

Guiding Students from Matriculation to Graduation: Analysis of a Four Year Professional Development Seminars Program for Undergraduates

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Introduction

- Astin (1993) states that the primary purpose of attending college is to prepare for a career.
- Super (1990) believes that success in coping with the demands of the ever-changing world of work depends on the readiness of the individual, or one's career maturity.

Introduction

- Crites (1978) indicates five mechanisms for good career decision making: accurate self-appraisal, gathering occupational information, goal selection, making future plans, and problem-solving
- These mechanisms can be successfully supported if one:
 - (1) *possesses attitudes and competencies critical for realistic decision-making*
 - (2) *performs a variety of career exploration activities*

Research Question?

- Relationship between student participation in a career development program and career growth
- Assessing the career maturity and career search self-efficacy of participants

Purpose of the Study

- (1) Many college students appear to lack the knowledge of self-awareness and how this knowledge influences career decision-making.
- (2) Many college students appear to lack the ability to make informed career decisions, and to successfully engage in the career planning and job search processes.
- (3) Many college students appear to lack the personal skills and attributes employers are searching for in new employees.
- (4) Many college students appear unaware of the value in participating in comprehensive career planning.

Theoretical Framework

- This research investigated career development in early adulthood within the theoretical framework of life-span development and social learning, both of which contribute to individuals' growth and development
 - Super's Life-Span/Life-Space Theory
 - Krumboltz's Theory of Social Learning

Nichols PDS program

Professional Development Seminars

- ▣ Mandatory
- ▣ 4-year series of 1-credit courses
- ▣ Textbooks & supplemental materials
- ▣ Faculty and staff as instructors
- ▣ Built into the culture of the campus
- ▣ Each course builds on the next

Year 1: Transition and Adjustment

- Goal: connect students to the college and develop a relationship with a faculty member and teaching assistant.
- Teaching Topics: College Transition & Goal Setting; Time Management; Academic Success; Library/Academic Resources; Academic Advising; Campus Awareness; Portfolios; Professionalism; Career Development; Presentations

Year 2: Exploration

- Goal: build a foundation of career skills to aid in more in-depth work in the junior and senior years.
- Teaching Topics: Portfolios; Self Exploration; Majors/Minors Exploration; Resumes; Cover Letters; Internships; Intro to Interviewing; Presentations

Year 3: Refinement

- Goal: learn and refine interviewing and job skills; begin crafting career plan through exploration and analysis.
- Teaching Topics: Portfolios; Resumes; Communication; Interviewing; Professional Organizations; Industry Research; Targeted Career Exploration; Post Graduate Options

Year 4: Implementation

- Goal: enhance skills developed in previous years and implement a job search plan.
- Teaching Topics: Portfolios; Recruiting; Salary Negotiations; Student Choice; Assessment; Business Etiquette/Ethics; Networking/Social Media; First Year on the Job; Presentations

Research Questions

- 1. What is the relationship between the degree of participation in PDS and the...
 - career maturity of college graduates?
 - career search self-efficacy of college graduates?

Research Design

- Quantitative Research
- Ex-Post Facto Design
- Cross-Functional Survey Research

Population and Setting

- Those surveyed were 2007 & 2008 college graduates (N=242) who participated in the Professional Development Seminar (PDS) program during the four years of undergraduate study

Variables/Measures

- *Dependant Variables:*
 - *Career Maturity*
 - *Career Search Self-Efficacy*
- *Independent Variable:*
 - *Participation in Career Development Program*

Instrumentation

Career Maturity Inventory-R Attitude Scale

- The CMI-R Attitude Scale contains 25 questions, and will be used to measure individual's attitudes towards careers and career choice
- The CMI-R Attitude Scale measures five behaviors and attitudes of career and career choice maturity: (1) greater decisiveness in making a career choice, (2) more active involvement in the process, (3) independence in decision-making, (4) realistic orientation towards work, and (5) the ability to compromise

Instrumentation

Career Search Efficacy Scale

- The Career Search Efficacy Scale (CSES) is an instrument designed to measure career search self-efficacy, or the confidence a person has for performing various career search tasks
- The CSES yields four factors: Job Search, Interviewing, Networking, and Personal Exploration Efficacy

Instrumentation

- Individual Data Sheet
 - Gather descriptive data on the sample
 - Identify respondents' degree of participation in the PDS program: overall engagement, class attendance, October (Student Choice) programs, group participation, course assignments, frequency of participation in class discussion

Data Analysis

- Descriptive statistics
- Pearson's correlations and regression analyses were used to test the null hypotheses to determine whether there was a relationship between participation in PDS (independent variable) and career maturity and career search self-efficacy (dependant variables) of participants

Results - Demographics

- Respondents (N=76)
 - 46.1% male
 - 92.1% between 22-24 years old
 - 51% 2007 graduates
 - 98.7% Bachelor's degree
 - 64.5% 3.1-4.0 GPA
 - 93.4% currently employed (64.5% within field of study)

Results - PDS Participation Variables

Total Responses 76

	No Participation				Extremely Participatory					
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Overall Engagement 32.9%			--	--	2.6%	--	1.3%	10.5%	21.1%	31.6%
Frequency	--	1.3%	2.6%	5.3%	11.8%	9.2%	26.3%	19.7%	23.7%	
Attendance 63.2%	--	--	--	3.9%	--	5.3%	6.6%	21.1%		
Group Participation 30.3%			--	1.3%	--	6.6%	3.9%	5.3%	18.4%	34.2%
October Programs 27.6%			--	7.9%	1.3%	6.6%	6.6%	7.9%	19.7%	22.4%
Assignments 51.3%		--	--	1.3%	1.3%	1.3%	3.9%	14.5%	26.3%	

Results - Descriptive Stats - PDS Participation Variables

	M	SD	Range
■ Frequency	7.0	1.7	7.0
■ Attendance	8.3	1.2	5.0
■ Group Participation	7.6	1.6	7.0
■ October Programs	6.7	2.5	8.0
■ Assignments	8.1	1.1	5.0
■ Overall Engagement	7.7	1.3	6.0

Results - Descriptive Stats - Career Maturity

	M	SD	Range	a
■ Overall CM	6.6	.8	4.1	.77
■ Decisiveness	6.3	.8	3.6	.61
■ Involvement	6.7	1.4	5.4	.63
■ Independence	6.6	1.4	6.4	.64
■ Orientation	7.0	.9	4.6	.49
■ Compromise	6.4	1.0	4.4	.50

Results - Descriptive Stats - Career Search Self-Efficacy

	M	SD	Range	a
■ Overall CSSE	7.4	1.2	6.1	.98
■ Job Search	7.5	1.3	6.0	.96
■ Interviewing	7.5	1.3	6.0	.93
■ Networking	7.1	1.4	7.0	.94
■ Personal Exploration	7.5	1.2	4.8	.92

Null Hypothesis #1 - Correlation

- There was no relationship between the degree of participation in PDS and the career maturity of college graduates.
 - Rejected

CM

- Frequency .23*
- Attendance .08
- Group Participation .05
- October Programs - .02
- Assignments .22*
- Overall Engagement .17

Note. CM, Career Maturity; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$ (one-tailed)

Null Hypothesis #2 - Correlation

- There was no relationship between the degree of participation in PDS and the career search self-efficacy of college graduates.
 - Rejected
- CSSE
- Frequency .51**
- Attendance .23*
- Group Participation .40**
- October Programs .03
- Assignments .37**
- Overall Engagement .40**

Note. CSE, Career Search Self-Efficacy; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$ (one-tailed)

Null Hypothesis # 1 & 2 - Regression

	Career Maturity		Career Search	
	β	t	β	t
■ Frequency	.236*	1.61	.393*	3.08
■ Attendance		-.052	-0.36	-.096
■ Group Participation			-.155	-0.98
227*	1.65			
■ October Programs			-.055	-0.44
-1.57				
■ Assignments			.221	1.47
140	1.08			

*p < .05, **p < .01 (one-tailed)

Discussion - Key Findings - PDS Participation Variables

Overall, credit bearing career development programs are most beneficial to participants

- The majority of respondents (64.5%) indicated being extremely or very participatory in the PDS program overall
- 43.4% of respondents were extremely or very participatory in class discussions
- The majority of respondents (84.3%) reported high levels of class attendance

Discussion - Key Findings - PDS Participation Variables Cont...

- The majority of respondents (64.5%) reported high levels of participation in group projects
- 50% of respondents were extremely or very participatory in October (Student Choice) Programming
- The majority of respondents (77.6%) reported being extremely or very participatory in course assignments

Discussion - Key Findings - Hypothesis #1

- There is no relationship between the degree of participation in PDS and the career maturity of college graduates. - Rejected

Discussion - Key Findings - Hypothesis #2

- There is no relationship between the degree of participation in PDS and the career search self-efficacy of college graduates. - Rejected

Implications

- Preparation Myths
- Goal of Higher Education - Dressel (1968) states the goal of higher education is to graduate students who are self-aware, who “know how to acquire knowledge, and how to use it” (p. 210), and who can contribute positively to society.

Implications

- Program Implementation
 - Look to smaller offerings
 - Seek support from the top
 - Redefine the mission
 - Meet generational needs
 - Cross-campus initiatives
 - Employer need

Recommendations for Further Research

- Longitudinal tracking of the students who have completed the PDS program
- Replication of this study with a similar population and at another university
- Similar study correlating the PDS program with career maturity and career search self-efficacy using a control or treatment group from a comparable population
- Qualitative study of career course participants involving personal interviews and/or focus groups may also prove to be beneficial to this body of research
- Similar study might be conducted using the same or similar evaluation tools in a pre and post-test format

Conclusion

- Examining the issue of student under preparedness for the college-to-career transition can :
 - (1) provide educators, researchers, administrators and policy-makers with valuable knowledge to help with the implementation of successful career development programs
 - (2) present information on students' decisiveness, involvement, independence, and compromise by examining levels of career maturity
 - (3) Assess the impact of self-efficacy on the outcome of the career search process

Conclusion

- Results of this, as well as past research indicate the need for structured career development programs and initiatives for undergraduate students, particularly mandatory career development programs spanning the entire undergraduate curriculum.