Is Career Advice in New Zealand Secondary Schools Working?
Five Career Advisers Tell Their Stories.

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Abstract

This thesis describes the ways in which some career advisors perceive and experience working in secondary schools in New Zealand in 2001. Secondary schools are being increasingly seen as the initial stepping stone in which students develop the capacity to foster realistic and productive career pathways. Career development is perceived as a social and personal process, which ultimately should prepare the students to manage career transactions throughout their life.

My interest lies in the personal viewpoint of the career advisors. The focus of this research is on the unique way in which he/she perceives the world they work in. A qualitative research method was chosen in an effort to understand situations in what Patton (1985) describes as situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context, and case studies were used to collect and analyse data.

From the group of five career advisors, whom I interviewed, a 'snapshot' that represents each person's different experiences of providing career advice was developed. By connecting the pieces of each person's story this research investigates the realities of working as a career adviser in New Zealand secondary schools.

The first chapter explores through the literature review different aspects of past research in relation to career information and guidance. Chapter two outlines the methodology of the research including the evolution of the project. Case studies
and photographs were important components in this process. The third chapter describes the history of the project and the processes that were worked through to gather information and analyse the data.

In chapter four the findings are analysed in five categories. Each of the five career advisors is introduced and gives an overview of a typical day. This is followed by four categories, which describe different aspects of the experience of providing career advice for these five people.

This information is interpreted in chapter five. The key conclusions are that there is no formal policy or planning that is used by any of the five schools and that provision for information and guidance from year 9 is often minimal. The focus in all five schools was year 13 students and students who were thought to be “at risk” of having no post secondary school plan to follow. Limitations of the research include the small number of participants, and the time of year the research was conducted. Recommendations for future lines of research include the school management teams, year 9, 10 and 11 students and the use of Career Services in secondary schools.
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