

100
YEAR

Celebration of CAREER
GUIDANCE & EDUCATION



The following is a keynote address given by Dr. JoAnn Harris-Bowlsbey, Executive Vice President of Development, Kuder Inc., during the National Career Development Association Conference in Washington D.C., July 2008

BELIEFS, ASSUMPTIONS, INTERVENTIONS, & OUTCOMES

This is a historic year in our professions. It is the 100th anniversary of the birth of career guidance in the United States. One hundred years ago, Frank Parsons set forth his belief that:

a) the characteristics of individuals could be measured, b) that the characteristics and demands of occupations could be identified, and c) that when these two are appropriately matched, individuals will be satisfied with their occupational choice. Thus, the trait-and-factor approach to career guidance was born, still one of the major approaches to assisting individuals with career choice and change.

So, on this 100th anniversary, significant professional associations spawned from this career guidance movement have set forth their beliefs in a brief document that contain three steps.

- Every student and adult will have access to useful information and effective guidance in order to set personal and career goals that align with their interests, talents, strengths, aspirations, and values.
- Every student will learn lifelong career decision-making and management skills necessary to succeed in postsecondary education, training, and the workplace (because unlike a century ago, there will be many career choices and changes as the effects of technology and globalization continue to effect us).
- Every educator, school counselor, and career development professional shall have access to appropriate professional development (so that they can learn how to enable students and clients to achieve the first two goals).

GOALS & ASSUMPTIONS

There are specific goals and assumptions related to these statements of belief. In democratic societies such as ours, one major goal is that individuals be empowered to live productive and fulfilling lives. In all societies, a major goal for these beliefs is the development of a highly skilled workforce able to sustain a nations position in the global economy and to assist substantially in the support of the government through taxes paid and lack of need for costly support services.



MODES OF DELIVERY OF SERVICE TO ACCOMPLISH GOALS & SATISFY BELIEFS

Services of the kind implied in Belief Statement 1 (“Every student and adult will have access to useful information and effective guidance.”) can be provided through group instruction, individual or group counseling, group guidance, and/or through systematic, web-based career planning systems. In reality, research indicates that the most cost-effective way to deliver these services is through a combination of human and technology support. That evidence underscores the importance of the third belief, i.e., that educators and counselors need professional training to help them know how to blend their services with capabilities of the computer.

OUTCOMES OF HUMAN-TECHNOLOGY SYSTEMS

As educators, we know that there are significant signposts related to our current lack of success in providing effective career guidance services to students. These signposts relate to lack of student motivation and academic performance; high rate of secondary dropout; low rate of retention in post-secondary education; and high rate of change of college major, often resulting in five years of completion of the baccalaureate degree. All of these phenomena are accompanied by loss of self-concept, lack of adequate preparation for work in the 21st century, loss of time, and loss of money. These effects have caused us to look diligently for evidence-based practices and ways to imbed measures of accountability into our practices. Acquiring such evidence is costly in time and money and difficult to achieve.

SOME RECENT EVIDENCE IN SOUTH CAROLINA

However, a study recently completed in the state of South Carolina provides both hope and evidence that the beliefs set forth by this 100th anniversary task force can be achieved in a cost-effective way. A prominent and comprehensive web-based system, called the Kuder Career Planning System, is being used by students across the state, supported by trained counselors and Career Development Facilitators. A sample of 2,000 students was drawn from those attending two technical colleges in the state. Approximately half of this sample used the Kuder Career Planning System (which contains research-based assessments of interests, skills, and values as well as extensive exploration of occupations, majors, schools, and financial aid opportunities) while the other half did not. Comparing these two groups, results indicate the following:

- Students who used the web-based system increased their performance in school (as measured by school grades and achievement tests) at a significantly higher rate.
- Students who used the web-based system chose majors consistent with the scores on their inventory, the Kuder Career Search with Person Match, with high frequency and changed their post-secondary majors far less frequently than did those who did not use the system.
- Students who used the web-based system were far more likely to make a successful transition to post-secondary education and to pursue it to its completion.

Data such as these do provide evidence that through collaborative development and funding efforts, states can offer high-quality web-based services, supported by trained professionals to all of their citizens and that the outcomes of those efforts do contribute substantially to more satisfied lives and to the development of a better prepared workforce.