

AN EXAMINATION OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS
OF THEIR SECONDARY CAREER GUIDANCE PROGRAMS

By

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of university undergraduate General Psychology students regarding the effectiveness and content of their high school career guidance programs.

Data was collected through a voluntary survey given to students enrolled in a General Psychology class during the spring semester of 2004. The participants were given an explanation of the study and its purpose. The university is located in a small upper Midwest community.

The survey was developed by the researcher based on the Wisconsin Developmental Guidance Model and the American School Counselor Association standards. Both models provided the framework from which a career development or

career guidance program should find basis. The participants were asked to evaluate how well the school guidance program prepared them for a career or other post-secondary options directly from high school. Qualitative data was gathered by asking participants for advice in the preparation for a better transition to college. Data was also gathered regarding interventions and services guidance counselors provided that helped students make good career decisions

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Career exploration and selection are a few of the most difficult and important choices students will be confronted with at some point during their high school education. Ideally, the path they choose will lead them on a road to success and happiness, not only for themselves but also their careers. However, too often students are left to do their own career exploration. This can lead to a difficult path for making one of the most fundamental decisions of their life. Thus, the career exploration and selection process needs to be addressed earlier in life, with more attention and direction from each level in the schools.

Career Development

Career development is a process that begins in childhood and continues to grow and develop throughout the lifespan (Super, 1990). Career choices and perceptions are influenced by experiences as well as a person's abilities. A person's culture, neighborhood, household and family composition may all influence the way a person perceives certain careers. Sometimes those perceptions are narrowed by past experiences, which is why career exploration is such an important aspect of an adolescent's high school years. Preparing adolescents from diverse backgrounds for the career choices they will have to make upon graduation is a huge responsibility that is regularly filled by the school counselor(s). Dahir and Campbell (1997) reported that the American School Counselor Association called on counselors to promote the career development of all students. Unfortunately, the career development programs counselors provide have varied immensely. According to Barker (2000), many schools still follow the conventional approach which typically involves referring students to the Occupational

Outlook Handbook. This “career development” does not provide a significant source of direction or exploration. It does not allow students to explore their interests and values and match those with a range of career choices, nor does it give a hands-on experience from which so many students benefit. Thus the conventional approach is too outdated for recent times, yet still used in many U.S. schools.

According to Reich (2002), the National Career Development Association Gallup survey reported that one-third of adults in the United States are working in their current job as a result of conscious planning. About half of those surveyed were not happy in their current job and almost 75% said they would seek more career information if they could start over (Reich, 2002). Acquiring appropriate knowledge and competencies regarding a given career/occupation is ultimately the recipe for success in a particular career field (Barker, 2000).

Keeley and Jarvis (2003) provide a model resulting in better job satisfaction and appropriate career goal development. This career exploration model includes: 1) explore one’s interests, aptitudes, and values through assessments and conversations with the individual, 2) explore career and work options using current information and local community resources, and finally 3) determine the occupational goal by matching the individual’s personality traits and values with the career or job while developing a plan to obtain the needed degree or job preparation. Job shadowing or career days in which a group of students would participate in hands-on experiences with local businesses is a great way to explore students’ interests. Many local businesses and/or programs put on a career development day for high school students to gain opportunities to see jobs up close

and personal. This is a great way to encourage student knowledge and growth of a particular career field.

According to a study done on the comprehensive career needs of students in grades 7-12, the career planning needs that have been addressed in past career planning programs are representative of the needs that parents or other adults have found to be significant (Bernes, Magnusson, Poulsen, & Pyne, 2002). Fortunately, researchers have begun to involve students in the needs assessments, thus creating a more beneficial and appropriate career planning program. Placing importance on the career needs that students view as most important is critical for a successful career program. Counselors must understand their students' current level of career awareness/ perceptions so they can build off what the students already know. Parents or teachers may assume students have some career awareness when often times they do not. An assumption such as this may prevent students from choosing the right career path for them. According to Bernes et al. (2002), when students are active participants in the planning process of the career development program, they may take a more active role in their own career development. Allowing individuals to contribute to the planning of a program creates a more conducive environment to be active participants in the program as well. Students will likely work harder to accomplish career goals they have set rather than goals set by someone else.

This study examined how students reported they were prepared to leave high school and begin a career path based on the career guidance they received in their high school. The study also determined if the student's high school followed the Wisconsin Developmental Guidance Model and/or the American School Counselor Association standards in promoting the students' knowledge and understanding of careers. From this

study recommendations will be provided to aid in the development of a more comprehensive career guidance program.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to look at the attitudes and opinions of university undergraduate students regarding their high school career guidance program. This study examined the career development services offered to the participants in high school and the effectiveness of those services as self-reported by the participants.

Data was collected through a survey given to students in the General Psychology class at the university during the spring of 2004.

Research Questions

This study was designed to gather information regarding how well high schools have provided career guidance and have met the career development needs of high school students. The research questions regarding career development were based on the Wisconsin Developmental Guidance Model and the American School Counselor Association standards. The research questions are as follows:

- 1) Are schools offering services to students regarding the development of life skills such as resume writing, interview skills, and other skills needed to seek, obtain, and maintain employment?
- 2) Are students developing competency in the area of career knowledge through programs offered in high school?
- 3) Are students forming career goals while in high school?
- 4) Are the students satisfied with the career guidance they received at their high school?

5) What suggestions do students offer in regards to their career guidance program?

Definition of Terms

Throughout the study these terms were defined as follows:

Career exploration - The activities, resources, discussions, and assessments given to students to assist in the exploration and decision-making process of a career.

Career guidance - The support given to students by school counselors in the form of reference material regarding careers, individual counseling, classroom guidance lessons on a career topic, and their own knowledge and expertise on the subject of careers.

Assumptions and Limitations

The assumptions of the study are as follows:

1) Career guidance programs are a vital part of career decision making in high school.

2) Data was analyzed only for those university students enrolled in the General Psychology course.

3) The participants of the study would answer truthfully and thoughtfully.

4) The participants will have gained competency in the area of career development as part of a school-based program in high school.

Limitations of this study are as follows:

1) As a result of being distributed in a social setting, the participants may not have given the survey the thoughtfulness or time needed to complete it honestly and in full.

- 2) Some participants may have graduate from high school several years ago.

Therefore a reduction in their ability to recall accurate information could occur.

- 3) The participants may have developed competencies related to career and career choice from other sources than school-based programs.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Career guidance programs in high school are the link between opportunity and success. There are always opportunities available; one just needs to find them. Career exploration programs offer students a chance to explore various careers as well as their inner self. A comprehensive and developmental career guidance program is the best way to ensure that students will leave high school with the advantage of knowing their interests, abilities, and how to apply them to career goals. Career guidance is an essential part of the high school curriculum.

This literature review will begin with the needs for career guidance programs in high schools across the nation as well as a general overview of the needs of today's youth. Next, the Wisconsin Developmental Guidance Model (WDGM) and American School Counselor Association (ASCA) model will be discussed with references to the specific areas in which the models indicate that students must gain competence, regarding career knowledge before they graduate from high school. Finally there will be a review of previous research on the effectiveness of career guidance programs.

Need for Career Guidance Programs

There is a vast amount of evidence that supports the need for developmental career guidance. According to the National Career Development Association Gallup survey, "only one-third of adults in this country were in their current jobs as a result of conscious planning" (cited in Isaacson & Brown, 2000, p.1). In addition, half of those surveyed reported to be unhappy in their current job. Another 72% said they would

gather more career-related information if they were to start their search over from the beginning (Isaacson & Brown, 2000). This survey supports the implication that more career guidance is needed in high school in order for students to make competent career decisions.

The lack of career planning stands in the way of providing students with the tools to explore their interests and abilities, which in turn reduces career goals that are set by students. Students often ask questions such as, who am I? Where am I going? How do I get there? According to the National Career Development Guidelines (NCDG), students need to develop competencies in three main areas: self-knowledge, educational and occupational exploration, and career planning (Ettinger, 1999). Competency developed in those areas should provide students with the knowledge and ability to pursue a career direction.

There are many factors that affect career development. Individual factors such as self-esteem, abilities, interests, and personality can have a huge influence on career choices and decisions. Self-esteem, as determined by Super's theory of career development, has a powerful effect on career patterns and choices (McIntosh, 2000). For example, people with high self-esteem have a more positive attitude towards their work or career and also enjoy thinking and planning for their future career (McIntosh, 2000). High self-esteem also leads to better career planning and a more satisfying career decision. Encouragement and reinforcement of positive attitudes can result in an increase of self-esteem among children, which can lead to positive attitudes towards careers as they mature.

Other factors that affect career development are the student's abilities and interests. Generally, the more a person has in common with their job requirements, the more satisfying their career will be. In addition, the more interested and passionate a person is about his/her career the higher his/her performance and job stability will likely be.

Personality traits most definitely influence the career direction or path an individual takes. People in the same or similar occupations often have very comparable personalities (cited in McIntosh, 2000). Personality is likely to be a good indicator of the career direction students may take. Many career development programs provide personality inventories, which can help students match a career path with their personality type.

Being that there are many influences on the career choices students make, the need for programs that foster career awareness and development is crucial during the high school years. There are a variety of frameworks to meet this need, such as the Wisconsin Developmental Guidance Model (WDGM) and the American School Counselor Association (ASCA). A description of the Wisconsin Developmental Guidance Model in detail as it relates to career development will be provided.

Wisconsin Developmental Guidance Model

The Wisconsin Developmental Guidance Model (WDGM) includes nine competencies and developmental concepts, from which activities and curriculum are developed and delivered (Bilzing, Brittingham, Perrone, Schutt, & Thompson, 1997). Within each competency there are three domains in which a student should develop knowledge, understanding, and growth. The domains are educational, personal/social,

and career development. The career development domain will provide the focus of this literature review.

In the Wisconsin school system, many schools follow the WDGM to achieve competency in the career domain. Some of the competencies students are expected to achieve as found in the WDGM are: 1) connect school, family, and work, 2) solve problems, 3) work in groups, 4) make decisions, and 5) set and achieve goals (Bilzing et al, 1997). Applying these skills to career development or occupational settings can help students understand what their skills and abilities are, as well as learn how to apply these to future careers and/or occupations.

There are several ways schools can achieve competency in the career domain and there are many people who provide this role. Teachers contribute to career development by providing a wide range of learning activities and helping students apply in the classroom what they learn outside of the classroom, thus connecting school, family, and work (Bilzing et al., 1997). Counselors contribute by developing a comprehensive and sequential career development guidance curriculum, providing in-service for staff on developmental guidance related to career development, and providing parents and community members with educational programs regarding career development (Bilzing et al., 1997).

As students mature and enter high school, career fairs are a popular and excellent hands-on experience for students to explore a variety of occupations. The school-to-work option allows youth to work a part-time job for credits and also helps students gain hands-on experience in a particular field of interest.

Developing a career portfolio is another career development tool the WDGM encourages school districts to participate. The need for organizing and evaluating a student's portfolio came from Maslow's hierarchy of needs as well as Hershenson's model of work adjustment (Bilzing et al., 1997). Hershenson identified three elements within work competency: 1) work habits, 2) physical and mental skills applicable to jobs, and 3) interpersonal skills required in the work setting (Bilzing et al., 1997). By developing personally appropriate, socially relevant, and increasingly specific work goals students begin to realize why some careers better suit them than others (Bilzing et al., 1997). The career portfolio allows students to reflect on the many aspects of career decisions, encourages the use of higher-level analysis, synthesis, and evaluation skills, and gives students more responsibility for their career decisions (Bilzing et al., 1997).

According to Isaacson and Brown (2000), the main goal of the high school guidance program is to increase awareness of the opportunities and options available to students far enough in advance to allow the student to make a wise career choice. With the appropriate guidance and resources, students can maximize their career success and satisfaction (Reich, 2002). The WDGM is designed to be implemented starting at the kindergarten level and intensify, providing a sequential curriculum all the way through the high school years. Providing very young students with opportunities to explore their interests and learn about careers aids them with the knowledge to eventually make a well-thought out career decision.

Some of the expected benefits of high school career guidance programs include: decreased dropout rates, improved school attendance and academic achievement, and increased motivation to reach personal goals (Kobylarz, 1996). Career guidance

programs can enhance the overall educational experience because the student has set a goal and is aware of the needed process to reach his/her goal.

Another model that focuses on delivering career guidance to students is the framework of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA). The framework provides the foundation and guidelines to deliver necessary services to students.

American School Counselor Association Framework

The American School Counselor Association National Model promotes academic achievement, career planning, and personal/social development. The ASCA model is composed of four interrelated components: foundation, delivery system, management systems, and accountability (Dahir & Campbell, 1997). The foundation of a counseling program is based on the school's goals for student achievement. It is their beliefs and philosophy or mission statement (Dahir & Campbell, 1997).

The delivery system consists of guidance curriculum, individual student planning, responsive services, and systems support (Dahir & Campbell, 1997). Guidance curriculum involves lesson plans taught in the classroom to large or small groups. Lessons on career exploration provide students the information to make a well-informed career decision. Individual student planning is assistance that is provided to students to set and attain future goals. Career planning can be a large part of a high school counselor's job. Responsive services are traditional counselor services such as counseling, consultation, referral, etc. Lastly, systems support is assistance from other staff, such as administration or teachers. For example, teachers can integrate career exploration and goal setting into the classroom curriculum by relating it to the subject at hand.

The management system of school counseling involves making agreements with administration to ensure the effectiveness of the school counseling program (Dahir & Campbell, 1997). Use of time, data, and calendars are also a part of the management system. Having an action plan for each desired competency, as well as an advisory council to review the counseling program is an essential part of the management system (Dahir & Campbell, 1997). Regular evaluation and updating of career programs is necessary in order to provide the most current, up-to-date information and requirements to students.

Accountability of school counselors is a more recent issue in school counseling. The ASCA model promotes the collection and use of data as a means to support what a school counselor does. The School Counselor Performance Standards is a performance evaluation of the standards of practice expected by a school counselor (Dahir & Campbell, 1997). It can also serve as a self-evaluation for the counselor. The result reports are data that has been collected to show the effectiveness of a program as well as recommendations for modification.

The ASCA model is set up to provide a goal or mission of the school through the foundation component. In the delivery system the students are taught about careers and encouraged to explore and select one that fits their goals. The management system helps to keep the counselors on board, encouraging advancements in the field and data collection. Lastly, the ASCA model thrives on accountability. Counselors need to keep track of what they do when, where they do it, and why as a means of supporting their purpose as well the importance of their position.

The ASCA model outlined the competency of career development as this: 1) students will acquire the skills to investigate the world of work in relation to knowledge of self and to make informed career decisions, 2) students will employ strategies to achieve future goals with success and satisfaction, 3) students will understand the relationship between personal qualities, education, training, and the world of work (Dahir & Campbell, 1997). This is very similar to the career development model discussed earlier. The first step is to investigate and explore the options available as well as the person within. The second step is to use that knowledge and set career goals to achieve. The last step is to gain knowledge and understanding of what it takes to attain the goals set and work towards them. Counselors are often called upon by individuals to help them with career planning, but career counseling and career exploration need to be offered to all students.

A Review of the Effectiveness of Career Guidance Programs

According to Reich (2001) the National Center for Research on Vocational Education (NCRVE) conducted a nationwide evaluation of career development programs. Out of all the responses given the study valued students' responses most. The NCRVE research showed that secondary career programs can be effective and meet the career development needs of the students.

A study done in the Midwest revealed that a majority of students met the competencies targeted by the career development program (Schleppegrell, 1998). The program's success was attributed to: age appropriate career development activities, mentoring, counseling, and good working conditions (Schleppegrell, 1998).

A study by Drier and Bebris (1989) as found in Reich (2001) reported student competencies in areas of: knowledge of career and educational opportunities, the work world, and the process of career planning. Direct services such as counseling did not seem to be a factor in that career development program.

However, a study done by Nevo (1990) reported that the most effective and valuable career service offered to students was individual discussion with a counselor. Assessments such as interest inventories, objective tests, and vocational information were also important. Students felt that their career needs were better met meeting with a counselor and doing interest profiles rather than receiving classroom instruction or doing large group activities on the topic of career exploration.

Suggestions from students such as: marketing an existing career program, requiring meetings with the school counselor to talk about various career options, and starting the career exploration process earlier, such as middle school, were made by former students of D.C. Everest High School (Newton, 1994).

There has been substantial research done on career decision making. The most highly regarded types of career exploration and/or development as viewed by students are: individual counseling, classroom guidance, and explorative assessments. Unfortunately, only 9-13 percent of counselor's time is spent on career activities (Brown & Isaacson, 2000). The remainder of their time is spent on academic support, post-secondary school plans, and personal/ social issues.

Conclusion

After reviewing a variety of studies on career development the literature revealed found a lack of support and effort given to the career development programs. Counselors

are held accountable for career guidance, yet it appears they are not providing effective guidance to students nationwide. Research on the WDGM and ASCA career competencies and how they are being met would be more helpful in the review of how each model's framework is essential to career development.

Career guidance has always been an important part of secondary curriculum. More recently, students and educators have realized the importance of introducing this topic earlier to our students. Both the WDGM and ASCA models provide schools with the framework from which to build upon by introducing the career competency in elementary school. Setting career goals in elementary and middle school can only provide a deeper connection to the world of work as well as school.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter will provide information about the participants in this study and how they were selected. The instrument used for data collection will be discussed regarding its development, as well as the data collection and analysis procedures. The limitations of the research methods will conclude this chapter.

Description of Subjects

The subjects in this study were students enrolled in General Psychology at a medium sized Midwest university during the spring semester of 2004. All of the students who participated in the study were undergraduate students with ages ranging from 18 to 37 years. The subjects were male and female Wisconsin, Minnesota and California residents. The subjects in this study participated voluntarily.

Sample Selection

The General Psychology class was chosen as the population from which to select a sample in an effort to get a representative sample of university students. All students are required to enroll in General Psychology and most students take this course within their first two years at the university. Therefore, the students should have an accurate memory of their high school experience.

Permission to conduct the study was granted by the professors who were teaching four of the General Psychology sections offered in the spring of 2004. A total of four sections of the General Psychology course were sampled, resulting in a grand total of 73 participants.

Instrumentation

The survey used in this study was developed by the researcher specifically for this study. The survey was developed based on the Wisconsin Developmental Guidance Model (WDGM) and the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) standards. The WDGM is a planned sequence of experiences and activities that is essential to student development when combined with student education (Bilzing et al., 1997). The WDGM provides developmentally appropriate guidance models for students with goals of becoming life-long learners and positive, productive citizens of the community (Bilzing et al., 1997). The ASCA standards are guidelines for establishing, coordinating, and evaluating effective career guidance programs in the schools (Reich, 2001). The standards are viewed as goals for all students.

Part I of the survey asked for demographic information of the participants including gender, age, high school class size, city and state of the high school attended, and year of graduation. Information such as class size and city of high school attended was gathered to determine if population size played a role in the amount of career development information offered in a school.

Part II of the survey measured the participants' opinions and attitudes about their high school guidance program. The choices were comprised of yes, no, or unsure to items involving career guidance the participants received or would have liked to receive in their high school.

Part III of the survey measured self-reported skills gained in high school regarding career development. The choices used a Likert scale of measurement composed of the possible answers, strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree.

Part IV of the survey was made up of two open-ended questions. These questions were asked to gain perspective on the participants' thoughts about their high school career guidance, its effectiveness, and ways it could be improved.

There have been no measures of validity or reliability documented because this survey was designed specifically for this study. Overall the instrument is two pages long with approximately twenty-five items (see appendix A).

Data Collection

All participating sections of the General Psychology class were given a brief explanation of the study and its purpose. Each of the students had the option to participate in the study. If they chose not to participate, they were asked to remain quiet and in their seat until the remainder of the class completed the survey. A consent form, giving an overview of the study, was given to each student along with the survey. The participants were informed of confidentiality and told to read the consent form and take that form with them to keep. The participants were told to read the directions carefully and not to leave any items blank. The surveys were then passed out to everyone in the room. The survey took about ten minutes to complete. The participants handed their survey to their professor when they were finished.

Data Analysis

Part I of the survey used fill-in-the-blank and multiple choice measurements. A code was assigned to each item that was not a numerical response. Part II and III of the survey used multiple choice Likert scales of measurement. These responses were also assigned a code. Part IV included an open-ended comments section.

Limitations

Although the General Psychology class is a required course for the university students, the results found may not be accurate of the general population because research was only done on students who are currently enrolled in college. High school graduates who went on to technical college, the workplace, or the military were not included in this sample, which could yield very different results. Another limitation was that the majority of students graduated from a high school in Wisconsin or Minnesota, which caused this study to be not very representative of the United States as a whole.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the results of the study regarding secondary career development. The results of the demographic information will be given as well as the results of the data analysis of each research question.

Demographic Information

The sample consisted of 53.4% (n=39) males and 46.6% (n=34) females. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 37, with age 19 as the most frequent age reported, at 43.8% (n=32). Freshman comprised 61.6% (n=45) of the sample with 54.8% (n=40) graduating from high school in 2003. Wisconsin high school graduates made up 72.6% (n=53) of the sample while Minnesota had the next highest frequency at 26.0% (n=19). Participants who graduated from a public high school occurred at the highest frequency with 97.3% (n=71). A total of 73 surveys were completed and used for data analysis.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1: Are schools offering services to students regarding the development of life skills such as resume writing, interview skills, and other skills needed to seek, obtain, and maintain employment? In Part II of the survey, participants chose from yes, no, and unsure regarding services provides by their high school. The frequency and percentage for responses to each item in Part II were calculated. Overall, 57.5% (n=42) of the participants reported being informed about work options during high school and after high school. Out of the 73 participants, 45.2% (n=33) reported they did not receive services in high school to help them seek, obtain, or maintain employment.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2: Are students developing competency in the area of career knowledge through programs offered in high school? According to Part II, 79.5% (n=58) of participants reported their high school provided services to help them understand their interests, skills, abilities and lifestyle preference and how to relate these to future career choices. Another 54.8% (n=40) reported that their high school helped them gain skills to understand the world of work as it relates to knowledge of self and one's interests. Similarly, 65.8% (n=48) of the participants also reported that their high school provided services that helped them understand the relationship between personal satisfaction and success in other areas such as education and work.

In Part III of the survey, participants chose between strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree regarding knowledge and skills they have gained. The frequency and percentages were calculated for each of the items. Of the participants, 75.3% (n=55) agreed and 15.1% (n=11) strongly agreed that they understand their interests, skills, goals, and lifestyle preference as well as how to relate these to their career choices. On item four, 58.9% (n=43) of the participants agreed that they have gained knowledge and experience of a variety of careers through school-related activities and/or work-based learning. Another 72.6% (n=53) of participants reported the ability to locate, evaluate, and apply information about career options available to them.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3: Are students forming career goals while in high school? According to Part III, 60.3% (n=44) of participants agree and 23.3% (n=17) strongly agreed that they have set career goals and have formed a plan to reach these goals.

However, only 47.9% (n=35) of participants agreed and 16.4% (n=12) strongly agreed that they came to college with a clear career goal in mind, while 26.0% (n=19) of participants did not come to college with a clear career goal in mind.

Research Question 4

Research Question 4: Are the students satisfied with the career guidance they received at their high school? According to Part III, 43.8% (n=32) of participants disagreed and did not feel satisfied with the career guidance they were provided in high school. Only about half, 49.3% (n=36) reported having the opportunity to meet with the school counselor to set or discuss career goals.

Research Question 5

Research Question 5: What suggestions do students offer in regards to their career guidance program? Part IV of the survey consisted of open-ended questions and responses (See Appendix B). Responses were analyzed looking for themes and summarizing responses.

In response to the question, “What do you feel your high school could have done differently to better guide your career decision and transition from high school to college?” there were five themes that developed. 1) Participants reported wanting more course selections, possibly specialized elective classes. 2) Talking with their school counselor about their interests and the possible career choices available to them would have been helpful. 3) Participants also reported they would benefit from a career exploration class if it were offered in high school. 4) Guest speakers on career types and choices would also be helpful to high school students. 5) Finally, more information

regarding post-secondary options such as: Peace Corps, work, military and college options should be offered to students.

In response to the question, “How did your high school provide you with the resources to make a career decision?” there were three themes that developed. 1) An overwhelming number of participants reported that their high schools did not provide enough resources to aid in the development of a career direction. 2) Some participants reported their high schools offered career days, job fairs, and career fairs but not often enough. 3) Finally, participants reported that they took personality and interest inventories to help brainstorm career options.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter will begin with a summary of the findings of this study. Conclusions of the findings will then be made. Finally, the last section will outline recommendations for the improvement of secondary career development programs.

Summary

Career awareness and development is an expectation of many students during the high school years. However, many students are not receiving a significant amount of services to which they feel entitled. For example, over half of the participants surveyed 58.9% (n=43) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, “I felt satisfied with the career guidance I received in high school”. Students expect to be given more opportunities to learn about specific careers as well as about their interests. Several other studies also found that there was a significant need for improvement regarding career development services offered to high school students (Drier, 1989; Hoyt, 1995).

Another important finding is that 64.3% (n=47) of participants came to college with a clear career goal in mind. This finding supports the notion that other factors influence the development of career goals. According to Reich (2001), research on the influence different factors have on career decision making has found that services provided by the schools have less influence than many other factors such as, parents, friends, and work experiences. Therefore, when students are not receiving career guidance in schools they are looking for it elsewhere.

Conclusions

The results show that a majority of participants were offered services in high school to help them understand their interests, skills, abilities, and lifestyle preference and how to relate those to future career choices. The results also show that services were provided in high school to help students understand the interpersonal skills needed to meet workplace expectations. The participants reported that their high schools helped them understand the relationship between personal satisfaction and success in other areas such as education and work. However, a majority of the participants felt their high school did not provide services to help them seek, obtain, and maintain employment. Nor were they provided with information about work options during high school or post-high school graduation. Participants also felt they were not provided the opportunities to form career goals or presented with empowering opportunities to achieve them.

Overall, the highest number of participants reported being competent in the following areas: 1) knowledgeable of education/ work options after high school, 2) relating knowledge of self to career choices, 3) set career goals and have plans to reach them, and 4) the ability to locate, evaluate, and apply information about career options.

Participants reported being less satisfied with the amount of career guidance offered in high school. The reoccurring theme in Part IV, regarding how their high school provided them with resources to make a career decision, was a very negative view of career guidance; related to school counselors more specifically. The participants often reported that their school counselors did not help them explore careers or their interests, which they thought to be an important part of high school.

An interesting and important suggestion that was made on the survey was the need for a mandatory career development or career exploration classes. The participants felt strongly that career classes would help to increase student awareness of a variety of careers, provide hands-on experiences, and provide them with the opportunity to learn and develop their interests, skills, and their ability to set career goals. All are viewed as important elements to a successful career.

Recommendations

Based on the finding that most participants were dissatisfied with the career guidance they were provided in high school, more high school counselors and staff members need to make a conscious effort to integrate career development into their curriculum or guidance program. Based on the findings, secondary career development needs improvement in the following areas:

- Information provided to students regarding work options during and after high school.
- Ability to gain skills to understand the world of work as it relates to knowledge of self and one's interests.
- Ability to form career goals and empower students with strategies to achieve them.
- Ability to seek, obtain, and maintain employment.
- Satisfaction of career guidance provided to students.

Further research should be done with a broader sample to get a more representative evaluation of secondary career development. Comparisons among states could be done to analyze the differences regarding career guidance between states which

mandate school counselors (for example, Wisconsin) and those states that do not (for example, Minnesota). Future research may also want to sample high school students throughout their high school career to establish the general time frame career development begins to take place. From that research, conclusions can be made whether or not career development is being introduced early enough for students to make well-informed career decisions.

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APPENDIX A

Career Development Survey

Part I: Please answer the following questions by filling in the blanks.

Gender: ____ Male ____ Female

Age: ____

Class rank: ____ Freshman ____ Sophomore ____ Junior ____ Senior
 ____ Other (please specify)

Year of high school graduation: ____

Approximate class size: ____ 1-75 ____ 76-250 ____ 251-500 ____ 501+

State of high school: ____

City of high school: ____

Type of high school: ____ Public ____ Private ____ Religious ____ Other

Part II: Please circle your response to the following questions.

Did your high school provide services to help you:

1) Understand your interests, skills, abilities, and lifestyle preference and how to relate these to future career choices?	Yes	No	Unsure
2) Become informed about work options during high school as well as after high school?	Yes	No	Unsure
3) Gain skills to understand the world of work as it relates to knowledge of self and one's interests?	Yes	No	Unsure
4) Form career goals and empower you with strategies to achieve them?	Yes	No	Unsure
5) Understand the relationship between personal satisfaction and success in other areas such as education and work?	Yes	No	Unsure
6) Seek employment, obtain employment and maintain employment?	Yes	No	Unsure
7) Understand interpersonal skills needed to meet workplace expectations?	Yes	No	Unsure

Part III: Please circle your response to each of the statements using the following scale:

SD= Strongly disagree D= Disagree A= Agree SA= Strongly Agree

SD	D	A	SA	1) I was informed about educational/work options available to me after high school graduation.
SD	D	A	SA	2) I understand my interests, skills, goals, and lifestyle preferences and how to relate these to my career choices.
SD	D	A	SA	3) I have set career goals and have formed a plan to reach them.
SD	D	A	SA	4) I have gained knowledge and experience of a variety of careers through school-related activities and/or work-based learning.
SD	D	A	SA	5) I can locate, evaluate and apply information about career options available to me.
SD	D	A	SA	6) I had the opportunity to meet with the school counselor to set and/or discuss my career goals.
SD	D	A	SA	7) I feel satisfied with the career guidance I was provided in my high school.
SD	D	A	SA	8) I came to college with a clear career goal in mind.

Part IV: Please write your response below.

What do you feel your high school could have done differently to better guide your career decisions and transition from high school to college?

How did your high school provide you with resources to make a career decision?