

**Perspectives on the Career Planning of Junior High School Students**

Dr. Peter Dietsche

Wm. G. Davis Chair in Community College Leadership

Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

252 Bloor St. West

Toronto, ON

Canada M5S 1V6

Work: 416-978-1217

Cell: 416-209-4324

Fax: 416-926-4741

Email: Peter.Dietsche@utoronto.ca

**Abstract**

Despite the recognized importance of career guidance to postsecondary access and persistence there is little research with key stakeholders in Canadian secondary schools. This study sought the perspectives of counselors, teachers and students on the Grade 10 career planning context in selected Ontario high schools. Results show that all groups viewed parents as most influential in adolescent career planning followed by someone working in the student's field of interest. Teachers and counselors were not generally seen as influential. Information to help identify students' interests, abilities and related careers was considered to be most useful in Grade 10 and, ideally, this would be provided via 'on the job' experience, speaking with someone working in their area of interest or a comprehensive 'one-stop' web site. Resources currently available viewed as most helpful included computer programs, individual support from guidance staff and opportunities to experience jobs via co-op courses or job shadowing. The results indicate that structured access to comprehensive, computer-based career exploration tools integrated with individualized guidance and experiential learning would help more junior high students identify a career consistent with their passion and abilities. The benefits would be increased progression to and success in postsecondary programs of study.

## **Introduction**

The dominant career planning theories of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century argued that with adequate access to good information and guidance, individuals would acquire the tools to make sound career decisions on their own. These decisions would result in improved human-resource allocation, labor force mobility and productivity, and improved cost-effectiveness of employment, education, and training programs (Krumboltz and Worthington, 1999). However, recent analyses of school-to-work programs globally brings this assumption into question by highlighting the need for individuals to locate and process information in an empowered way that goes beyond simply providing basic information and guidance (Grubb, 2002; Lent, Hackett, and Brown, 1999; Savickas, 1999; Worthington and Juntunen, 1997).

The benefits of career guidance programs are well documented. Magnusson and Roest's (2004) meta-analysis of the efficacy of career-development interventions has shown they are by and large positive and enabling tools for Canadian adolescents. Despite the lack of longitudinal studies and best practice analyses, many interview-based studies conclude that career planning services for adolescents in junior and senior high school often lead to reduced drop out rates, improved employment prospects, an increase in self-esteem, more efficient use of resources, a greater supply of skilled workers to employers, changed attitudes to increased career choice, and increased motivation to continue learning after high school (Bell and Bezanson, 2006; McCrea Silva and Phillips, 2007). Some, however, have argued that career planning supports could reap greater benefits if they went beyond the typical descriptive format; there must be an active engagement with key stakeholders that goes beyond an information dump (Grubb, 2002; Walker, Alloway, Dalley-Trim and Patterson, 2006).

### ***Barriers to Postsecondary Participation and Persistence***

Numerous studies (Barr-Telford, Cartwright, Prasil and Shimmons, 2003; McElroy, 2008; King, Warren, King, Brook and Kocher, 2009; Malatest and Associates, 2007; Ringer-Lepre, 2007) have examined the barriers cited by high school students as reasons for not pursuing postsecondary education immediately after high school. One study in particular (Malatest and Associates, 2007) suggests an information gap exists with respect to making decisions about postsecondary studies. Less than half the high school students surveyed reported they had received enough information to make informed choices about their career path and over one third felt that high school had not provided enough information to make good postsecondary decisions. This result was confirmed by Frenette (2009) who found almost one quarter of 15 year olds aspiring to a career requiring a university degree were unaware of the level of education necessary. In addition, less than half of those who aspired to a career requiring a non-university postsecondary credential accurately estimated the level of education necessary. Foley (2001) found that nearly thirteen per cent of high school graduates did not pursue PSE because they couldn't decide what to do. A regional analysis showed that in Ontario, more than other provinces, this reason was cited by one fifth of those who did not pursue postsecondary education. The findings across many studies are consistent in that career indecision or 'not knowing what I really wanted to do' placed second or third among the reasons given for not pursuing postsecondary education.

The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada and the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation (2009) have also highlighted the need for more emphasis on career development. Their study concluded that inadequate information about postsecondary choices and the connection to careers led some Grade 11 students to discount the possibility of additional studies after high school. The report also noted that only a minority of participants had interacted with their school's guidance counselors and those who did speak with them typically reviewed grades and courses.

Very few participants approached their guidance counselors to inquire specifically about postsecondary education and in most cases discussions with guidance counselors took place after students had already begun considering alternatives to postsecondary studies. An important finding, consistent with the argument made by Grubb (2002), is the need to present information about postsecondary education alongside information about careers. This would not only illustrate how they are linked, but also help students think more about postsecondary education and future careers. Indeed, Frenette (2009) found that students who understood their career aspirations required a university degree were more likely to attend university. Improved career guidance resources at the secondary school level, therefore, is clearly one way to increase college and university participation rates.

Career information has also been found to be important for persistence. Malatest and Associates (2007) found that half of those who had discontinued their postsecondary studies did so because they were undecided about their career and reported they had not been provided with sufficient information about postsecondary options. A report from Statistics Canada's Youth in Transition Survey (Lambert, Zeman, Allen and Bussière, 2004) concluded that lack of program fit was the major reason cited by those who had left college or university without completing their program. A notable proportion of postsecondary leavers stated that they had done so either because they didn't like the program or their program wasn't for them. Similarly, the Price of Knowledge (Berger, Motte and Parkin, 2007) concluded that a lack of career direction is a barrier to persistence in and of itself.

Findings from the 2006 – 2008 Ontario College Student Engagement Survey (OCSES) (Dietsche, 2009) also support this conclusion. The study showed that while three in five entering Ontario college students are quite certain about the type of job they will obtain when they

graduate, that is they are high in career clarity, approximately one quarter are not. Career clarity was defined by a student's response to the Likert item, "I feel undecided about what my career will be after college". Consistent with the findings of Berger et. al. (2007), the OCSES results demonstrated the importance of career clarity in an educational context where most academic programs are designed to develop occupation-specific knowledge and skills. The study revealed that students who began college with significant doubt regarding their future career and the relationship between their program of study and their eventual career destination were significantly less likely to become engaged in their studies, were more likely to express a preference for working rather than studying after a few months of college experience and more strongly indicated a desire to leave. Other research, both nationally (Finnie and Qiu, 2008) with college and university students and with Ontario college students alone (Finnie, Childs and Qiu, 2010), has produced similar results.

King (2003) and King and Warren (2006), examined access to and perceptions of career guidance activities in Ontario secondary schools and found the vast majority of students had received information from their teachers and guidance counselors about universities and colleges. However, of those who had received career and educational information on colleges from guidance counselors, approximately one quarter viewed the information as 'slightly' or 'not' helpful and over one third viewed the information from teachers the same way. Additionally, one fifth of the students reported they had received no information about colleges from guidance counselors and teachers.

These results are consistent with those of Bloxom, Bernes, Magnusson, Gunn, Bardick, Orr, and McKnight (2008) who found that Grade 12 students in Alberta generally did not find career planning resources to be very helpful. The authors concluded that students need to be active

participants in influencing the development of career services in order to enhance their appeal and effectiveness. The Canadian Career Development Foundation (2003) has also stressed the need to strengthen student awareness, planning and decision-making with reference to postsecondary education choices. Their study documented students' frustration with not having enough help connecting entrance requirements and courses of study with a career direction or career path; the relatively narrow focus on university as the preferred postsecondary option; the complexity of information and applications; and understanding of costs associated with post-secondary participation. Clearly, more work is required to identify the types of career information, delivery formats and interactions that will most effectively support the career planning efforts of high school students.

In spite of the overwhelming evidence for the importance of career guidance to postsecondary access and persistence, research on this topic with Canadian secondary school stakeholders outside of Alberta (Magnusson and Bernes, 2002; Pyne, Bernes, Magnusson & Poulsen, 2002; Bardick, Bernes, Magnusson & Witko, 2004; Code, Bernes, Gunn & Bardick, 2006; Bloxom, Bernes, Magnusson et. al., 2008), is meager at best. This is particularly true for research on stakeholder groups such as teachers and guidance counselors. The current study, therefore, was designed to portray multiple stakeholder views of career planning resources in Ontario secondary schools. Perspectives on career information needs, resources and activities were sought from secondary students, school guidance staff and teachers of the mandatory Ontario Grade 10 Career Studies course. Project objectives were to: i) identify the attitudes and plans held by junior high school students toward their future career; ii) identify the types of career information and delivery format(s) most useful to adolescent learners iii) identify key players and activities that influence their career planning; iv) describe the availability, use and helpfulness of

career information, activities and resources typically available to Ontario high school students; v) identify additional resources to facilitate the career planning of high school students. While specific articles have been written summarizing the research results for each stakeholder group, this report focuses on a comparison of the views held by guidance staff, Career Studies teachers and students on the career planning context and needs of Grade 10 students in Ontario.

## **Methods**

### ***Sample and Procedures***

Perspectives on the career planning context, needs and activities of Ontario secondary students were gathered via a survey similar to that used by Magnusson and Bernes (2002). Parallel versions of questionnaires were administered to students, Career Studies teachers and guidance counselors to triangulate the views of the three stakeholders groups. The questionnaires consisted of both closed and open response types. In addition to group-specific demographic, background and contextual questions, four closed response sections examined perceptions of the information that would be most useful to the career planning of Grade 10 students, the most useful format for presenting such information and the relative influence of various groups and individuals on their career planning. A final section asked respondents to indicate what types of resources were available in their schools and the degree to which they believed each was helpful in supporting the career planning of junior high school students. The study was designed to elicit the participation of public and Catholic school boards representative of the province of Ontario. Five geographic regions were identified, North, East, Central, Southwestern and Western.

Data from Career Studies teachers in Ontario high schools was collected with an in-class survey conducted during May 2010-June 2011 in collaboration with participating Ontario school boards. Career Studies teachers were selected to participate since they were intensively involved in



career exploration with Grade 10 students and would be familiar with career planning information and activities. The nine-week mandatory Career Studies course teaches students how to develop and achieve personal goals for future learning, work, and community involvement. Students assess their interests, skills, and characteristics and investigate current economic and workplace trends, work opportunities, and ways to search for work. The course explores postsecondary learning and career options, prepares students for managing work and life transitions, and helps students focus on their goals through the development of a career plan (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2006).

The perspective of guidance counselors was obtained with an online survey conducted during May 2010 in collaboration with the Ontario School Counselors Association. The survey web site was publicized to all members via *OSCAnews*, the weekly e-journal of the Association.

Student views were collected with an in-class survey during the last week of their Grade 10 Career Studies course in selected Ontario school boards and schools between May 2010 and June 2011. The Career Studies course was an ideal survey venue since students had been intensively involved in career exploration for nine weeks and would be knowledgeable and familiar with career planning information, resources and activities.

### ***Measures***

This report deals with only those questionnaire items posed to all three groups using parallel versions of the questions for each group. The wording of items for guidance staff and teachers was identical, while that for students was slightly different as they were the main focus of the study. Perceptions of the most useful resources for career planning in Grade 10 were based on ratings of fifteen types of information or activities potentially available in school or the community, prompted by the question “To what degree do you believe each of the following would help the majority of grade 10 students plan their future career?” Each resource was rated by respondents on

a scale of 0 = *Don't Know*, 1 = *Not at all*, 2 = *Somewhat*, 3 = *Quite a lot*, to 4 = *Very much* and presented in a sequence following Gati and Asher's (2001) characterization of the career decision-making process as involving six tasks. The sequence begins with a student recognizing the need to undertake the planning process followed by self exploration to identify passions, interests, and abilities and progresses to a broad exploration of the types of careers available. This is followed by acquiring more in-depth, career-specific information such as annual salary, employment opportunities, required knowledge, skills and duties, information about related postsecondary programs and opportunities for financial support. The last two stages involve deciding between a few possibilities and finally committing to a single career path.

Views on the ideal format for providing career planning information to Grade 10 students were obtained with the question "To what degree do you believe each of the following would help the majority of grade 10 students plan their future career?" A list of nine possible modalities was presented including print and web-based text, interactive web sites, videos of occupations, speaking with someone employed in an area of interest or speaking with postsecondary students about their career planning strategies. Each modality was rated by stakeholders on a scale of 0 = *Don't know*, 1 = *Not at all useful*, 2 = *Somewhat useful*, 3 = *Quite useful* to 4 = *Very useful*.

The relative influence of various groups and individuals on the career planning of Grade 10 students was determined by the question "Career plans may be influenced by a number of individuals or groups. How much does each of the following influence the career planning of Grade 10 students?" Possible responses ranged from 0 = *Don't Know*, 1 = *Not at all*, 2 = *Somewhat*, 3 = *Quite a bit*, to 4 = *Very much*. Potential influences included teachers, guidance counselors, parents, siblings and other relatives, someone working in a field of interest and the media.

The final parallel item was designed to assess the availability and helpfulness of twenty career planning resources typically available in Ontario secondary schools or the community. The question “Is each resource listed below available to you/your students? If so, how helpful do you think the particular resource is to career planning? Does it help students identify a career path?” Respondents rated availability as 0 = *Don’t know*, 1 = *Not available*, 2 = *Available*, and helpfulness with a scale of 0 = *Don’t know*, 1 = *Not at all*, 2 = *Somewhat*, to 3 = *Very much*. Students were also asked if they had used each resource and were instructed to provide ratings only if they had actually done so. Resources listed included print and web-based materials, interactive computer programs, courses such as co-operative education and the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship program, speaking with individuals such as high school or postsecondary guidance counselors, or guest speakers and more “hands-on” activities such as job shadowing, volunteering, workplace tours or paid employment.

### ***Data Analysis***

Data analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences consisted of calculating mean scores for each group on the Likert variables, excluding “Don’t know” responses, and using these to rank order the sources of influence on the career planning of Grade 10 students, the relative utility of various types of career planning information, the ideal format for providing this information, and the relative utility of career resources typically available in Ontario high schools and the community. Views on the availability of current school and community resources were summarized by calculating the percentage of each respondent group who reported the resource was ‘available’ to students.

## **Results**

### ***Sample Profiles***

The in-class survey of Grade 10 Career Studies teachers resulted in 55 completed questionnaires from 11 Ontario English language school boards and 24 schools, 20 public and 4 Catholic. All five geographic regions identified for the study and four of the six Ontario Ministry of Education school board regions were represented. The majority of respondents (69%) taught in Toronto region schools, one fifth was located in the Barrie region, one tenth taught in London boards, and a small percentage (2%) were from Sudbury area schools. Roughly two thirds (64%) of survey respondents were female, three fifths had been teaching nine years or less and one quarter had taught 20 or more years. Experience with the Career Studies course was quite diverse in that almost one third (30%) had taught the course once or twice, another third three to five times, and slightly more (37%) six or more times.

The online survey of guidance counselors produced 144 completed questionnaires comprising 62% of Ontario school boards, 140 individual public, Catholic and independent schools, both English and French language schools and all geographic regions of the province were represented. Over four fifths of survey respondents were females employed full-time, with approximately one half having less than 10 years experience and almost one third with fifteen or more years as a guidance counselor.

The survey of students yielded 1,665 completed questionnaires from the 12 Ontario English language school boards who agreed to participate. Four of the six provincial school board regions as defined by the Ontario Ministry of Education were represented. One half of the sample was from the Toronto region, 30% was from the Barrie region, 17% was from London region boards and 3% was drawn from the North Bay/Sudbury region. The 31 participating schools consisted of 22 public and 9 Catholic schools. While it is difficult to determine whether the sample is representative of Ontario Grade 10 students more generally, it is noted that little variation in

student responses on core questions was observed between jurisdictions. In addition, profiles of participating schools developed from Ontario Ministry of Education web site ([www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/sift](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/sift)) that included Grade 10 literacy and Grade 9 math achievement scores, demographic information such as socioeconomic status and first language, and percentage of gifted students showed considerable student diversity across schools. Ninety-two per cent of the sample was enrolled in grade 10 with the remainder in grades 11 and 12. Almost three-quarters (72%) were fifteen years old and one-quarter (23%) was 16 years of age. Males (48%) and females (52%) were almost equally represented.

### ***Career Planning Support and Influences***

The perceived influence of various agents on the career planning of Grade 10 students was explored by asking respondents to rate each of ten possibilities. Overall, there was agreement by all three groups on the top two influences. Not surprisingly as shown in Table 1, teachers, students and guidance staff rated parents/guardians as the primary influence on the career planning of Grade 10 students. In addition, “Someone they admire working in a field/job they like” was ranked as the second greatest influence by all respondents. While students ranked the media third in influence, both teachers and guidance staff ranked this somewhat lower, in fifth place. Surprisingly, guidance counselors and teachers were not generally rated as very influential by all groups except for counselors who rated themselves as third most influential while teachers and students ranked this group toward the bottom, in eighth place.

*Table 1 here*

### ***Ideal Career Planning Information***

To identify the information or activity that would be most useful to plan a future career, respondents were asked to rate each of fifteen possibilities presented, as discussed earlier, in a

sequence corresponding to Gati and Asher's (2001) characterization of the career decision-making process as involving six tasks. Table 2 presents the rankings, in descending order as viewed by students, for each of the fifteen possibilities in terms of their usefulness to career planning, and the corresponding rankings of counselors and teachers. The correspondence to Gati and Asher's sequence of tasks is also provided.

*Table 2 here*

The results show there was general agreement across the three groups that self-exploration information, Task 2 in Gati and Asher's list, to help identify careers related to things they are really passionate about and related to their interests, talents and abilities would be most useful to the career planning of Grade 10 students. A second area of general agreement between students, counselors and teachers was the low usefulness ranking, thirteenth to fifteenth place, attributed to in-depth exploratory information such as the salaries and hiring potential associated with specific careers. In addition, Table 2 shows that all three groups ranked information related to Gati and Asher's final stages, deciding between more than one career plan (Task 5) and help with a career plan they had already developed (Task 6), quite low in usefulness.

A number of discrepancies between the rankings of the three groups are also notable. While students ranked in-depth exploratory information (Task 4) focusing on the knowledge and skills required for specific careers third in usefulness, guidance staff and teachers' rankings placed this sixth and seventh, respectively. Counselors rated helping students identify their interests, talents and abilities (Task 2) first in usefulness while students and teachers ranked this information in sixth and fifth place, respectively. One of the most dramatic differences between the rankings of students and the other respondent groups was related to Gati and Asher's 'orientation to choice' Task 1, or creating an awareness of the need to make a career decision, Students ranked this type

of information last (15<sup>th</sup>) in usefulness whereas guidance staff and teachers rated this seventh and sixth most useful, respectively.

### ***Utility of Information Delivery Formats***

Information about careers may be provided to students in a number of ways including workplace experiences, conversations with individuals working in various careers, watching videos profiling specific careers or reading print or web-based text. Identifying the format viewed by students, guidance counselors and teachers as the best way to provide career planning information for Grade 10 students was a major focus of this study. Table 3 presents the rankings attributed to each format by the three respondent groups and indicates there was little agreement on the first-place format. Students ranked spending time on the job as most useful, while this was ranked fourth by counselors and third by teachers. Counselors deviated from students and Career Studies teachers the most by ranking interactive web sites as the most useful format for career planning information. Somewhat greater agreement, however, was observed for the next most useful format in that talking to people working in their area of career interest was ranked second by students, third by counselors and first by teachers. A hypothetical web-based tool that provides all the information needed to select a future career that matches their interests and abilities was also ranked highly by all groups. There was also general agreement on the lack of utility associated with text-based career information whether this was delivered via a web site or in print materials, both of which were ranked as 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>.

*Table 3 here*

### ***Availability and Helpfulness of Current Career Planning Resources***

A variety of school and community-based career planning resources are available to students across Canada (Bell & Bezanson, 2006). This study, therefore examined the current career

planning resource context as perceived by students, Career Studies teachers and guidance staff. This was assessed by asking respondents to indicate whether each of twenty potential career planning resources was available and, if so, how helpful they thought it was. Students were asked to rate the helpfulness of a particular resource only if it had been used.

Table 4 shows the perceived availability of the twenty career planning resources that might be accessed within most Ontario secondary schools or the community. Overall, it is clear that a considerable number of resources are available to Ontario Grade 10 students. As expected, the provincially mandated Career Studies course and required participation in volunteer activity were perceived to be available by almost all of the three groups. Co-operative education courses, computer programs such as Career Cruising and written materials were also reported to be widely available. In some cases such as “working one-on-one with a guidance counselor”, discrepancies were observed in that fewer students (78%) than counselors (100%) and teachers (89%) saw this as an available resource. Other cases where the views of counselors and teachers regarding availability deviated from that of students included community agencies such as the YMCA, career interest questionnaires and information sessions with guest speakers. In the case of guest speakers for example, approximately two thirds of students reported this resource was available while nine in ten counselors and teachers did so. Resources of the type valued by students for their career planning such as workplace or industry tours were reported to be available by two in five students and teachers while almost two in three counselors thought so.

*Table 4 here*

Table 5 presents the perceived helpfulness, ordered by students’ rankings, of the same twenty career planning resources based on the mean score of the Likert responses provided by teachers and counselors and of the students who had used them. Most agreed that computer



programs such as Career Cruising and working one-on-one with a guidance counselor were the most helpful career planning resources, although counselors ranked Career Cruising lower than students and teachers and teachers ranked working individually with a counselor lower than students and counselors. High school co-op courses were also ranked in the top three most helpful resources by all respondent groups. Guidance staff and teachers showed divergent views for some resources. While teachers and students ranked job shadowing fourth in helpfulness, this was ranked 14<sup>th</sup> by counselors. However, speaking with college or university guidance staff was ranked 5<sup>th</sup> by students and counselors, but was ranked 13<sup>th</sup> by teachers.

Of the career guidance resources mandated for all students by the Ontario Ministry of Education, the Career Studies course was ranked 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> by students and counselors, respectively, but only 11<sup>th</sup> by the teachers of the course. The requirement that all students complete forty hours of community service was ranked 9<sup>th</sup> in helpfulness by students but 21<sup>st</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> by counselors and teachers, respectively.

A middle tier of resources ranked as helpful by most respondents included career-specific videos, workplace tours, information sessions with guest speakers and career interest inventories and internet sites. Other resources such as career fairs/days, school career libraries and print materials were ranked quite low in helpfulness by students, guidance staff and teachers.

The ranking of planning resources presented in Table 5 shows that, generally, those perceived to be most helpful to Grade 10 students by participants in this study combined computer software programs that help students identify potential careers such as Career Cruising with experiential activities such as co-op courses and job shadowing, and individual interaction with guidance staff.

## **Discussion**

This study sought to describe and compare the views of students, teachers and guidance staff on the career planning needs of Grade 10 student in Ontario high schools. Objectives were to document views on the relative influence various individuals and groups have on their career planning, the types of information and activities that would best support this planning and the relative utility of various formats when providing information to students. The availability and perceived helpfulness of the diverse career guidance resources typically available in Ontario secondary schools and the community were also examined.

### ***Career Planning Support and Influence***

Students, teachers and guidance counselors agreed that parents influence the career planning of Grade 10 students the most. Consistent with the findings of others (Bloxom, Bernes, Magnusson, Gunn, Bardick, Orr & McKnight, 2008), the results affirm the primacy of parents in adolescent career planning (Looker & Lowe, 2001; Magnusson & Bernes, 2002; Prairie Research Associates, 2005). While parental influence has generally been shown to be positive (Grant, 2000), there is some evidence that such exclusivity could have negative implications. Middleton and Lougheed (1993) noted that parental encouragement, although well-meaning, may focus only on a range of alternatives acceptable to the parent and thus may limit adolescents' career exploration and choice. King and Warren (2006) found that some high school students reported their parents felt so strongly about universities that they would not let them attend a community college. They also found evidence that parents' advice may not be adequate. A third of university and of college-bound high school students thought the career information provided by parents was 'slightly' or 'not' helpful. Focus groups with students (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada & Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, 2009) suggest that some parents were more inclined to nag their children about postsecondary attendance rather than provide them with practical information

to help them decide what they might like to study. While Otto (2000) found that four-fifths of high school juniors said their career aspirations were consistent with those of their parents, the one in five cases where this was not the case could have led to enrollment in a program of study for which the student was ill-suited. Indeed one third of students in another study (Dietsche, 2011a) reported being encouraged to follow a career path that was not consistent with their interests.

The potential for misdirection by parents is underscored further by the relatively low level of influence attributed by all respondents in this study to teachers and counselors. The finding is consistent with other research (Alexitch & Page, 1997; Domene, Shapka & Keating, 2006; King & Warren, 2006) and may result from students' perceptions of the quality of information provided or infrequent contact. King and Warren (2006) found that substantial numbers of students thought the information provided by teachers and counselors was 'slightly' or 'not' helpful. In addition, several studies (Bardick et al, 2004; Kotrlik & Harrison, 1989; Mau, 1995; Stratton, 2001) have shown that only a small percentage of high school students make use of guidance services and that this is particularly true in provinces like Ontario that have a mandatory high school career guidance course. Structural barriers might also account for the low levels of interaction since high school counselors must divide their time with students between personal/social issues, academic issues such as course selection, and career guidance. There are very few Ontario schools with dedicated career counselors (Malatest and Associates, 2009) and the numbers of guidance counselors are spread quite thinly in most Ontario secondary schools (Malatest and Associates, 2009). There is also evidence (Dietsche, in press; King, Warren, King, Brook & Kocher, 2009; Malatest and Associates, 2009) that much of their time is spent on activities other than career advising such as helping senior students with course selection and preparing applications to postsecondary institutions.

A high level of parental influence and the low impact of teachers and guidance counselors suggest that career planning for junior high school students could benefit from policies and practices to better inform parents about the complexities of career planning. Current resources for parents are either text-based (Canada Career Information Partnership, 2006) or online but these typically provide information in a piecemeal fashion and lack the integration necessary as suggested by Grubb (2002) and others (OECD, 2002). Other options for providing career information to parents include school-sponsored information sessions, but these have been noted to occur infrequently in Ontario high schools (Dietsche, in press; Malatest & Associates, 2009).

### ***Ideal Career Planning Information***

All three groups in this study ranked self-exploration information to help identify careers related to students' passions, talents and abilities highest in usefulness to career planning in Grade 10. As with other studies (Bardick, Bernes, Magnusson & Witko, 2004; Bloxom, Bernes, Magnusson, Gunn, Bardick, Orr & McKnight, 2008), this was followed in degree of usefulness by a mix of broad and in-depth information related to types of careers available, the knowledge and skills required, and relevant postsecondary programs of study. More in-depth information such as salaries and hiring potential and information corresponding to Gati and Asher's final stages were ranked very low in usefulness by all groups. While the consensus is that most students are in the early stages of career planning, in contrast to teachers and counselors, Grade 10 students saw little utility in information designed to convince them that career planning was important. Other findings from this research project (Dietsche, 2011a) indicate that the majority of Grade 10 students recognize the importance of career planning.

These results suggest an emphasis on providing exploratory information to help students identify their interests and abilities, as argued by Tracey and Hopkins (2001). Their study confirmed that interests are predictive of occupational choice and satisfaction and that self-

efficacy/ability plays a role independent of interest. The authors recommend the adoption of a sequential interpretation strategy wherein conclusions of appropriate choices garnered by examining interests are altered or “tweaked” rather than presenting an independent set of options based solely on abilities. The implications for the design of computer support programs that help students integrate and “make sense” of career planning information to provide tentative career directions are clear. There is a need for a new generation of “smart” computer-based programs that allow users to access relevant career information in an integrated, cumulative fashion that leads to a limited set of potential careers options.

### ***Ideal Format for Career Information***

How students acquire information about their interests and abilities is as important as what information they receive. While unanimity was absent, study participants ranked exposure to concrete ‘on the job’ experiences such as work placements, and opportunities to speak with others working in their field of interest as the most useful formats for providing career planning information. The utility of activities such as co-op and work placements has also been highlighted by others (King et. al, 2009) and a comprehensive review of the impact of experiential learning opportunities (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009) concluded that work experience programs had a significant impact on career preparation. King & Warren (2006), however, have shown that opportunities to obtain career information through visits to businesses and industries are quite infrequent for Ontario high school students. Other jurisdictions, however, such as the U.K. (EBP West Berkshire, 2011) have been successful in creating organizations that facilitate such opportunities on a broader scale and might serve as models for Ontario. Established in 1992, EBP West Berks works closely with all ten of the local state secondary schools along with Newbury College. The aim of the organization is to inspire and enable the future workforce by engaging

with and supporting young pupils and students at all levels to better equip them for the challenges of their future working life. EBP West Berks has successfully forged links between local employers, teachers and students, and through these partnerships create and deliver a range of work-related and vocational learning opportunities to inspire, inform and motivate young people to make more informed decisions about their future.

A hypothetical, comprehensive, 'one-stop' web tool with all the information required to plan a future career was rated by all groups as one of the most useful formats for providing career-related information. Consistent with the arguments of others (OECD, 2004; Offer, 1999; Tricot, 2002), the use of ICT tools and web-based career development resources allow students independent access to career planning information at a distance. While such resources reduce the need for guidance staff, their effectiveness depends on the student's ability to make sense of the information they obtain or else it simply becomes an 'information dump' (Grubb, 2002; Tait, 1999). The results of this study suggest that a 'one-stop' resource that integrates self-, broad, and detailed exploratory information, as described by Gati and Asher (2001), to help students identify their interests and talents, related careers and relevant postsecondary options is most desirable.

### ***Availability and Helpfulness of Current Career Planning Resources***

From the perspective of students, teachers and guidance staff, a wide variety of resources are available to support the career planning of Grade 10 students. Those available to all or almost all students include a mix of informational, experiential and computer-based resources such as the Career Studies course, volunteering for community service and co-operative education courses, and computer programs such as Career Cruising. Of these, co-op courses and Career Cruising were considered by all groups to be among the most helpful although participation in co-op courses can only begin in Grade 11 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2000). Indeed, while Ontario

has the highest enrollment in co-op programs, counselors have reported that only between twenty and forty per cent of Ontario students enroll in such courses (Malatest and Associates, 2009).

Other research confirms the value students place on co-op programs in helping them decide on a future career (King et. al, 2009). Other experiential opportunities such as job shadowing and paid work experience, while ranked in the top ten in helpfulness, were less likely to be available. The perceived value of paid work experiences by respondents in this study is consistent with the utility they ascribed to exploring potential careers via ‘on the job’ learning opportunities. Results from student interviews (King et. al, 2009) suggest the experiences afford students the opportunity to test jobs related to potential career aspirations. The effectiveness of such opportunities has also been noted elsewhere (Canadian Career Development Foundation, 2003).

Interviews with students and parents (Canadian Career Development Foundation, 2003) have found that both groups desire greater access to individualized support. The ability of students to work one-on-one with a guidance counselor was rated as the second most helpful resource by all groups except for teachers, who ranked this fifth. However, while such counselor support is generally available to students, other research (Malatest and Associates, 2009) has shown that a minority of counselor time is actually devoted to individual career planning. The results of the student survey component of the current research program (Dietsche, 2011a) also showed that less than half of Grade 10 students had actually met individually with a guidance counselor.

Generally, the perceptions of respondents regarding the most helpful of the resources available to Grade 10 students paralleled their views of the ideal format for providing information about potential careers. In both cases experiential opportunities were ranked first followed by conversations with knowledgeable individuals. A desire for individual support from guidance staff,

presumably to help “make sense” of the exploratory career information obtained, was also cited as one of the most helpful resources.

### **Implications**

This study gathered information from students, teacher and guidance staff in numerous high schools across Ontario with the goal of gaining their perspective on career planning. A number of important implications for both policy and practice can be drawn from the study findings.

Several implications relate to the development of additional career planning resources that move beyond an “information dump” as identified by Grubb (2002). The primacy of parents in influencing career planning and the weak influence of counselors and teachers found in this study is well documented (Domene, Shapka & Keating, 2006) and argues for additional career planning resources targeted at parents. As others have suggested (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada & Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, 2009; King & Warren, 2006), some parents might not be aware of the full range of careers and postsecondary destinations available to their child. Many parents also rely on guidance counselors as the expert sources of support in student decision making, information on postsecondary education options and future career possibilities (Canadian Career Development Foundation, 2003). While the same research also indicates parents are willing to become more involved if they had information and coaching, surveys of Ontario guidance counselors (Dietsche, in press; Malatest and Associates, 2009) have found that less than half of their schools offered parent workshops, and if they were, it was typically once a year. The conclusion, as others have argued, is that the benefits of promoting increased parental involvement in career planning workshops in concert with their son or daughter are likely to be significant (Bardick, Bernes, Magnusson & Witko, 2004; Bernes & Magnusson,



2004). In the absence of widely available school-based initiatives for parents, the creation of an online, non-proprietary resource accessible from a home computer that integrates the information necessary to explore and identify a future career path(s) could help facilitate such conversations between parents and their children.

The optimization of career planning resources for junior and senior high school students must recognize the type of information they need and the most effective way to provide it. As with Grade 12 students in Alberta (Bardick, Bernes, Magnusson & Witko, 2004), respondents in this study ranked information that would help students identify careers related to their passions, interests and abilities as most useful, and the opportunity to directly experience a job/occupation or speak to someone who was in the job as the best way of accessing information to help formulate a plan. The helpfulness attributed to Career Cruising and the high ranking of a web-based “one-stop” tool as a useful way to provide career planning information also suggest that packaging interest assessment tools with detailed occupation profiles and comprehensive postsecondary education information is an excellent starting place for students. The concept is for students to move seamlessly through the self and career exploration tasks similar to Gati and Asher’s (2001) sequence to ultimately identify a career path. As noted by Tracey and Hopkins (2001), however, the information obtained by users needs to be integrated in a sequential interpretation strategy wherein conclusions of appropriate choices garnered by examining interests, for example, are altered or “tweaked” rather than presenting an independent set of options based solely on abilities. In addition, given the complexity of the information presented and the cognitive integration that is required to ‘make sense of it’, providing individual support to help integrate the diverse types of information would be beneficial (Canadian Career Development Foundation, 2003; Grubb, 2002; Watts, 2005). Indeed, some have argued (OECD, 2004) that there is more than enough career-

related information available today, and that those attempting to identify a future career face a “paradox of choice” (Schwartz, 2003) in that the available information can be overwhelming and therefore difficult to comprehend.

All groups in this study ranked students working individually with guidance staff as very helpful to their career planning and suggests that providing such support could help adolescents sort through the information they obtain. The ideal career planning resource, therefore, would integrate computer-based career exploration tools with individualized support as well as opportunities to access workplace experience to test tentative career plans. Such resources go well beyond an “information dump” and would empower individuals to locate and process information in way that makes sense to them (Grubb, 2002; Lent, Hackett, and Brown, 1999; Savickas, 1999; Worthington and Juntunen, 1997).

The findings of this study also have implications for policy initiatives on the part of government and postsecondary institutions. The current career guidance framework for Ontario secondary schools developed in 1999, “Choices into Action”, created the Grade 10 Career Studies course and opportunities for co-operative education courses (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1999). Ontario is one of three Canadian provinces to implement a mandatory career guidance course as part of the secondary school curriculum and participants in this study generally ranked it as moderately helpful to the career planning of Grade 10 students. Increasing the helpfulness of the Career Studies course might result from making it a full- rather than half-credit course as has been suggested by counselors (Dietsche, in press) and Career Studies teachers (Dietsche, 2011b) as part of this broader research project. A policy change to provide more time for students to process detailed career planning information may help more identify a tentative career path earlier.

A second area for policy development would address the desire for increased opportunity to test tentative career plans via co-operative education courses or work placements. The results of this study regarding the availability and use of career planning resources show that experiential opportunities are limited. While Grade 10 students are not generally eligible for co-op courses, increasing participation in these courses in Grades 11 and 12 could be one way to help students clarify a future career and accommodate any changes to course selection in Grade 12.

A third policy area concerns the deployment of guidance staff in secondary schools. Despite the helpfulness to students of working individually with counselors cited by all respondents in this study, other research (Dietsche, in press; Malatest and Associates, 2009) indicates that only a minority actually meet one-on-one with a counselor. While this may be due in large part to structural factors (King, Warren, King, Brook & Kocher, 2009; Malatest and Associates, 2009), the mandatory Career Studies course could provide an opportunity to increase interaction between Grade 10 students and guidance staff. Like many students in Grade 12 who meet individually with guidance counselors to plan postsecondary studies, those in Grade 10 could do so toward the end of their Career Studies course to help more students ‘connect the dots’ than is currently the case. Such meetings could also allow counselors to highlight ways in which students might test their career aspirations via co-op courses, job shadowing or other experiential options. For example, the mandatory community service requirement, completed by all students, could be very helpful to career planning if students were encouraged to select their service activities with potential careers in mind.

A final policy arena focuses on the provision of career guidance services by postsecondary institutions, seen as inadequate by some (OECD, 2002; Watts, 2005). A substantial number of studies (Finnie and Qiu, 2008; Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1994; Tracey & Robbins, 2006; Parkin &

Baldwin, 2009) indicate that students who enter college or university with a clear understanding of their post-graduation career are more likely to do well and persist. It is also well recognized that while students are enrolling in postsecondary institutions to obtain the knowledge and skills required to obtain a 'good job' in the knowledge economies of the twenty-first century (Association of Canadian Community Colleges, 2007; Canadian University Survey Consortium, 2010), many discover during the first year that they are in the wrong program. At the same time, while the majority of Canadian community colleges (Dietsche, 2005) and universities (Gilbert, Chapman, Dietsche, Grayson & Gardner, 1997) provide career counseling services, available evidence (Dietsche, 2007; Canadian University Survey Consortium, 2010) suggests they are used by only a relatively small proportion of students. Policies and practices designed to increase the use of career guidance services provided by colleges and universities, particularly during the application phase, could help maximize the alignment between students' career aspirations and their program of study.

Taken together, the information provided by the guidance staff, teachers and students who participated in this study suggests a need to rethink the access to and delivery of career planning resources in Ontario secondary schools. There is little doubt that the use of comprehensive, computer-based career exploration tools combined with individual counselor support and an increased opportunity to test tentative career plans via experiential learning could help more high school students identify a career path that is consistent with their passions and abilities. The benefits would no doubt be increased progression to and success in postsecondary programs of study.

## References

- Alexitch, L. & Page, S. (1997). Evaluation of academic and career counselling information and its relation to students' educational orientation. *Canadian Journal of Counselling, 31*(3), 205-218.
- Association of Canadian Community Colleges. (2007). *Pan-Canadian Study of First Year College Students: Report 1 Student Characteristics and the College Experience*. Ottawa.
- Bardick, A. D., Bernes, K. B., Magnusson, K. C, & Witko, K. D. (2004). Junior high career planning: What students want. *Canadian Journal of Counselling, 38*(2), 104-117.
- Barr-Telford, L., Cartwright, F., Prasil, S. and Shimmons, K. (2003). *Access, persistence and financing: First results from the Postsecondary Education Participation Survey (PEPS)*. Ottawa, Ontario: Statistics Canada.
- Bell, D., and L. Bezanson. (2006). *Career development services for canadian youth: Access, adequacy and accountability*. Pathways to the Labour Market Series – No. 1. Ottawa, Ontario: Canadian Policy Research Networks and the Canadian Career Development Foundation.
- Bernes, K.B. & Magnusson, K.C. (2004). Building future career development programs for adolescents. NATCON Papers 2004.
- Berger, Joseph, Anne Motte and Andrew Parkin. (2007). *The price of knowledge: Access and student finance in Canada*. Montreal, QC: Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation.
- Bloxom, J.M., Bernes, K.B., Magnusson, K.C., Gunn, T.T., Bardick, A.D., Orr, D.T. & McKnight, K.M.. (2008). Grade 12 student career needs and perceptions of the effectiveness of career development services within high schools. *Canadian Journal of Counselling, 42*, 2, 79-100.

Canada Career Information Partnership. (2006). *A Career Development Resource for Parents: Helping parents explore the role of coach and ally*. Ottawa.

Canadian Career Development Foundation. (2003). *The role of guidance in post-secondary planning*. Montreal, QC: Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation.

Canadian Council on Learning. (2009). *The impact of experiential learning programs on student success*. Report prepared for the Ontario Ministry of Education.

Canadian University Survey Consortium. (2010). *First-Year University Student Survey: Master Report*. June 2010.

Code, M., Bernes, K., Gunn, T., & Bardick, A. (2006). Adolescents' perceptions of career concern: Student discouragement in career development. *Canadian Journal of Counselling, 40*(3), 160-174.

Council of Ministers of Education, Canada and Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation (2009). *An examination of barriers to pursuing post-secondary education and potential solutions*. Toronto, Ontario; Council of Ministers of Education, Canada.

Dietsche, P. (2011a). *Career Planning in Ontario Grade 10 Students: Student Perspectives*. Unpublished manuscript. Toronto: University of Toronto.

Dietsche, P. (2011b). *Career Planning in Ontario Grade 10 Students: Teacher Perspectives*. Unpublished manuscript. Toronto: University of Toronto.

Dietsche, P. (in press). Career planning in Ontario Grade 10 students: Counselor perspectives. *Canadian Journal of Career Development*.

Dietsche, P. (2009). *The Ontario College Student Engagement Survey 2006-2009: Final report - project results, data modelling, tests of reliability and validity and future directions*. Toronto, ON: Report prepared for the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Dietsche, P. (2007). Report of the Pan-Canadian Survey of College Students and the Student Experience. Unpublished manuscript. Toronto.

Dietsche, P. (2005). *Final Report of the Pan-Canadian Inventory of Exemplary Practices In College Student Learning*. Montreal: QC. Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation.

Domene, J.F., Shapka, J.D. and Keating, D.P. (2006). Educational and career-related help-seeking in high school: an exploration of student's choices. *Canadian Journal of Counselling*, 40, 3, 145-159.

EBP West Berkshire. (2011). Work related learning portfolio 2010-2011. Retrieved Jan. 27, 2011 from [http://www.ebpwb.co.uk/portfolio/ebpwb\\_portfolio\\_2010.pdf](http://www.ebpwb.co.uk/portfolio/ebpwb_portfolio_2010.pdf)

Finnie, Ross, and Qiu, Hanqing (Theresa) (2008). *The patterns of persistence in post-secondary education in Canada*. A MESA Project Research Paper. Toronto, ON: Educational Policy Institute.

Finnie, Ross, Childs, S. and Qiu, Hanqing (Theresa) (2010). The patterns of persistence in post-secondary education among college students in Ontario: *New Evidence from Longitudinal Data*. A MESA Project Research Paper. Toronto, ON: Educational Policy Institute.

Foley (2001). *Why stop after high school? A descriptive analysis of the most important reasons that high school graduates do not continue to PSE*. Millennium Research Series. Montreal, QC: Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation.

Frenette, M. (2009). Career goals in high school: Do students know what it takes to reach them and does it matter? Ottawa, Ontario: Statistics Canada.

Gati and Asher's (2001). The PIC model for career decision making: Prescreening, in-depth exploration, and choice. In T. L. Leong & A. Barak (Eds.), *Contemporary models in*

*vocational psychology: A volume in honor of Samuel H. Osipow* (pp. 6-54). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Gilbert, S., Chapman, J., Dietsche, P., Grayson, P. & Gardner, J. N. (1997). *From Best Intentions to Best Practices: The First Year Experience in Canadian Postsecondary Education*. South Carolina: National Resource Center for the Freshman Year Experience.

Grant, D. F. (2000). The journey through college of seven gifted females: Influences on their career-related decisions. *Roeper Review*, 22, 251-261.

Grubb, N.W. (2002). *Who am I: The inadequacy of career information in the information age*. A paper prepared for an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development review of policies for information, guidance and counselling services, Commissioned jointly by the European Commission and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

King, A.J.C. (2003). *Double cohort study: Phase 3 report*. Toronto, Ontario: Ontario Ministry of Education.

King, A.J.C. and Warren, W.K. (2006). *Transition to college: Perspectives of secondary school students*. Toronto, Ontario: Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario.

King, A.J.C., W.K. Warren, M.A. King, J.E. Brook and P.R. Kocher (2009). *Who doesn't go to post-secondary education: Final report*. Toronto, Ontario: Colleges Ontario.

Kotrlik, J.L. & Harrison, B.C. (1989). Career decision patterns of high school seniors in Louisiana. *Journal of Vocational Education Research*, 14, 47-65.

Krumboltz, J.D., and R.L. Worthington. (1999). The school-to-work transition from a learning theory perspective. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 47, 312-325



Lambert, Mylène, Klarka Zeman, Mary Allen, and Patrick Bussière. (2004). Who pursues postsecondary education, who leaves and why: Results from the Youth In Transition Survey. Ottawa: Statistics Canada.

Lent, R.W., G. Hackett, and S.D. Brown. (1999). A social cognitive view of school-to-work transition. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 47, 297-311.

Looker, D. and Lowe, G. (2001). Post-Secondary Access and Student Financial Aid in Canada: Current Knowledge and Research Gaps. Ottawa: Canadian Policy Research Networks.

Magnusson, K. C., and Bernes, K. B. (2002). Comprehensive career needs survey: An overview. *Alberta Counselor*, 27, 12–15.

Magnusson, K, and Roest, A. (2004). The efficacy of career development interventions: A Synthesis of research. University of Lethbridge. Retrieved November 8, 2008 from [http://www.crccanada.org/crc/files/magnusson-CareerEfficacy-synthesis829\\_2.doc](http://www.crccanada.org/crc/files/magnusson-CareerEfficacy-synthesis829_2.doc)

Malatest and Associates. (2009). *Pan-Canadian study of career development practices in k-12 public schools*. Montreal, QC: Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation.

Malatest and Associates. (2007). *Class of 2003 high school follow-up survey*. Montreal: Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation.

Mau, W.C. (1995). Educational planning and academic achievement of middle school students: A racial and cultural comparison. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 75, 518-526.

McCrea Silva, M., and S.M. Phillips. (2007). *Trading Up – high school and beyond: Five illustrative Canadian case studies*. Pathways to the Labour Market Series – No. 4. Ottawa: Canadian Policy Research Networks.

McElroy, L. (2008). *In pursuit of postsecondary education: Whether and when to go on*. Montreal, QC: Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation.

- Middleton, E.B. & Lougheed, T.A. (1993). Parental influence on career development: An integrative framework for adolescent career counseling. *Journal of Career Development, 19*, 161-173.
- Offer, M. (1999). The Impact on Career Delivery Services of Information and Communications Technology. In, *Making Waves: Career Development and Public Policy, International Symposium 1999, Papers, Proceedings and Strategies*. Ottawa: Canadian Career Development Foundation,
- Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (2002). *OECD Review of Career Guidance Policies: Canada Country Note*. Paris: OECD.
- Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (2004). *Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap*. Paris: OECD.
- Ontario Ministry of Education. (1999). *Choices Into Action: Guidance and Career Education Program Policy for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools*. Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario.
- Ontario Ministry of Education. (2000). *Cooperative education and other forms of experiential learning: Policies and procedures for Ontario secondary schools*. Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario.
- Ontario Ministry of Education. (2006). *The Ontario curriculum Grades 9 and 10: Guidance and career education*. Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario.
- Otto, L.B. (2000). Youth perspectives on parental career influence. *Journal of Career Development, 27*, 2, 111-118.
- Parkin, A. & Baldwin, N. (2009). *Persistence in Post-Secondary Education in Canada: The Latest Research*. Research Note #8. Montreal, QC: Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation.

Prairie Research Associates (2005). *Survey of secondary school students*. Montreal, QC: Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation.

Pyne, D., Bernes, K. B., Magnusson, K. C., & Poulsen, J. (2002). A description of junior high and senior high school students' perceptions of career and occupation. *Guidance and Counselling, 17*(3), 67-72.

Ringer Lepre, C. (2007). Getting through to them: Reaching students who need career counseling. *The Career Development Quarterly, 74*-85.

Savickas, M.L (1999). The transition from school to work: A developmental perspective. *The Career Development Quarterly, 47*, 326-336.

Schwartz, B. (2003). *The Paradox of Choice: Why more is Less*. New York; HarperCollins.

Stratton, M. (2001). *Muddling through: What do teens want from career counselors?* Paper presented at the annual convention of the National Consultation on Career Development (NATCON), Ottawa, ON.

Tait, A. (1999). Face to face and at a distance. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling, No. 27*, 113-122.

Tracey, T.J.G. and Hopkins, N. (2001). Correspondence of Interest and Abilities with Occupational Choice. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 48*, (2), 178-189.

Tracey, T.J.G. & Robbins, S.B. (2006). The interest–major congruence and college success relation: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Vocational Behavior 69*, 64–89.

Tricot, A. (2002). Improving Occupational Information. *A paper prepared for an OECD review of policies for information, guidance and counselling services Commissioned jointly by the European Commission and the OECD.*

Walker, K., Alloway, N., Dalley-Trim, L., and Patterson, A. (2006). Counselor practices and

student perspectives: Perceptions of career counseling in Australian schools. *Australian Journal of Career Development*, 15 (1), 37-45.

Watts, A.G. (2005). Career guidance policy: An international review. *Career Development Quarterly*, 54, 66-76.

Worthington, R.L., and C.L. Juntunen. (1997). The vocational development of non-college-bound youth: Counseling Psychology and the school-to-work transition movement. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 25(3), 323-363.

Table 1

*Sources of Influence*

	Student	Counselor	Teacher
Group/Individual	Rank	Rank	Rank
Parent(s) or guardian(s)	1	1	1
Someone they admire working in a field/job they like	2	2	2
The media (e.g. movies, TV programs, etc)	3	5	5
Friend(s)	4	6	4
Brother, sister, cousin	5	4	3
Teacher(s)	6	7	6
Other relative(s)	7	8	7
Guidance counselor(s)	8	3	8
Youth groups or associations (non-religious)	9	9	9
Spiritual or religious groups	10	10	10

Table 2

*Ratings of Usefulness*

Decisional Task	Information/Activity	Student Rank	Counselor Rank	Teacher Rank
2. Self Exploration	Finding careers related to the things you are really passionate about	1	3	2
2. Self Exploration	Help identify careers that are related to interests, talents and abilities	2	2	1
4. In-depth Exploration	Information about knowledge and skills required for specific careers	3	6	7
3. Broad Exploration	Information about the different types of careers available	4	5	8
3. Broad Exploration	Information about career-related PSE programs of study	5	4	3
2. Self Exploration	Help students understand/identify their interests, talents and abilities	6	1	5
3. Broad Exploration	Information about what it's like to take a college/university program	7	10	4
4. In-depth Exploration	Information about the day-to-day tasks/duties for specific careers	8	9	11
4. In-depth Exploration	Information about the chances of getting hired in specific careers	9	13	13
4. In-depth Exploration	Information about the salaries associated with specific careers	10	15	15
3. Broad Exploration	Information about financial help for after high school	11	12	14
5. Decisional Status	Help with choosing between two or more career options/choices	12	14	12
4. In-depth Exploration	Getting personal one-on-one support to develop a career plan	13	8	9
6. Commitment	Help with planning the next steps in a career plan already developed	14	11	10
1. Orientation to Choice	Help students understand that career planning is important right now	15	7	6

Table 3

*Utility of Career Information Formats*

Format of career information	Student Rank	Counselor Rank	Teacher Rank
Spending some time ‘on the job’ exploring what the career involves day-to-day	1	4	3
Talking to people working in the career area you are interested in	2	3	1
A web-based tool that provides all the information needed to select a future career	3	2	4
Meeting with students in college or university to hear about their career planning	4	7	6
Interactive web sites (e.g. surveys, quizzes, careers game etc.)	5	1	2
Video clips of people talking about what they do in their career.	6	5	5
Text-based information on web sites describing potential careers	7	6	7
Printed materials (e.g. books, brochures etc.)	8	8	8

Table 4

*Availability of Career Planning Resources*

Resource	Student (%)	Counselor (%)	Teacher (%)
Mandatory Career Studies course in high school	93	99	100
40 hour high school volunteer requirement	93	99	100
High school co-op courses	85	93	98
Computer programs (e.g. Career Cruising etc.)	85	99	100
Written materials (magazines, brochures etc)	80	99	89
A student working one-on-one with a guidance counselor	78	100	89
Paid work experience (full/part-time work etc.)	76	85	79
School career information centre / library	72	85	85
Short videos that show actual on-the-job duties	69	63	79
Community agencies (e.g. YMCA, CEC etc.)	64	88	79
Career Interest questionnaire	64	83	92
Career information sessions with guest speakers	64	92	87
Career Fairs/Career Days	60	80	75
Job Shadowing (time with someone at their job)	58	65	70
Career related internet sites (e.g. My BluePrint,)	56	80	83
Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP)	51	90	94
Speaking with college / university guidance staff	46	86	51
Groups of students working with a guidance counselor	40	83	59
Workplace/Industry Tours	39	62	40



## Career Planning in Grade 10: Stakeholder Perceptions

Table 5

### Ranking of Career Planning Resource Helpfulness

Resource	Student Rank	Counselor Rank	Teacher Rank
Computer programs (e.g. Career Cruising etc.)	1	4	2
A student working one-on-one with a guidance counselor	2	2	5
High school co-op courses	3	1	1
Job Shadowing (time with someone at their job)	4	14	4
Speaking with college / university guidance staff	5	5	13
Paid work experience (full/part-time work etc.)	6	7	6
Mandatory Career Studies course in high school	7	8	11
40 hour high school volunteer requirement	9	21	17
Workplace/Industry Tours	10	12	7
Career Interest questionnaire	11	11	12
Short videos showing actual on-the-job duties	12	17	10
Written materials (magazines, brochures etc)	13	19	21
Career information sessions with guest speakers	14	9	8
Career related internet sites (e.g. My BluePrint etc.)	15	10	9
Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP)	16	3	3
Groups of students working with a guidance counselor	17	6	16
School career information centre / library	18	18	19
Career Fairs/Career Days	19	13	15
Community agencies (e.g. YMCA etc.)	20	16	14