Improving Exercise Science students’ self-efficacy in making positive career decisions

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Field Project A is an elective course in the Bachelor of Exercise Science program at Griffith University and includes elements of both career development learning and work integrated learning. This paper aims to determine the effects of the learning activities and assessment items developed for the course on students’ self-efficacy in making positive career decisions. Two days of workshops were conducted prior to the placement based on the SOAR model (Kumar, 2007). Self-awareness activities included: a discussion of career theory; explanation of the SOAR model; the Personal Style Inventory; sensing dimensions; Lifeline exercise; identifying skills and abilities; work values; Myers-Briggs Type Indicator; influential external factors; and the Systems Theory framework and a walk-through Assessment 1 - Personal Profile. Opportunity Awareness concepts consisted of: information gathering; gaining industry knowledge; informational interviews; the labour market and employment information; and a lead-in to Assessment 2 – Personalised Job Study. The activities related to Aspirations involved: making decisions; the life-raft activity; setting career goals; and a walk-through Assessment 3 – Career Action Plan. Other assessment items were related to placement and included performance on placement, a reflective journal and oral presentations conducted following the completion of placement.

The career decision self-efficacy scale (CDSS) (Taylor & Betz, 1983) was administered prior to and on completion of the course. Additionally, responses from an open-ended questionnaire were analysed to determine common themes. Comparison of pre- and post-scores on the CDSS demonstrated statistically significant differences in relation to students’ confidence in self-appraisal, occupational information, goal selection, planning and problem solving. The results of the study indicated that students perceived the course increased their awareness of personal strengths and weaknesses in relation to employability, as well as their knowledge of specific occupations. Students suggested that they were more able to set career goals, had developed skills to achieve those goals and had improved their abilities to solve problems related to their career development.

Keywords: Exercise Science; self-efficacy; career decisions; career development learning; work integrated learning