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AN ASSESSMENT OF A CAREER EDUCATION COURSE IN A CANADIAN SCHOOL DISTRICT*

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Abstract

Since 1978 the Greater Victoria School District has been offering a career education course for students in grades 10 and 12. In 1980 a sample of 154 of these students finishing the course in career education and a control group of 154 similar students without this course completed a 60-item questionnaire. Students completing the career education course demonstrated significantly greater satisfaction with their career needs being met and significantly reduced levels of needs in terms of their career development. The career education course seems successful in fulfilling some of the goals identified by the career counsellors. Achievement of other goals will require the cooperation of the entire staff in each school and of working people in the community.

Résumé

Depuis 1978, la Commission scolaire du grand Victoria offre un cours d'éducation à la carrière aux élèves des classes de 10e et de 12e. En 1980, un groupe de 154 élèves ayant complété le cours et un groupe témoin de même taille ont répondu à un questionnaire de 60 items. Les sujets qui ont suivi le cours d'éducation à la carrière ont fait preuve d'une plus grande satisfaction - leurs besoins au plan de la carrière ont été comblés - et d'un plus bas niveau de besoins quant à leur développement vocationnel. Le cours d'éducation à la carrière semble donc atteindre avec succès certains des objectifs définis par les conseillers. L'atteinte d'objectifs additionnels nécessitera la collaboration de tout le personnel de chaque école ainsi que celle des personnes oeuvrant au sein de la communauté.

Secondary-school students in Canada need help in developing appropriate career goals. Breton (1972) identified serious problems concerning the career goals of secondary-school students. He found that only 40% of Canadian students felt that they were adequately prepared to make an occupational choice while 34% had no occupational goal whatsoever. Bullock (1980) commented that money is being wasted on man-power training because Canada has the simultaneous problems

of a shortage of skilled people and a huge surplus of unemployed.

The Commission on Canadian Studies (Symons, 1975) has encouraged a career-oriented approach to education in order to ensure that the nation's young people will have a place in the high technology future that the government sees for the nation. Gimmetstad (1975), Sanderson and Helliwell (1978) have demonstrated that a well-planned and clearly defined education program can facilitate the decision-making process toward seeking a career. If these recommendations were being followed, each school district in Canada would be providing opportunities in career education.

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In 1972 the Greater Victoria School

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District responded to encouragement by Canada Manpower by organizing a committee on career education. This committee produced a course that was piloted with students of grade 12. In 1978 the same course became offered to students in grade 10. The same manual (Smith, Leitch, Clazie, & Sloan, 1978) is used by all students enrolled in the course. By 1980 many students in grades 10, 11, or 12 were enrolled in this popular elective course.

The career counsellors of the Greater Victoria School District identified eight goals for the course: 1. to develop a clearer, more positive *understanding of self* – their interests, abilities, values and interpretations of the events in their lives; 2. to develop greater control over their lives through *decision-making* and planning; 3. to develop personal and *interpersonal skills* and attitudes essential to success in school and work; 4. to develop greater *respect for other* people and the work they do; 5. to develop a clearer concept of *successful work behavior* – the attitudes, skills and responsibilities demonstrated by successful people at school and at work; 6. to develop skills necessary to *gather*, process and act upon *information* about self in relation to a constantly changing environment; 7. to develop a relationship between their immediate experiences and decisions and their *evolving career* development; 8. to develop an understanding of the relationship between what they learn in *school* and the problems and activities *outside* the school. Key words in each of the goals have been underlined to provide titles for the goals in later discussions.

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of the career education course in terms of meeting these career development course goals. Two hypotheses were tested: 1. There is no significant difference in the students' perceived needs for career information between the questionnaire responses of students enrolled in the career education course and those of students not enrolled in the course. 2. There is no significant difference in the students' perceived satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the meeting of their needs for career information between the questionnaire responses of students enrolled in the career education course and those of students not enrolled in the course. Within these hypotheses the term "career information" covers all of the goals of the course in career education.

Method

Instrument

A questionnaire of 60 items was prepared through the cooperative efforts of the researchers and a dozen career-education teachers in the Greater Victoria School District. These teachers reached a consensus on the items that should be in the questionnaire after considering a much longer list of possible items. They determined that the selected items well represent the course in career education with the appropriate emphasis on each goal. If a goal was more emphasized by these teachers, it received more items in the questionnaire.

The 60 items of the questionnaire consisted of two types of responses to each of 30 different statements. For example, the first statement was the following: "I need to explore my own interests, abilities, attitudes, and values; then to use what I find out to help me choose a career I might want." Item One proposed five different possible responses to this statement with the following numerical weightings for each response: 0=Very Strong Need; 1=Strong Need; 2=Moderate Need; 3=Some Need; 4=No Need. For the same statement, Item Two offered five different alternatives with the following numerical weightings for each response: 0=Need Is Being Very Well Met; 1=Need Is Mostly Being Met; 2=Need Is Partially Being Met; 3=Need Is Mostly Not Being Met; 4=Need Is Not Being Met. The odd-numbered items were designed to measure an expression of need for assistance in career planning. The even-numbered items provided a demonstration of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the efforts of the school to meet the needs of students in their career development.

Table 1 provides the 30 statements of the questionnaire. It also identifies the goal for each of the statements although the questionnaire itself did not mention any goals. The first eight items of the questionnaire sought responses to four statements related to the first goal, "understanding of self". The next twelve items were for the second goal, "decision-making". The third goal, "interpersonal skills," had two statements that were separated in the questionnaire for responses 21-22 and 35-36. Eight items were for the fourth goal, "respect for other". The fifth goal, "successful work behavior," had only four items. Goal six, "gather information, "

was a major topic with 14 items. Goal seven, goal eight, "school and outside," had the last "evolving career," had only six items while four items.

TABLE 1

Goal and Item Numbers with Statements of the Career Information Survey

Goal Item Numbers	Statements: "I need to --"
1 1-2	explore my own interests, abilities, attitudes, and values; then, to use what I find out to help me choose a career I might want.
1 3-4	understand how my abilities, interests, values and attitudes may be needed in more than one kind of job.
1 5-6	understand why people work, and the reasons why they pick one kind of job instead of another.
1 7-8	find out how much my beliefs and values affect my behavior and the decisions I make.
2 9-10	learn how to make career decisions.
2 11-12	know how to prepare for a career in which I am interested.
2 13-14	know about financial aid for continuing education beyond graduation.
2 15-16	become more aware of educational alternatives after graduation.
2 17-18	develop career plans and goals.
2 19-20	take exploratory classes that help me make a decision toward a career.
3 21-22	develop personal and interpersonal skills to be successful in school & work.
4 23-24	understand how jobs differ with respect to work conditions & fringe benefits.
4 25-26	understand how jobs differ with respect to rewards and satisfactions.
4 27-28	read job descriptions from booklets, pamphlets, etc.
4 29-30	attend a "career day" or "job fair" where workers or employers talk.
5 31-32	understand how a worker's attitude can affect his job.
5 33-34	understand how the formal description of a job is usually well-defined, but that many job situations are also influenced by an informal organization.
3 35-36	become aware of the reasons why people often lose their jobs.
6 37-38	know how to write a resume or summary sheet describing my job qualifications.
6 39-40	know how to fill out an application form for a job.
6 41-42	know skills that will increase the likelihood of a successful interview.
6 43-44	know how to use the <u>Canadian Classification and Dictionary of Occupations</u> .
6 45-46	know how to use CHOICES, a computer system for career information.
6 47-48	be aware of the different kinds of specific jobs within a general career field, and how much skill I need in order to get each kind of job.
6 49-50	know the regulations governing employers and employees.
7 51-52	be aware that choices I make now may affect my future career options.
7 53-54	find more courses relevant to my future.
7 55-56	receive more help in selecting courses.
8 57-58	understand the relationship between learning in school & working in a job.
8 59-60	know how the course I am taking relates to my career plans.

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The questionnaire also contained a few "identification questions" to recognize the age, grade and sex of each respondent. Although the questionnaires were marked to recognize the school, there were no systems for matching any questionnaire with an individual student.

Subjects and Procedure

All of the subjects were volunteers who remained anonymous. They were students at eight randomly selected secondary schools of the Greater Victoria School District. In June of 1980 a sample of 154 students finishing the career education course completed the questionnaire; this sample contained approximately all of the students enrolled in the career education course at these eight schools. Simultaneously 154 randomly selected similar students who did not take the career education course completed the same questionnaire in the same eight schools. This second group served as the control in the posttest-only design of the study.

The students of the control group were matched to those enrolled in the career education course by noting sex, grade level, age, and general academic ability. Because the matching was done within each school, there were no problems with approximating social class and race. Each school was relatively homogeneous in terms of its students' economic, racial and ethnic backgrounds. Of the total of 308 students completing the questionnaire, 128 were males and 180, females. These students were enrolled in the following grades: 205 in grade 10, 24 in grade 11, and 79 in grade 12. The ages of the students were following: 28 of age 14 years; 92 of age 15; 88 of age 16; 56 of age 17; and 44 of age 18.

Secondary schools of the Greater Victoria School District have any one of the three possible organizations: quarter system, semester system, and year-long system of courses. The career education course is an elective course taken by a minority of the students in any of these secondary schools. The course is one-quarter in length in a secondary school on the quarter system, a semester in length in semester-system schools, and a year-long course in the other schools. Despite the variations in the length of time for the course under different circumstances, the teachers believed that they had covered at least the content implied by

the 30 statements of the questionnaire. Students in the career education course completed the questionnaire during time within the course while the students of the control group completed the questionnaire during time within another course, e.g., English.

Results

Two-tailed *t* tests were employed to analyze all questionnaire data. Tables 2 and 3 present the means, standard deviations and independent *t* values for the students' responses. Table 2 considers only the odd-numbered items, i.e., responses of the students' perceived needs in career development. Table 3 considers only the even-numbered items, i.e., responses of the students' perceptions concerning how well their career development needs are being met. The lower means correspond to stronger needs expressed on the odd-numbered items and greater satisfaction for the need being met on the even-numbered items.

Table 2 reveals 10 significant differences between those who completed the course in career education and those students who did not. Five of these differences are at the .01 level of confidence while the other five are at the .05 level. On these 10 items, students lacking the course in career education consistently expressed significantly greater needs. Among the 20 items which did not show significant differences, 19 items continued the trend of greater needs expressed by the students lacking the course in career education.

Students completing the course in career education expressed reduced needs especially concentrated in the seven statements dealing with the sixth goal, "gather information." Because five of these seven statements showed significant differences, this goal is outstanding in terms of being met by the career education course. The five statements are for needs items #37, 39, 41, 43, and 49.

The second and seventh goals were met in 33% of the statements. The second goal, "decision-making," had two of the six items (# 11 and 17) with significant differences. One of the three items for goal seven, "evolving career," (item # 51) had a significant difference.

The first and the fourth goals were met in 25% of the statements. The first goal, "understanding of self," had one of the four items

TABLE 2

Differences between Career Education and Control Group Students on Expressed Needs for Career Development

Questionnaire Item	Goal	Career Education ^a		Control ^a		t
		M	SD	M	SD	
1	1	1.34	1.22	1.09	1.13	1.81
3	1	1.44	1.22	1.14	1.06	2.26*
5	1	2.54	1.31	2.27	1.34	1.71
7	1	1.68	1.26	1.63	1.25	0.34
9	2	1.30	1.34	1.15	1.23	0.97
11	2	1.22	1.34	0.78	1.08	3.04**
13	2	1.84	1.42	1.68	1.40	0.92
15	2	1.66	1.37	1.59	1.28	0.47
17	2	1.48	1.29	1.15	1.20	2.25*
19	2	2.03	1.43	1.90	1.33	0.78
21	3	1.84	1.33	1.56	1.28	1.85
23	4	1.70	1.29	1.63	1.28	0.52
25	4	1.89	1.22	1.80	1.25	0.62
27	4	2.31	1.36	1.93	1.34	2.38*
29	4	2.21	1.42	1.98	1.43	1.38
31	5	1.89	1.33	1.66	1.29	1.48
33	5	1.95	1.36	1.85	1.26	0.66
35	3	1.86	1.33	1.83	1.46	0.14
37	6	1.97	1.62	1.26	1.47	3.90**
39	6	1.95	1.59	1.58	1.54	2.03*
41	6	1.47	1.44	0.96	1.16	3.26**
43	6	2.01	1.43	1.56	1.34	2.75**
45	6	1.97	1.52	1.72	1.35	1.47
47	6	1.33	1.29	1.05	1.18	1.95
49	6	1.83	1.34	1.46	1.19	2.48*
51	7	1.44	1.36	1.05	1.23	2.58**
53	7	1.38	1.27	1.10	1.20	1.90
55	7	1.76	1.31	1.99	1.41	-1.38
57	8	1.75	1.36	1.71	1.30	0.26
59	8	1.73	1.42	1.40	1.40	1.62

^aN = 154

* p < .05 ** p < .01.

(# 3) with a significant difference. Similarly, one of the four items (# 27) for the fourth goal, "respect for other," had a significant difference.

There were no significant differences expressed on items for three of the goals in terms of less needs among the students completing the career education course in

contrast with those not taking the course. These three goals are the third, "interpersonal skills," the fifth, "successful work behavior," and the eighth, "school and outside." These three goals deal with bridging the gap between work in school and work in the "outside" world.

Table 3 contains data on the even-numbered items which deal with the students'

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perceptions of how well their needs in career development are being satisfied. Those completing the course in career education expressed significantly greater satisfaction on twenty-eight of the thirty items. Twenty-six of the items had *t* statistics significant at the .01 level of confidence, and two items had significance at the .05 level. On all of these thirty items, the mean of the students with the

career education course was greater than that of students lacking such a course. Only items 8 and 14 showed no significant differences between the two groups in satisfaction related to the following statements: "I need to find out how much my beliefs and values affect my behavior and the decisions I make. I need to know about financial aid for continuing education beyond graduation."

TABLE 3

Differences between Career Education and Control Group Students on Expressed Satisfaction over Career Development Needs Being Met

Question-naire Item	Goal	Career Education ^a		Control ^a		<i>t</i>
		M	SD	M	SD	
2	1	1.71	1.08	2.13	1.17	-3.21**
4	1	1.89	1.05	2.43	1.16	-4.20**
6	1	1.99	1.18	2.38	1.28	-2.64**
8	1	1.91	1.18	2.14	1.13	-1.66
10	2	1.70	1.18	2.47	1.27	-5.28**
12	2	1.67	1.18	2.26	1.26	-4.08**
14	2	2.09	1.22	2.34	1.29	-1.65
16	2	1.89	1.23	2.30	1.10	-2.97**
18	2	1.80	1.21	2.27	1.19	-3.32**
20	2	2.01	1.40	2.53	1.29	-3.15**
22	3	1.80	1.09	2.18	1.16	-2.85**
24	4	2.09	1.19	2.66	1.17	-4.04**
26	4	2.08	1.16	2.64	1.13	-4.12**
28	4	2.09	1.23	2.54	1.27	-2.95**
30	4	2.34	1.35	2.80	1.38	-2.79**
32	5	2.03	1.22	2.46	1.25	-2.93**
34	5	2.08	1.21	2.74	1.13	-4.69**
36	3	2.13	1.20	2.50	1.21	-2.57*
38	6	1.28	1.36	2.59	1.32	-8.15**
40	6	1.49	1.38	2.39	1.36	-5.42**
42	6	1.64	1.22	2.65	1.24	-6.95**
44	6	1.69	1.39	3.00	1.22	-8.35**
46	6	1.50	1.40	2.86	1.24	-8.53**
48	6	1.79	1.24	2.58	1.20	-5.47**
50	6	2.04	1.20	2.65	1.25	-4.19**
52	7	1.59	1.13	2.19	1.32	-4.09**
54	7	1.98	1.30	2.38	1.23	-2.67**
56	7	1.96	1.13	2.28	1.26	-2.27*
58	8	1.92	1.15	2.45	1.18	-3.69**
60	8	1.92	1.34	2.45	1.24	-3.40**

^aN = 154

* *p* < .05 ** *p* < .01.

Table 4 provides data which contrast the expression of need with that of satisfaction toward each of those same needs for students completing the career education course and those students who did not. The differences between means, standard deviation of differences and correlated t values are presented. For students completing the course, there were significant differences between need and satisfaction on 17 of the 30 statements. In

15 of these contrasts, the students gave responses of significantly greater need than satisfaction. Eight of these were at the .01 level of confidence and seven were at the .05 level. In terms of the goals of career development, the students' needs remained higher than satisfaction on 75% of the items for goals one and two; 68% for goal five; 50% for goals four and eight; and only 29% for goal six.

TABLE 4

Differences between Needs and Satisfaction for the Thirty Statements on Career Development

Contrast of Items	Career Education ^a			Control ^a		
	$M_1 - M_2$	SD of Diff.	t	$M_1 - M_2$	SD of Diff.	t
1-2	-.38	1.62	-2.90**	-1.04	1.87	-6.53**
3-4	-.48	1.74	-3.39**	-1.28	1.60	-9.40**
5-6	.40	1.74	2.73**	-.16	1.81	-1.00
7-8	-.31	1.66	-2.27*	-.59	1.75	-3.88**
9-10	-.47	1.88	-3.06**	-1.30	1.87	-8.19**
11-12	-.52	1.71	-3.70**	-1.48	1.72	-10.10**
13-14	-.34	1.78	-2.32*	-.73	1.97	-4.28**
15-16	-.29	1.88	-1.88	-.80	1.79	-5.16**
17-18	-.38	1.71	-2.69**	-1.12	1.64	-8.02**
19-20	-.12	1.96	-0.72	-.71	1.84	-4.43**
21-22	-.08	1.68	-0.54	-.65	1.64	-4.67**
23-24	-.51	1.74	-3.55**	-1.07	1.76	-7.08**
25-26	-.31	1.64	-2.27*	-.90	1.61	-6.48**
27-28	.07	1.68	0.50	-.73	1.66	-4.99**
29-30	-.30	2.14	-1.65	-.95	2.15	-5.05**
31-32	-.29	1.68	-2.03*	-.93	1.85	-5.70**
33-34	-.29	1.73	-1.96	-.99	1.72	-6.57**
35-36	-.36	1.78	-2.44*	-.73	2.07	-4.07**
37-38	.55	1.97	3.35*	-1.37	2.14	-7.43**
39-40	.29	2.07	1.63	.94	2.15	-5.03**
41-42	-.28	1.92	-1.76	-1.74	1.82	-11.13**
43-44	.20	2.15	1.12	-1.48	2.01	-8.48**
45-46	.31	2.03	1.82	-1.23	2.01	-7.02**
47-48	-.50	1.89	-3.22**	-1.56	1.84	-9.92**
49-50	-.32	1.92	-1.98*	-1.21	1.76	-8.01**
51-52	-.26	1.78	-1.73	-1.19	1.95	-7.09**
53-54	-.67	1.90	-4.29**	-1.33	1.90	-8.11**
55-56	-.27	1.92	-1.71	-.42	2.10	-2.25*
57-58	-.31	1.86	-1.98*	-.89	1.84	-5.46**
59-60	-.31	2.14	-1.74	-1.09	1.93	-6.50**

Note: M_1 = Needs, M_2 = Satisfaction.

^a $N = 146$

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$.

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Students completing the course in career education expressed greater satisfaction than need on two contrasts. At the .01 level of confidence, there was greater satisfaction on the statement for items 5 and 6: "I need to understand why people work, and the reasons why they pick one kind of job instead of another." At the .05 level of confidence, satisfaction exceeded need for items 37 and 38: "I need to know how to write a résumé or summary sheet describing my job qualifications."

For students who did not participate in the career education course, 29 of the 30 statements showed significantly greater needs than satisfaction. Twenty-eight were at the .01 level of confidence, and one was at the .05 level. The only statement which indicated no significant difference was for items 5 and 6: "I need to understand why people work, and the reasons why they pick one kind of job instead of another."

Discussion

Table 2 shows that students without a course in career education had significantly greater needs in response to one third of the questions than did students who completed the course. These data provide evidence to support the conclusion that the course in career education of the Greater Victoria School District reduces the expressed needs of students in terms of their career development. The expressed reduction in needs varies among the eight different goals. The most successful goal is the sixth: "to develop skills necessary to gather, process and act upon information about self in relation to a constantly changing environment." The teachers of the career education course assigned more items to this goal for the questionnaire than any other goal because they stress its achievement more than any other goal. On the other hand, the three goals that attempt to bridge the gap between work in school and work in the "outside" world, i.e., goals 3, 5, and 8, had no significant differences for their items on the questionnaire. The apparent deficiencies in meeting the students' needs for these three goals might be reduced through a greater use of work-study programs and other opportunities to make contact with the "outside" world of working people.

Table 3 demonstrates that students completing the course in career education expressed significantly greater satisfaction over the meeting of their career development needs than

students lacking the course on almost all of the items of this questionnaire. These data suggest the conclusion that the career education course of the Greater Victoria School District is perceived by the students as highly successful in helping them with many of the difficult issues involved in their career planning.

Table 4 shows that the students completing the course in career education continue to have significantly greater needs than satisfaction in response to 17 of the 30 statements on the questionnaire. Apparently this one course in the Greater Victoria School District is not enough to meet adequately most of their perceived needs. Nevertheless, this course seems to have met many of their needs while students lacking the course expressed much greater needs than satisfaction on all but two of the items. The almost unanimous expression of greater needs than satisfactions among those lacking the course in career education implies the urgency of providing more students with this course.

The teaching of a course in career education can probably meet only some of the needs of students for career development. The Task Force to the Ministry of Education on Counselling Services in the Secondary Schools of British Columbia (1980) has recommended that "the counselling services delivered in a school are accepted as the shared responsibility of all members of the staff" (p. 2.2). Although courses in career education can easily provide instruction in writing a résumé or summary sheet on job qualifications, they are relatively less effective in explaining the relevancy of topics required within other courses. The Task Force to the Ministry of Education has urged all teachers to describe the career implications of their topics to their students. If the teachers fail to make all courses career-oriented, their schools will be unable to meet some of the important goals of the students' career developments.

Conclusions

This assessment of the career education course in the Greater Victoria School District has demonstrated that the course is helpful in meeting many of the perceived needs of the students. Students lacking the course expressed dissatisfaction with the failure to meet most of their career development needs. These generalizations lead to the recommendation that the course should become more available to students in this district. Because the course

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seems unable to meet all of the ambitious goals identified by the career counsellors, the involvement of community resources and the cooperation of the entire staff in each school are advocated to increase the service of the schools to the basic needs of students in their career development.

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