

Evaluation of career interventions.

Short- and long-term outcomes for students finishing upper secondary school in Iceland.

The aim of this quasi-experimental field study was to assess the impact of two short career interventions on Icelandic upper secondary school students. The *Icelandic Developmental-focused Intervention* (IDI group) was adapted from a semester long career education course (Sveinbjörnsdóttir, 2011) composed of assignments drawn from several career theories (e.g., Holland, 1997; Savickas, 2005; Super, 1990) and the *CIP intervention* (CIP group) was based on the cognitive information processing (CIP) theory-based approach in career counseling and service delivery (Sampson et al., 2004). The main task of students in the IDI group was to explore their own career, from past to present, in a broad context and to enter the career decision process with an open mind. The main objective for students in the CIP group was to learn what they needed to know and do in order to move forward in their current decision-making process.

Participants in the IDI, CIP, and control groups were students finishing their matriculation exam. Participants ranged from 17 to 28 years old at the beginning of the study, 59.8% were female, and about 91% were born in Iceland. Four measures assessed participants' degree of career indecision (Abrams et al., 2013), career thoughts (Sampson et al., 1996a), career decision self-efficacy (Betz et al., 2005; Betz & Klein, 1996), and global life satisfaction (Diener et al., 1985) at pre-test (N = 468), post-test (N = 336), and follow-up (N = 225).

One week after the intervention period (post-test), MANCOVA analysis revealed a main effect for group ( $p < .01$ ) when participants' gender, age, grades in Icelandic and mathematics, and parents' education were used as covariates. Pairwise comparisons revealed larger difference scores for the CIP group in career decision self-efficacy as compared to the control group ( $p < .01$ ), as well as in global life satisfaction as compared to the IDI group ( $p < .01$ ). At the one-year follow-up, MANCOVA analyses did not indicate a main effect for intervention groups ( $p > .05$ ). Furthermore, the career interventions did not affect participants' primary career choices one year later (Chi-square test  $p > .05$ ).

Nationally, the results offer valuable information about effective career interventions for counselors, educational institutions, and authorities in Iceland. First, upper secondary school students seem to need more organized or structured career interventions than were generally available to them at the time. Second, the cognitive information processing theory and counseling model (CIP; Sampson et al., 2004) seem to be useful for students, at least in the short term. Third, the fact that a long-term impact was not confirmed supports the conclusion that students need more guidance, even from an early age. Thus, it should be beneficial for the Icelandic authorities to implement a national policy in career counseling and guidance at all educational levels (Kjartansdóttir et al., 2015). Internationally, the contribution is mainly twofold. This study adds support to indications that career interventions based on CIP theory are effective for individuals in different countries and cultures (Brown, 2015) and indicates the importance of structured career interventions (Whiston et al., 2003).