



Career Development Needs of Students in a Developing Country in Africa

White Paper
October 2015

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Introduction

In June of 2014, personnel from Kuder, Inc. (and its wholly owned subsidiary, Kuder Visions Unlimited, LLC) administered the Kuder® Career Needs Assessment™ to four groups of stakeholders in a developing country in Africa. The purposes of the needs assessments were twofold: (1) to build a career planning system that directly addresses students' educational and career development needs, and (2) to serve as baseline data for evaluating the effectiveness of the career planning system. Needs assessments were administered to secondary school students, their parents, their teachers and school administrators, and community partners (local leaders, employers, etc.). Respondents were from each geographical area of the country. Students responded in terms of what they need. Other stakeholders (i.e., parents, teachers and administrators, community partners) responded in terms of what they think their children/students/job applicants need. The items were largely the same across the four stakeholder groups.

Student Needs Assessment Results

Students were asked to rate their levels of need on 23 items related to their educational and career development. Ratings were on a five-point scale, with a rating of 5 indicating the highest need, and a rating of 1 indicating the lowest need.

The 23 items covered three salient areas of students' educational and career development:

1. **Self-knowledge** – learning their career interests, skills, and values.
2. **Knowledge of education and work** – learning about educational opportunities and requirements, learning about work tasks and environments.
3. **Educational and career planning** – including how to set goals and make decisions, learning how to plan their careers.

An overwhelming majority of secondary school students indicated a high level of need on each of the 23 items. Results from some of the items are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Percentages of Students (N = 772) who Indicated a High Need (Rating of 4 or 5 on a 5-point Scale) on Selected Needs Assessment Items.

I need to:	4	5
Learn about my own occupational interests (career, work, or job interests).	6%	87%
Learn about specific higher education combinations and training opportunities.	10%	81%
Learn about work tasks and working conditions of various occupations.	12%	78%
Learn how to develop educational and occupational goals for myself.	7%	87%
Learn how to make educational and occupational decisions.	9%	83%
Gain skills in completing applications for educational programs or jobs.	15%	74%
Develop skills for interviewing for jobs or educational programs.	12%	82%
Learn about on-the-job training opportunities, such as internships.	11%	81%
Learn how to network with people when searching for jobs.	10%	84%

Disaggregated analyses were conducted to determine if levels of need differed based on student characteristics. There were only slight differences by gender. On most items, young men indicated slightly less need than did young women. For example, on the occupational interests item, 85% of young men rated the need a 5 and 7% rated it a 4; 90% of young women rated the need a 5 and 6% rated it a 4. These slightly higher ratings of needs by young women were consistent across the 23 items. The indicated needs of young men, however, were high. There were small differences in need ratings across areas of the country, with students in rural areas indicating slightly higher needs.

Teacher and Administrator Needs Assessment Results

A total of 111 teachers and school administrators responded on the needs assessment. Teachers' and administrators' ratings of students' needs were high across all the items, with a solid majority indicating high need. On some items, however, the levels of need were somewhat lower than levels indicated by students. For example, fewer teachers and administrators (77%) rated "learning about work tasks" as a high need, compared to students (90%). On many items, the need ratings of teachers and administrators were similar to need ratings of students. For example, 93% of students and 94% of teachers and administrators rated "learning about occupational interests" as a high need. Numbers of teachers and administrators were too small for disaggregated analyses.

Parent Needs Assessment Results

Of all the stakeholder groups, parents (N = 54) indicated the highest levels of need. On 13 of the items, over 90% of parents indicated a 5, the highest level of need. On all but one item, over 80% of parents indicated a 5. The number of parent respondents was too small for disaggregated analysis.

Community Partner Needs Assessment Results

The number of community partners (local leaders, pastors, employers) who responded to the needs assessment was low (N = 21), and therefore, results should be interpreted with caution. The need ratings of community partners were very high, with over 90% of them rating a 5 (highest need) on 17 of the 23 items. Community partners highly endorsed the needs for students' learning about work tasks, developing goals and plans, writing resumes, completing applications, and connecting education and training to jobs.

Results Across Stakeholder Groups

The ratings of needs by students, teachers and administrators, parents, and community partners were all high. Although there was some variation in levels of need indicated by stakeholder groups, and some variation across items or areas of need, all needs were indicated as high. Several of the differences in levels of need across stakeholder groups were what would logically be expected. For example, community partners rated several needs higher than did teachers (e.g., learning work tasks, writing resumes, writing cover letters, and completing applications). These were expected as these needs connect more closely to jobs and work. Note that the sample of community partners was small, and chance variation could have played a role in these particular results.

Recommendation

Based on the high levels of need indicated by students, teachers and administrators, parents, and community partners, it was recommended that a comprehensive system of career planning be implemented to help students meet their educational and career development needs.

Major Benefits from the Needs Assessments

- Needs assessments provided a firm, valid basis for building the career guidance system for this country in Africa. That is, the system was built around local students' needs, as indicated by students, their teachers and school administrators, their parents, and their potential employers.
- Needs assessment results are baseline data that become part of program development and program evaluation. The needs assessments will be re-administered at appropriate points to gauge the extent to which needs were met.
- For this country in particular, the needs assessments generated interest in and an understanding of the importance of the Kuder Career Planning System[®], thereby encouraging high usage levels by students.
- Needs assessments have encouraged wide ownership of the career guidance system by the officials and citizens of in the country.

About the Author



Jerry Trusty, Ph.D. is a professor of counselor education, counseling psychology, and rehabilitation services and coordinator of the secondary school counseling program at The Pennsylvania State University. He is also a member of the Kuder, Inc. research faculty. In this role, he conducts outcome research on the company's online education and career planning resources and develops customized needs assessments to evaluate key stakeholders' awareness, acceptance, and application of career program initiatives.

Dr. Trusty's research and scholarly work has focused on school dropout prevention, adolescents' educational and career development, parents' influences on adolescents' educational and career development, achievement and opportunity gaps in schools, and quantitative research methods. Much of Dr. Trusty's research has focused on the career development of students experiencing opportunity gaps. Dr. Trusty began his career as a secondary school counselor and as a dropout prevention coordinator for a school district. He became a counselor educator in 1992 after earning his doctorate from Mississippi State University. He served as a faculty member at the University of Alabama and Texas A&M University.