

Report on “What are the points?” Workshop

Given by Patricia Quigley

From Tipperary Institute

Patricia Quigley introduced herself and explained that she works as a careers guidance counsellor. Patricia gave everyone a handout (included in this report) and said that she would work through her hand-out and expand on same. Patricia went on to say that she would be exploring the role of parents/guardians in assisting their children in their choice and planning of a career .

Expectation of both parent and the students themselves will dictate the choices that are made. Students will try to postpone their decision on a career but it is important that they are motivated to consider this early as subject choice in the early stages of secondary school can dictate whether they have limited their choices later on. A broad range of subjects can help to keep all their options open, the compulsory, (English, Irish and Mathematics), along with a business subject, a science subject, a language and whatever other subject choices the individual schools offer e.g. History, Geography etc.

A person can expect to make career changes at least eight times during their working life and employers are looking for employees who are flexible and adaptable.

Students at third level who drop out do so in the first year because its not what they expected and this is because they haven't researched the course enough, they need to talk to people who are studying the course they would like to take up and to those who work in the field to ensure that it's a career path they really wish to take.

To assist them in their choices they need to look at their interests, skills, personality and their values. Secondary schools could organise career guidance nights where they would invite a number of different people working in different fields, and the students and parents could speak to them and find out what's involved and what subjects and qualifications are needed to get into those professions. Work experience is also an excellent way for students to check out what they would or would not like to do, there is nothing like sampling the work to find out whether its for you! Students also need to keep a watch on what the current employment trends are too.

Students should also attend the open days in the third level colleges/universities that they think they would like to attend to see the campus. This can have a huge impact on a student as for some the larger campus is too daunting and they would be more

comfortable in a smaller environment. Each student has different needs and these need to be taken into account when choosing both a course and a college/university.

The role of the parent/guardian in assisting their student needs to be one of effective support, identifying issues and lots of discussion to empower the student to make a decision. A student shouldn't base their choice on a third level institution because their friends are going there. They will procrastinate and parents must try to assist them to make their decision in a timely manner, but ultimately it must be the student and not the parent who decides! However research has shown that while students listen to and are influenced by their friends it is you, the parent/guardian who is the biggest single influence on your child's choice of career.

Following Patricia's presentation there followed a short presentation by John Farrell from Qualifax.

Qualifax is a website with a data base of all National Courses run in Ireland, north and south from university courses to night school courses.

The website is www.qualifax.ie.

This site is aimed at a wide variety of groups, including students, those returning to education and international students.

The site aims to take the guess work out of course choices, it gives the course, course content and exam requirements, ie the student chooses engineering but then their maths is not up to the standard required, by doing the search on the website they know that they cannot take up that course.

You can log onto the website and choose a course and it gives you all the information that you need to see if you would qualify for the course and where the course is running, including the other career path to enable them to take up their preferred course by doing a PLC etc.

Teresa McSweeney,

Conference 2008.