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High School Students + Vocation Education = Better Decisions?

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Mixed Methods, Group Comparison Study of Students at a Midwestern, Suburban High School

Introduction
Every year, students who have just graduated high school bilhetly begin their journeys through postsecondary education and into adult life. This study sought to discover if addressing the concept of vocation and character strengths would influence those decisions.

Research Questions
1) Is there a statistically significant difference (p < 0.05) between pre and post test Brief Calling Scale scores of high school seniors and juniors exposed to the Ikigai/Vocation/Character Strengths workshop at a Midwestern suburban high school?
2) How do these students describe the influence of the Ikigai/Vocation/Character Strengths workshop on their postsecondary decisions?

Methodology
1) Administer a pre-test using the 4-item Brief Calling Scale
2) Administer the Ikigai/Vocation/Character Strengths workshop
3) Administer the post-test using the 4-item Brief Calling Scale, three additional qualitative questions, and four demographic questions

Pre and Post Test Experimental Group comparisons of the four items, n = 31

Survey Items | Pair | Mean Deviation | t | Sig (2-tailed)
--- | --- | --- | --- | ---
I have a calling to a particular kind of work. | Pre-test 1 Post-test 1 | -.129 | .845 | -.849 | .403
I have a good understanding of my calling as it applies to my (future) career. | Pre-test 2 Post-test 2 | -.194 | .749 | -1.438 | .161
I am trying to figure out my calling in my career. | Pre-test 3 Post-test 3 | .581 | 1.089 | 2.970 | .006
I am searching for my calling as it applies to my (future) career. | Pre-test 4 Post-test 4 | .484 | 1.092 | 2.468 | .020

Findings
The students in this study were able to use information from the Ikigai/Vocation/Character Strengths workshop and make more holistic postsecondary decisions in discerning their callings and considering how those callings will apply to their careers.

There was a statistically significant difference between the pre and post-test scores on item 3, “I am trying to figure out my calling in my career”; t(30) = 2.97, p = .006.

There was a statistically significant difference between the pre and post-test scores on item 4, “I am searching for my calling as it applies to my (future) career”; t(30) = 2.47, p = .020.

Upon finding statistically significant differences (p < .05) on items 3 and 4, the researcher calculated effect sizes using Cohen’s d = M/SD.

For item 3: Cohen’s d = .53, indicating a medium effect size;
For item 4: Cohen’s d = .44, also indicating a medium effect size (Pallant, 2010).

Recommendations
Vocation is not an end point, but a journey and is best traveled with caring, honest others. Further longitudinal research into teaching the concept of vocation to students while still in high school and perhaps even earlier is recommended.

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Select References