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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Self-Knowledge in Relation to Career Choice of Students in Stand Alone Institutions.

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Manuscript Info	Abstract
	Choosing a career is an extremely important decision. The present study is based on the premise that Self-Knowledge plays a crucial role in career choice of individuals. Self-Knowledge is the cognitive ability of individuals to maturely and accurately appraise their interest, skills and abilities in relation to their career choice. The vocational orientation of Stand Alone institutions manifest in the career choice and preference of the students. Since the career choice of the students in these institutions is already decided, an attempt is being made through this research work to find out the congruence between their self-knowledge and career choice. Thirty two per cent of the population in Stand Alone Institutions of West Garo Hills District in Meghalaya was selected purposively as sample of the study. Part I of the Competence Test of Career Maturity Inventory by Dr. Nirmala Gupta (CMI_G, 1989) was used. The data were analysed with the help of t-test in SPSS. The result showed significant differences in the Mean scores of Self-Knowledge of Male and Female students. Males were found to have significantly higher accuracy of Self-Knowledge than the females. However, it was found that majority of the students lacked accurate Self Knowledge in relation to their Career Choice. From this, it was inferred that the Self Knowledge of both Male and Female students in Stand Alone Institutions was not congruent to their Career Choice.

Introduction:-
Choosing a career, especially among diverse options is a herculean task (Osipow, 1983; cited by Salami, 2008), yet an extremely important decision that impacts an individual's entire future (Olaosebikan & Olusakin, 2014). It is a process characterized by an interplay of various personal and social factors. A recurrent theme in human psychology is the structure of self, which is the essence of an individual's life (Moustakas, 1956; cited by Chen, 1998). Donald E. Super (1957) in his Self-Concept Theory of Career Development viewed career development as the process of developing and implementing one's Self-Concept (Chen, 1998; Swanson & Gore, 2000; Leung, 2008; Mubiana, 2010). He postulated that an individual will choose an occupation that allows him or her to function in a particular role that is consistent with his or her Self-Concept (Cortse & Schepers, 2004). He also suggested that the Self-Concept is not static but evolves continuously as the person encounters new experiences and progresses through the developmental stages (Leung, 2008). Super (1957) proposed five stages of career development in his Stage Developmental Framework (Leung, 2008). These stages are: Growth (birth to 14 years), where a person starts to develop a sense of Self; Exploration (15-24 years), where a person actively engages in exploring oneself and the world of work from tentative to realistic career choices that are attainable; Establishment (25 to 44 years), where a person confirms his career choice through actual work experience; Maintenance (45 to 65 years), where a person engages in continual adjustment to maintain and improve his/her position and lastly Decline (above 65 years) where a person shows reduced output and prepares for retirement. Each stage is characterized by certain appropriate tasks (Patton & Lokan, 2001) as proposed by Super (1980), which provides an individual with the vehicle needed to

progress through the five stages (Cortse & Schepers, 2004). These tasks are: Crystalisation (14 to 18 years), a cognitive process involving an understanding of oneself leading to the formation of general career goals and preferences; Specification (18 to 21 years), the process of moving from a tentative to specific career preference; Implementation (21-24 years), getting necessary education and training to fulfill the goal and enter employment; Stabilisation (24-35 years), confirming career choice through work experience and Consolidation (above 35 years), advancement in career. Consequently, Super introduced the normative concept of Career Maturity as an index for measuring the readiness of an individual to cope with career developmental tasks at each stage. Building on Super's formulation of career maturity, Crites in 1971, proposed a model and a measure of career maturity (Themba, 2010). According to Crites (1973), career maturity consists of two dimensions – cognitive and affective. The cognitive dimension includes career choice competencies which comprises of five kinds of competencies – self appraisal, occupational information, goal selection, planning and problem solving. On the other hand, the affective dimension includes five attitudinal dimensions – involvement in choice process, orientation towards work, decisiveness, independence in decision making and compromising tendencies. Describing the characteristics of a career mature person, both Super (1957) and Crites (1978) maintained that a career mature person gathers information about the self in order to gain insight, obtain necessary competencies in order to make an informed decision, integrate self-knowledge and knowledge of the world of work, and implement them when planning a career (Cortse & Schepers, 2004). Hence, this study is based on the premise that Self-Knowledge plays a crucial role in career choice and determines the success of one's career development (Mubiana, 2010). Self-Knowledge is therefore, operationally defined as the cognitive ability of individuals to maturely and accurately appraise their interest, skills and abilities in relation to their career choice.

Students in Stand-Alone Institutions:-

In India, there are some institutions which are not affiliated to any University but are recognised by various Councils or Ministries. These institutions, for the purpose survey, were referred to as Stand-Alone institutions in the document report of All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE, 2012-13) by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. Stand Alone Institutions have been categorised into 5 types:

Type I - Diploma Level Technical Institutes such as Polytechnics, which are generally recognised by AICTE and administered by State Directorate of Technical Education.

Type II - Diploma Level Teacher Training Institutes including DIETs recognised by NCTE and generally administered by SCERT.

Type III - Diploma Level Nursing Institutes recognised by INC and generally administered by State Nursing Council.

Type IV - Post Graduate Diploma in Management (PGDM) recognised by AICTE.

Type V - Institutions running mainly Diploma/ PG Diploma level programmes and directly regulated/ administered by Central Ministries.

The students enter these institutions normally after completing Secondary or Higher Secondary levels of schooling. The vocational orientations of these institutes manifest in the career choice and preference of the students who are in the exploration stage of career development and are faced with the developmental tasks of crystalisation, specification and implementation. Since their career choice, to some extent, is already decided, an attempt is being made through this research work to find out the congruence between their self-knowledge and their career choice.

Review of Related Literature:-

A perusal of available literature shows that most studies on career development or career choice are based on the measure of Career Maturity as is the present study. However, it was found that no attempt has been made in Meghalaya or India to understand the role of self knowledge in determining the career choices of students, especially in vocational institutes, where students are being skilled and trained to enter the labour force. The present study attempts to bridge this research gap with the anticipation that more empirical studies would be taken up in future. Zhou & Xu (2013), who studied the university student's career choice and emotional well-being, found that with regard to their career choice, the lack of required information was reported to be the top reason for career-decision making difficulty, followed by the lack of clear sense of self, the lack of decisiveness and recognition of career choice importance scored the lowest. Cortse & Schepers (2004), in their study on the personality and cognitive correlates of career maturity found among other findings that career mature and immature students differed significantly in respect of self-confidence, self-esteem and self-control, and that students with an internal locus of control had a more realistic picture of their own ability and their interaction with the environment.

Westbrook & Sandford (1993) found no gender differences in self-appraisal of adolescents. Studies done in India on career maturity were reviewed and the results on the test of Self Appraisal showed significant gender differences favouring males (Kaur, 2014; Singh & Shukla, 2015). Kaur & Kochar (2014) found significant difference in self appraisal of academic and vocational students and that the academic students had significantly higher Mean scores than the vocational students. Hasan (2004) found that students with higher self concept had better self appraisal.

Objective:-
The primary objective of this research work is to compare the Mean scores of Self Knowledge in relation to Career Choice of Male and Female students of Stand-Alone Institutions in West Garo Hills District of Meghalaya.

Hypothesis:-
The Null Hypothesis was formulated stating that there is no significant difference in the Mean scores of Self Knowledge in relation to Career Choice of Male and Female students of Stand-Alone Institutions in West Garo Hills District of Meghalaya.

Population and Sample:-
The population of the study comprised of 237 students (96 Male/ 141 Female) in four Stand-Alone Institutions of West Garo Hills District of Meghalaya. These Institutions include District Institute of Education and Training (DIET), Polytechnic and two institutes of Diploma in Nursing, i.e. Female Health Worker's Training School (FHWTS) and Tura Christian Hospital School of Nursing (TCHSN). 32 per cent of the population was selected purposively as sample of the study. The detail of the sample is presented in Table 1.

Table 1:- Sample of the Study.

Sl No.	Institute	32% Male	32% Female	Total
1	DIET	16	12	28
2	Polytechnic	15	5	20
3	FHWTS	0	19	19
4	TCHSN	0	9	9
Total		**31**	**45**	**76**

Research Tool and Technique:-
To measure Self-Knowledge in relation to Career Choice of the students, Part I of the Competence Test of Career Maturity Inventory by Dr. Nirmala Gupta (CMI_G, 1989) was used. CMI_G is an Indian adaptation of the Career Maturity Inventory developed by J.O Crites (1973/78). It comprises of two sub tests – Attitude Scale and Competence Test. The Competence Test measures five cognitive dimensions in five Parts, i.e. Part I – Knowing Yourself (Self Appraisal), Part II – Knowing about Jobs (Occupational Information), Part III – Choosing a Job (Goal Selection), Part IV – Looking Ahead (Planning) and Part V – What Should They Do? (Problem Solving). Part I of the Competence Test i.e. Knowing Yourself, is a measure of Self Appraisal and is based on the assumption that individuals who can accurately appraise the career relevant capabilities of others are good self appraisers. This test contains 14 question items with 5 options each. These options reflect: (i) dependency upon others, (ii) need for certainty, (iii) overestimation of one's capabilities, (iv) accurate self appraisal and (v) don't know, which presumably vary in degree of accuracy in appraising oneself.

The normal distribution of the scores was checked by using SPSS (Ver. 20.0). It was found that the scores were approximately normally distributed with a Skewness of .284 (SE=.421) for male and .155 (SE=.354) for female, and a Kurtosis of -.859 (SE=.821) for male and 1.097 (SE= .695) for female. Visual inspection of the distribution showed that the scores were slightly negatively skewed for male and slightly Kurtotic for female; however, their z values fell within $\pm1.96\sigma$ (Lofgren, 2013). Hence, Independent Sample t-test was used to analyse the data in SPSS.

Result:-
The result of the study, as presented in Table 2 shows that the t-value of 1.37 with df 74 is significant at .01 level of significance. It indicates that the Mean scores of Self Knowledge (SK) in relation to the Career Choice of the students in Stand-Alone Institutions differ significantly. Hence, the null Hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the Mean scores of SK in Career Choice of Male and Female students in Stand-Alone Institutions of West Garo Hills District of Meghalaya, is rejected.

Further, the Mean score of SK of Males is higher than that of Females. It may therefore, be said that the Males in Stand-Alone Institutions in the District were found to have significantly higher accuracy of SK.

Table 2:- Gender-wise N, Mean, SD and t of SK.

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df
Male	31	5.90	2.55	1.37 **	74
Female	45	5.09	2.55		

** Significant at .01 level

The result was further analysed to find out the Mean, Standard Deviation and Percentage of the responses made by Male and Female students in relation to (i) dependency upon others, (ii) need for certainty, (iii) overestimation of one's capabilities, (iv) accurate self appraisal and (v) don't know, as reflected in the alternatives of the question items, which is presented in Table 3.

Table 3:- Mean, SD and Percentage of Response of the Five Types of Alternatives of Self Appraisal Test

Self Appraisal (Knowing Yourself)	Male (n = 31)			Female (n = 45)		
	Mean	SD	Percentage	Mean	SD	Percentage
Dependency upon Others	1.81	1.51	13%	1.69	1.52	12%
Need for Certainty	1.93	1.29	14%	1.98	1.45	14%
Overestimation of One's Cababilities	3.19	1.94	22%	3.22	1.66	23%
Accurate Self Appraisal	5.90	2.55	42%	5.09	2.55	36%
Don't Know	1.22	1.54	9%	2.13	2.09	15%

As is evident from Table 3, more Males than Females showed dependency upon others, need for certainty and accurate self appraisal, while more Females than Males showed overestimation of one's capabilities and had no idea about the options. The Mean scores of accurate self appraisal, which in the present study is taken as the Mean scores of Self Knowledge, lies in the 42nd percentile for Males and in the 36th percentile for Females. According to Crites (1978), scores below the 50th percentile are indicative of the potential for delayed or impaired progress related to career decision-making (Rojewski, Wicklein & Schell, 1995). It may, therefore, be said that majority of the students in Stand Alone Institutions lack accurate Self Knowledge in relation to their Career Choice. From this, it can be inferred that the Self Knowledge of both Male and Female students in Stand Alone Institutions is not congruent to their Career Choice.

Discussion:-

The result of the study is in conformity to the findings by Kaur (2014) and Singh & Shukla (2015) whose findings showed significant gender differences favouring Males on the Test of Self Appraisal (Knowing Yourself), which in the present study is used as the measure of Self Knowledge. A possible explanation for the result of the present study could be the lack of self-clarity, awareness, interest and motivation for the choice of career which the students are getting trained for. Another reason could be the stigma attached to Vocational and Technical Education in India, which may also be assumed to be true in Meghalaya, which may be impairing the students' Self-concept. Apart from personal factors, several socio-cultural factors may also be responsible for the incongruence between the students' Self Knowledge and Career Choice, such as lack of availability of educational and employment opportunities, quick and easy access to the labour market, need for financial independence and stability at an early age, need for better socio-economic status, etc. But the basic reason underlying them all is the unavailability of Career Guidance and Counselling interventions in schools and colleges of Meghalaya.

Suggestions:-

Self Knowledge, according to Mubiana (2010), plays a crucial role in career decision making and to a large extent may determine the success of one's career development. Understanding how career choices are identified based on knowledge of self and work can be instrumental in positive career development and satisfying occupational placement (Maietta, 2010; cited by Kaur, 2012). Without looking at the individuals' unique formation and associated elements of the inner self (Chen, 1998), it is impossible to identify a career which is suitable and satisfying. Hence, considering the importance of Self Knowledge in determining the Career Choices of individuals it is imperative to spread awareness amongst the students in schools and colleges and to the society in general on the relevance of career guidance and counseling. Especially in a state like Meghalaya which is the youngest state in terms of median age of its population and also has the largest pool of youth resource (Meghalaya state youth Policy, 2012), it is necessary to provide the youth with a direction so that they can live productive and fulfilling lives. Career counseling should be incorporated in the curriculum in schools and colleges to help students make realistic career choices. The Chief Minister's Career Guidance programme should reach all stakeholders in the state, even to students in Vocational and Technical Institutes. The effectiveness of this programme should be evaluated from time to time and should be made continuous and comprehensive. At the institutional level, self awareness programmes should be organized which would consequently help the students to enhance their Self Knowledge and help them in making realistic Career Choices.

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