Orientation to the World of Work

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Introduction
An important component of youth development is understanding the effect work has on life. Hansen’s (1989) definition of work is "is paid and non-paid employment, educational endeavors and some avocational efforts" (p. 1). The interaction of work and personal development over a lifetime become the career (Walker & Coble, 1989). People work for a variety of reasons: for survival, to define who they are, for a sense of security, for self-respect, for a sense of competence and power, to fill the day; and to measure self worth (Bingham and Stryker, 1990).

Programs must address the issue of work as major element of life because youth do not have the close association with work that was common 30 to 50 years ago. Most youth do not have an opportunity to view role models or see a finished product.

Adults can reasonably expect to change jobs a minimum of five times during their working years. Because the world of work is changing at such a rapid rate, youth must adopt a philosophy of life-long learning to keep current with changing needs and occupational requirements.

Appropriate orientation to the world of work is a developmental decision making process beginning at about age six and lasting until about age 25. The three developmental stages are fantasy, tentative and realistic. The fantasy stage involves career selection based on limited information and is most often based on emotion. At this stage children need opportunities to see a variety of occupations. In their minds anything is possible.

In the tentative stage, youth are learning about their own limitations and capabilities in relation to occupational opportunities and requirements. At this stage youth need to be actively involved in self-discovery and are actively involved in developing personal interests and values. In their minds fewer things are possible.

During the realistic stage, youth are basing future choices on their perceived abilities and needs as well as employment trends, etc. They are most actively involved in strategizing for their future. In their minds, the things they are capable of doing may be worth pursuing. The developmental process is one in which the typical youth will not experience adequate progress toward vocational maturity without assistance. To facilitate the movement through these stages, Hall (1991) offers the following components to foster an appropriate orientation to the world of work:
**Component Elements**

- Foster curiosity.
- Help youth explore different work avenues.
- Encourage self discovery.
- Emphasize the development of goal setting and decision making skills.
- Recognize that planning for the future includes more than career decisions.
- Help adults who interact with youth, including parents, understand the career development process and encourage them to provide support throughout the process.

**Summary**

In today's society this developmental process cannot be left to chance. It is estimated that three-fourths of current workforce entrants will be qualified for only 40 percent of the new jobs created between 1985 and 2000 (Cetron and Gayle, 1990). Most of the jobs that the workforce will be qualified for are at a minimum wage level and, by today's standards, are below the poverty level. The jobs of the future that will support a reasonable lifestyle are difficult to predict during a period of rapidly advancing technology. Preparation for the world of work will require some planned educational experiences that are not found in the home or in most schools. An appropriate developmental process will not happen except through a planned series of education experiences for the large majority of today's youth.

Stimulating and cultivating curiosity in children are keys to the entire career development process. The role of career and occupational information for children and young adolescents is to arouse interest. It is not an end in itself, but is a means of developing attitudes and skills toward career readiness (Hall, 1991).

**References**


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