

Classroom Use of Public Data to Inform Students' Career Choices

Natalia V. Smirnova and Svetlana S. Kalnova, University of Connecticut

Motivation

The National Alumni Career Mobility Survey (NACM) 2020 have emphasized that receiving helpful career information during an undergraduate degree is a significant contributor to educational satisfaction as well as to career pathway preparation. Proper knowledge of career-pertaining information plays an important role in economic mobility and career satisfaction. This project stems from the premise that career choice could be explored by students using data from legitimate sources and guidance from an undergraduate course instructor.

Teaching Strategy

Using data of BLS Occupational Outlook Handbook to guide students in the exploration of their major and career choice.

Method Used

Two-part assignment that could be implemented as a class work or as a homework in any undergraduate course.

Assignment # 1: Exploring your Career Choice

Assignment # 2: Exploring Data in Support of Your Career Choice

Learning objectives:

- (1) Explain the current situation in the job market for the career path of interest.
- (2) Identify and extract valuable data for analysis using public database.
- (3) Make meaningful inferences regarding one's potential career path.

Originality

The innovation is in the use of the BLS data on occupations as a base for major and career choice exploration.

The assignment integrates the data analysis skills with the critical thinking about one's potential career choice trajectory.

The aim of the exercise is to develop several competencies for career readiness identified by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) such as Career & Self Development, Critical Thinking, Equity & Inclusion, and Technology.

Impact

This exercise provides high-impact results identified by The Career Leadership Collective: 1) It helps students understand career opportunities; 2) It helps students create a plan for their career.

Evidence that this Strategy Enhances Learning

This strategy was used successfully in several courses in Economics and Communication. The quantitation and qualitative evidence from students' satisfaction surveys and open-ended essay responses will be provided.

Results:

- (1) Exercise helped students navigate their career path by making meaningful data-driven decisions;
- (2) Students
 - (a) gained confidence in working with big data,
 - (b) applied (and developed further) critical thinking and analytical skills,
 - (c) utilized data-driven approach for career choice exploration.

Versatility of this Strategy

This strategy can be implemented in any classroom at any institution. The actual assignment with step-by-step directions is available to be shared. By accessing these documents, any instructor could tailor this exercise for their instructional style, course level, and diversity of emphasis on those skills in the syllabus.

Contact: Natalia.Smirnova@uconn.edu

Career Readiness Competencies

There are **eight career readiness competencies**, each of which can be demonstrated in a variety of ways.



Sources:

National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2021.
The Career Leadership Collective, 2021.
National Alumni Career Mobility Survey, 2020