



**Doctor of Education: Leadership, Learning and Community**

A HIGH SCHOOL INTERNSHIP PROGRAM AS AN INFORMED  
DECISION-MAKING INFLUENCE: A QUANTITATIVE CASE STUDY

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**Introduction:** The purpose of this case study was to examine the differences in high school students' awareness and understanding of their options and opportunities for post-high school life paths after participating in an internship-based program.

**Problem of Practice:** The problem of practice is that high school students do not have the information needed to make practical forward-looking decisions about their own futures.

**Research Method:** This was a quantitative case study that used pre and post program surveys of 15 high school internship participants. The surveys measured individual students changes in self-perceived awareness of their levels of informed decision-making abilities and confidence. Both surveys used a Likert model based on the Career Decision Scale (Gati et al., 1996; Osipow et al., 1976). The Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare the values of the two sets of survey data.

**Summary of Findings:** Although analyses did not show statistical significance with the Mann-Whitney U tests, there is a strong case to be made of the practical significance in nearly all of the survey items. In nearly every survey item, there was a positive change over time in the samples overall perception of growth in the students understanding and application of knowledge to make more informed decisions at the conclusion of the internship, when compared to the pre survey results.

**Limitation(s) of Study:** The study focused on a single school's internship program and collected quantitative data exclusively. Future studies could benefit from a qualitative analysis of multiple programs.

**Implications/Significance of Study:** Since this case study showed substantial positive empirical results from the students survey responses, the expansion of internship programs should be given consideration as a primary means of delivering experiential student learning.