

Supporting Youth with Matching Their Skills to Current Labour Market Needs Using The Ontario Compulsory Career Studies Program: A Review of Curriculum Documents

Lorraine Godden
Queen's University

Abstract

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) proposed that policies to address high youth unemployment should include better matching between the skills acquired at school and those needed in the labour market (OECD, 2011). This analysis, utilizing Cohen's (2001) conceptual sense-making model, examined two guidance and career education documents to determine whether their expectations aligned with OECD policy priorities. One document contained a range of strategies for the meeting of program expectations. The other document provided more flexibility to align program expectations to meet OECD policies. A significant implication was the reliance on information technology (IT) to facilitate students to access current labour market information.

The 2011 Economic Outlook produced by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) referred to continuing high youth unemployment in OECD nations as the "elephant in the room" (2011, p. 1) and suggested that high unemployment is the "human face" (p. 1) of the global

economic crisis. The Economic Outlook highlighted two worrying aspects for OECD nations to consider: a) the serious threat of unemployment becoming entrenched, and b) the disproportionate impact of the global economic crisis on youth unemployment.

Identifying that youth (age 15 to 25) unemployment was 17.4% compared with 7% unemployment rate for adults for the first quarter of 2011, the OECD identified key policy priorities to secure job creation in a context of tight fiscal conditions. The OECD suggested that promoting better job opportunities for youth is a challenge that cuts across all countries, and is of significant importance given the established high risk of labour market and social exclusion for youth not in education, employment or training (NEETs).

In the first quarter for 2011, NEETs accounted for 12.2% of all youth aged 15-24 in the 30 OECD countries for which data are available, up from 10.7% in the first quarter of 2008. This represents 22.3 million young people, 14.2 million of whom were inactive and not studying, 8.1 million of whom were unemployed (OECD, 2011). Amidst a context of weak jobs recovery, an important and increasing popula-

tion of youth remain at risk of protracted unemployment or inactivity, with many negative potential consequences. The OECD identified these "scarring effects" as persistent difficulty in finding employment and lower salary than their peers (2011, p. 2).

Building upon the report of 2010 *Off to a Good Start: Jobs for Youth* [which summarized the key lessons from 16 country reviews], the OECD highlighted a wealth of good practices that can support youth with employment and argued for key policy priorities across the OECD area. The OECD acknowledged that there is no "quick-fix" for ensuring all youth get a good start in the labour market, but nevertheless suggested that one of the key policy priorities should be to focus upon greater alignment between the skills young people acquire in school and those needed in the labour market. The OECD has called for educational systems to be more responsive to changing skills needs, stating that the global economic downturn has highlighted that.

One of the main underlying structural problems in the youth labour market is related to education and training. Some youth are leaving the education system and entering the labour market without a recognized



qualification and/or with skills not relevant for labour market needs. (2010, p. 71)

The Role of Compulsory Career Studies in Ontario

The Ontario Ministry of Education described how the goal of secondary schools in Ontario was “to support high quality learning while giving individual students the opportunity to choose programs that suit their skills and interest” (2006, p. 3). The curriculum for guidance and career education provides a central role in focussing students towards developing learning and employability skills that can be applied to their secondary and post-secondary studies, and the workplace. The guidance and career education program for secondary schools consists of courses that are intended to “help students develop learning and interpersonal skills and to enable them to explore careers and the pathways that lead to them” (2006, p. 7). The Ontario Ministry of Education outlined:

As the pace of change in the labour market accelerates, it is increasingly important for schools to help students develop basic and transferrable skills and connect their learning in school to conditions in the wider world, including the world or work. (1998, p. 3)

Highlighting the place that guidance and career education had in the curriculum, the Ontario Ministry of Education

stated that students would be able to “relate what they are learning in various subjects in their secondary school program to their personal aspirations and interests and to possible work and life roles” (2006, p. 4). In addition, as students learned about the career planning process, they would be able to “set goals for post-secondary education and work and develop the knowledge and skills they need to achieve those goals” (2006, p. 4). At the centre of the guidance and career education program is the compulsory half credit course in career studies for Grade 10 students (GLC20). The GLC20 course intends to provide students with an introduction to “self-assessment, development of personal and interpersonal skills, and a general understanding of career planning” (2006, p.7).

It is the author’s contention that the rationale outlined in current guidance and career education for Ontario documentation, and the language used to describe the expected outcomes suggest that achieving a better match between the skills youth acquire at school and those needed in the labour market seems to be a policy priority for the OECD and a curriculum policy priority for the Ontario Ministry of Education. Accordingly, making sense of how guidance and career education expectations (written well before the economic downturn) might be interpreted by teachers and applied to meet the policy priorities stated by the OECD can help to establish the continued relevance of a 2006 career studies curriculum in supporting students to match their skills learned in school to skills

needed in the world of work.

Purpose

This study seeks to determine whether the expectations of the Choices into Action: Guidance and Career Education Policy Grades 1-12 (1998) Detailed Discussion Document and the Ontario Curriculum Grades 9 and 10: Guidance and Career Education (Revised 2006) align with the policy priorities described in the OECD’s Economic Outlook 2011. Additionally, this study seeks to detail which aspects of the two documents characterize and determine how teachers might make sense of the curriculum, in particular with regard to implementation of curriculum expectations [last revised in 2006] in alignment with the current policy priorities determined by the OECD.

Background to the Analysis of Documents

Over the past decade or so, academics and policy makers have argued that evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of career education is slight and that new research examining the efficacy of career development services is required (Slomp, Bernes, & Magnusson, 2011). Slomp et al. articulated that this concern had been expressed through national and international career development symposiums (Bezanson & O’Reilly, 2002; Magnusson & Roest, 2004) and by academics (Dagley & Salter, 2004; Lalande & Magnusson, 2007). However, Slomp et al. concluded that, although eval-



uation of career education is undertaken through symposia and research, it is not consistently undertaken at agency manager and program administrator levels despite being valued by all levels of stakeholders. Accordingly, given that teachers who implement secondary school career education utilise the curriculum documents analysed in this study, this research proposes to begin to build a picture of how teachers might contribute to the efficacy of career development services.

In a review of international and national factors affecting school to work transition, Versnel, DeLuca, Hutchinson, Hill, and Chin (2011) suggested that matching educational programs with students skills, aptitudes, and what was needed in the labour market appeared to be intrinsically linked with successful school-to-work transition. However, the authors found that often schools seemed unaware of “the mismatch between these academic outcomes and the skills needed to succeed in the workplace” (2011, p. 27). Versnel et al. added that further research could begin by studying successful work-based education programs from which we could learn more about designing programs and interventions better able to meet the needs of youth in these challenging times.

This paper posits that, in addition to any evaluation of career education programs, the degree which career education curricula support youth with the current challenging school-to-work transition should also be investigated. How curriculum is written and presented in docu-

ments determines the intended curriculum (Hutchinson, Munby, Chin, Edwards, Steiner-Bell, Chapman, Ho, & Mills de España, 2001) from which teachers mould (interpret, translate, and adapt) into the curriculum that students will experience in the classroom. Therefore examination of career education curriculum documents can indicate specific characteristics that might provide insight into how teachers are able to use current career education policy to align with the OECD policy priority.

Implementation of Career Studies as a Form of Policy

For some time, empirical research had acknowledged that, although many lessons have been learned from studying policy implementation, through generations of analysis, an overarching conclusion of policy implementation was that it is incredibly hard to make it happen (McLaughlin, 1987). Studies of policy implementation have shown that at each point of the implementation process, policy is transformed in some way as individuals decode, understand, and react to the policy (McLaughlin). Attempting to establish what could be learned from the experience of policy implementation, McLaughlin argued that learning for experience, “requires moving away from a positivistic model to a model of social learning and policy analysis that stresses reflection and assistance to on-going decision making” (p. 175).

McLaughlin contended that a number of guidelines for analysts followed from this per-

spective; therefore the relevant frame of analysis for the career studies program would be the implementation system of the program, not just the program itself. McLaughlin argued that, “taking the implementation system as the analytical frame was essential in order to sort out the effects of policy qua policy from policy as transformed through various individual interpretations and choices” (p. 176). Consequently, analysis of the career studies program should reflect the multi-staged developmental character of the implementation process, focussing on the institutional and broader contexts that may also impact upon the implementation process of the program.

Some of the early literature on policy implementation discussed themes within the literature that can help understand implementation, one of which was learning as a possible process by which policy was enacted. The idea of learning as a process of implementation was explored by Sabatier through his development of the Advocacy Coalition Framework theory (Sabatier, 1993). Sabatier claimed that for learning to occur, there must be a modification of behavioural intentions as a result of the experience gained from trying to obtain the policy goals. According to Sabatier, for learning to occur there would be a policy loop within career studies, where future policy formulation would need to be informed by policy experience (Schofield, 2001).

A further theme used within the literature to understand the policy implementation



process was to view implementation through a procedural lens. Thus, aspects such as decision-making, communication, bargaining, negotiation, and even conflict are considered (Schofield, 2001). The challenge with taking this perspective is that the research can become dif-fused, and though some scholars have sought to overcome this by focussing on particular points in the implementation continuum, for example, detailed studies on the processes of micro-imple-mentation (Scheirer & Griffith, 1990), communication as a key process (Nixon, 1980); Yin, 1982) bargaining and negotiation (Barrett & Hill, 1984) and con-flict (Matland, 1995).

Schofield (2001) recog-nized the importance of actors and groups of actors as part of the policy implementation process. In the period since her acknowledgement, many scholars have sought to clarify actors and groups of actors' specific roles and influences. In an effort to comprehend how school leaders understood and implemented pol-icy, Dunbar and Villarruel (2002) adapted Downey's (1998) stages of policy analysis to create a four-stage policy analysis frame-work. Stage one was concerned with the specific guidelines and knowledge of the policy, stage two with determining the need for the policy, stage three ex-plored how the policy is under-stood, and stage four involved whether the policy has been im-plemented according to the leg-islative intent. At all stages actors were involved to some extents, however, stage three was where actors were likely to become

most concerned with what the policy means and with what the parameters of implementation were (Dunbar & Villarruel, 2002).

Since the late 1990's and early 2000's, scholars have sought to understand the role of policy implementers' sense-mak-ing in the implementation process (Spillane, 2000). Weick (1995) a founder of this approach, under-took research that sought to un-derstand sense-making in organizations and outlined how sense-making was about "author-ing as well as interpretation, cre-ation as well as discovery" (p. 8). Building upon the work of Weick, Spillane, Diamond, Burch, Hallet, Jita, and Zoltners (2002) suggested that "imple-mentation involves interpretation because implementers must fig-ure out what a policy means and whether and how it applies to their school to decide whether and how to ignore, adapt, or adopt policy locally" (p. 733).

Further work seeking to understand how teachers' co-con-struct understandings of policy messages were undertaken by Coburn (2001). She acknowl-edged that earlier work to under-stand how teachers "interpret, adapt, and even transform" (Coburn, 2001, p. 145) policy as they take place had helped in-crease an understanding of indi-vidual teacher's construction of policy messages. However, Coburn also recognized that stud-ies had begun to move beyond this individual interpretation to examine how individuals made sense of policy messages from their conversations with col-leagues and from ways that were

"deeply situated in broader so-cial, professional, and organiza-tional contexts" (p. 145). In her study, Coburn (2001) focussed on the way those teachers "collec-tively negotiated pressures and interpreted and adapted messages from the environment" (p. 145). To inform her study, Coburn (2001) drew on both theoretical and empirical research of institu-tional and sense-making theory to construct a model of collective sense-making that focussed on the ways that teachers co-con-structed understandings of policy messages, made decisions about which policy messages to pursue in their classrooms, and negoti-ated any practical and technical details.

This focussed literature review has demonstrated that, since the 1990's, studies of policy implementation have increasingly seen teacher learning as the issue of educational policy implemen-tation (Coburn & Stein, 2006). How teachers implement educa-tional policy is therefore depend-ent upon their pre-existing knowledge, beliefs, experiences, and the mechanisms that connect them to educational policy. Teachers' knowledge consistently undergoes a process of transla-tion, interpretation, and finding pathways to either engage or dis-engage with educational policy. Hence, by understanding these pathways we gain insight into the complex and dynamic relation-ship between policy and class-room practice (Coburn, 2005).

Theoretical Framework

In her study of how teach-ers interacted in both formal and



informal groups with messages from the environment, Coburn (2001) noted that the teachers' interaction followed a pattern similar to what she had observed in the sense-making literature. In particular, drawing from her conceptual sense-making model, Coburn identified three sub-processes that characterized and facilitated collective sense-making: (1) constructing understanding through interpersonal interaction, (2) gatekeeping, and (3) negotiating technical and practical details. Coburn noted that each of these three sub-processes was influenced by the teachers' worldviews, pre-existing practices, and shared worldviews. Coburn concluded that by influencing the sub-processes, teachers' worldviews, pre-existing practices, and shared understandings "shaped and influenced what teachers selected, emphasized, interpreted, and ultimately brought into their classrooms" (p. 152). This study uses Coburn's (2001) three sub-processes of sense-making to take a "step back" to the policy and curriculum documentation to determine how guidance and career education guidelines might be interpreted by teachers and be applied to the career studies programs to meet the policy priorities outlined by the OECD (2011).

Method

Document collection, selection, and analysis were conducted to examine the key documents associated with the Ontario Ministry of Education's guidance and career education curriculum. An initial electronic

search of the Ontario Ministry of Education website using the search term "guidance and career education" revealed 12256 results. All duplicate results were removed and the resulting list was examined to identify the original policy document and the most current curriculum documents for the compulsory half credit career studies course GLC20.

Two documents were ultimately selected for analysis, Choices into Action: Guidance and Career Education Policy Grades 1-12 (1998) Detailed Discussion Document (ranked number four in the results list) and the Ontario Curriculum Grades 9 and 10: Guidance and Career Education (Revised 2006) (ranked number one in the results list). Choices into Action: Guidance and Career Education Policy Grades 1-12 (1998) Detailed Discussion Document was chosen for analysis for two reasons. First, it was the original policy document for the current guidance and career education curriculum in Ontario. Second it remains a current policy document. The Ontario Curriculum Grades 9 and 10: Guidance and Career Education (Revised 2006) was selected for analysis as it represents the most current curriculum document for guidance and career education in Ontario. Both documents were available electronically so could be easily accessed by any Ontario teacher of career studies.

Different methods of document analyses can be observed within published research. For example, some studies adopt a deductive approach, using classi-

fications based upon previously undertaken document analyses (e.g., Robitaille, Schmidt, Raizen, McKnight, Briton, & Nicol, 1993). Others use inductive methods, allowing coding categories to emerge from the content of the examined documents (e.g. Hutchinson et al., 2001). In this study, a combination of deductive and inductive methods was used. First, a framework was developed for the analysis of the two documents. The framework began with the theoretical lens of Coburn's conceptual model of the sense-making process, and consisted of the three clear sub-processes of:

- Conducting understanding through interpersonal interaction [where teachers are asked to collaborate];
- Gatekeeping [where teachers are given specific choices and/or options]; and,
- Negotiating technical and practical details [resources and incorporation of information technology into the career studies program].

Documents were read and re-read to identify representation of the three sub-processes in each document. I then used a deductive approach to create a chart for each document outlining the findings within the three sub-processes. A total of three charts were produced from the two documents examined. Subsequently, I used a further deductive method to analyze each of the charts based upon three inductive themes of skills, skills matching, and labour market needs. These were inductively construed from the OECD policy priority "achieving a better match be-



tween the skills youth acquire at school and those needed in the labour market” (2011, p. 2).

I reviewed all documents a second time to ensure consistency in the data across both documents. The resulting clusters of themes are presented in clusters of the three inductive themes of skills, skills matching, and labour market needs, under each of the three sub-processes of interpersonal interactions, gatekeeping, and technical and practical de-

10: Guidance and Career Education (Revised 2006) to determine whether the expectations contained in these documents aligned with the policy priorities described in the OECD’s Economic Outlook 2011. In addition, I sought to describe which aspects of the two documents characterized and determined how teachers might make sense of any curriculum expectations relevant to this alignment. The data are presented for each of the induc-

Choices into Action: Guidance and Career Education Policy Grades 1-12 (1998) Detailed Discussion Document (hereafter referred to as CiADDD) these included work experience, community based learning, and community experience. The community experience was detailed in CiADDD as including field trips, work-site tours, job shadowing, career mentoring, community service, work experience, co-operative education, youth apprenticeships, internships, and school-to-work transition programs.

The focus on skills in the Ontario Curriculum Grades 9 and 10: Guidance and Career Education (Revised 2006) (hereafter referred to as OCG2006) included worksite visits, job shadowing, community involvement, work experience, apprenticeships, interaction with employers and employees, connections with community service agencies, connections with post-secondary agencies, and connections with broader community outside of school.

skills matching.

CiADDD detailed opportunities that could be used by students to gain experience of matching their skills gained in school to what was needed in the labour market in the form of school-to-work programs, the reviewing of students individual portfolios with students and their parents/guardians, and students being able to access individuals in the community that possess a “wide range of knowledge within the broader community” (p. 18). The CiADDD identifies that

Table 1

Themes from document analysis

Interpersonal interactions	Gatekeeping	Technical and practical details
Skills Work experience Community-based learning Work placements	Skills Workshops and small groups Lifelong learning Broad range of work-related options	Skills Experiential learning Computer-assisted learning modules CD ROM technology Internet websites ICT applications to support enquiry
Skills matching School-to-work programs Portfolio reviews Individuals with wide range of knowledge from community	Skills matching Up-to-date information Application of learning Insights into challenges and opportunities Post-secondary goals	Skills matching Annual Education Plan Portfolios Options for exploring work and learning Post-secondary options Entrepreneurship opportunities Making connections between community experience and program of study
Labour market needs Global community in the classroom Business partnerships	Labour market needs Trends affecting workplace Modern economy Prepare for changing world Learning about world of work	Labour market needs Current labour market information Statistics and trends Occupational data Community agency information Career opportunities – local, national, and international

tails. The themes are shown in Table 1.

What the Documents Revealed

I drew on Coburn’s conceptual sense-making model (2001) to frame the analysis of Choices into Action: Guidance and Career Education Policy Grades 1-12 (1998) Detailed Discussion Document and the Ontario Curriculum Grades 9 and

10: Guidance and Career Education (Revised 2006) to determine whether the expectations contained in these documents aligned with the policy priorities described in the OECD’s Economic Outlook 2011. In addition, I sought to describe which aspects of the two documents characterized and determined how teachers might make sense of any curriculum expectations relevant to this alignment. The data are presented for each of the induc-

Interpersonal Interactions

skills. The focus on skills was on what could be obtained from practical experience gained outside of the classroom. In the



planned career education experiences are an important resource for exposing teachers and students “to up to date workplace practices” (p. 11).

Data from analysis of OCG2006 did not fall into the theme of skills matching as part of interpersonal interactions.

1 **labour market needs.**

Document CiADDD presented community partnerships, in particular with employers, community agencies, business partnerships, and the private sector as opportunities for teachers to have interpersonal interactions that might lead to information about current labour market needs for their students. In document OCG2006, teachers were encouraged to have interpersonal interactions with employers and employees and to form connections with community agencies, post-secondary institutions, and other broader communities outside of school, all of which could be potential sources of information about labour market needs for students in their programs.

gatekeeping skills. The aspects of CiADDD that could provide students with the opportunity to develop skills were expressed in ideas for workshops, which were outlined as job search strategies, resume writing, interview skills, conflict resolution skills, assertiveness training, study skills, time management skills, life skills, and leadership opportunities. In OCG2006, the areas within the program where students could gain skills were described as actively involving students in inquiry, problem solv-

ing, decision making processes, developing learning skills, developing employability skills, and students being provided with knowledge and skills to benefit them throughout their lives.

OCG2006 relied on more generic explanations of how students could acquire skills, leaving the interpretation open to the teacher. This was in contrast to CiADDD where specific ideas for workshops were described recommending their use by teachers in their career studies programs.

skills matching.

CiADDD outlined the need for students to access a wide range of information on careers and educational requirements and listed potential sources as being community partners including employers and social and counselling agencies. OCG2006 outlined the necessity for students to be informed of post-secondary choices, to be able to recognize their diverse abilities and strengths, and to have aspirations. In addition, OCG2006 proposed that students would be able to use career planning to formulate and pursue educational and career goals and be able to apply their learning to their lives and work, in school, and in the community. Teachers would be responsible for offering students the opportunity to participate in a variety of school and experiential learning opportunities, and for ensuring that the concepts, content, and skills identified in different strands of each course are integrated into instruction wherever appropriate in order to meet diverse student needs.

Labour market needs.

CiADDD instructed teachers that students must be provided with many opportunities to explore links between the classroom and the world beyond school, and the students should have access to local labour market information. OCG2006 offered teachers more explicit choices about providing students with opportunities to access labour market needs through the career studies program.

Teachers were directed to provide students with a broad range of options related to work, stating that students should be aware of the changing nature of work, trends affecting the workplace, the modern economy, preparing for the changing world, lifelong learning, and learning about the world of work.

Technical and practical details

skills. Document CiADDD outlined extensive technical and practical details teachers should consider with regard to developing students skills that they will need, to include assisting students with employment acquisition skills, resume writing, interviewing, self-marketing, occupational research, job searching, using new and emerging technology, accessing information, and health and safety information. In addition, CiADDD specified that students will need information about paid work, apprenticeships, international studies, training programs, work experience, and cooperative education.

OCG2006 specified that career studies courses should encourage students to explore skills



development through experiential learning opportunities, job shadowing, community involvement, work experience, cooperative education, Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program, and specialist High Skills Major programs. In addition teachers should integrate computer-assisted learning modules, internet websites, and CD ROM technology.

skills matching. The theme of skills matching was featured heavily in technical and practical details. CiADDD presented a variety of opportunities for teachers to encourage students to skills match including using the students' annual education plan, assisting students with post-secondary options, directing students to relevant support services and entrepreneur opportunities, helping students to make connections between community experience and their program of study, and supporting transitions to work/post-secondary training or study.

OCG2006 described the technological and practical details of skills matching as use of students' annual education plan, developing students' portfolios, recognizing pathways to apprenticeships or workplace destinations, and offering students the opportunity to explore the world of work and options for learning.

labour market needs. CiADDD outlines how technology could be used to support students with accessing information about changes to the nature of work and the workplace, to help prepare them for the workplace, and included use of the Ontario

Ministry of Education sponsored Gateways to Opportunities website. OCG2006 offers more detailed information to teachers about use of technology to support students accessing information on labour market needs, and outlined pathways to apprenticeship or workplace destinations and career exploration programs. OCG2006 asserted that students need access to current labour market information, statistics and trends, occupational data, community agency information, apprenticeship information, and information about career opportunities at local, national, and international levels.

Discussion

Read individually, the Choices into Action: Guidance and Career Education Policy Grades 1-12 (1998) Detailed Discussion Document and the Ontario Curriculum Grades 9 and 10: Guidance and Career Education (Revised 2006) offer an unsurprising account of the aspects of the documents that teachers must consider and respond to as they implement the curriculum for career studies. However when read together, consistencies and inconsistencies are revealed between the documents that may influence the implementation process.

Consistencies and Inconsistencies

interpersonal interactions. Making use of employers, community agencies, work experience, worksite visits, job shadowing, and apprenticeships could

all be construed as interpersonal interactions outlined for teachers to offer students in both documents. Similarly, both documents did not distinguish between generic vs. specific skills students might need for entering the workplace vs. specific skills for specific workplaces. CiADDD outlined specific kinds of practical experience both inside and outside of school that could be accessed by teachers for their students for example, community-based learning, career mentoring, co-operative education, and school-to-work transition programs. In contrast, OCG2006 uses generic terms to describe potential interpersonal interactions, for example, connections with community service agencies, post-secondary agencies, and the broader community outside of school. The choice of generic language may be deliberate, as it offers greater flexibility for teachers in application of the document expectations to the dynamic fluid context of the macro environment.

gatekeeping. Some consistencies were apparent between the two documents, as for example the need for students to access information (including current labour market information) and be informed of post-secondary options, and that teachers had a role in facilitating this. With regard to skills, CiADDD was very specific, outlining workshops that could be used to provide students with the opportunities to enhance their skills. OCG2006 was broader in its descriptions of how students could acquire skills, leaving the



interpretations to the individual teacher. OCG2006 also placed a greater emphasis on students matching their skills to what was needed in the labour market and workplace. This may have been an acknowledgement of the increasing desirability of students being able to understand that this may have value when they were planning their careers. OCG2006 also uses terms like changing nature of work, trends affecting the workplace, the modern economy, and learning about the world of work, making direct links between these terms and students understanding labour market needs. However in CiADDD, terms like changing nature of the world of work were expressed as a rationale for guidance and career education rather than specific learning outcomes for students.

technical and practical details. Extensive technological and practical details for teachers to consider with regard to developing students skills were provided in CiADDD. Whereas in OCG2006 the document talked broadly about what skills students might need. OCG2006 appeared to offer teachers more room to adapt the curriculum to suit their particular cohort of students with regard to developing their skills. CiADDD and OCG2006 outlined opportunities teachers could use to encourage skills matching by students, for example a student's annual education plan, student portfolios, and directing students to relevant support and guidance.

CiADDD described how teachers' could use technology to

enhance the career studies program, but OCG2006 described the potential use of technology in far greater detail and provides explicit examples of the types of data that students need to access for information about current labour market needs. This may be a reflection of the advances that have been made in technology in the time period (of six years) between the two documents.

In neither document was any obvious consideration given as to the expertise and skills that a teacher would need in order to be able to implement the career studies program.

Conclusion

This study sought to establish how career education expectations contained in policy and curriculum documents dated 1998 and 2006 aligned with an OECD priority policy of "achieving a better match between the skills youth acquire at school and those needed in the labour market" (OECD, 2011, p. 2). Specifically, this study uses Coburn's (2001) three sub-processes of sense-making of, (1) constructing understanding through interpersonal interaction, (2) gatekeeping, and (3) negotiating technical and practical details, to take a "step back" to the policy and curriculum documentation to determine how guidance and career education guidelines might be interpreted by teachers and be applied to the career studies programs to meet the policy priorities outlined by the OECD (2011). The data showed that the policy document CiADDD mostly contained a greater range

of specific options and strategies that could be used by the teacher to use the career studies program expectations to achieve the priority policy outlined by the OECD. However, the broader descriptions contained within OCG2006 suggested that teachers might have greater flexibility within those descriptions to align career studies program expectations to meet the OECD policy priority.

The consistencies observed between the two documents suggested that during the period of 1998 to 2006 specific career studies expectations had remained largely unchanged. For example, both documents emphasized the importance of involvement of the broader school community in the career studies program. In addition, the point that students needed to be able to access a wide range of information about post-secondary planning from differing sources was mentioned in both documents, as was the point that students had to have access to labour market information. This latter point was mentioned as local context information in CiADDD.

Discussion of the inconsistencies highlighted that in specific areas of the documents, there was a shift from the detailed methods by which teachers were able to facilitate students with skills, skills matching, and access to labour market needs information contained in the 1998 document (CiADDD) to a broader set of guidelines contained in the revised curriculum document of 2006 (OCG2006). The exception to this was in the use of information technology. In CiADDD, the potential applica-



tion of technology was outlined in some detail; in OCG2006, the use of technology within the career studies program was described in broader detail. This may have been a planned response to the advances in technology during the period between 1998 and 2006, the use of increasingly non-specific descriptions giving teachers the flexibility to respond appropriately in their career studies programs.

Implications

The requirement detailed in both CiADDD and OCG2006 for teachers to integrate the broader school community in career studies necessitates teachers to collaborate and build relationships with community partners. This has implications for teachers being able to spend time not only on relationship building but also in subsequent information brokering to ensure the most appropriate information and resources are reaching their students (Larsen, Segersteen, & Svensson, 2011). In addition, the global economic downturn had added complexity to the labour market context of career studies. The policy priority determined by the OECD suggests that these environments cannot be separated from the teaching of career studies; therefore the onus is on the teacher to find ways to keep updated on such issues.

Possible variances in teacher interpretation of the curriculum could contribute to Taylor's (2007) argument that institutional and policy structures affect the ability of high school

students to find learning and career pathways that lead to success in the labour market. The open level structure of the career studies program produces mixed cohorts of students with differentiated academic abilities, and differing goals for post-secondary destinations. How well the career studies teacher interprets the career studies policy and curriculum expectations may impact upon how demographics, the distribution of occupations in the economy, and current labour market status are used to facilitate the connections between skills and labour market needs for the students.

The implications for incorporating information technology into the career studies program are perhaps the most significant implications found in this study. Data from the document analysis of document OCG2006 demonstrate that the significant reliance on students accessing current labour market needs is proposed through students accessing current information via the application and use of information technology within the career studies program. To successfully achieve this expectation, the availability and capability of technology in schools, support and infrastructure of information technology, and skills for using information technology of teachers and their students becomes crucial (Taylor, 2007). The reliance on technology suggests a significant potential impact upon any program that could be offered in career studies.

References

- Barrett, S., & Hill, M. (1984). Policy bargaining and structure in implementation theory: Towards an integrated perspective. *Policy and Politics*, 12(3), 219-240
- Bezanson, M. L., & O'Reilly, E. (2002). *Making waves: Volume 2. Connecting career development with public policy*. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Career Development Foundation.
- Coburn, C. E. (2001). Collective sensemaking about reading: How teachers mediate reading policy in their professional communities. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 23(2), 145-170.
- Coburn, C. E. (2005). The role of nonsystem actors in the relationship between policy and practice: The case of reading instruction in California. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 27(1), 23-52.
- Coburn, C. E., & Stein, M. K. (2006). Communities of practice theory and the role of teacher professional community in policy implementation. In M. I. Honig (Ed.), *New directions in education policy implementation: Confronting complexity* (pp. 25-46). Albany, NY: State University Press.
- Dagley, J. C., & Salter, S. K. (2004). Practice and research in career counselling and development, 2003. *Career Development Quarterly*, 53(2), 98-157.
- Downey, L. W. (1998). *Policy analysis in education*. Calgary, AB: Detselig Enter-



- prises.
- Dunbar, D. Jr., & Villarruel, F. A. (2002). Urban school leaders and the implementation of zero-tolerance policies: An examination of its implications. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 77(1), 82-104.
- Hutchinson, N. L., Munby, H., Chin, P., Edwards, K. L., Steiner-Bell, K., Chapman, C., Ho, K., & Mills de España, W. (2001). The intended curriculum in co-operative education in Ontario secondary schools: An analysis of school district documents. *Journal of Vocational Educational Research*, 26, 103-140.
- Lalande, V., & Magnusson, K. (2007). Measuring the impact of career development services in Canada: Current and preferred practices. *Canadian Journal of Counselling*, 41(3), 133-145.
- Larsson, M., Segersteen, S., & Svensson, C. (2011). Information and informality: Leaders as knowledge brokers in a high tech firm. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 18(2), 175-191.
- Magnusson, K., & Roest, A. (2004). The efficacy of career development interventions: A synthesis of research. Retrieved from http://www.iaevg.org/crc/files/magnusson-CareerEfficacy-synthesis829_2d.
- Matland, R. E. (1995). Synthesizing the implementation literature: The ambiguity-conflict model of policy implementation. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 5(2), 145-177.
- McLaughlin, M. W. (1987). Learning from experience: Lessons from policy implementation. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analyses*, 9(2), 171-178.
- Nixon, J. (1980). The importance of communication in the implementation of government policy at local level. *Policy and Politics*, 8(2), 127-144.
- Ontario Ministry of Education. (1998). Choices into action: Guidance and career education policy grades 1 to 12 (1998), detailed discussion document. Retrieved from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/discussi/choices.pdf>.
- Ontario Ministry of Education. (2006). The Ontario curriculum grades 9 and 10. Guidance and Career Education. (revised 2006). Retrieved from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/secondary/guidance.html>.
- Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD). (2011). Employment outlook 2011: Multilingual Summaries. Paris, FR: OECD.
- Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD). (2010). Off to a good start? Jobs for youth. Paris, FR: OECD.
- Robitaille, D. F., Schmidt, W. H., Raizen, S., McKnight, C., Briton, E., & Nicol, C. (1993). Curriculum frameworks for mathematics and science (Third International Mathematics and Science Study, Monograph #1). Vancouver, BC: Pacific Educational Press.
- Sabatier, P. A. (1993). Policy change over a decade of move. In Sabatier, P. A. and Jenkin-Smith, H. C. (Eds.), *Policy change and learning: An advocacy coalition approach*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Scheirer, M. A., & Griffith, J. (1990). Studying micro-implementation empirically: lessons and dilemmas. In D. J. Palumbo & D. J. Calista, (Eds.), *Implementation and the policy process: Opening up the black box*. New York, NY: Greenwood Press.
- Schofield, J. (2001). Time for a revival? Public policy implementation” A review of the literature and an agenda for future research. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 3(3), 245-263.
- Slomp, M. W., Bernes, K. B., & Magnusson, K. C. (2011). Evaluating the impact of career development services in Canada: The perceptions of managers and program administrators. *Canadian Journal of Career Development*, 10(1), 5-12.
- Spillane, J. P., Diamond, J. B., Burch, P., Hallett, T., Jita, L., & Zoltners, J. (2002). Managing in the middle: School leaders and the enactment of accountability policy. *Educational Policy*, 16(5), 731-762.
- Spillane, J. P. (2000). Cognition and policy implementation: District policymakers and the reform of mathematics education. *Cognition and Instruction*, 18, 141-179
- Taylor, A. (2007). Pathways for youth to the labour market:



- Canadian Policy Research Networks project. Ottawa, Canadian Council for Learning: Work and Learning Knowledge Centre: Ottawa.
- Versnel, J., DeLuca, C., Hutchinson, N., Hill, A., & Chin, P. (2011). International and national factors affecting school-to-work transition for at-risk youth in Canada: An integrative review. *Canadian Journal of Career Development*, 10(1), 21-31.
- Weick, K. E., (1995). *Sensemaking in organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Yin, R. K. (1982). Studying the implementation of public programs. In W. Williams, (Ed.), *Studying implementation: Methodological and administrative issues*. Chatham, NH: Chatham House.