers (Cross, 2016). To the contrary, the expanding literature base involves the use of behavioral technology as an instructional tool provides ample evidence that moderately and severely handicapped children can learn skills that allow them varying levels of independence in community-based activities. If the society begins to accept the different talents that abound in these categories of disability, they would be more informed about the different careers existing and with much vocational guidance and counseling, they would be able to have career choices. Most of the disabled children have not had enough access to vocational or career guidance, and also have never utilized the services of guidance counseling or career masters of any sort. This attitude should be changed for better in order to integrate the special needs. Osipow (2014) stressed the fact that career-related experiences of special-needs children may be disrupted or diminished by several factors.

Mobility problems are capable of diminishing their ability to go out of their household or institutions, thereby limiting their acquisition of knowledge about the neighborhood surroundings, and happenings. Some children with disabilities are deliberately shielded from the outside world by the protective attitude of many parents and guardians. These people think they are protecting their children or relatives, as well as giving them comfort, not knowing that they may be preventing them from trying their hands on some vocations of their interest and abilities. They render them totally dependent upon the society. Preoccupation with treatment of a handicap or disability may also deny a child access to the time available for world exploration. There are some disabled children who have been confined for most of their lives in isolated homes or institutions, with little or no contact with the outside world (Osipow, 2014). The result of these situations is that the child is extremely limited in exposure, both to the world in general, and to the world of works. It should not be so; they have to undergo career development and vocational guidance. Osipow (2014), a proponent of career and vocational development theory based on social learning models emphasized that the importance of one's social climate especially role models in career decisions depends on one's social interactions and social contacts. Children with disabilities are frequently exposed to a typical role situation and model. When a child is disabled, he or she often requires unusual amount of care, which is generally the domain of the mother. Connor, Rusalen, and Cruickshank, (2014), reported that families of children with cerebral palsy are at risk for breakdown, and that when the family remains intact, the father may disengage himself from the disabled child. Seligman, (2004), stated that, in vintage paper of February, March, 1990, a father of a cripple was reported to have wished his son dead

because for 17 years, the child could not walk and therefore was only useful to him and not to the family. Instead of the parents of the cripple to expose him to some vocations related to his handicap so as to make him functional in the society, they decided to leave him to be totally dependent even in toilet training. We as parents and guardians of disabled children should be aware of vocational development.

The Protectiveness and dependency often imposed on children with disabilities can leave other potentially damaging marks. These circumstances can result in social immaturity, particularly with regard to decision-making and problem-solving. Parents may also contribute to immaturity by holding their disabled child less responsible than a baled child for his or her behavior (Bartel and Guskin 2010).

Although there has been an increase in the attention given to persons with disabilities, the role models presented after have been of questionable merit. There seems to have been a shift from the earlier portrayal of special needs persons as hideous, dependent and pathetic to a portrayal of them as “super crippled”. For the disabled persons with average abilities, motivation and steaming, these portrayals send the message that they probably do not have enough to make it in life. Rarely, if ever, do the media portray characters with disabilities coincidental and irrelevant to the plot and suggest that disabled persons succeed as average “Peters” and “Marias”.

Existing assessment problems also contribute to under-estimation of disabled students’ abilities and potentials. Their inability to read, write, or speak clearly and efficiently makes it difficult to obtain accurate standardized results. Persons with these communication special needs can be expected to perform poorly on most of these measures. Problems also abound for the disabled student who is ready to make a career choice and is receiving counseling. One problem is that the disabled person is often placed in a predicament in which he or she is given only one chance for advanced education or training. In essence, he/she is denied the right path to follow. He is often treated with special care, as if he can do nothing on his own, thereby denying him the right to interact with the environment. Even special-needs children attending the same class with “normal” students, whose teachers tend to give them special attention will have their potentials, their abilities, and their interests inhibited. The student with challenges could have exhibited some qualities in their learning environment, which could have aided the teacher in giving that student vocational guidance.

Transition from School to Work

After the special needs children have been exposed to vocations or have made their own choices of career and are prepared to keep that vocation for their living, they should be prepared to go and live with their community, because all their training might have been received in an isolated environment quite different from their real environments. Therefore, there is the need for their exposure to enable them experience what they should expect when they go out into the labor market, (Hohensil, 2017). Programme developers have realized that because of the particular learning characteristics of disabled children, such as memory deficits, difficulty in generalizing skills, and difficulty in generating solutions to new problems, teaching programmes are more successful when presented in the environment where the learners are expected to eventually exhibit the skills. The best way to help them learn to adjust to the real world situation is by giving them training at the actual work set-up to help them have a firsthand knowledge of their work environments, once in a while through field trips as earlier mentioned. By doing that they will appreciate whatever they see, hear or feel better than they would, without any experience. Osipow and Seligman, (2014), said that there are other specific factors that can affect the career outlook of children with disabilities. Lack of role models in the forms of persons with visible disabilities in the work place, where children visit, can have a profound impact on their sense of what they can do and cannot do. If one has never seen a teacher, banker, carpenter or physician with a disability, the logical

conclusion is that these careers are out of the realm of possibility for the disabled. This problem is compounded by the fact that the challenged child and non-special needs peers are likely to have come to the same conclusion. This is where the vocational guidance counselors need to do serious work to make sure that these special-needs persons are prepared psychologically, to go out and face the reality or get the shock from their non-handicapped mates. If these disabled children are exposed to the real work environment, and areas, and are able to see different workers with different disabilities, they will be moved, encouraged and have a feeling that they can also succeed in these different vocations.

Conclusion

The special-needs person, like other persons, need guidance in their vocational or career development and choice, but most of the time, these guidance services are not extended to this group of persons. From the theories of career development, it is generally accepted that the bases of career awareness and choice are to a large extent, shaped by childhood experiences that support the developmental process. We are, therefore, exposed to the world of work at an early age through contact with peers, family members, role models, early childhood exposure to different environments, and situations which play a vital role in our choice of vocation. It is the same thing that applies to the disabled persons, so over-restricting them in the name of protection is counterproductive. They should be allowed access to guidance, to be able to explore the environment according to their interests and abilities.

Challenged children also go through career-related problems or in other words disability-related-problems because of the nature of their challenges, which if given proper attention, will help their choice of vocations, without much restriction, and will also help in their transition from school to work, much easier by exposing them to real world situations, instead of isolating them in various special schools.

There are other specific factors that can affect the career outlook of children with special needs .There is lack of role models in the form of persons with visible disabilities in the work place. Children's visit can have a profound impact on their sense of what they can do and cannot do.

All these factors support the notion that career planning may be of greater importance to persons with severe disabilities, when they are exposed to real work environment. Work-oriented values can be acquired and enhanced. Not only should the child with special needs be given the attention necessary to overcome problems cited above, but he/she should be equipped to handle career related issues.

Recommendations

There is an urgent need to bring career education, guidance and counseling up to date, for students with disabilities. Guidance counselors must assume the advocacy role for special-needs students to help ensure that they are guided into appropriate educational tracks. This advocacy role should include helping the special-needs child to exercise his or her right, to take risks, often synonymous with taking difficult courses, and helping to secure the child's right to fail and to begin anew, when failure occurs.

Finally, career planning and placement group of scientist stress that the crucial factor underlying the choice and attainment of special-needs students' career goals, is the continuing support of at least one significant other person, who encourages self-exploration and risk-taking. Special-needs persons should be allowed to explore, and take risks through guidance.

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