RECONSIDERING CAREER EDUCATION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS:
COUNSELLOR AND STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF
CAREER COUNSELLING

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BSc, GradDipEd

This thesis is presented for the degree of
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Declaration of Original Submission

I declare that this thesis is my own account of research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

Hanh Quah Theresa Truong
Abstract

Career counselling is central to facilitating high school students’ postsecondary goals. Research studies have revealed student dissatisfaction with career guidance, but how do counsellors respond? Dialogue between counsellors who provide guidance and students who are discontent with career planning services is scarce. Counsellor and student opinions need to be collaborated and communicated to each other for practical and relevant practice. This thesis considers counsellor and student perspectives to inform effective career education in secondary schools.

A mixed methods approach was used to examine existing policies in place at one Ontario high school. A survey of 35 Grades 11 and 12 students assessed student initiative towards, and opinions about, counselling. Interviews with 2 counsellors provided a more in-depth understanding of the counsellor-student discourse, contextualised realistic practice, and suggested methods to manage student expectations and needs.

Findings indicated complementary results. Students were largely confident in their postsecondary goals, but a smaller percentage credited counsellors for their success. A majority of students sought advice from their counsellors, but responded differently on the quality of guidance received. Many Grade 12 students felt they were not receiving enough exclusive and specific attention. Counsellors’ multifaceted responsibilities did not allow for special attention to the graduating class. Differences between counsellor and student perspectives lay in their respective opinions about effective practice. However, both parties felt more counsellors or lower student-to-counsellor ratios would benefit their working relationship and improve provisions for student needs.
Results suggest the need to better define counsellor and student responsibilities. Assessment of student concerns and counsellor responses support a proposal to infuse career development into other high school subject areas. Career education needs to encourage student independence and enforce student accountability for their career development.
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Career counselling and education in high school is an essential means to prepare students for their transition into postsecondary academic and/or occupational careers. Much of this responsibility lies with high school guidance counsellors because of the interrelated aspects of academic maintenance, aptitude profiling, personal support, and career development.

High school counselling programs and services encompass personal, social, academic, and career counselling. Personal counselling pertains to the nurturing and maintenance of healthy attitudes as adolescents encounter developmental demands. Social counselling assists students in their navigation of interpersonal interactions with their peers. Academic counselling refers to the exploration of learning strengths, challenges, and interests as students select courses that will optimize their academic progress toward successful fulfillment of requirements for their secondary school education. Career counselling involves consolidating all the above to prepare students for transitioning from high school into their postsecondary academic and/or occupational pursuits. Academic and career counselling are closely related because academic planning and outcomes greatly influence career goals and potential. Thus, while academic and career counselling are considered separate domains, this study refers to the two components collectively, and more generally, as career counselling.

Guidance counsellors are often charged with the responsibility to oversee students’ successful completion of high school requirements, counselling students on overcoming their difficulties, and advising students on possible career paths. The multifaceted nature of their duties requires guidance counsellors to not only be knowledgeable in various aspects of academia and administration, but also challenges
them to be current with educational and occupational opportunities. As such, as secondary school educators, high school counsellors have more dynamic and more difficult to define roles compared to high school subject teachers.

Perceptions of high school counsellors’ roles and effective practices have been discussed in many studies (Aluede & Imonikhe, 2002; Balcombe, 1995; Bernes & Magnusson, 2004; Borgen & Hiebert, 2006; Curry & Lambie, 2007; Domene, Shapka, & Keating, 2006; Gullekson, 1995; Magnifico, 2007; McDowell, 1995; Pyne, Bernes, Magnusson, & Poulsen, 2002). Borgen and Hiebert (2006) noted that students’ self-identified needs “have been studied systematically for almost 20 years” (p. 394). However, differences between counsellor and student priorities have been reported (Code et al., 2006; Domene et al., 2006; Pyne et al., 2002). Counsellors and students need to acknowledge these differences in order to work more collaboratively. This thesis compares counsellor and student perceptions of high school career counselling, leading to suggestions for change in high school career education.

High school Guidance departments oversee general student welfare. Guidance counsellors’ responsibilities include academic planning, career advising, and providing personal counsel. Personal counselling will not be addressed in this paper. As Lee and Ekstrom (1987) explained, only select students require personal counselling, but all high school students need to make educational decisions and postsecondary career plans.

Academic and career counselling in high school help students prepare for their postsecondary goals. These two aspects are intricately related in this respect. According to Gordon (1992), academic advising incorporates exploration of life and/or vocational goals, program and course choices, and the scheduling of these program courses. Students consider counsellors as advisors to postsecondary options
and maintainers of academic records (Aluede & Imonikhe, 2002). The effectiveness of high school career counselling is thus a topic of interest for educational stakeholders such as business and industry, community members, parents, governments, and most importantly, guidance counsellors and students.

An essential responsibility of schools is to prepare students for employment. Every high school student needs to make postsecondary career plans. A career in the broadest sense is the design of one’s life plans, including schooling, occupation, and lifestyle. Balcombe (1995) and Hiebert (2002) alluded to career education as a means to develop self-direction in pursing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to achieve meaningful careers. Thus, career education encompasses the refinement of one’s academic choices in pursuit of one’s occupational and lifestyle plans. Lazerson and Gaskell (2008) attributed much of this responsibility to high school counsellors. Career counselling, which involves career development, work adjustment, and integration of life roles (Borgen & Hiebert, 2006) is particularly relevant toward the final high school years. Career education is a priority in secondary schools because we need to prepare students for life after high school (Gullekson, 1995).

Career counselling is an evolving profession that reflects economic and social realities (Borgen & Hiebert, 2006), and changes according to the manner in which society perceives careers. The Canadian Encyclopedia (Lazerson & Gaskell, 2008) attributed the dawn of career counselling to the early 20th century educational reforms, and noted the provision of guidance counsellors beginning with the Ontario Vocational Education Act in 1921, before its substantial establishment in the 1960s. High school counselling in the early 20th century concentrated on matching students with jobs using instruments such as aptitude tests (Patton & McMahon, 2006). Counsellors were seen as objective experts.
The theoretical framework for career counselling in the 21st century differs from the past. Counselling moves from a student-to-job matching practice towards a cognitive problem-solving process where skills and personalities are challenged by changing economic climates. These changes inform a departure from objective to perspective practices. Students who have similar career goals, but different academic strengths now have varied opportunities to achieve their postsecondary plans. A 21st century high school counsellor needs to be sensitive to the subtleties of student strengths and be knowledgeable of various career pathways. Counsellors need to move away from being impartial advisors to incorporating students’ perceived needs to inform good practice.

Career counselling is not a stand-alone intervention. Gitterman (as cited in Balcombe, 1995) described guidance counselling as a combination of curriculum and service with specific measurable learning outcomes. Springer and Pevoto (2003) described the process as students’ development of self-efficacy. This development begins early. Helwig’s (2004) 10-year longitudinal study described children as young as three reporting occupational aspirations. Children in the study associated their occupational interests first through the power embodied by influential adults and gender-associated roles to affiliation with social value and personal preferences. Students’ aspirations became better defined, and their preparations ripened toward their career expectations as they aged. Helwig’s (2004) findings suggest that effective counselling entails varying strategies to accommodate students’ developmental growth.

The faculty of high school Guidance centers on transitioning processes. Sears (2004) described transition issues that arise between high school and higher education lying in the difference “between learner centred and discipline centred education” (p.
Transition during a student’s academic career becomes increasingly more dramatic from the primary years to higher education. The same increasing intensity affects students pursuing occupational careers after high school. All students negotiate new identities in their new environments (Chen, 1999). Ontario elementary school students have between 8 to 10 years to sort through adjustment issues. High school education in Ontario is half this time. Students spend four years in high school transitioning out of the elementary setting, adjusting to the secondary learning environment, and preparing for the transition into higher education and/or the world of work. Guidance counsellors assist students with these changes in high school and help students develop skills to adapt to new environments.

As service industries continue to dominate global economies, both educators and students see education, especially higher education, as a means to improve employability (Alexitch, Kobussen, & Stookey, 2004). Postsecondary education has become mainstream practice compared to 20 or 30 years ago. Student participants sampled by Alexitch et al. (2004) considered higher education more important for securing employment opportunities than for personal development. They also noted parents encouraging their children to attend postsecondary education regardless of readiness, interests, or personal goals. Other options may not even be considered. Students also reported teachers and guidance counsellors providing the same information and advice regardless of their postsecondary directions. Besides the obstacle of financial costs, students are encouraged to attend a postsecondary program of study regardless of their interest or career direction.

The notion of higher education appears to be embraced by many high school graduates as Pancer, Pratt, Hunsberger, and Alisat (2004) reported approximately 60% of North American students pursue higher education after high school. However,
statistics from multiple studies show that many who pursue higher education do not succeed in completing the endeavour (Alexitch et al., 2004; Borgen & Hiebert, 2006; Gibbons, Borders, Wiles, Stephan, & Davis, 2006; Gullekson, 1995; Jarvis, 1995). Despite student optimism, few are actually prepared for the experience. Hoyt (as cited in Alexitch et al., 2004) noted that less than half of students enrolled in a postsecondary academic program obtained a degree and a third did not continue their second year of studies. There appears to be a sense of necessity to obtain a postsecondary education, but students may not feel they are adequately prepared or were given sufficient information to be successful in the endeavour. Preparing students for higher education needs to involve more than simply getting students admitted into a college or university program. Otherwise, efforts may result in wasted commitment, resources, and time.

In one study, senior high school students shared a common concern about making the wrong occupational choices and were nervous about the very need to make a decision (Code et al., 2006). Anxiety arising from the sense of urgency toward high school graduation was also reported by Bardick, Bernes, Magnusson, and Witko (2004) and Magnusson and Bernes (2002). Studies centred on the Comprehensive Career Needs Survey conducted by Magnusson and Bernes in 2002 found that students left high school generally feeling unprepared for both postsecondary academic and/or occupational demands. In other studies, students noted a lack of awareness of counselling services (Bernes & Magnusson, 2004; Wintemute, 2004), inadequate preparation for the demands of higher education (Alexitch et al., 2004), and counsellor unhelpfulness (Magnusson & Bernes, 2002) contributing to their lack of success. Borgen and Amundson’s findings (as cited in Code et al., 2006) showed that students were also worried about postsecondary financial assistance, lack of
support, transitioning from the secondary to postsecondary setting, employment difficulties, lack of job satisfaction, and lack of educational opportunities after high school.

While counsellors cannot alleviate all student concerns, high school career education needs to present career opportunities in breadth and in depth for students to make well-informed and confident postsecondary choices. Davey (1993) demonstrated the limitations of student perceptions and knowledge about occupational choices. She described half of her student participants’ desired jobs as represented by only 10 occupations. A statement by the president of Ferris State University in the United States accentuated these findings: “High school students are making critical decisions about their career paths in a vacuum, unaware of the broad array of educational and employment opportunities available to them” (Survey Shows Lack of Career, 2002, p. 447). Canadian students also expressed the need to address more postsecondary options during counselling consultations (Borgen & Hiebert, 2006).

Career planning is believed to be one of the most important parts of a guidance counsellor’s role (Aluede & Imonikhe, 2002). However, studies have found that students turned to parental guidance as their primary source of advice (Domene et al., 2006; Worzel, 1997). Worzel (1997) cautioned against over reliance on parental advice because contemporary students are facing a new world of industrial demands. Parents may not be providing the soundest advice because parents and students are likely experiencing different employment demands, hence varied employable skills. Bardick, Bernes, Magnusson, and Witko (2005) cited Middleton and Loughead’s 1993 study, which contended that parental encouragement may be skewed to a limited range of alternatives for adolescent career exploration and choice. Likewise, high school counsellors arguably have presaged experiences that bias advice given to
students. This notion is precisely why it is necessary to identify what students know about career education and what counsellors are able to provide in order to enhance the educative nature of existing practices.

**Research Aims**

This thesis project sought to analyse counsellor and student perceptions about career counselling in high schools by addressing four main questions as it pertains to one mid-sized metropolitan high school in Ontario, Canada.

1) What types of career counselling services are available in high school?

2) What do students perceive as effective high school career counselling?

3) What are the differences and similarities between students’ identified counselling needs and available provisions?

4) How do counsellors respond to student feedback?

Proposing to examine consistencies between high school students’ perceptions of counselling in secondary school and counsellors’ practices implicitly assumes the existence of differences. The null hypothesis would be that there are no incongruities between students’ perceived needs and high school career education provisions. However, literature which shows student discontent cannot be ignored. The assumption is that discontented students equate to perceived ineffective high school counselling. Improving counselling practice would begin with generating better student opinions of counsellors as students are assumed to collaborate more candidly and effectively with counsellors whom they are confident in.
Structure of Thesis

Chapter One outlines the basis for my research and its aims. Chapter Two draws attention to relevant literature about high school career education and examines what we already know about how high school counsellors and students perceive these practices. The literature review informed the approach I took for this study, which is outlined in Chapter Three. Research findings are summarized in Chapter Four in response to each of the four research questions: What types of career counselling services are available in high school? What do students perceive as effective high school career counselling? What are the differences and similarities between students’ identified counselling needs and available provisions? How do counsellors respond to student feedback? Chapters Three and Four contain less detail because the subsequent two chapters are manuscripts submitted for publication, which further divide this study into perspectives on career counselling and high school career education, respectively. Chapter Five focuses on counsellor and student opinions about effective practice during secondary school. Chapter Six relates my findings to compare career education policies with realistic practices. These two chapters provide more pertinent details of my research methods and findings, but repeat some content from Chapters One to Four. Chapter Seven discusses overall findings, linking elements discussed in Chapters Five and Six. Chapter Eight summarizes my conclusions and evaluates this study.
CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

High school student guidance services need to reflect current economic, career, and social realities and pressures. Changing guidance practices implies tailoring information according to perceived relevance to students based on formal and informal knowledge gained about students (Borgen & Heibert, 2006). Astramovich and Harris (2007) describe counsellors as advocates for students, the community, and the public. However, the role of guidance counsellors often become obscured by demands that trickle down from educational policies and expectations from administrators, students, and teachers.

Perceptions of Counsellors

Counsellors’ roles are often vaguely defined, such that expectations placed on them by other school personnel and their own priorities are inconsistent (Aluede & Imonikhe, 2002). Balcombe (1995) described high school counsellors’ time being spent mostly on personal counselling, leaving inadequate provisions for academic and career counselling. Contrary to Balcombe’s (1995) advocacy for career education to take priority, Winternute (2004) argued that personal counselling is a much needed aspect requiring attention from high school counsellors. The different perspectives portrayed in these studies may depend on a school’s specific student needs and whether a school caters for the range of students at risk, or focuses on the severity of needs of a selected group of at-risk students.

Educators involved with guidance counselling in high schools may endorse different views compared to uninvolved educators. Counsellors in McDowell’s (1995) study considered individual counselling paramount, but it was not their most frequent activity. Administrators held educational advising, scheduling, sequential
interventions, and career guidance in high regard. Principals held no consensus on counsellor functions. Some described counsellors as administrative assistants, while others encouraged more counselling activities. McDowell reported higher congruence between educational practitioners about the counsellor’s role compared to administrative authorities. The way administrators and educators view the counsellor’s role affects the tasks and duties counsellors become responsible for because policies tend to rely on their opinions.

Clear definition of the high school counsellor’s role is most important to counsellors themselves and the students they serve. Although researchers such as Bardick et al., (2004), Borgen and Hiebert (2006), Domene et al., (2006), and Hiebert, Kemeny, and Kurchak (1998) have suggested the importance of acknowledging student opinions on counselling practice, later studies continued to show general student dissatisfaction with the counselling they received (Alexitch et al., 2004; Bernes & Magnusson, 2004; Code et al., 2006; Magnusson & Bernes, 2002). Ambiguous interpretation of counsellors’ roles and responsibilities leads to inconsistent expectations of the services counsellors could provide. McDowell’s (1995) students illustrated their perceptions of counsellors varyingly. Some noted their most significant contribution as personal counsellors, while others regarded counsellors as disciplinarians and administrators. Role ambiguity causes unrealistic expectations to form. Researchers have suggested that better definition of counsellor roles is needed for the benefit of counsellors and students (Aluede & Imonikhe, 2002; Wilkerson, 2009; Wintemute, 2004).

Research has shown benefits for students who sought counsel, but it has also revealed that few students actively sought professional help (Domene et al., 2006). Domene et al. (2006) referenced studies recording between 8% and 40% of students
seeking assistance from high school counsellors. Similar behaviour was demonstrated by participants in several other studies on different student cohorts (Bardick et al., 2004, 2005; Bernes & Magnusson, 2004; Gibbons et al., 2006; Helwig, 2004; Magnusson & Bernes, 2002). In terms of helpfulness, Pyne et al., (2002) referenced a somewhat dated (Noeth, Engen, & Prediger, 1984) research study of 1200 students seeking help from their school counsellors as a last resort. Parents were students’ first resource. However, Bardick et al., (2005) found parents unsure of effective means to help their children’s career development. Gibbons et al., (2006) also reported parents looking to educators for help and direction for their children.

While there is a general notion that high school guidance counsellors are key to students’ career education in high school, students in past research have expressed little confidence in their counsellors and shown little initiative to approach them. The latter is problematic because guidance counsellors are not being accessed for the very purpose of their existence. In order to instil student confidence in counsellors, counsellor roles need to be clearly defined so students know what to expect from them. Counsellors need to be accessed for the right reasons to be effective and efficient.

**Counselling Difficulties**

Perceived ineffective career counselling practice may be fuelled by a lack of communication and collaboration between educators and students. Healthy counsellor-student relationships determine the success and outcome of the career education rendered. Fitzpatrick (2008) found students who had better relationships with their counsellors, in terms of goal and task collaboration, were more prepared for transitioning out of high school. Their alliance improved when counsellors and students formed goals that were personally meaningful to the student. Unfortunately,
counsellor-student interaction is often limited and usually on a short-term basis when counsellors are responsible for an average of approximately 400 (Helwig, 2004) to 500 (Gullekson, 1995) students. The opportunity to build rapport may be more viable when guidance counsellors are involved with other teaching disciplines, where they may interact with students in subject classes. This practice is not foreign in some Ontario high schools, but it is not routine. In settings where counsellors have limited interactions with students, developing a strong relationship may not be possible.

Counsellors have also reported dissatisfaction with the delivery of career education to young people. Counsellors in a study by Balcombe (1995) perceived that issues of high student-counsellor ratios, inconsistent perspectives on counsellors’ roles, and lack of counsellor accessibility diminished effective career counselling. Some counsellors were explicitly concerned with the amount of time they have to dedicate to career counselling. Additional responsibilities reduced counsellors’ priority to counsel students on career matters. In another study by Wintermute (2004), counsellors reported paperwork, scheduling, and administrative tasks taking up the most time. Balcombe (1995) found that on average, only 17% of a full time counsellor’s time was spent on career counselling. Wintermute (2004) reported an even lower percentage of active career counselling, at a little over 7% of counsellors’ time.

High student-counsellor ratios play a role in determining counsellor availability. Gullekson (1995) reported some schools in Alberta affording one counsellor per every 500 students. The “Counseling Trends Survey” (2004) reported U.S. public high schools average over 400 students per counsellor, with the highest workload noted by high schools in California, where some schools allocated over 950 students per counsellor.
High school guidance counsellors provide a range of guidance services, including career education, but little is known of how useful and meaningful this assistance is for students. For the most part, access appears to be a key issue. Whiteley and Porter (n.d.) noted the majority of students seeking counsel found it helpful. More-directed students gained more than less-directed students. This evidence suggests accessibility is a crucial element to investigate. However, this does not appear to be the only issue.

**Student Competencies**

Surveying students, parents, and businesses have indicated that high school career counselling has been minimally effective in terms of producing realistic and attainable postsecondary goals (Gullekson, 1995). Many students have unrealistic perceptions of themselves regarding their preparation for postsecondary study. Gullekson found that while 65% of Canadian students believed they would receive direct entrance into university, only between 20% and 25% actually did. Research a decade later showed only a small improvement in a similar Canadian context. Borgen and Hiebert (2006) found 80% of parents and 75% of students expected formal postsecondary education, while the Canadian national average accounted for only half of these figures being realised. A study in the U.S. also reported students having unrealistic perceptions about postsecondary education (Gibbons et al., 2006). The opinion of high school incompetence was also voiced by employers who believed secondary schools did not teach relevant information and skills required in the workplace, and students did not link course work beyond high school (Magnifico, 2007).

The lack of student awareness of available counselling services (Bernes & Magnusson, 2004; Wintemute, 2004) may be a possible cause for student
unpreparedness. The importance of educating students about available resources was noted by Domene et al. (2006). Though this is a crucial step to initiate student consciousness, it does not guarantee increased student preparation. Student confidence in available guidance services and their appropriate approach to utilising these services are vital to effective career planning. Without confidence, students will continue to evade seeking counsel. On the other hand, without selective counselling sessions, students may constantly seek counsel for purposes that they themselves are capable of performing (e.g., college and university applications, seeking financial assistance, and scholarships). Neither approach contributes to the effective use of a counsellor’s time.

Few studies have asked students directly what they know about higher education and career planning, and what they would find helpful (Gibbons et al., 2006). Wintermute (2004) cited most research focussing on counsellor perspectives. More references have been made about dissatisfaction with counselling practices from both counsellors (Balcombe, 1995) and students (Alexitch et al., 2004; Bernes & Magnusson, 2004; Code et al., 2006; Magnusson & Bernes, 2002; Wintermute, 2004). However, little is known about cognitive responses to student opinions. Identifying the differences and similarities between students’ self-expressed needs with available provisions and understanding how counsellors respond to student feedback would help pinpoint where the working relationship between counsellors and students needs improvement. As Manthei (2006) noted, research on counselling is often unknown to counsellors. Modifications cannot be made when counsellors are unaware of student concerns, and students do not consider the limits of their counsellors’ help. Hence, matching perspectives between counsellors and students is a crucial step to mutual understanding and acceptance of responsible roles for both parties involved.
Policy Changes

Researchers noted the benefits and importance of integrating comprehensive developmental career guidance programs with other subject curricula in school (Balcombe, 1995; Bernes & Magnusson, 2004; Chen, 1999; Hiebert et al., 1998; Kiker, 2008; Lapan, Gysbers, & Sun, 1997; Levi & Ziegler, 1993). According to Galassi and Akos (2004), “comprehensive guidance and counseling programs became the primary conceptual framework for school counseling in the latter part of the twentieth century” (p. 155). Comprehensive career education includes formal courses and informal guidance of student career plans. Ontario implemented the mandatory half-credit Grade 10 Career Studies course amongst other career development measures as part of the Choices into Action: Guidance and Career Education Policy for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training [OMET], 1999). Similar to Alberta’s requisite Career and Life Management course, Career Studies helps students match their academic goals with postsecondary career plans and manage individual career education portfolios.

The counselling profession has undergone changes in response to growing student needs. However, implementation of any mainstream practice is subject to adjustments to meet specific school-based needs. Continued monitoring and acclimatisation is necessary to ensure theoretical frameworks are indeed effectively serving the populace it is accountable for. Understanding the types of career planning services that are in effect and how students perceive their effectiveness help maintain a successful program. Choices into Action (OMET, 1999) proposed program evaluation in Ontario schools every three years, but this requirement was later revoked (OMET, 2005). Thus, understanding implications of the Ontario guidance and career education policy would require contact at the local school level. We cannot
understand the high school counsellor’s role in facilitating career education without reviewing and assessing how policies surrounding career education in high schools are manifest. Policies need to be consistent and transparent to show effectiveness by some measureable means.

Counselling Practice

Existing career counselling practices have not been thoroughly discussed and understood. Research evidenced the need to reform counselling programs, but the object of reform has not been explicit. Lee and Ekstrom (1987) noted a sample of American students who did not have aspirations for higher education received less counselling. Students in North America described the guidance counselling advice they received in high school to be vague (Alexitch & Page, 1997; Alexitch et al., 2004), and a sample of Canadian students described the advice as not applicable to their interests (Bardick et al., 2005). Despite unfavourable findings, Hiebert (2003) noted that students were concerned about, and interested in career counselling at school. These studies voice student concerns, but they do not address the validity of the students’ views. The opinions were singular and lacked dialogue with counsellors. To link the two parties in the counsellor-student discourse, this project first sought to validate student views against existing policy and practice, before examining the need to reform career educational practices and to assess its viability.

Effective practice relies on mutual understanding of roles, services, and expectations amongst relevant parties. Aluede and Imonikhe’s (2002) conclusion that there is no consensus on counselling roles agreed with Wilkerson (2009) and Wintermute (2004) that guidance counsellor roles need clarification. Magnusson and Bernes (2002) also found that students lacked knowledge about available resources.
Students need to know about available services and school counsellors would benefit from understanding students’ perceptions of the counsel they want.

Guidance counsellors’ opinions are vital to understanding counsellor-student relationships. Magnusson and Bernes (2002) studied various perceptions of students’ career needs. Their study concentrated on students’ responses in comparison to other surveyed participants, namely, counsellors, parents, other school administrators, and teachers. Participating counsellors were asked to suggest additional workshops which may complement existing practice, but surveys did not ask for counsellors’ evaluation of existing methods, nor do their results express counsellors’ responses to student feedback. In-depth understanding requires bridging perceptions from both counsellors and students because the two parties may likely prioritise different elements of academic and career counselling.

This study sought to measure effective counselling by furthering the knowledge of student concerns to incorporate counsellors’ responses of these student views. The validity of students’ opinions has been acknowledged by Pyne et al. (2002) when discussing student perceptions of careers. As Bardick et al., (2004) referenced, “effective and comprehensive guidance and counselling programs need to begin with a comprehensive assessment of student needs” (p. 107). However, little is known about how guidance counsellors react to student responses.

Studies describing inadequate programs addressing students’ postsecondary plans span over 20 years of research. The lengthy process required to effect change demonstrates elements of unrealistic demands on high school counsellors and a lack of communication between students and their advisors. For research to effect efficient contributions, change needs to be exacted locally and immediately. This project
supports effecting local change in schools to demonstrate the benefits of a larger scale policy change.
CHAPTER THREE

Method

This project utilised a mixed methods approach in the form of a case study to contextualise high school career counselling needs. Since my literature review showed high student-counsellor ratios and a multitude of additional tasks surfacing as common concerns amongst counsellors and students, I undertook to first understand the nature of the guidance counsellors’ roles and workload at the school through an initial interview with participating counsellors. After contextualizing the participating school from the perspective of guidance counsellors, I surveyed students for their opinions about career planning and the assistance they had received through their counsellors. To complete my analysis of the school’s career counselling practice, I shared the data collected through the student survey with counsellors upon completion.

Quantitative measurement and descriptive statistical analysis of measurable data allowed for comparison with other studies. Considering that quantitative research largely aims to test theory (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2002), my study began with testing the applicability of prior research on my participant sample. I wanted to know where students’ self-described needs were rooted by first considering whether my student sample expressed the same concerns as high school students from other similar educational settings as noted by prior studies. Thirty five senior high school students in Grades 11 and 12 were surveyed for their perceptions of their readiness to graduate, their views on effective career counselling practices, and their suggestions for improving available services. Student opinions were gathered in the form of a questionnaire (Appendix A).
Qualitative understanding of the context of counselling practice and student perceptions “aim[ed] to generate theory” (Ary et al., 2002, p. 22) surrounding the exhibited observations. High school counsellors were interviewed before and after student surveys to provide an overview of counselling practices and to discuss student feedback, respectively (Appendix B). Focused interviews enhanced analyses of quantitative data collected from students to build a better understanding of the context of counselling practices and informed suggestions for future improvement.

A longitudinal investigative approach was considered, but abandoned. As Helwig (2004) acknowledged, “the value of the longitudinal design is that intraindividual variation can be accounted for” (p. 50). Longitudinal research, though preferred, is rare. They are time-consuming and difficult to find allowances and support for. A cross-sectional design was chosen instead because it was less intrusive, required less time and resources, and was less demanding on participants.

**Research Instruments**

Interviews and questionnaires were administered to gather data for this study. Counsellors were interviewed twice. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. Students were surveyed for their opinions and perspectives using a questionnaire.

Student questionnaires were separated into three main parts, each on a separate page (see Appendix A). The first part collected information about students’ postsecondary goals and/or plans, the people they approached for advice, and the types of guidance services they prioritised. Additional empty slots were provided in case the lists were not thorough enough. The second section used 22 Likert-scale type questions to examine students’ perceptions of their readiness for high school exit, including factors which were counsellor-reliant (9 items), financially-dependent (2 items), and student-reliant (6 items). The remaining five items assessed student access
to counsellors and their confidence in them. These first two sections collected mainly quantifiable data. The last section of the questionnaire collected qualitative student responses with open-ended questions about career education programs in place, student relationships with counsellors, and the types of programs and services students valued.

Surveying allowed me to canvas student feedback simultaneously. As McMillan (2000) recommended, surveying is helpful for identifying characteristic attitudes and opinions. Since I wanted to compare student opinions about career counselling with existing practice, surveying seemed an appropriate measure that required minimal time commitments from students.

Counsellors were interviewed before and after the student survey (see Appendix B). Interviews were entirely qualitative in nature. They provided descriptive qualitative data, and led to discussion of counselling implementation in the context of theoretical practices. The first interview asked counsellors to contextualise the realities of counselling practice in the school setting, describing what academic and career counselling entails at their school, their experiences with the senior student cohort, their perceptions of student needs, and the tools and methods used to facilitate career education. The realities of counsellors’ intended efforts and practical obstacles were highlighted in the second interview when student responses to questionnaires were discussed. Counsellors were observed for their reactions to the student responses, and asked about how the school may accommodate for the students’ expressed concerns.

Ethical Review

Ethical review consisted of approvals from Murdoch University and each school board I intended to conduct research in. Murdoch University granted ethical
Permission to conduct research was sought from three different school boards in the hopes to sample schools hosting different demographics and practicing variable career counselling procedures. However, only one school board accepted the invitation for this study. The school board further requested limiting the study to one of several preselected schools, which were deemed appropriate for this study in order to reduce the amount of disturbance to the school curriculum. These limitations severely hampered the originally desired range for comparative study.

**Participant Consent**

I conducted counsellor interviews and a student survey between January and April 2009 with the cooperation of an upper mid-sized high school in Southern Ontario. Two counsellors volunteered for participation in this project after I received consent from the school principal. The head of the Guidance Department and another counsellor with over 20 years of counselling experience offered their time for two interviews. The purpose of the interviews and data use was described to counsellors before they consented to the two audio-recorded interviews.

I approached one Grade 11 class of 22 students and one Grade 12 class of 33 students for voluntary participation in the study after receiving verbal cooperative consent from their subject teacher. Neither class were requisite courses required for obtaining the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD). The intention was to include a mixture of students who were bound for various postsecondary destinations.

The purpose of the study and students’ voluntary participation was explained during an introductory meeting where parental and student consent forms were distributed. Signed consent forms were collected on the date of the survey. Verbal
assent to participation was explained once again prior to distribution of student questionnaires. Students were reminded that they could withdraw from participation only up to collection of their questionnaires. Because no identifiable information was collected, I would not be able to remove a participant’s responses from the sample once I collected their input. Nine Grade 11 students and 26 Grade 12 students submitted completed questionnaires. Of the 35 student participants, nine were in Grade 11 and 26 were in Grade 12 at the time of study. Twenty females and 15 males were surveyed. The participant cohort consisted of observably mainly Caucasian students; with only four Asians and five students of Latin European descent. Information about students’ socio-economic background was not collected. The grade level is the only demographic feature of interest to this particular study.

**Implementation**

Research was conducted in three phases. First, counsellors were interviewed to examine the scope, range, and depth of existing counselling practices in relation to associated policies at the school level. This served as an initial step to examine potential disparities between counsellor practices and student expectations, as well as investigating the relevance of prior research results at the particular school. The second stage of investigation sought to identify students’ state of career goals and planning, their approach to the process, their evaluation of assistance received, and their opinions about existing practices. The study’s final phase presented counsellors with annotated results of student responses. Discussion developed from the similarities and differences between student expectations and career counselling practices. The order of investigation was important for matching career education policy and practice with student opinions, expectations, and concerns.
The process of data collection prompted additional research of statistical data with respect to student-counsellor ratios in local schools for comparison with the sample school to better objectify the viability of expected counselling practice. Data was gathered from 44 schools within two school boards serving the same educational jurisdiction via public websites which offered statistical school information.

**Data Analysis**

Both quantitative and qualitative techniques were used to analyse collected data. Student questionnaires were separated into Grade 11 and Grade 12 respondents and randomly coded in numerical order (i.e., 11.1 to 12.26). All quantitative results were coded, organised, tabulated, and calculated using Microsoft Excel. Qualitative data were transcribed and descriptively interpreted.

Quantitative analysis began with quantifying student preferences toward postsecondary education and/or occupational goals and students’ help-seeking practices. Ranking-type questions and Likert-scale type questions about student career direction and their confidence in counsellors were analysed with descriptive statistics. Students’ career direction was tallied to gauge the type of counselling services students needed and wanted. This was compared to counsellor services students prioritised and provided a basis for interpretation of the types of counselling students valued.

Students then ranked 10 categories of guidance counselling services in order of priority. These rankings in Question 3 (Appendix A) were given a reverse hierarchal value. The service with the lowest average demonstrated student preference. Open-ended responses were separated into negative and positive opinions using binary representation, namely “0” for negative opinions and “1” for positive responses. The frequency of these values was compared with quantified student
responses from Question 3 for consistency. Responses to the open blank suggestions were highlighted and grouped into similar categories for later discussion with counsellors at the second interview to improve students’ career counselling experiences.

The intention of the first three segments and open-ended questions of the student questionnaire was to identify students’ most prioritised needs and the counselling services they valued most to meet their concerns. Question 4 of the student questionnaire focussed on students’ self-reported confidence in their own preparedness for transitioning out of high school, their confidence in their counsellors’ help, and their access to student services. Students’ level of confidence for each of the 22 Likert-scale type questions was given a value between 1 and 4, with 1 representing “strongly disagree” and 4 representing “strongly agree”. A value of “3” or “4” would demonstrate that students felt that they were well prepared and had positive counselling experiences.

Interviews with counsellors were audio recorded, transcribed, and read multiple times over a time lapse to enhance interpretation of data. Interview transcripts were physically highlighted based on key responses to policy implementation, realistic contextual practice, perceptions of student needs, and their responses to student expectations. Coding seemed inappropriate here because responses tended to link across the categories of investigation. Multiple readings and review of the transcripts to verify consistency of interpretation was more suitable.

Student populations and counsellor staffing tendencies in 44 local high schools were collected to calculate student-to-counsellor ratios. This accented the context in which interviewed counsellors were working. Results also helped justify student opinions about counsellor availability.
Qualitative analysis enabled contextual description of quantitative implications. Interviewing counsellors enhanced analyses of data collected from surveying students’ perceptions of their needs and the quality of counselling services they received. Qualitative and quantitative techniques complemented each other to provide a more in-depth understanding of their separate analysis. A mixed method approach, combining quantitative data with qualitative interpretation provided a more holistic examination of career counselling perceptions exemplified in one Ontario high school.
CHAPTER FOUR

Results

Results are briefly presented here in response to each of the four research questions. Both quantitative and qualitative results are presented in the order deemed befitting to address each question. More detailed data analyses are presented and discussed in Chapters 5 and 6. These two chapters address the counsellor-student discourse and the realities of policy and practice at the participating school.

What types of career counselling services are available in high school?

Choices into Action (OMET, 1999) initiated a career education curriculum requiring Ontario Grade 10 students to take a mandatory Career Studies course towards their secondary school diploma. In addition, students create their Annual Education Plan (AEP) starting in Grade 7, and maintain their AEPs twice a year with Teacher Advisors from Grades 9 to 11 through the Teacher Advisory Program (TAP). Participation in TAP is optional in Grade 12. However, section 7.2 of the policy regarding AEP and TAP was later revoked (OMET, 2005). Counsellors at my study school did not refer to TAP as a career education resource, but the school website had noted Grades 9 and 10 students creating their AEPs, which were revised in Grades 11 and 12.

Counsellors and the school website referenced substantial opportunities for high school apprenticeships and cooperative education programs. Counsellors referred to five specific career education interventions during our interviews; four pertained to experiential learning opportunities. One event aimed at exposing Grades 11 and 12 students to varying postsecondary academic avenues, including college diploma programs, university degree courses, private school offers, and vocational studies. Counsellors noted a high level of appreciation for the varied opportunities on offer.
Response to the Cooperative Education Fair was exceptionally high, and encouraged “promoting Co-op even more” (Counsellor1, personal communication, January 21, 2009). Students also reported most appreciation for cooperative education programs, and experiential learning opportunities continued to be in high demand. Fourteen of the 35 sampled students (40%) noted having attended some sort of experiential learning program or were considering enrolling in experiential learning courses. This percentage is relatively high considering the time commitment such programs demand and the limited placements available. Experiential programs generally run for the course of a school year or as an intensive summer program. The students reported a strong emphasis and appreciation for experiential learning at the target school.

**What do students perceive as effective high school career counselling?**

Student participants expressed a high preference for postsecondary education. Twenty nine of the 35 respondents (82.9%) reported having higher educational goals (Table 1, Appendix C). This strong tendency may have affected their assessment of the counsel they received because qualitative responses pointed to a great appreciation for cooperative education opportunities and a high demand for postsecondary information, including financial assistance, academic requirements, and general postsecondary experiential sources of information. Students’ top three prioritised counselling services pertained to academic scheduling and preparation for higher education, including secondary school course selection, postsecondary education course selection and prioritization (Table 2, Appendix C). The desire for assistance with secondary school course selection was understandable as students perceived their immediate needs were to fulfill course requirements for high school graduation. This was closely related to the course of study students planned on pursuing in higher education, thus the subsequent priority to receive assistance with postsecondary
educational planning. Students prioritizing postsecondary advice were consistent with the high preference for higher educational goals.

Student tendencies to approach their parents for advice (Table 3, Appendix C) were consistent with other research (Bardick et al., 2004, 2005; Bernes & Magnusson, 2004; Domene et al., 2006; Gibbons et al., 2006; Magnusson & Bernes, 2002). However, students in this study sought professional counselling more avidly than was reported by other studies. As shown in Table 3 (Appendix C), twenty five students (71%) reported seeking their counsellor’s assistance. Nine students also sought additional advice from postsecondary advisors outside of their school. Students’ self-expressed proactive approaches for seeking advice also reflected the high number of students pursuing higher education.

In general, approximately 80% of sampled students felt prepared to transition out of high school and embark on their postsecondary goals (see Table 5, Appendix C). Grade 12 students showed more confidence (88.4%) compared to their younger counterparts (60.2%). The greatest determining factor was the near 40% difference between Grade 11 and Grade 12 students’ self-expressed academic readiness, as represented by question items 4a and 4c (Appendix A). This is likely due to the further completion of diploma requirements by Grade 12 students as compared to Grade 11 students.

Despite the high level of confidence students expressed about transitioning out of high school, only six (25.7%) of the 25 (71.4%) students who actually sought counsellor assistance reported confidence in their counsellors’ help. Over half of the students reported accessibility to be an issue. This was also quantitatively represented by students’ responses to Questions 4t to 4v (Table 7, Appendix C). Questions to open-ended questions received mixed reviews about the quality of career counselling.
Some students reported high levels of satisfaction, while others felt counsellors were unhelpful. This was consistent with quantitative scores for Questions 4i and Questions 4k to 4s, denoting counsellors’ helpfulness (Table 9, Appendix C).

Students who responded to the open-ended Question 7 (Appendix A) wanted counsellors to allocate more time for individual counselling, advise about postsecondary funding and application procedures, invite more relevant guest speakers to share their experiences, and provide more information about a variety of career pathways, in addition to existing services. The most consistent request was to have more counsellors available to address the immediate needs of graduating students.

What are the differences and similarities between students’ identified counselling needs and available provisions?

A general consensus between counsellors and students was the overall lack of counsellors and time to meet all students’ self-expressed needs. However, their placement of responsibility differed. As previously mentioned, student responses to Questions 6 and 7, expressed belief that effective counselling stems from added effort to meet their specific needs, particularly with providing dedicated assistance to the graduating Grade 12 class. Counsellors noted the importance for students to be more selective in their approach to using student services offered by their Guidance Department and the need for students to take more responsibility and initiative with planning for their postsecondary goals. While counsellors and students shared the common objective to advance students’ postsecondary plans, each party seemed to place the responsibility on the other. Their differences in opinion and implications will be discussed in Chapter Seven.
How do counsellors respond to student feedback?

Counsellors explained that they could not realistically meet student expectations because their roles are multifaceted and tended to require reactive measures, which may be difficult to predetermine. Interviewed counsellors were responsible for more than one Grade level of students. As one counsellor stated, they can never solely concentrate on being the career counselling centre Grade 12 students wanted them to be. Both counsellors voiced concern that students were being too reliant on counsellors to give them the answers, and they suggested students needed to take more responsibility for their decisions and career pathways.

The following two chapters present findings in two manuscripts that were submitted to the Canadian Journal of Education (CJE) and the Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy (CJEAP) for peer review. The latter has since been published in the August 2011 issue of the CJEAP. Chapter Seven discusses results and implications from both papers. The final chapter gathers conclusions made in the two manuscripts to suggest a more collaborative approach to career education in Ontario high schools.
CHAPTER FIVE

High School Counsellor and Student Perspectives on the Role of High School Counselling to Facilitate Student Transitions

Research has indicated student concerns about transitioning out of high school, but there is little dialogue between counsellors and students. This study investigated student expectations in comparison to counselling provisions in one Ontario high school assuming that examination of counsellor and student opinions collectively would help inform effective practice. Two counsellors and 35 Grades 11 and 12 students participated in interviews and responded to a survey, respectively. The chief difference between counsellor and student opinions related to the pragmatics of implementing counselling initiatives. Identified issues of counsellor accessibility and student accountability invite consideration for alternative approaches to career counselling practices in Ontario.

Introduction

High school counselling programs and services encompass personal, social, academic, and career counselling. Personal counselling pertains to the nurturing and maintenance of healthy attitudes as adolescents encounter developmental demands. Social counselling assists students in their navigation of interpersonal interactions with their peers. Academic counselling refers to the exploration of learning strengths, challenges, and interests as students select courses that will optimize their academic progress toward successful fulfillment of requirements for their secondary school education. Career counselling involves consolidating all the above to prepare students for transitioning from high school into their postsecondary academic and/or occupational pursuits. Academic and career counselling are closely related because academic planning and outcomes greatly influence career goals and potential. With
growing service industries that require some form of postsecondary education, academic and career counselling become more and more inseparable. Thus, while academic and career counselling are considered separate domains, this study refers to the two components collectively, and more generally, as career counselling.

Students perceive career planning skills to be important for successful transition to postsecondary experiences (Hiebert, 2002). Preparing for high school exit is considered particularly important because, after graduation, students may have difficulty accessing the support afforded them in high school. Students may underestimate the stressors they encounter in postsecondary studies and lack the requisite discipline to succeed without the structure and support they were accustomed to having at their disposal in high school.

This study was inspired by findings that adolescents felt unprepared for their postsecondary pursuits when they left high school (Alexitch, Kobussen, & Stookey, 2004; Code, Bernes, & Gunn, 2006). Alexitch and colleagues (2004) further added that senior high school students felt less prepared than did their junior colleagues. While studies have noted student dissatisfaction with a lack of awareness of school counselling services (Bernes & Magnusson, 2004; Wintermute, 2004), the amount of university preparation provided by high schools (Alexitch et al., 2004), and a lack of helpfulness from school counsellors (Magnusson & Bernes, 2002), little is known whether students’ unpreparedness was attributed to insufficient career counselling. To address this query, this study focused on how senior secondary students responded to career counselling in relation to available career counselling programs and services.

The following study compares the differences and similarities between what students from one Ontario high school described as high school student needs and effective high school career counselling with their counsellors’ descriptions of the
available services to meet those needs. Prior to the study, the presumption was that students were dissatisfied with their counsellors because their expectations were not being met by the school system. Aligning school-based counselling provisions with student needs would help ensure that effective programs and services are in place to help prepare students for transition out of high school.

**Literature Review**

High school students’ prioritized concerns change over time. Their focus on schoolwork and the home turns toward future careers as students mature between 13 to 19 years of age (Millar & Gallagher, 1996). Bardick, Bernes, Magnusson, and Witko’s (2004) sample of Grades 7 to 9 students believed career planning was unimportant until the later high school years. First year high school students were most concerned about determining course requirements. Students reported putting off making career choices until their senior year, and then became anxious when they perceived time was running out. Procrastination resulted in students struggling to make secondary exit preparations in their final high school year. Students also reported feeling unprepared because of limited and unreliable information about postsecondary pathways, discouragement from educators about achieving their goals, student perceptions of inadequate financial support for postsecondary pursuits, and lack of confidence to pursue their goals (Bardick et al., 2004). Davey’s (1993) research demonstrated that over 93% of students noted specific occupational desires, but only 54% reported confidence that they would attain their goals. Students’ lack of confidence in achieving their career and life goals prompts examination of how counsellors may address student concerns and advocate for support systems in schools.
**Student Expectations**

Prior studies have noted some student concerns warranting attention. Bardick et al. (2004) reported that students were concerned about the quality of information and assistance that related to their immediate planning needs. Hiebert (2002) found that career concerns were among the top ten needs (out of 200 potential needs) expressed by Grades 7 to 12 students in Canada. Students wanted exposure to different careers and alternative postsecondary options (Gibbons, Borders, Wiles, Stephan, & Davis, 2006), additional information about job requirements, assistance with secondary course selection, more extensive work experience, and assistance with selecting well-matched higher education programs (Hiebert, 2003). According to Magnusson and Bernes (2002) students believed that more career development information and work experience programs would be helpful with their career planning. These articulated concerns demonstrated some student understanding of their future plans and the type of assistance students required to transition successfully. These studies highlighted considerations for the current study: How applicable are these concerns to the high school involved in this research? How feasible would it be for school counsellors to support these student-identified priorities?

Students with different goals presumably seek varied counselling services. However, Alexitch et al. (2004) found students reporting that school counsellors provided the same information and advice regardless of their intended postsecondary directions. Thus, examining student confidence in counselling services and examination of the actual programs and services available would provide insight into the dynamics of implementing career counselling initiatives and mobilise communication between counsellors and students.
Students expected school counsellors to assist with academic problems and to help them develop effective study skills (Aluede & Imonikhe, 2002). Over 540 secondary students who participated in Aluede and Imonikhe’s study expected counsellor’s to prioritise educational problems (44%), followed by career or vocational concerns (26%), and least of all, devote time to personal-social issues (11%). However, other researchers have found that little time is actually devoted to counselling (Balcombe, 1995; Chapman & De Massi, 1985; Wintemute, 2004). Unfortunately, these studies were not based in the same research schools, thus do not allow for direct comparison of student expectations and counsellor provisions. Situating research participants within the same school would contextualise student expectations and counselling priorities. Communication by school counsellors of the rationale for their counselling practice and what they perceive to be feasible provisions would promote student awareness, independence, self-advocacy, and more efficient use of counsellors’ time.

**Student Approach**

In addition to issues of perceived insufficient school-based counselling programs and services, research has demonstrated that only a fraction of students turn to school counsellors for help. While a quarter of sampled students in Alexitch et al.’s (2004) study indicated a preference for a minimum of a monthly visit with school counsellors, 50% of students perceived that less than three visits per year was sufficient. Domene, Shapka, and Keating (2006) referenced studies which documented student help-seeking that ranged from 8% to no more than 40% of sampled students from two high schools. Bernes and Magnusson (2004) reported students sharing little awareness of, or satisfaction with existing career interventions.
Views of trustworthiness, honesty, and respectfulness determined students’ help-seeking tendencies. Magnusson and Bernes (2002) found that 12% of junior high school students ranked school counsellors as one of their top three confidantes. The percentage rose to 36% amongst senior high school students as they reflected a sense of urgency about making career decisions. Code et al. (2006) also noted senior high school students expressing a sense of immediacy to make career choices. Wintermute (2004) surmised that the primary reason for little student-initiated contact with school counsellors was student misconceptions of school counselling programs and services.

Assumptions of low student rapport and insufficient time commitments may be made for underutilising counsellor services, but documentation of potential causes is rare. Studies also did not differentiate between the types of students who did approach counsellors versus those who did not. This study attempted to investigate the types of services students with varied postsecondary goals desired and suggests a possible method to address a greater range of students.

**Quality of Counselling**

The quality of high school counselling has been reported as being variably effective. A 1993 Canadian nation-wide survey showed that 23% of students found career counselling “very helpful”, 56% of students found it “somewhat helpful” and 20% described their experience as “not helpful at all” (Balcombe, 1995). Magnusson and Bernes (2002) reported more discouraging results, where only 11% of students found career counselling helpful. Whiteley and Porter’s (n.d.) study, conducted between 1995 and 1999, demonstrated more favourable results, where a majority of students who did seek guidance found it helpful, but the number of students who sought counselling was not reported. Bardick and colleagues (2004) found only approximately 12% of sampled students tended to initiate contact with their school
counsellor. Whitely and Porter’s longitudinal data suggested that students who took this initiative benefited more than less-directed students. Domene et al. (2006) strengthened this claim, noting documented studies that support the effectiveness of counselling for students who sought counsel. This invites the question of how high school counselling, programs and services help students who do not seek counsel. Addressing this issue with school counsellors in this study promotes awareness and suggests more context-focussed measures to address the need for postsecondary planning.

Research Gap

Studies have examined school counselling practices from educator perspectives (Aluede & Imonikhe, 2002; Chan, 2005; Law, 2007; Wilkerson, 2009) and student perspectives (Alexitch et al., 2004; Aluede & Imonikhe, 2002; Bernes & Magnusson, 2004; Borgen & Hiebert, 2006), but few compared both parties’ opinions within the same jurisdiction, and no studies in the literature review noted either party’s reactions to the other’s expectations. Comparative perspectives on expectations and practices need to come from the same local source for analyses to be directly pertinent, reliable, and valid. Likewise, any resulting change needs to be effected locally, where the participants are informed and directly affected. This article explores the afore-mentioned queries by examining differences and similarities between counsellor and student perceptions in one Ontario high school: What are students’ expectations of their counsellors? What do counsellors consider when prioritising their time? Are proactive counselling approaches feasible? Essentially, are student expectations realistic, and how can all student needs be effectively met?
**Method**

Approval to conduct this research was sought from three school boards, of which only one was able to accommodate the study, with the condition that only one school may be approached. This study was conducted in a southern Ontario high school with circa 1300 students through preapproval and selection by the local school board. The school was approached in the middle of the academic year. Arrangement for data collection was made with two school counsellors who volunteered their time and a teacher who taught two senior classes. A class of 22 Grade 11 students and a class of 33 Grade 12 students volunteered their participation. Nine Grade 11 students and 26 Grade 12 students were present on the day of data collection. Students who did not show up on the prearranged date were assumed to have withdrawn their interest.

The two school counsellors were interviewed twice. The first interview lasted an hour and discussed counselling practices at the school and how it applied to their students. Students were then surveyed for their postsecondary plans and their perceptions of the contributions that school counselling programs and services made. This was followed by presentation of annotated student responses to counsellors at a second interview, where consistencies, disparities, and possible amendments to current practices were discussed. The second interview was just shy of an hour.

The student survey inquired about students’ postsecondary goals and whom they approached for advice. Students’ immediate postsecondary goals were coded into five categories: higher education, occupational career, transitory gap period, indecision, and multiple options. Advice-seeking was also tabulated to compare tendencies.

Students were asked to rank 10 counselling services in order of importance. Three blank slots were available for students to add additional elements they felt were
important for school counsellors to address. Frequencies of students reporting each category’s importance were tallied to establish a general hierarchy of needs.

A 4-point Likert scale questionnaire with 22 items was used to extract student opinions. Eight items targeted student preparedness for high school exit. Four items represented student access to school counselling and guidance information. The remaining 10 items assessed student confidence in the school’s counselling services. Responses were summarised as the percentage of students in agreement with positive outcomes for each item. The survey also collected qualitative student opinions through open-ended questions about the nature of the working alliance they felt they had with their counsellors and the types of information and programs they believed would improve their high school counselling experience.

Student opinions were collated against counsellors’ described programs and services and were presented to the school counsellors as average percentages at the second interview with counsellors. A number of student comments were also mentioned to elicit counsellor response. The second interview involved examination of consistencies and disparities between counsellor and student views.

Each of the two interviews with the school counsellors were audio recorded, transcribed for reference, and qualitatively interpreted. Interpreting how active counsellors were in promoting student career planning via school counselling programs and services was the main focus of the initial interview. The second interview involved assessment of the degree of alignment of counsellor and student perspectives. The practices which school counsellors emphasised were compared with the services which students prioritised. This article focuses on comparative analysis of student responses to survey items and counsellors’ responses and reactions to student opinions in two interviews bracketing the student survey.
Results

Results are presented here to address what students perceive as effective secondary school career counselling. The differences and similarities between students’ identified counselling needs and available provisions were investigated mainly with qualitative results. Quantitative results are first presented to map students’ anticipated postsecondary outcomes, help-seeking tendencies, preparedness, and confidence in guidance counsellors. Qualitative results are then presented in support of quantitative figures and to compare counselling provisions with student feedback.

Quantitative Findings

Students’ postsecondary plans and help-seeking tendencies were considered in order to understand what students perceived as effective high school career counselling. The distribution of 35 students’ responses were descriptively analysed to provide insight to the types of services they would appreciate. Table 1 summarises students’ goals after high school.

Table 1

Students’ Postsecondary Goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Grade 11 (n=9)</th>
<th>Grade 12 (n=26)</th>
<th>All (n=35)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td>6 (66.7%)</td>
<td>23 (88.5%)</td>
<td>29 (82.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational Career</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (7.7%)</td>
<td>2 (5.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitory Time</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (3.8%)</td>
<td>1 (2.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period</td>
<td>3 (33.3%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>3 (8.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>2 (22.2%)</td>
<td>2 (7.7%)</td>
<td>4 (11.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Open Options</td>
<td>2 (22.2%)</td>
<td>2 (7.7%)</td>
<td>4 (11.4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Approximately 83% of students reported higher educational aspirations, pursuing either an academic degree in university (60.0%) or an applied diploma or certificate in
college (28.6%). Two students reported that they were considering both college and university studies. Counsellors agreed that the high number of students pursuing higher education is typical at the school. These student aspirations reflected a great demand for information and assistance for deciding postsecondary majors or academic streams.

Students ranked Guidance services. Their rankings were tallied and ordered by the majority of favoured provisions:

1. Guidance with high school course selection
2. Advice for postsecondary courses
3. Help with prioritising postsecondary courses
4. Help with prioritising high school courses
5. Provision of information regarding alternative postsecondary options
6. Mentoring time management
7. Provision of information and help with financial assistance
8. Provision of cooperative education, internship, and work placement information
9. Access to individualised counselling
10. Help with skills development

Course selection and orientation were amongst students’ top four priorities. These findings coincided with high levels of academic readiness (92.3%) reported by Grade 12 students and their confidence (71.5%) in the academic counsel provided them.

Students’ reliance on counsellors and other individuals was examined by calculating the percentage of students seeking advice from various groups of individuals. These results are shown in Table 2.
Table 2

Students’ Help-Seeking Tendencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Grade 11 (n=9)</th>
<th>Grade 12 (n=26)</th>
<th>All (n=35)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Postsecondary Advisors</td>
<td>1 (11.1%)</td>
<td>8 (30.8%)</td>
<td>9 (25.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Counsellors</td>
<td>6 (66.7%)</td>
<td>19 (73.1%)</td>
<td>25 (71.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Teachers</td>
<td>2 (22.2%)</td>
<td>16 (61.5%)</td>
<td>18 (51.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>6 (66.7%)</td>
<td>23 (88.5%)</td>
<td>29 (82.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peers</td>
<td>2 (22.2%)</td>
<td>22 (84.6%)</td>
<td>24 (68.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siblings</td>
<td>3 (33.3%)</td>
<td>6 (23.1%)</td>
<td>9 (25.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (15.4%)</td>
<td>4 (11.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No One</td>
<td>1 (11.1%)</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>1 (2.9%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grade 12 students in the sampled group approached more varied sources for advice compared to Grade 11 students. Grade 11 students accessed their immediate adult advisers, showing similar tendencies toward counsellors and parents. Grade 12 students pursued additional alternative opinions. For instance, Grade 12 students noted seeking advice from postsecondary advisors and students, other parents and mentors outside of school.

Student preparedness for high school exit was compiled using the percentage of agreements students expressed about awareness, academic completion, and personal readiness for the challenges they have planned. Each of these aspects was represented by two or three items on the Likert scale survey. Table 3 summarises these results.
Table 3

*Student Preparedness and Satisfaction with Counselling Services*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Student Preparedness</th>
<th>Counselling Access</th>
<th>Confidence in Counsellors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grade 11</td>
<td>Grade 12</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Preparedness</td>
<td>60.2%</td>
<td>88.4%</td>
<td>81.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselling Access</td>
<td>48.6%</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence in Counsellors</td>
<td>72.6%</td>
<td>59.6%</td>
<td>63.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grade 12 students exhibited significantly higher confidence in readiness to embark on their postsecondary goals. There was an over 25% higher level of preparedness expressed by Grade 12 students compared to their younger counterparts. A higher demonstration of readiness in Grade 12 students paralleled their attention to help-seeking practices and a culmination of their work in high school. The difference in academic completion between Grade 11s and 12s was the largest (38.8% difference) determinant compared to the other two factors, namely awareness (26.9% difference) and personal preparation (22.3% difference).

Interestingly, students’ confidence in their counsellors declined (by over 10%) from Grades 11 to 12. A particular cause for worry was the low levels of students being served. Low student numbers accessing counselling services was also reflected in students’ responses in the open-ended questions.

*Qualitative Responses*

Of the 71.4% of students who sought counsellor assistance, only a quarter (25.7%) noted confidence in approaching their counsellor for help. Twenty-nine percent of students noted their own indecision and lack of confidence to approach counsellors, while 54.3% of students felt deterred by counsellors. Over half of the students reported long waiting times as the major deterrent for their initiative. All of
the students who reported counsellors’ lack of availability were in Grade 12. Over 30% of participants described lack of approachability from their counsellors, and about 15% of students felt counsellors did not possess appropriate faculties to help them. Students whose own insecurities deterred them from seeking help accounted for approximately 8% of the sample.

Some students did not feel counsellors were knowledgeable or were helpful to their specific needs.

*Student 12.5*: “Often times they are wrong about things such as course pre-requisites to get into colleges or university.”

*Student 12.14*: “[The counsellor] has misled people I know in the wrong direction”.

*Student 12.16*: “Sometimes it’s difficult to make them comprehend one’s needs.”

*Student 12.1* felt discouraged when s/he was told her/his academic scores were “not good enough” to pursue her/his goals, and felt let down when counsellors “can’t do anything to help”. Shyness and uncertainty also deterred students from approaching counsellors.

*Student 11.1*: “If I don’t know them that well, I would feel uncomfortable asking them for help”

*Student 11.4*: “They get me nervous.”

*Student 11.7*: “Sometimes I am unsure of what I want.”

*Student 12.25*: “[I] feel uncomfortable around [them]… feeling of them being a stranger.”

Ten participants had no reservations about their counsellors, and three students explicitly commended their counsellor’s work:
Student 11.5: “I would approach them for everything.”

Student 12.3: “My guidance counsellor gives me plenty of help.”

Student 12.6: “Any question I have about anything related to school or postsecondary school, I ask my guidance counsellor.”

Despite the relatively even split in opinions, students appeared to be in agreement with the need to have more counsellors dedicated to their attention. Half of the Grade 12 student sample noted lacking access to counsel because of the lengthy wait period. Their comments demonstrated both their empathy and frustration.

Student 12.1: “My guidance counsellor whom we Grade 12s share with the Grade 9 class is never available when needed. It sometimes takes 2-3 weeks in order to meet with my guidance counsellor.”

Student 12.19: “Guidance counsellor at times, lack time; makes me feel under pressure and sometimes I forget what I need to ask because it’s such a hurry.”

Student 12.21: “When all the appointment [times] are taken, you kind of let yourself down a little and you opt to make your own decisions.”

Student 12.23: “They are so busy, so when you make an appointment, it’s a week or two weeks later and I would like to get help as soon as possible.

Unlike students who highlighted their lack of confidence in counsellors, Student 12.18 presented a more positive reason for not approaching counsellors: “I wouldn’t approach my guidance counsellor if I knew the career I wanted and which path I have to take.”

Irrespective of the reasons for low confidence in counsellors, Student 12.1 duly expressed a need for “a person in Guidance who is the designated schedule
changer; [a need] for more guidance counsellors or at least one more solely for the Grade 12 class”. The idea of having services and a dedicated counsellor to attend to the specific needs of the graduating class was raised by two other responses.

*Student 12.9:* “They need to take into consideration Grade 12s because we need the most help. . . . [They need to provide] assemblies [for] just Grade 12s, [have] university student speakers, [and] speak of financial aid.”

*Student 12.23:* “I wish the Guidance department booked one-on-one interviews with every student in Grade 12, so they are aware of what they need to graduate and get into university and/or college.”

Grade 12 students were particularly concerned that their interests were not prioritised. However, both classes of senior students expressed more exploratory programs and exposure to varied advice would be helpful to their career plans. They considered guidance counsellors responsible for procuring such information and coordinating these events or programs.

**Counselling practices.**

Reviewing transcripts of the interviews conducted with counsellors provided insight to the differences and similarities between students’ identified counselling needs and counsellors’ perception of guidance concerns and provisions. Counsellors described Guidance as a mixture of responsibilities. *Counsellor1* explained a strong academic focus in Grades 9 and 10:

We worry about whether they are correctly placed into the correct level and if they are going to experience success; earn the credits they are going to have to earn. Academically, we are very focused on that at least in the first two years of high school.

*Counsellor2* added that every grade level exhibited signature issues.
I think every year is distinct with us. I think in Grade 9... As far as academics go, that’s a big struggle. I feel Grade 10 is more an emotional, social year. Everything is drama for that year. Grade 11... They are really seriously taking a look at where they may be going postsecondary simply because of the push that they need to choose. And Grade 12... Majority will know [where they are headed]. Now, it’s a numbers’ game. ‘Will I get the marks?’

Counsellors’ observations of student readiness mirrored the confidence levels expressed by Grade 12 students about transitioning out of high school. Counsellors agreed that students were relatively sure of their postsecondary course of study, even if they had yet to decide on a specific specialty. Counsellor2 explained, “With the Humanities, they don’t [necessarily] know exactly what area they might major in, but they know that’s the area. With the Sciences, students know... because [their course of study have led them there].” The courses that students enrol in the beginning of Grade 10 are streamed into college, university, or workplace destinations. A student’s career pathway becomes more defined as they approach high school graduation.

Counsellors discussed several events used to promote experiential programs to help students better define their postsecondary goals. For instance, an observation of many postsecondary workforce oriented students favouring cooperative education (co-op) prompted a Coop Fair to promote the variety of opportunities. As noted by Counsellor1:

We’re encouraging Grade 11s next year to take co-op because they might have more room [in their schedule]. There is the apprenticeship program, [Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP)] too that is really big right now.

Other events counsellors described included a Let’s Talk evening for local colleges, universities, trade schools, and senior students and their parents to mingle. A panel discussion with six colleges helped expose Grade 11 students to available Applied programs of study.
In terms of individual counsel, Counsellor2 responded that mandatory one-on-one sessions probably took place annually when the school was smaller. This practice was no longer feasible with the larger school size, but counsellors indicate their presence to students every year. Counsellors were confident that students would approach them for assistance on their own accord, “They’re quite good. They know how to find us.” Counsellor1 further illustrated the dynamics of their practice:

We often seek [students] out too at different times of the year. [If] we see students who are slipping in marks, we’ll make the appointment for them. If we want to congratulate a student who seems to improve in marks, we’ll call them down. . . . The reality is that you may see a lot of 20 or 30 kids because they’ve got some of those other issues. . . . Sometimes [we] can’t predict what the day will bring. As much as we try to schedule, we’re also a ‘walk-in’ clinic.

Expectations, opinions, and concerns.

Counsellors appeared to have a good impression of student initiative to seek help when needed. However, there was also the notion that students were overly dependent on counsellors for reassurance and administrative assistance. As noted by Counsellor 2, “Students will come in, almost to say, ‘Choose a career for me. . . Do this application for me.’ They need to be hand held.” This perceived lack of students’ independent responsibility fed into a concern voiced by both counsellors: accountability. With the instigation of Learning to 18, where students are mandated to remain in school until 18 years of age or high school graduation, high schools became responsible for the truancy of older students who may be reluctant to be confined by the institution. This task further detracted counsellors from their counselling duties, but the outcomes were rarely within their control or influence. Counsellor1 described, “Sometimes the attendance is horrific. We can’t get them here, yet schools are responsible for chasing them. There is so much responsibility on guidance counsellors, administration, and teachers.”
Another associated concern raised was the types of accommodation in place for low performing students and the effected outcomes. As noted by Counsellor 1:

With the Credit Recovery, Student Success [programs]… the chance to redo credits in a different way, a different environment with flexibility of timelines and due dates, I don’t know if that’s really doing [students] a disservice. It’s not common [in the real world]. It’s not an expectation.

While the intention to help students fulfill their high school diploma requirements is a good one, the leniency of the approach may result to less desirable outcomes.

Counsellor 2 explained that the School Board has delegated a program called Fast Forward to select schools that help place students who do not perform well in the mainstream setting into trade focuses. The program is costly, competitive to get into, and is insufficiently serving the high demand. Getting students enrolled in Fast Forward may also be difficult because disengaged students tend not to appear attractive on paper. In such cases, the schools hosting the program are unlikely to offer that student a placement when there are such high enrolment demands.

Counsellor descriptions of the core issues students experience and their illustration of coping mechanisms demonstrated an understanding of student crises points and assumed student needs. However, there was a concern that some educational policies were hampering student progress. Counsellors agreed that there was not enough manpower and time to address every student’s needs, and stood by the importance of addressing students whom they deemed at-risk. The assumption is perhaps that the average student and high achievers will get by, but at-risk students are in higher need for help and may not have reliable faculties to cope with educational demands without active and explicit assistance.
Discussion

Identifying the relevance of prior research to the target school, and mapping the consistencies between counsellor and student perceptions on Guidance practice identifies realistic expectations from counsellors and students. Analysing responses from the target school demonstrates that a more aggressive systematic approach to career education may be necessary to meet student demands.

Student Expectations and Approach

The finding that the majority of students were aspiring to higher education (82.9%), including university programs and vocational studies at colleges or private trade schools, may be attributed to the employment advantages associated with obtaining a postsecondary qualification. Favouring higher education explained the types of counselling services students prized most: assistance with charting an academic plan throughout high school and into postsecondary programs. Students’ qualitative responses also expressed the desire for more help planning potential career pathways. This suggests more emphasis to help students chart their career paths with opportunities to explore potential careers is needed. Perhaps, more experiential learning experiences need to be implemented earlier in the secondary academic path to accommodate the range of possibilities.

Older students sought out more avenues for advice. Students reported parents, counsellors and peers being accessed the most. The dependence on parents and friends were similarly reported by Domene et al. (2006), Gibbons et al. (2006), and Whiteley and Porter (n.d.). Counsellors joined the ranks of trusted advisors in this study. Over 71% of students initiated contact with school counsellors for help with their career goals compared to the much lower percentage (12%) reported by Bardick et al. (2004).
Grade 12 students reported more proactive planning of their postsecondary goals. Code et al. (2006) and Magnusson and Bernes (2002) both agree that students about to graduate high school felt pressured by the urgency to make postsecondary plans. This pressure, which was also referenced by *Counsellor1*, helps to explain Grade 12 students putting more effort into help-seeking and demanding more explicit counsel. Students at the study school exhibited a much higher reliance on the school for help with their career planning. This demand supports a good response to events and interventions organised by the school, which encourages more school-based initiatives to be in place.

The majority of students in this study noted a definitive postsecondary pathway. Only two students recorded more than one postsecondary consideration. Considering past research noting low numbers of students’ academic aspirations coming to fruition (Borgen & Hiebert, 2006; Gibbons et al., 2006; Gullekson, 1995; Jarvis, 1995), high records of participants geared towards higher education may be somewhat unrealistic. Some questions that students need to consider should include alternative options and multiple pathways that their education may lead to.

Fifty-four percent of student participants agreed on a common counselling issue: access. Inaccessibility is a cause for concern considering the asset of having guidance and the relatively high percentage (71.4%) of students who reported initiating contact with counsellors in this study. Whiteley and Porter’s (n.d.) longitudinal study demonstrated that a majority of students who received counsel reaped helpful benefits. However, counsellors were only able to provide point interventions, while indirectly monitoring student progress and implicitly guiding students because of other responsibilities. Similar to Wintemute’s (2004) findings, counsellors were often over-laden with non-counselling tasks.
Counselling Reform

Students’ request for a dedicated counsellor for the Grade 12 class seems to be a simple answer. The reality of bringing in additional staff has funding hurdles, and the result would likely involve increased counsellor workload as directed from other administrative duties. As Counsellor1 mentioned, school counsellors also share responsibility monitoring student truancy and helping to improve attendance records. An enhanced systematic approach to help students become more self-directed and self-sufficient would be more effective for tackling the backlog of unmet student needs, instead of simply increasing staff numbers.

Both participating counsellors reported career development being emphasised in the senior years. Despite student dissatisfaction, students also agreed that senior students, specifically Grade 12 students require the most help with career development. Grade 12 students’ request for special attention and provisions for the graduating class is understandable considering their immediate needs to secure graduation credentials and to make postsecondary career decisions. However, counsellors cannot satisfy every student need. It would be more effective to create a system where students are more accountable for their own career plans rather than allocating one specialised counsellor for Grade 12 students.

Teachers have regular scheduled Professional Development Days where they assess and plan teaching methods, allocate administrative needs and consider educationally related issues. Since students are professional learners, perhaps they too should be involved in professional development; in the case of this argument, to assess and chart their career plans. Student 12.18 commented, “If I had the knowledge of the classes I need to have and where I want to go, [I would not approach counsellors for help]”. This may indeed be the more feasible solution: Provide
students with the tools to help themselves, show them how to use these tools and have collective sessions regularly, rather than individual sessions only when requested.

While counsellors were confident that students would make sound judgements to seek help when needed, they also expressed concern that students relied too much on staff members. Students are asking, “What can you do for me?” instead of “What can I do to achieve...” The solution to reinforcing responsibility and instilling more student accountability may partially be found by insisting students take charge of their career plans. Coming to open terms about counsellor and student expectations in relation to realistic provisions is important to pacifying student dissatisfaction, and encouraging student responsibility and initiative to take charge of their career goals.

Study Scope and Extension

The quantitative results of this study may not be a good representation of other demographics nor be generalised for other schools because of the small sample size. Enlarging the scope of study to include other schools would help us understand how the context of counselling may change according to whole school needs. Limited sample size and brevity of interaction with students in this study also did not allow for further assessment of student evaluations about high school career counselling. Continued communication with participating students later in their academic and/or occupational careers would help justify their opinions whilst in high school. It would also be helpful to relay counsellors’ responses and expectations back to students. This will not only help clarify counsellor roles, but also indicate the realities of student expectations for students.

Conclusion

Student dissatisfaction reported in this study was mainly an issue of the quality of counsel they received, not the breadth of services available. Students reported
having a fairly good idea of their postsecondary goals. What they wanted from counsellors was reassurance, which translates into more individual sessions. There will never be enough counsellors to meet all individual student needs. A plausible solution would be to hold regular group interventions for all students; professional development days for students *per se*.

Counselling practice undoubtedly already align individual sessions with key deadlines for undergraduate applications. It would be more time-efficient to use the same scheduling principles in a collective nature, and share the responsibility with other teaching staff. Professional development days for students could be split into different session times, each concentrating on areas which are of interest to various postsecondary destinations. Students will benefit from attending one or more session depending on their postsecondary directions. These interventions could entail more than just college and university applications to include other aspects of career development. This way, students can develop more skills to help themselves, rather than simply receiving reassurance for a brief individual session. Counsellors can manage and support other teachers in the process, where more may be achieved in a few strategically scheduled days instead of two or three weeks of dedicated individual career counselling.

Enlisting additional staff commitment may seem like a daunting administrative hurdle, but the benefits could be worth the investment. Running a trial of professional development sessions for students could examine whether it would be an effective method to remedy the concerns for counsellor accessibility and student accountability.
CHAPTER SIX

High School Career Education: Policy and Practice

A considerable amount of research in a number of different jurisdictions has shown student dissatisfaction with career counselling in secondary schools. This article explores policy and practice by reflecting on 2 counsellor interviews and 35 student responses to a questionnaire about career education in a single Ontario high school. Students noted a level of certainty about their postsecondary plans, and reported experiential learning being most helpful to career planning. However, demands on counsellors’ time are seen as substantial, and dissatisfaction with program provisions remain high. High student-counsellor ratios, over-extended counsellor responsibilities and low student initiative suggest a need for different approaches to helping students plan for their postsecondary careers.

Introduction

A job was considered a life commitment up to the early part of the 20th century (Patton & McMahon, 2006). School counselling focused on career choice as a cognitive problem-solving process to match knowledge of the self with the job market. A good match resulted to a good career choice. However, changes to occupational climates prompted changes to educational policies informing career education in high schools. The plethora of new job types and the revolutionary ways in which careers are now perceived are matched by new curriculum policies that govern how educators help prepare students for high school exit. While more demands are placed on educators, little is known about how effective these policies are.

Recent research has demonstrated concern that students were leaving high school unprepared for their postsecondary plans (Alexitch, Kobussen & Stookey,
2004; Code, Bernes & Gunn, 2006). Alexitch et al. (2004) cited students reporting inadequate preparation for higher education. Magnifico (2007) noted employers believing high schools do not teach relevant information and skills needed by the workplace, and students do not link course work beyond high school. These problems elicited advocacy for career education in high schools because students need to be postsecondary ready (Gullekson, 1995).

High school counsellors have indicated little time to fulfill their responsibilities satisfactorily while balancing administrative duties and traditional counselling roles (Balcombe, 1995; Wintermute, 2004). Studies have also shown high student-to-counsellor ratios in North American schools (Balcombe, 1995; “Counseling Trends Survey”, 2004; Gullekson, 1995; Helwig, 2004; Lee & Ekstrom, 1987). Counsellors involved with the demands of educational policies and managing large student numbers have less time devoted to individual student counselling.

Effective practice needs to be relevant and sustainable. This article surveys the types of career preparation policies and services in place in Ontario high schools, and discusses counsellor and student responses to the system of career education. Three key questions guided this study and subsequent recommendation: What types of career planning services are available in high schools? What do students think about their career development? How do counsellors respond to student feedback? Counsellor and student responses helped identify the effectiveness of policies in practice in the context of a realistic teaching-learning environment.

**Literature Review**

Career education has undergone adaptations to meet the continuously changing needs of contemporary students. Balcombe (1995) presented a timeline of the development of career education in the past century. High schools in Boston
linked vocational guidance initiatives with the secondary English curriculum in the 1900s. The use of psychological testing and advocacy for self-awareness came into vogue between 1910 and the 1930s as an extension from World War I screening practices. The Great Depression influenced vocational sorting of individuals into the early 1940s. Ontario adopted testing for more structured guidance in the mid 1940s. Personal counselling from a developmental approach emerged in the 1950s, and moved toward group education in the 1970s. The 1980s introduced cross-curricular programming and the beginnings of cooperative education.

Expansion of postsecondary options and multiple entrance alternatives available to students in the 21st century makes career planning and postsecondary choices more complex. “Career counseling can be seen as very much an evolving profession.” (Patton & McMahon, 2006, p. 157) As careers change, and the manner in which society perceives careers change, so does Guidance practice. The challenge is to keep pace with emerging student demands and government policies to help direct students along their desired career pathways. This study comments on effective practice when one school works under such pressures.

Integration

Integrating career education into routine teaching practice creates synergy of exposure to the relevance between academics and career planning. Emphasis on career education in high school subject courses may be effective because secondary students are more likely concerned about their career options and may have a better idea of their life direction. Beginning career education at an early stage helps students relate their academic work with future plans and promotes active citizenship. Hiebert (2002) cited two studies which suggested that regular career education also increased academic success. “Inherent in the [career planning] process should be curriculum to
allow [students] to chart a course to their destination,” (Balcombe, 1995, p. 20) with specific identifiable learning outcomes (Hiebert, Kemeny & Kurchak, 1998). Many researchers have suggested for comprehensive career education programs to be infused into regular curriculum (Balcombe, 1995; Bernes & Magnusson, 2004; Borgen & Hiebert, 2006; Chen, 1999; Hiebert et al., 1998; Levi & Ziegler, 1993).

The dawn of comprehensive programs in the latter part of the 20th century was reported by Galassi and Akos (2004). Choices into Action: Guidance and career education policy for Ontario elementary and secondary schools (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training [OMET], 1999), which informs Grade 1 to Grade 12 curricular inclusion of career awareness and developmental processes in one Canadian province is an example. The policy mandates a Grade 10 Career Studies course and the Teacher’s Advisory Program (TAP) being imposed at key stages to facilitate transitioning between high school and postsecondary careers. The Choices into Action document was a step toward infusing career education into mainstream curriculum. Examining its influences would confirm its merits and suggest areas requiring amendment.

**Student Needs and Effective Practice**

Several studies supported guidance beginning with acknowledging and assessing student needs (Bardick, Bernes, Magnusson & Witko, 2004; Hiebert, 2002, 2003; Hiebert et al., 1998). Hiebert (2002, 2003) found students reporting career and life planning skills as being important for their successful transition out of high school. Students in Magnusson and Bernes’ (2002) study believed more information and work experience programs would be helpful. Hiebert’s (2003) students wanted more information about job requirements, help with course selection, more work experience, and help with selecting higher educational programs. Bardick et al. (2004)
noted other adolescent concerns including skills training, maintaining grades, access to scholarships, need for role models, support with career planning, and financial assistance. Students rated assistance with academic decisions and the provision of postsecondary information as the most important tasks guidance counsellors could provide (Winternute, 2004). Interestingly, Alexitch et al. (2004) found senior high school students feeling less prepared for high school exit than their younger peers. This study looks at the relevance of these concerns within the target school.

A survey of over 800 high school students in the U.S. described most teenagers receiving little or no career guidance outside the home (“Survey Shows Lack of Career”, 2002). Fifty-one percent of surveyed students could not identify helpful school personnel. Although Domene, Shapka and Keating (2006) cited three sources which documented effective counselling for students who sought professional counselling, they also noted guidance professionals being underutilised, referencing as low as 8% of students to no more than 40% of students seeking assistance from counsellors. Student initiative is a key partner to effective counselling practice. By identifying student involvement in their career plans, this study suggests feasible outcomes by improving student awareness and initiative.

Student preference to seek advice from sources other than professional counsellors is well documented (Bardick et al., 2004, 2005; Bernes & Magnusson, 2004; Domene et al., 2006; Gibbons, Borders, Wiles, Stephan & Davis, 2006; Lee & Ekstrom, 1987; Magnusson & Bernes, 2002). Their primary confidantes included parents, friends and teachers. Adolescents with strong peer support tended to explore and commit to career choices (Bardick et al., 2004). Alexitch and Page (1997) noted student perceptions that teachers provided more useful advice compared to guidance counsellors, and Bardick et al. (2004) noted students reporting counsellor services not
being tailored to their needs. Most reports noted parents as students’ primary resource (Bardick et al., 2004, 2005; Bernes & Magnusson, 2004; Gibbons et al., 2006; Magnusson & Bernes, 2002). However, besides stressing the importance of education, parents were unsure of how to effectively help their children with career development (Bardick et al., 2005; Gibbons et al., 2006). Parents in Bardick et al.’s (2005) report wanted to expose their children to more career options, but felt inadequate to help them. They felt better rapport with the school and closer communication with guidance staff, as well as a better view of the job market would improve their supportive roles. Although such reports demonstrated small student numbers accessing professional school counsellors, there was little empirical evidence supporting the reasons behind these tendencies. This study adds to current literature by examining student perceptions of their counsellors.

Student-Counsellor Relations

Understanding the dynamics affecting counsellor-student interactions helps to maintain a healthy working relationship between educational personnel and the students they serve. Fitzpatrick and Irannejad (2008) found students who were more prepared for change have better alliances with their counsellors. Counsellor-student relationships were a determinant of the success and outcome of counselling processes (Fitzpatrick, 2008; Schedin, 2005). Working relationships improved when adolescents and counsellors formed goals which were personally meaningful to the student.

Whiston and Aricak’s (2008) survey, which monitored effectiveness of counselling practices, found that students who did not meet with their counsellors reported fewer career competencies. This study focused on the opinions of senior secondary students with the assumption that Grade 11 and 12 students would have more invested interest
in their postsecondary career plans. This study asks students to identify specific expectations they have of their counsellors.

The Guidance program once defined “as a service to assist students in making course selections and as the maintainer of student records” (Levi & Ziegler, 1993, Conclusion, para. 2) still reverberate in students’ consciousness. Students rarely see Guidance as more than such, even when they themselves voiced the need to receive more career planning services from Guidance. Domene et al. (2006) reflected that students associated counsellors to only deal with school related issues. They also surmised students with low grades felt counsellors were biased for high achievers. This sentiment mirrored Lee and Ekstrom’s (1987) study, where academic students were more likely to receive counsellor input. Another interpretation could be that students with little or no postsecondary aspirations were less motivated to seek counsel.

Despite the relatively poor illustration of counselling services and student access trends, Alexitch et al. (2004) noted that 50% of senior high school students wanted up to three annual visits with counsellors, and 25% of students preferred a minimum monthly visit. Such demands for individual attention factor into a counsellor’s responsibilities. This study compares data collected from one Ontario high school to existing research, and discusses the feasibility of accommodating high school students’ career planning needs.

Universality

Much research have noted student dissatisfaction and staffing shortage, but none have asked counsellors to respond to student feedback or suggested a sustainable solution which may be adopted by more than one school or local area. Although local efforts and projects such as the *Experiential Learning and Instruction for Trades*
Entry (ELITE) and the Hospitality-Entertainment, Leisure, and Personal Services (HELP) programs (Beggs, 1995), which was pioneered in 1988 to target non-academic students, have had successful outcomes, they catered for a specific student type. This study’s target was to identify a feasible solution that would accommodate a spectrum of student needs. Educators need to support new educational implementations for them to be successful. Without their cooperation, any suggestion would only be extra text in policy manuals. Building a program around student needs and counsellors’ responses to such feedback would be more relatable for the primary stakeholders, thus more appreciated and amenable to counsellors and students. Both parties would be more likely to invest in an approach which draws from their opinions.

**Method**

Research was conducted in a high school in southern Ontario with over 1300 students. I approached two classes of senior secondary students of mixed genders and ethnicities. Thirty-five student respondents volunteered their time and reported their opinions on student questionnaires. Counsellors were also approached for interviews. Two counsellors volunteered their time.

Student questionnaires comprised of five main sections. The first section gathered information about students’ postsecondary goals, including plans for higher education, entering the work force, travel, uncertainty and other. The second section asked students who they approached for advice. Students were then asked to prioritise various guidance services offered at their school in order of its importance to them. The following section gathered student opinions about guidance services and career education based on their agreement or disagreement with 22 items posed with a 4-point Likert scale. The final section invited students to express their opinions to open-
ended questions about their guidance experiences, and identify career development programs they were, or wished to be involved with.

Student responses to the Likert scale questions were quantified by descriptive statistics. Eight items were coded for student preparedness for high school exit. Ten items represented student confidence in various counselling aspects. Four items denoted student access to counsellors. Responses to non-Likert scale questions were ranked based on percentage frequency. Student responses to open-ended questions, including description of their counselling experiences and the type of assistance they wanted from guidance counsellors were qualitatively coded for high frequency words and grouped into positive and negative experiences. Each positive or negative qualitative remark was mapped against the student’s responses to the related Likert scale question(s) for consistency.

Counsellors were interviewed before and after the 35 students were surveyed. The first interview provided insight into the counselling profession as a negotiation between effecting educational policies and addressing school-, and student-specific needs. Students’ qualitative responses on the questionnaires were related back to counsellors for discussion at our second interview. The second interview discussed student opinions and the feasibility of providing for student-identified needs based on the school’s resources.

Interviews with counsellors were audio recorded and transcribed. Interview transcripts were read multiple times over elapsed intervals to ensure appropriate interpretation. Counsellors’ descriptions of effective career interventions and programs were highlighted for comparison with students’ opinions.

The initial interview, which provided an overview of the career interventions and programs that were in place at the school, prompted a closer look at policy
documents to contextualise counsellor availability and responsibility. Information and policies surrounding high school career education was retrieved from the Ministry of Education website. Students’ references to low counsellor accessibility prompted questioning the student load at the school, and suggested a consideration of student-to-counsellor ratios in other schools within the same local jurisdiction. Counsellors disclosed their estimated student responsibility at the target school, and data about other schools were gathered from public internet websites, which noted student population and staff statistics. Forty-four schools within two School Boards were canvassed. Average student-counsellor ratios mapped from these schools were used to accent the situation at the target school.

**Results**

Qualitative results are presented to depict counsellor and student perceptions on the application of counselling services in one Ontario high school. Student opinions are then supported with quantitative statistics describing percentages of the student sample who shared similar views. The three research questions, ‘What types of career counselling services are available in high school? What do students think about their career development? How do counsellors respond to student feedback?’ are addressed in comparison with, and discussion of these results.

**Career Education Programs**

Interviews with guidance counsellors prompted a closer review of Ministry documents pertaining to career development mandates on high school curriculum. Counsellors referenced programs such as the half credit Career Studies course and the *Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program* (OYAP), amongst other optional programs including cooperative education, which are all part of the overarching policy document, *Choices into Action* (OMET, 1999).
Choices into Action (OMET, 1999) guides career education and development from Grades 1 to 12 in Ontario. Both the Teacher Advisor Program (TAP) and several Guidance courses were offered at the school. Experiential learning procedures such as cooperative education, apprenticeships and volunteer work fed into these programs and connected with other academic courses.

According to the School’s website, all Grades 9 and 10 students participated in TAP. Educational and personal goals were set in Annual Education Plans (AEPs). Grades 11 and 12 students reviewed their AEPs with the Teacher Advisor. This program appeared to serve as a baseline to guide each student’s career development. However, counsellors did not refer to it, and student opinions about the program were not gathered since student surveys were conducted prior to acknowledging TAP’s existence. TAP’s permanence at the school could have been short-lived since the Ministry of Education revoked the TAP requirement in Ontario schools in 2005 (OMET, 2005).

Amongst the three Guidance courses offered at the school at the time, Career Studies is a compulsory Grade 10 course that helps link academic pathways with career goals. Interviewed counsellors noted a job shadowing component, which furthered the Grade 9 Take Your Kid to Work Day (K2W) experience. While K2W provided students with observation of the work environment of a parent or a close relative, job shadowing allowed students to observe a career of interest.

Other interconnected experiential programs included cooperative education, apprenticeships through OYAP and the Fast Forward program. Cooperative education placements emphasised the theory behind the practical component, while apprenticeships emphasised the trade or work experience. Fast Forward (FF) is a program aimed at students who may not be engaged at a particular school, but are
interested in specific courses or trade work. *Counsellor1* explained that FF allowed students to enrol in courses at other schools within the same School Board. While cooperative education and apprenticeships were directly offered at the school, FF was only available in select schools. They have limited enrolment, and may be difficult to get into.

*Counsellor2* observed that students across different postsecondary pathways benefitted from cooperative education programs:

A lot of students that are geared toward the work place [have a] heavy emphasis on co-op. We have students that do co-op that will be university bound also; but they will have a placement that will probably enhance maybe their supplementary application or portfolio for university.

Students pursuing college or work after high school favoured apprenticeships. An OYAP presentation was organised by Career Studies teachers, and mainly targeted Grade 11 students. Counsellors complemented these efforts by organising two events that offered a variety of postsecondary destinations to students. Six colleges were invited to speak with Grade 11 students about the Applied programs. A *Let's Talk* evening for Grades 11 and 12 students and their parents invited guests from universities, colleges, private schools and trades personnel, demonstrating various options to students.

Fourteen out of 35 students reported having attended, or will be enrolling in one or more experiential program. Cooperative education was the most noted. Eleven of the 14 involved students were in Grade 12. The number of students participating in optional career development programs demonstrated high levels of student consciousness and investment for their future plans.
**Student Opinions**

Student commitment to experiential programs mirrored their confidence in their postsecondary goals. Over 81% of sampled students indicated that they were prepared to transition out of high school. Grade 12 students showed higher confidence (88.4%) than Grade 11 students (60.2%). High levels of student preparedness paralleled high percentages of students seeking advice from high school counsellors (71.4%) and adults (91.4%). Counsellors attributed the high student consultation with adults to the school’s *Caring Adults* program. As noted by Counsellor 2:

> We’ve indicated that if a student is in need, or wishes to speak to someone, Guidance is always available. We’ve also indicated other staff members that [students] may feel more comfortable with, [whom] they can approach. I know [the] Grade 12s ask their Grade 12 teachers; especially if it’s in a career area that they are interested in.

Counsellors also noted encouragement from the family for students to double check their options and plans with Guidance.

The high percentage of students seeking professional advice seemed to demonstrate confidence in Guidance, but other data contended with this notion. Table 4 summarises student satisfaction with various aspects of Guidance counselling.

Table 4

**Student Satisfaction with Aspects of High School Guidance Counselling**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Counselling Aspects</th>
<th>Academic Counsel</th>
<th>Career Counsel</th>
<th>Admin. Assistance</th>
<th>General Support</th>
<th>Sufficiency of Access</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage Satisfaction</td>
<td>71.7%</td>
<td>62.8%</td>
<td>73.5%</td>
<td>53.6%</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quantitative data demonstrated student confidence in counsellors varied between content in some areas to dissatisfaction in others. Similarly, qualitative responses exhibited variable contentedness with guidance services. One student recorded that he
or she “really wouldn’t put anything else in the guidance program” when asked about any additional services students may want to add to existing programs. However, the same student noted a lack of confidence in counsellors’ expertise, expressing, “often times they are wrong about things”. There appeared to be satisfaction with the breadth of counselling coverage, but discontent with the quality of advice.

The lack of student satisfaction with sufficient access to counsel corresponded with students’ open responses. Surveys found 52.0% (n=25) of students not approaching counsellors due to counsellor unavailability. Student request for more counselling time was also reflected in responses to additional services they wanted. These services included:

- Allocating more time for individual counselling sessions, especially for Grade 12 students
- Advising postsecondary funding and application procedures, including bursaries, scholarships and student loans
- Including former graduates as guest speakers to relate their experiences
- Providing more classes or programs for various career paths, including alternative non-academic pathways
- Providing preparatory sessions outlining sample career pathways that link to high school courses
- Providing more information about non-traditional or novel courses of study and career pathways
- Providing more apprenticeships and cooperative education opportunities in non-traditional fields and emerging trends
- Providing off-site accessibility to information on the school’s network
- Providing information about institutional specialties
• Providing information for out-of-country opportunities

The most repeated requests (37.5%) were related to immediate needs for transitioning out of high school, including attention to college and university applications, financial assistance, and specialised attention to the Grade 12 class.

**Counsellors Respond**

The request for more information about financial aid and help with applications baffled both counsellors. Initially, counsellors thought perhaps students experienced difficulty or uncertainty following up on procedures themselves, but soon asserted that this should not be the case because the information was prevalent and have been inducted during their initial counselling sessions at the beginning of the academic year. Packaged information was explained and given to each student. The consensus was a lack of student follow-up. Counsellors expected more responsibility from students.

In response to Grade 12 students’ need for individualised attention, counsellors referred to a notion that Guidance takes on different meaning to students in varying Grades. As noted by *Counsellor 2*:

> In Grade 12, Guidance all of a sudden becomes a career counselling centre, which we can never be because we’re just divided all over the place. We direct them to websites, or something that they can do, but we’re not going to be the career centre that they want us to be.

Counsellors further expressed the need to filter resources which they gather before passing them onto students, and to alter the way in which information is presented to students entering various pathways. For instance, concentration on colleges and universities may not be appropriate in a mixed group session because students who were not academically geared would see little benefit. *Counsellor 2* explained:

> The process where I talk about universities and colleges, I tune out the kids that are not going to university. [We] try to balance it as best [we] can. . . As a counsellor, I still try to introduce new avenues, new
The dilemma to advise students about varied opportunities was countered by the difficulties of encouraging students to approach novel careers compared to traditionally proven successes.

Counsellors did not think that having one-to-one sessions with every student was a feasible option. The approximate 380:1 student-counsellor ratio was the main determinant. Counsellors explained that most of their student interactions circulated amongst a core group of 20 to 30 students who have more intricate personal issues. Counsellors also commented that most students tended to request sessions at the same time when demand was high and counsellors were busy (i.e., during postsecondary application season).

Separately allocating counselling responsibilities (e.g., separating academic, career and personal counselling) was also deemed a misstep. There was not enough government funding to support the overall needs that arise, and student issues tend to cross between the three aspects. Counsellor1 expressed,

> As counsellors, if we kept the academics, our lives will be much easier, but who would fill the other need? Sometimes keeping [students] emotionally stable affects their academics as well. It would be nice to have more counsellors, and those counsellors had a smaller group to work with. We could do it all. We could have the time for the academics, and the career counselling, and the socio-emotional needs as they arrive.

Approaching counselling matters as separate categories of interest may result to added counselling time because more than one counsellor may need to be acquainted with each student’s case from an academic, career, and personal development perspective.

When asked about staffing concerns, Counsellor1 commented that high student-to-counsellor ratios were not uncommon, and the distribution of personnel in schools likely depended on several factors:
Sometimes schools are looked at for their socio-economic background and all kinds of other demographics, . . . Maybe in a school that is more affluent in nature, there might be more other issues. It doesn’t mean that kids are all just sitting at their desks and learning, . . . We have one [Child and Youth Worker] in a school of over 1300 students. Other high schools have say three [CYWs] for a population that is much lower than ours.

The approximate 380 student load per counsellor cited at the school was higher than average in comparison to 44 other high schools in the same educational jurisdiction.

Figure 1 illustrates each of 44 schools’ student-to-counsellor ratios.

*Figure 1.* Student-counsellor ratios.

The lowest student-counsellor ratio was calculated at 186 students per counsellor, while the highest student load observed in public records was 691 students per counsellor. The average student-counsellor ratio was 339:1.
Counsellors believed empowering students to become more self-sufficient was vital as a viable means to cope with limited personnel and government funding. As noted by Counsellor 2:

I think what we need to do is empower students to take the responsibility themselves. As far as career choices, starting with the Grade 10 Careers course, - if students took it a bit more seriously; there’s the first step.

Counsellor2 noted that students who were most successful were those who took initiative and followed-up on their own accord.

**Discussion**

Counsellors and students both demonstrated great appreciation and demand for practical experiential learning. Stone (1995) ascertained that “contextualised learning is a more powerful way to enhance academic as well as vocational skills” (p. 329). His research demonstrated school-related, work-based learning helped students improve in academics, behaviour, and work ethics. Stone’s conclusion is perhaps the reason why such programs continue to be in vogue, but they are not without limitations.

One limiting aspect of cooperative education programs is time commitment. These courses generally run for a full school term, or for 4 to 8 weeks in the summer. Students who enrol in such programs spend a lot of time experimenting with occupational fields. Students in Whiteley and Porter’s (n.d.) sample reported rejecting or reconsidering the career they experimented with, rather than confirming their postsecondary directions after participating in some form of experiential learning. Students were using up valuable time. The amount of time and money invested in experiential opportunities by governments, industries, and sponsors may be deterred by less favourable student outcomes. Unlike Whiteley and Porter’s results, students at the target school expressed positive feedback from experiential learning. Interestingly,
students’ high levels of readiness and positive experiential experiences did not translate into lessened demands from Guidance.

**Student Demands**

Qualitative responses suggested student demands reflecting dissatisfaction with Guidance services with the exception of experiential learning, where the demand reflected a consciousness of the effective practice. Counsellors also spoke highly of cooperative education and apprenticeship programs. However, these initiatives depend on availability, community sponsorship and government funding; none of which are easily procured.

Student anxiety with funding their postsecondary education was also reported by Gibbons et al. (2006). In their study, the main issue was attributed to inaccurate knowledge about tuition costs. Students in this study were uncertain about the availability and application processes associated with financial aid. This baffled counsellors. Counsellors concluded that there was a lack of student follow-up, which resonate Whiteley and Porter’s (n.d.) remarks. Although all students may be aware of, and/or have access to available literature, only a minority of students actually read them.

Putting aside accessible information and little student initiative, student concern about seeking financial assistance is understandable. Adolescents may not have working knowledge about the processes of loans, interest accumulation, and liability. Students may not be acquainted with credit history if they have never held a job. The prospect of financial assistance could be daunting for those who have no experience procuring funding for themselves. It would be useful to make use of other staff expertise by incorporating financial management and budgeting into the mandatory Career Studies course, for instance.
Students described their lack of confidence in professionals when counsellors could not meet their expectations. Counsellors explained their inability to meet every student’s request because of their circa 380 student responsibility. In reality, counsellors focussed on between 30 to 40 students who have been deemed in most of need. The majority of other students are often redirected to alternative sources of information. Students need to share in the responsibility by following-up on their own accord.

Interviewed counsellors acknowledged the use of other teachers as student resources. Cross-curricular connections made in the classroom helps relieve some of the pressure on Guidance counsellors, and creates more available counsel for students seeking various career avenues. However, whether students were accessing these resources and factors affecting their approach to these resources have not been accounted for. Understanding these dynamics would help clarify the network of resources available to students, and help adjust the approach counsellors may take.

**Student-Counsellor Ratios**

Perhaps, the most difficult student demand to fulfill is for counsellors to provide more individual counselling sessions. Counsellors in this study reported a circa 380 student responsibility per counsellor, which is slightly higher than the average (339:1) calculated from other schools within the same jurisdiction. Comparing these results to the U.S. recommended ratio of 250:1 (“Counselling Trends Survey”, 2004) or the Ontario School Counsellors’ Association’s recommendation of 300:1 (Balcombe, 1995), a counsellor cannot meet each of 380 students’ needs to satisfaction.

To put counselling time-commitment into perspective, we can assume Alexitch et al.’s (2004) reported demand of a minimum monthly visit and use the two
recommended student-counsellor ratios as a theoretical baseline. A 10-minute session with each student per month amounts to between 40 to 50 hours of commitment. This would account for approximately 30% to 36% of a counsellor’s time based on a 35-hour work week. Raising the average session to 15 minutes raises counsellor dedication to between 60 to 75 hours per month, or approximately 45% to 54% of their time. If the demand were to be supplied by the target school at 380 students per counsellor, the monthly commitment would be between 60 and 95 hours, or between 45% and 68% of a counsellor’s time.

A counsellor’s responsibility does not allow for such time commitments. Similar to our counsellors’ testaments, Lee and Ekstrom (1987) and Wintemute (2004) illustrated counsellors spending much time with administrative and clerical support. Balcombe (1995) quantified data indicating full-time counsellors spending only 17% of their time on career counselling on average. Factoring in the fact that student-counsellor ratios are far from ideal, students’ desired commitment from counsellors is not a feasible outcome. A more probable target outcome would be to devise feasible and sustainable teaching-learning opportunities in each subject course. Policy makers need to revisit the idea of integrated career education as initiated by Choices into Action (OMET, 1999). It is not enough to have a half credit course (i.e., Career Studies) dedicated to career planning. Career education needs to be infused into every high school course. Bridging the gap between student demands and counsellor shortages need to manifest as a ministry-wide initiative and be supported by all educators.

**Study Scope and Extension**

This research project focused on career guidance programs linked with high school counsellors, hence did not account for other programs unless they were noticed
by research participants, themselves. Extending evaluation to other career
development programs in place may enrich this study’s findings, and better inform
effective practice by liaising between the multiple facets of high school career
education. While the small sample of counsellors and students involved in this study
does not allow for generalising quantitative results, counsellors and students provided
valuable opinions suggesting a need to involve students more proactively in high
school career education.

Conclusion

Counsellor shortages and student demands cannot be remedied without
changing attitudes toward career education. As Counsellor2 noted, students need to
take their Career Studies course more seriously. On the same note, career education
policies also need to take cross-curricular integration more seriously. Integrating a
career planning component into high school subject courses could alleviate the issues
raised by counsellors and students in this study.

Four concerns were highlighted in this study: students want more time
commitment from counsellors to help with their career plans; we do not know if
students are accessing the resources given to them; counsellors suspect a lack of
student follow-up; experiential learning opportunities, which counsellors and students
highly value, are limited. Including a career planning component into each subject
course, where students are asked to explore an occupation linked to the subject area
would address these concerns simultaneously. Students could use the resources given
to them by Guidance to complete such a course component, thereby practising
independent research while expanding their knowledge and improving their skills.
Having to research multiple career paths simultaneously would expand the breadth of
students’ career education, and help narrow areas which students are more interested
Integrating this initiative into subject courses from early high school years would help pinpoint a compatible experiential learning focus in the senior years, and reduce the probability of a wasted cooperative education and/or apprenticeship opportunity.

Incorporating a career planning unit into subject courses would also address the three main requests students wanted from counsellors: help with academic and career pathways, transitioning out of high school, and individualised attention. The process of researching a career path gives students a better opportunity to answer their queries about academic and career pathways, and their transition process for themselves. Students would receive individual attention through assessment. Students could also enhance their career planning portfolios where schools enforce the Teacher Advisory Program, and receive additional specific support. Recruiting other teaching expertise expands the breadth of advice and career choices for students.

Integrating career education as a component of subject courses forces students to address their career goals earlier, with greater depth. Sharing the load with other courses allows the Career Studies course to hone in on the technical aspects of career education, including financial assistance and budgeting skills. Cross-curricular attention to career education not only alleviates counsellor responsibility, but also empowers student independence in preparation for their transition out of secondary school.
CHAPTER SEVEN

Discussion

This thesis investigated the alignment between counsellor and student perceptions of high school career counselling in one Ontario high school in order to better understand what students consider as effective career education, whether student expectations are realistic, and to suggest how high student demand for personalized counsel may be more effectively met. Research focused on four questions about counselling practice and perceptions: What types of career counselling services are available in high school? What do students perceive as effective high school career counselling? What are the differences and similarities between students’ identified counselling needs and available provisions? How do counsellors respond to student feedback?

Career education policy guidelines outlined in the 1998 and 1999 *Choices into Action* curriculum documents (OMET, 1998; OMET, 1999) set the tone for counselling practices observed. Student opinions were compared with prior studies and mapped against available provisions. Counsellor responses to student feedback helped place student expectations into realistic perspective.

**Student Attitudes**

Unlike studies which demonstrated few students approaching counsellors for help (Magnusson & Bernes, 2002; Pyne et al., 2002), this study showed a great reliance on counsellors (71.4%). Twenty five of the 35 student participants reported seeking assistance from their guidance counsellors. However, a major concern students expressed was the lack of counsellor availability. The quality of counsel received both good and poor reviews. Nonetheless, a higher student willingness to
approach counsellors is beneficial to developing a working relationship between educators and students.

My student sample was confident that they would achieve their goals, irrespective of their postsecondary directions. The level of surety which appeared in their responses demonstrated a sense of comprehension and control of their career paths. There was a notably high percentage (82.9%) of students planning on postsecondary studies. Students’ high reports of postsecondary enrolment are directly and indirectly influenced by “the school a student attends” (Perna, 2008, p. 5). A school that prizes continued education after high school would instil a similar value in their students. Understanding students’ postsecondary tendencies enables more focused help with student career planning.

The optimistic percentage of students pursuing higher education flags alert when prior studies have shown low levels of university completion rates in North America. Gibbons et al.’s (2006) found that a majority of American senior high school students had plans for postsecondary education, and seemed relatively confident in their goals. However, they reported a small percentage (26%) of adults have a higher educational degree. Gullekson (1995) noted 65% of Canadian students expected direct acceptance into university, but less than 25% achieved this goal. Borgen and Hiebert (2006) also found that only half of the 75% of Canadian students who pursued postsecondary education had their plans realised. Based on these statistics, my student sample may be pursuing similar unrealistic goals.

The sense of urgency which senior students exhibited as reported by Bardick et al. (2004), Code et al. (2006), and Magnusson & Bernes (2002) also seemed prevalent in my Grade 12 sample. Students not only avidly expressed the need for specialised assistance from counsellors, but also felt it necessary to receive dedicated
attention. Students did not feel this need was adequately supplied due to a lack of personnel.

Counsellor Perspectives

High school guidance counselling is in large part, not an individualised service. Student-counsellor ratios are too high to facilitate individual counselling for every student. Counsellors target select students who demonstrate a need for help, and attend to students who initiate contact more readily than the average student. Counsellor shortages result to focus on students at the lower end of the academic spectrum. The result is a concentration on a group of students who experience the most dramatic issues, rather than equal attention to all students. As such, students who are not within critical radar are left to the wayside. These students may not be in academic peril, but they may not be getting sufficient attention either.

Counsellor2’s explanation of the changing needs of students from Grades 9 to 12 provided understanding of the reality of counselling practice in relation to student expectations. Students in each Grade expected and wanted different things from their counsellors. Counsellors need to accommodate these varied roles. Often times, they were unable to satisfactorily satiate every student’s expressed needs. In this particular school, counsellors revealed that in reality, the majority of their time was spent with the same 20 to 30 students because of their more complex issues. It was also common for counsellors to group issues that affected a large group or the entire student body.

Considering each counsellor was responsible for approximately 380 students at the school, students who did not initiate contact with counsellors may be presumably self-sufficient, or be neglected. Although counsellors reported identifying students who demonstrate academic peril and success, average students may escape detection. More educational options being available also meant that counsellors
needed to help prepare students for a greater variety of academic and career paths. The more accommodating schools are with providing alternative courses, the more counselling potential arises. Students have more choice, which translates to more decision-making. Counsellors acknowledge that students want reassurance with their choices, but there simply are not enough counsellors to supply the demand.

Teaching adaptive skills becomes more and more practical. One may suggest separating personal counselling from academic and career counselling for counsellors to better address student needs. Realistically, counsellors explained that each facet tends to influence the others. Students’ personal lives and experiences affect their academic performance, which in turn affects their career aspirations. Separating these aspects may end up requiring more time spent on an individual as more than one counsellor would need to be acquainted with the specific student profile. Moreover, this runs the risk of creating more distance between students and counsellors, resulting to greater distrust in school personnel (i.e., notions that students’ personal welfare is of little importance), which dissolves any existing working relationship between the counsellor and the student.

**Expectations**

Students may have been relying too much on counsellors, but the education system has not taught them otherwise. From the beginning of high school entrance, student-counsellor interactions centred on scheduling courses, and monitoring academic competence and tendencies. Students become familiar with this relationship. They know their expected contribution and their counsellor’s role in the process. Career counselling is novel to students when they enter their senior years. The amount of information coming at students becomes difficult to digest. Students are expected to mature into an unprecedented independency. This is where the gap between
perception and reality widens. Some students may thrive at the opportunity for self
direction, but not all students learn independence through osmosis. Academic
progression does not always translate into personal management.

The majority of a student’s life is structured by a systematic step-by-step
process of gradation. One enters institutionalised education, develops academic
competence, and graduates into the following preset Grade level. In high school,
students begin to experience choice when choosing their study subjects. However, this
is limited by the number of requisite courses they must complete in the first two years
of secondary education. The amount of selection an Ontario student is afforded
essentially amounts to one elective course in Grade 9 and between 2 to 4 electives in
Grade 10 (based on curricular requirements and an eight course per year
arrangement). The process is systematic: One considers one’s courses for the year and
meets with a counsellor who registers them into a time schedule. Students expecting
the same step-by-step procedures for transitioning out of high school should be
foreseen. It seems unfair to assume, and expect students to emerge out of these
accustomed structures, and graduate into independence without appropriate guidance
on shedding the “training wheels”.

Interviewed counsellors noted the intention of providing more individual
counselling, but in reality, most of their time was spent on crisis management.
Contrary to the student belief noted by Domene et al. (2006) that counsellors
prioritised high achieving students, interviewed counsellors’ attention to “at-risk”
students significantly dictated the time they had for students outside of their radar.
The lengthy wait period for individual sessions as reported by sampled students
reflected Wintemute’s (2004) findings: “Unanimously, the students said that there
needed to be an increase in the number of guidance counsellors in each of the schools to better meet the needs of all students seeking assistance.” (p. 29)

Counsellors’ and students’ perceptions of each other’s affective motives may be different, but the root cause of their differences is the same: There are not enough counsellors to attend to all student needs. Wtermute’s (2004) study also noted counsellors’ intentions for actual counselling was greatly limited by other duties. Domene et al.’s (2006) work suggested an effective guidance program involves a negotiation of awareness, service selection, and implementation by both counsellors and students.

Agreements and Differences

Counsellor and student perceptions of student needs are not entirely at odds (Hiebert, 2003). Both educator and pupil are intent on students transitioning out of high school, but their emphasis differs. The high number of students planning on entering college or university, which was also supported by Alexitch et al.’s (2004) data, requires assistance with moving between educational systems. However, counsellors emphasised the importance of helping students that are not college and university bound. The message counsellors were trying to send to students pursuing higher education is to become more independent in their planning process. Unfortunately, students interpret the urge for independent action as ineffective counselling.

Like Schedin’s (2005) evaluation of counselling services, counsellors’ and students’ preconceptions of the other party’s views dictated their opinion and practice. Surveyed students expressed a greater demand for counselling assistance because of the urgency described by Code et al. (2006). They are pressured by the pressing graduation requirements. On the other hand, counsellors expect students to take more
responsibility with their career plans because they tend to be preoccupied with helping students in immediate crises.

Both counsellors and students have valid concerns. Students felt the need to access more varied experiences, and relied on guidance counsellors’ expertise. Meanwhile, counsellors did not have time to cater for specific interests, and tended to rely on available sources filtered through tertiary educational institutes, the School Board and government assistance programs. The limited information counsellors supplied to students as described by Alexitch et al. (2004) was in large part dependent on what was available to them. It was then up to students to differentiate for themselves what was specific to their needs.

The problem with disparate expectations and perceptions between high school counsellors and students stemmed from students’ accustomed practice. Academic counselling was the norm and the expected (i.e., course registration), but personal and career counselling are two aspects that are more variable depending on student-initiated access and counsellors’ selective attention. The overarching problem is the gap between student expectations and available resources.

The first step to amending unrealistic expectations is to be candid about the issue. Let students know what their responsibilities are and how prepared they need to be before scheduling a counselling session. Set priorities within the Guidance department and ask that they are respected. If the priority is to provide students counsel, ask for policies and administration to acknowledge that administrative support comes secondary. Organise group interventions such as career development days for students to address student needs collectively to save time. Diffuse the responsibility of educating career competencies into other subject areas to expand the scope of options for students. This way, students will have more opportunities to
explore multiple career options and link their research to subject learning. Such
recommendations require much support from the school and other teachers, but its
benefits could be multi-fold.
CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusion

This study essentially dealt with the working relationship between high school counsellors and students by examining their perceptions of career guidance policies and practice. Schedin (2005) acknowledged the importance of a good working relationship between counsellors and students to achieve successful counselling outcomes. He noted the difficulties of maintaining a good relationship given the short and transient encounters between each student and their counsellor. This study emphasised the services counsellors provided and student perspectives on career guidance.

Results highlighted helpful responses to inform more effective counselling practice. Students were satisfied with counselling services and wanted help from counsellors, but there were not enough counsellors or time to provide for individual student needs. Student responses and turn-out to planned interventions demonstrated a willingness to take advantage of good practice. This means counsellors’ efforts would not be in vain. The key is to appropriate career development programs that maximises student benefits in minimal time.

Affirmation of high school student tendencies toward higher education helps hone in on prioritised help students wanted from counsellors. At the same time, literature identifying students with the same aspirations and confidence not achieving their postsecondary goals cautions counsellors to prepare students with alternative career plans. The question is not only as Counsellor2 cited, “Will I get the marks?” Students need to consider alternative options if their primary goals become unattainable. Individual counselling is not the most efficient solution because almost every student will require tailored advice to suit her/his career plans. A more
educative approach would be to focus on teaching students how to seek information, and relate it to their career choices on their own accord.

**Some Suggestions**

Career education is not only the responsibility of the Guidance department. All educators are entrusted with preparing students to become active citizens. Chen (1999) expressed a need to infuse guidance components such as self-exploration into daily teaching and learning processes in order “to help [students] open up their personal exploration which leads to a broad and in-depth awareness of experiences” (p. 38). Nearly a decade later, Law (2007) continued to urge the incorporation of guidance into classroom practices. The distribution of career education across curricula not only helps alleviate guidance counsellors’ workload, but also creates more accessible student support. Students may be more likely to approach subject teachers than counsellors because of easier access, and possibly better rapport. Teachers also have the advantage of helping students realise the connections between subject academia to the world of work through subject content. Although current Ontario policies encourage these practices, it is not explicit, and it does not appear the outcomes were optimally manifested in our sampled students. If the purpose of ubiquitous career education is to help students become better agents in their transition, students need to become more independent, rather than relying on counsellors for short-term solutions.

Over a decade ago, Gullekson (1995) commented that career education is misunderstood, that activities are isolated, and that schools are not adept at sharing and networking outside of their immediate jurisdiction. How have we changed today? Ontario has policies to share the responsibility of career education amongst all educators, which issues evaluations of career education outcomes to applicable
stakeholders, including students, parents, educators, and community collaborators (OMET, 1999). Yet, the roles and responsibilities of counsellors and students remain ill-defined and vague, and the sharing of measurable outcomes is not prominent.

Choices into Action (OMET, 1999) suggested evaluation surveys to be conducted every three years, but results have been maintained only within each school, and no collective summation of effective practice has been conducted (R. Franz, personal communication, November 27, 2009). Sharing information across schools working with the same policies would advantage a network where resources may be better utilised. Successful interventions and practices can function as case studies for less successful schools; unsuccessful counselling interventions can act as precautions.

As with many other educational aspects, parental involvement and understanding of career development processes in high school may help develop shared understandings with adolescents. Bardick et al. (2004) warned that information separate from family expectations are also important in career development. This, at times, may come to odds with parental support. The challenge is to create a collaborative and communicative relationship with not only students, but the parents whom students are most influenced by.

There also needs to be more vigorous measures to address disengaged students and research to identify effective processes. Interviewed counsellors showed a concern for a lack of successful programs to keep non-academic students motivated and in school. Truancy was a major issue when the school could not offer enough options for these students. Aside from individual student disadvantages, counsellors also become bound by chasing after absences, which further reduces their availability to attend to other student needs. Although apprenticeships help some non-academic
students stay grounded, there are not enough placements available to supply the abundance of disengaged students.

One successful campaign was reported by Beggs (1995). In 1988, Don Beggs developed the Experiential Learning and Instruction for Trades Entry (ELITE), and the Hospitality-Entertainment, Leisure and Personal (HELP) services programs in response to the high dissatisfaction with counselling services, school curriculum and teaching strategies for non-academically streamed students. Both programs were three years in length. ELITE and HELP helped non-academic students become job-ready, and generated unexpected enhanced academic behaviour. Despite the successful campaign, such programs are difficult to come by, demands great commitment and financial support, and are specific to the local need. Beggs exemplified crucial elements to successful Guidance: commitment, relevance and resource.

Looking at career education, Balcombe (1995) expressed that incorporating career education across the curriculum is crucial to preparing youths for a “society that demands they are ‘educated’” (The importance of career education in the 1990s, Aims of Career Education, para. 11). Balcombe calculated the possible number of careers which may be investigated if all teachers from Grades 7 to 12 issued a career-based assignment in their class. Such a proposal needs to be explicit. Students need to acknowledge career development assignments as steps, or research designed to enhance their knowledge of the working society they will eventually enter. Metacognition of this learning is essential to career education.

Infusing career planning into subject courses will expand the educative and supportive nature of career education. Career planning projects developed in subject courses can become more personally meaningful to students in terms of acknowledging the academic relevance of their studies, and exploring potential career
options. Parental knowledge and involvement could also be expanded when students have more opportunities to investigate different career pathways. The objectives would be for students to expand their postsecondary options, become more self-sufficient, and receive more varied guidance, while creating for themselves an informative career portfolio.

This notion of cross-curricular integration should not be exclusive. Its very purpose is to eliminate Guidance working in isolation. High school counsellors remain a vital liaison for all students. Group career development interventions still need to be in place to complement and link concurrent student involvement in other subject areas. Professional development days or sessions for students such as that described in Chapter Five is an example. The difference would be that students would attend these interventions being more directed, better equipped and better focused, having accumulated knowledge and experiences from other subject areas.

**Limitations**

One drawback to this study was the limited contact with student participants. It would have been helpful to survey students at various intervals throughout their postsecondary careers (academic or occupational) to identify whether their expressed level of preparation for high school exit was realised after high school, thus justifying the accuracy and reliability of their responses noted in this paper.

The brevity of interaction with student participants hindered further research informed by the results collected. Examining the aspects which draw students to their choice career programs and identifying career programs which appeal to students who did not respond to experiential learning through qualitative focus groups would have enhanced this study. A longitudinal approach to this study, where sampled students
may be contacted during their postsecondary years would help justify the effects of career education interventions received in high school.

The focused nature of this study on one school means its specific results may not be representative of other schools. An expansion of participating schools and a longitudinal research approach could provide further insight and generalisation. Nonetheless, suggestions for integrated cross-curricular career education and concurrent group counselling interventions can still be applicable to all schools.

Further Study

This study demonstrated counsellor and student perceptions of counselling practices in the context of one high school. I have discussed counsellors’ responses to student feedback in this paper. An annex to this project would be to consider how students view counsellors’ attitude toward career education. Student-counsellor working relationships can improve when students are better aware of what is expected of them.

Merits of the mandatory Grade 10 Career Studies course and the Teacher Advisory Program (TAP) were not thoroughly studied. An analysis of the multiple aspects affecting student career planning progress would provide better understanding of the dynamics associated with career counselling in high school and the various avenues that may help relieve the lack of human resources. Further research could include examining evaluation surveys of the Choices into Action (OMET, 1999) policy, and begin with reviewing the Student Success Reports conducted by the Canadian Council on Learning (2007, 2008). Accounting for changes in counselling trends reported in the surveys, and evaluation of reports relating to career education would be another step closer to perfecting effective practice.
Practice steps to creating sustainable career education in high schools would require support from policy makers, administrators and educators. Career education needs to diffuse from the Guidance department into other subject areas. Spreading career planning tasks throughout the high school curriculum would lighten counsellor demand, benefit from teacher expertise, and enforce student accountability.
References


Appendix A: Student Questionnaire

**Student Questionnaire**

Grade (circle one): 11 12

1. What are some of your goals/plans after high school? (check all that apply)
   - university (program ____________; when? ____________ )
   - college (program ____________; when? ____________ )
   - workforce (career choice ____________; when? ____________ )
   - temporary/transitory job ____________
   - travel
   - other ____________
   - other ____________
   - other ____________
   - undecided/unsure

2. Who do you approach for advice or to discuss your postsecondary goals/plans? (check all that apply)
   - advisors/counsellors from colleges/universities
   - high school advisors/counsellors
   - high school teachers
   - parents
   - peers
   - siblings
   - other ____________
   - other ____________
   - “I do not approach or have not approached anyone for advice.”

3. What types of services do you think are most important to receive from your guidance counsellors and/or career advisors (1 being most important)? You may use the same number for more than one item to note equal importance.

   - ___ provide help with high school course selection
   - ___ provide help with high school course prioritization
   - ___ provide help with postsecondary course selection
   - ___ provide help with postsecondary course prioritization
   - ___ mentor time management skills
   - ___ provide information about a variety of higher education or career options (check all that apply)
     - “I look for specific advice from counsellors regarding my desired future goals”, OR
     - “I look for a range of options from counsellors based on my interests”, OR
     - “I look for a range of options from counsellors based on my skills and talents” OR
   - ___ provide information about cooperative education opportunities or internships
   - ___ provide information about postsecondary funding, financial aid and/or resources
   - ___ provide information about skills-building programs
   - ___ provide individual attention specific to my queries
     - other
     - other
     - other

   1
4. For the following statements, check the box that best describes your agreement with it. (SA=strongly agree, A=agree, D=disagree, SD=strongly disagree, N/A=not applicable, undecided, unsure)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) I am aware of what I need to study in order to pursue my academic/career goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>b) I am aware of what skills I need to learn in order to pursue my occupational goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>c) I will have completed all necessary high school preparatory courses to prepare for my postsecondary plans by the end of this year (for grade 12s), or the end of next year (for grade 11s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>d) I am aware of what I need to study after high school in order to pursue my future goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>e) I am aware of the commitments required to reach my postsecondary goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>f) I am aware of the effort commitments required to reach my postsecondary goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>g) I have the financial means to pursue higher educational (college, university, or vocational) studies to reach my goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>h) I am aware of the funding (e.g., bursaries, grants, scholarships, loans etc.) to support my postsecondary goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>i) I think my guidance counsellor/career advisor can help me plan for my future goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>j) I approach my guidance counsellor/career advisor frequently for help with planning my future goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>k) I expect my guidance counsellor to help me with course scheduling.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>l) Guidance counsellors provide helpful information about choosing high school courses to meet my goals.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>m) Guidance counsellors provide helpful information about career choices.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>n) Guidance counsellors provide helpful information about college, university and/or vocational study options.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>o) Guidance counsellors provide helpful information about job opportunities during and after high school.</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>p) Guidance counsellors provide helpful information about post-secondary funding, financial aid and/or resources.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q) Guidance counsellors are helpful with suggesting time management between study and work.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r) Guidance counsellors are knowledgeable about my queries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s) Guidance counsellors are directive to options and/or programs to help me plan and prepare for my future goals.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t) I have received sufficient guidance from student services to prepare for my future plans.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u) I have received sufficient information about higher educational options from student services.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>v) I have received sufficient information about exploratory programs (e.g., mentorships, cooperative education, internships, entrepreneurial opportunities) from student services.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Please list some exploratory programs you have attended or plan on attending during your secondary school studies. Underline the ones you plan to attend. Please also indicate your information source (eg. community, counsellors, parents, peers, self research, siblings, teachers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exploratory Programs:</th>
<th>Source of Information:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Are there any reasons why you would not approach your guidance counsellor/ career advisor for help? List and briefly explain.

7. What other types of programs or information sessions would you like to see available through your school’s guidance department and/or student services?
Appendix B: Interview Schedule

Interview with Counsellors

Exploratory Questions

- What do you do as a counsellor? How much time is dedicated to academic/career counselling? Is there a difference?
- What does academic counselling involve? What does career counselling involve?
- Are there/Do you use any instruments to help with academic/career counselling practices?
- What are some difficulties or obstacles when addressing academic and career planning?
- How are counsellor roles and assistance communicated to students?
- Does every student receive individual academic and/or career consultation? Are there students that do not seek counsel?
- In your opinion, is the current counsellor/advisor to student ratio sufficient?
- What are the postsecondary academic/career concerns which students express the most? How are these issues addressed?
- Are there any concerns that you feel necessary to student acknowledgement, yet not addressed in existing practice?
- Is there anything that you feel will enhance provision of student services in terms of academic and career counsel? If so, what are some suggestions? What are potential drawbacks, or obstacles that may prevent their implementation?

Discussion Overview

- Counsellors will first be asked about their review of the interview transcript provided by the researcher prior to the meeting. Desired corrections will be respectfully made.
- De-identified student knowledge and opinions about guidance counselling services will be presented.
- Discussion questions regarding responses to the student questionnaire may include:
  - How do you feel about the percentage of students who are not yet prepared for their postsecondary goals/plans? eg. Is this higher/lower than expected? Is there anything that may be done by student services to better equip these students?
  - (%) of students report not accessing student services. Is this an acceptable/predictable number? Do you think it would benefit to encourage these students to seek school counsel? If so, how can this effort be manifested?
  - There is a (# degree) of alignment between student perceptions about guidance counselling and your previously expressed practice. How do you think this agreement is achieved?
  - Some students expressed the desire to include or have access to ... programs through student services. How feasible is it to accommodate such programs? (eg. funding, personnel, time)
Appendix C: Tables

Table 1

*Students’ Postsecondary Goals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Postsecondary Direction</th>
<th>Grade 11 (n=9)</th>
<th>Grade 12 (n=26)</th>
<th>All (n=35)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td>6 (66.7%)</td>
<td>23 (88.5%)</td>
<td>29 (82.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational Career</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (7.7%)</td>
<td>2 (5.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitory Time Period</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (3.8%)</td>
<td>1 (2.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>3 (33.3%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>3 (8.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Open Options</td>
<td>2 (22.2%)</td>
<td>2 (7.7%)</td>
<td>4 (11.4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 2

*Students’ Prioritised Counselling Services*¹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Counselling Services</th>
<th>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High School Course Selection</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Course Prioritization</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postsecondary Course Selection</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postsecondary Course Prioritization</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Management Skills</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific Advice For Future Goals</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest-related Counsel</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills/Talents-related Counsel</td>
<td>12 (+1)&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiential Learning</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postsecondary Funding</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills-building Programs</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Query-specific Advice</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Stress Management)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Students had the option of listing more than one option as their most prioritized career counselling service.

² One student reported prioritizing career counsel that was catered to her/his personality traits and strengths under “Other”.
Table 3

*Student Choices for Sources of Information*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Information</th>
<th>Grade 11 (n=9)</th>
<th>Grade 12 (n=26)</th>
<th>All (n=35)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grade 11 (n=9)</td>
<td>Grade 12 (n=26)</td>
<td>All (n=35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postsecondary Advisors</td>
<td>1 (11.1%)</td>
<td>8 (30.8%)</td>
<td>9 (25.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Counsellors</td>
<td>6 (66.7%)</td>
<td>19 (73.1%)</td>
<td>25 (71.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Teachers</td>
<td>2 (22.2%)</td>
<td>16 (61.5%)</td>
<td>18 (51.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>6 (66.7%)</td>
<td>23 (88.5%)</td>
<td>29 (82.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peers</td>
<td>2 (22.2%)</td>
<td>22 (84.6%)</td>
<td>24 (68.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siblings</td>
<td>3 (33.3%)</td>
<td>6 (23.1%)</td>
<td>9 (25.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>4 (15.4%)</td>
<td>4 (11.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No One</td>
<td>1 (11.1%)</td>
<td>0 (0.00%)</td>
<td>1 (2.9%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 4

**Student Perceptions of Preparedness for High School Exit**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Item</th>
<th>Frequency of Scores (n=35)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4a</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.86%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4b</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4c</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4d</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5.71%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4e</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4f</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4g</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(8.57%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4h</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(8.57%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>3</sup> n=34 for this question item because one student participant did not respond to this item.

<sup>4</sup> One student respondent scored both “3” (agree) and “4” (strongly agree) for this item.

<sup>5</sup> One student respondent scored both “2” (disagree) and “3” (agree) for this item.
Table 5

Proportion of Students Who Feel Prepared for High School Exit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Item</th>
<th>Grade 11</th>
<th>Grade 12</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4a (n = 34)</td>
<td>5 (55.6%)</td>
<td>25 (96.2%)</td>
<td>30 (85.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4b (n = 35)</td>
<td>5 (55.6%)</td>
<td>23 (88.5%)</td>
<td>28 (80%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4c (n = 35)</td>
<td>4 (44.4%)</td>
<td>23 (88.5%)</td>
<td>27 (77.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4d (n = 33)</td>
<td>5 (55.6%)</td>
<td>21 (80.8%)</td>
<td>26 (74.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4e (n = 35)</td>
<td>5 (55.6%)</td>
<td>21 (80.8%)</td>
<td>26 (74.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4f (n = 34)</td>
<td>7 (87.5%)</td>
<td>25 (96.2%)</td>
<td>32 (94.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4g (n = 32)</td>
<td>3 (33.3%)</td>
<td>19.5 (75%)</td>
<td>22.5 (64.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4h (n = 32)</td>
<td>7 (77.8%)</td>
<td>21 (80.8%)</td>
<td>28 (80%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6 This table only shows frequencies of students responding “agree” or “strongly agree”.
7 n=8 for this question item because one student participant did not respond to this item.
8 n=34 for this question item because one student participant did not respond to this item.
9 One student respondent scored both “2” (disagree) and “3” (agree) for this item.
Table 6

*Student Perceptions of Access to Guidance Counsellors*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Item</th>
<th>Frequency of Scores (n=35)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4t</td>
<td>1 (2.86%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4u</td>
<td>2 (5.71%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4v</td>
<td>2 (5.71%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7

*Proportion of Students Who Reported Positive Responses to Access to Guidance Counsellors*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Item</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Grade 11</td>
<td>Grade 12</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4t</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n&lt;sub&gt;Grade 11 = 8&lt;/sub&gt;)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(50%)</td>
<td>(34.6%)</td>
<td>(38.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n&lt;sub&gt;Grade 12 = 26&lt;/sub&gt;)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n&lt;sub&gt;All = 34&lt;/sub&gt;)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(n&lt;sub&gt;Grade 11 = 9&lt;/sub&gt;)</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n&lt;sub&gt;Grade 12 = 24&lt;/sub&gt;)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(45.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n&lt;sub&gt;All = 33&lt;/sub&gt;)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4v</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n&lt;sub&gt;Grade 11 = 9&lt;/sub&gt;)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(66.7%)</td>
<td>(41.7%)</td>
<td>(48.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n&lt;sub&gt;Grade 12 = 24&lt;/sub&gt;)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n&lt;sub&gt;All = 33&lt;/sub&gt;)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>10</sup> This table only shows frequencies of students who responded “agree” or “strongly agree”.
Table 8

**Students’ Expressed Confidence in Guidance Counsellors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Item</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4i</td>
<td>3 (8.57%)</td>
<td>3 (8.57%)</td>
<td>12.5 (35.7%)</td>
<td>14.5 (41.4%)</td>
<td>2 (5.71%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4k</td>
<td>2 (5.71%)</td>
<td>2 (5.71%)</td>
<td>2 (5.71%)</td>
<td>20 (57.1%)</td>
<td>9 (25.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4l</td>
<td>2.5 (7.14%)</td>
<td>5 (14.3%)</td>
<td>5.5 (15.7%)</td>
<td>19 (54.3%)</td>
<td>3 (8.57%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4m (n=32)</td>
<td>1.5 (4.69%)</td>
<td>2 (6.25%)</td>
<td>2 (6.25%)</td>
<td>18.5 (57.8%)</td>
<td>3 (9.38%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4n</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (5.71%)</td>
<td>2 (5.71%)</td>
<td>6.5 (18.6%)</td>
<td>3 (8.57%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4o</td>
<td>0.5 (1.43%)</td>
<td>4 (11.4%)</td>
<td>11.5 (32.9%)</td>
<td>17 (48.6%)</td>
<td>2 (5.71%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4p</td>
<td>2 (5.71%)</td>
<td>2 (5.71%)</td>
<td>11.5 (32.9%)</td>
<td>18.5 (52.9%)</td>
<td>1 (2.86%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4q</td>
<td>1 (2.86%)</td>
<td>3 (8.57%)</td>
<td>15 (42.9%)</td>
<td>15 (42.9%)</td>
<td>1 (2.86%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4r</td>
<td>2 (5.71%)</td>
<td>5 (14.3%)</td>
<td>11.5 (32.9%)</td>
<td>16.5 (47.1%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4s (n=34)</td>
<td>2.5 (7.35%)</td>
<td>3 (8.82%)</td>
<td>7.5 (22.1%)</td>
<td>20 (58.8%)</td>
<td>1 (2.94%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11 One student respondent scored both “2” (disagree) and “3” (agree) for this question item.
12 One student respondent scored both “0” (not applicable) and “3” (agree) for this question item.
13 One student respondent scored both “2” (disagree) and “3” (agree) for this question item.
14 n=32 for this question item because three student participants did not respond.
15 One student respondent scored both “0” (not applicable) and “2” (disagree) for this question item.
16 One student respondent scored both “2” (disagree) and “3” (agree) for this question item.
17 One student respondent scored both “2” (disagree) and “3” (agree) for this question item.
18 One student respondent scored both “0” (not applicable) and “2” (disagree) for this question item.
19 One student respondent scored both “2” (disagree) and “3” (agree) for this question item.
20 One student respondent scored both “2” (disagree) and “3” (agree) for this question item.
21 n=34 for this question item because one student participant did not respond.
22 One student respondent scored both “0” (not applicable) and “3” (agree) for this question item.
23 One student respondent scored both “2” (disagree) and “3” (agree) for this question item.
Table 9

*Students Who Reported Positive Perceptions of Guidance Counsellor Support*\(^{24}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Item</th>
<th>Grade 11</th>
<th>Grade 12</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4i</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((n_{\text{Grade 11}} = 9))</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((n_{\text{Grade 12}} = 23))</td>
<td>(55.6%)</td>
<td>(50%)</td>
<td>(51.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((n_{\text{All}} = 32))</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4k</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((n_{\text{Grade 11}} = 8))</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((n_{\text{Grade 12}} = 25))</td>
<td>(87.5%)</td>
<td>(88%)</td>
<td>(87.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((n_{\text{All}} = 33))</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4l</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((n_{\text{Grade 11}} = 9))</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((n_{\text{Grade 12}} = 23.5))</td>
<td>(66.7%)</td>
<td>(68.1%)</td>
<td>(67.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((n_{\text{All}} = 32.5))</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4m</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((n_{\text{Grade 11}} = 7))</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((n_{\text{Grade 12}} = 23.5))</td>
<td>(71.4%)</td>
<td>(70.2%)</td>
<td>(70.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((n_{\text{All}} = 30.5))</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4n</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((n_{\text{Grade 11}} = 9))</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>26.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((n_{\text{Grade 12}} = 26))</td>
<td>(77.8%)</td>
<td>(75%)</td>
<td>(75.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((n_{\text{All}} = 35))</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4o</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((n_{\text{Grade 11}} = 9))</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((n_{\text{Grade 12}} = 25.5))</td>
<td>(66.7%)</td>
<td>(51.0%)</td>
<td>(55.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((n_{\text{All}} = 34.5))</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4p</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((n_{\text{Grade 11}} = 9))</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((n_{\text{Grade 12}} = 24))</td>
<td>(66.7%)</td>
<td>(56.2%)</td>
<td>(59.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((n_{\text{All}} = 33))</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4q</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((n_{\text{Grade 11}} = 9))</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((n_{\text{Grade 12}} = 25))</td>
<td>(77.8%)</td>
<td>(36%)</td>
<td>(47.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((n_{\text{All}} = 34))</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4r</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((n_{\text{Grade 11}} = 9))</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((n_{\text{Grade 12}} = 24))</td>
<td>(66.7%)</td>
<td>(43.8%)</td>
<td>(50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((n_{\text{All}} = 33))</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((n_{\text{Grade 11}} = 9))</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((n_{\text{Grade 12}} = 22.5))</td>
<td>(88.9%)</td>
<td>(57.8%)</td>
<td>(66.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((n_{\text{All}} = 31.5))</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{24}\) This table only shows frequencies of students who responded “agree” or “strongly agree”.