To make that right choice

There is more to choosing a career than just aptitude

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Completed your Class 10? Now, which stream are you choosing? Which course are you choosing after Class 12? What are your plans after college? The questions keep coming till you settle down in life. Your peers, colleagues, advisers and even family constantly ask these. The fact that choosing a career path can be daunting. Perhaps you find a few roads converging in a maze before you and the decision often is to take the one less travelled. And this, as Robert Frost said, can make all the difference.

This is where Vedatma counselling comes in. "We are a student career counselling company focussed on helping students choose their best-fit educational and career streams aligned with their unique natural potential. We've been down the road six months now with our office based in Kochi. And we work with students from the 9th grade onwards till graduate level," says Eldho Kuruvilla, founder and head of the company.

With a BA (Hons) in Economics from St. Stephen's College, Delhi, and an MBA from Griffith University, Eldho has reasons for plunging into this field."I discovered the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) during my MBA and I was interested in its varied use and applications. This led me to my certification in the same and in Murphy-Beisegel Type Indicator for Children (MMBTC) and Strong Interest Inventory certifications. But the main reason for this shift was because I felt that in our country most of what goes as career counselling is simply placement. There are a lot of people talking about career counselling but it is mainly about certain universities, about the possibilities of studying abroad, which is wrongly identified as career counselling. My attempt is to provide a scientific, world-reputed, career assessment system based on the natural potential of the student," says Eldho.

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has mandated career counselling. "But instead of a scientific, proven, step-by-step process, 99% of schools get a guest speaker for one day, organise workshops and that's it," says Eldho.

Eldho says that he approaches schools with a different objective. "It is not to conduct a seminar. We actually ask them if we can reach out to the parents, whoever is interested to take up the counselling we offer, which is not done in the school environment but in our office. It is highly personalised and I don't think schools can provide that kind of time. What we are trying to do is to get to one step before placements. It is trying to help a student realise who he is, what he is all about, his unique potential. And that we match to the right careers because everybody has got strengths and weaknesses. We assess students using certain psychometric assessments that have been around for a long time in different parts of the world, especially in the UK and the US. In fact, the top universities and schools there use MBTI, Strong Interest Inventory, MMPI - assessments, which is what I do."

The other problem in the usual career counselling is that a lot of emphasis is placed on aptitude. "Personality and interests are largely ignored. If a student has an aptitude for arithmetic, the natural thing for the parent and student is to get a wrong conclusion that the student is great in Math so let the student go for engineering. But our whole approach is where we are trying to educate people that aptitude is not everything, it is important but equally important is personality and interest. We assess these too. The whole idea about us is that we gauge the personality and career interest, along with aptitude. For example, a kid can have a great musical ability but doesn't want to be a singer but she gets pushed into it. Here interest is lacking in spite of aptitude being present. In another scenario the kid might have a great voice, an aptitude and interest too but the personality may not be suited for a career in music. Personality is usually ignored."

The Vedatma process involves three well-defined steps. In the first step, the student takes two online psychometric assessments to identify personality preferences, interests and aptitude. "The online assessment can be taken by the student from home, which is followed by a counselling session with certified experts. This is a six-hour process spread over three days. The final step is identifying the best fit educational and career streams."

Eldho believes that in the present counselling scenario as it largely exists today only "What do I want to do?" and "Where do I want to do it?" are considered. "Equally important are 'Who am I?', the values, belief systems and motivations that make up the student. Then 'Why do I want to do it?' question also needs to be addressed."

The initial response, says Eldho, has been very encouraging. "We have had some very good response from 35 students who have been in these six months been through our process. Children do open up during our assessment, speak their mind, go beyond mere career choices. We then identify their strengths, help them understand their potential, and introduce them to a variety of options suited to them."

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