Computer Used for Vocational Guidance

Computer: Let's imagine you are going to decide now your future career. Tell me which of the following appeals to you most: teacher, lawyer, doctor, writer, scientist, broadcaster, executive, politician, programmer?

Student: I want to be a scientist.

Computer: Then perhaps you have known someone who was successful as a scientist.

Student: Yes.

Computer: Tell me what you think you have in common with that person.

Student: I like to work in a laboratory, discovering things.

Computer: Then we can say you two have at least one common interest. What abilities do you have in common?

Imaginary conversation? Not at all. This excerpt from a typical dialogue with a computer is part of a new experimental project at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, designed to help students choose their careers.

The project is being supported by the U. S. Office of Education. Collaborating with the Harvard researchers are the New England Education Data Systems, a project of the New England School Development Council, and the Newton, Mass., Public School System.

Officially, the project is entitled "An Information System for Vocational Decisions." A variety of information about jobs, industries, schooling, the students themselves, and the career development process will be put into a computer.

A student will be able to ask the computer such questions as: what does a programmer do? How many people work in broadcasting? Which jobs involve a great deal of travel? A student can also get suggestions for possible job choices by stating his preferences, such as, "I like working with things and being out of doors."

In addition to answering specific queries, the computer will search its "bank" of information for related data and the student's personal history. It can then spell out the courses the student needs for a particular job, the time involved, the schooling costs, possible colleges or institutes to attend, or suggest another, related career choice.

The computer may relay information through a typewriter, earphones, or a television screen, showing films, cartoons, and other visuals. It can also refer the student to other sources of information.

While working with the computer, the students also will take a training course to help them understand their personal traits in relation to various jobs and schooling requirements. The aim is to help them acquire skill in vocational decision-making and a sense of control over their future plans. More realistic vocational choices are expected to result.

Teachers and vocational counselors, as part of the course, will help the students to understand the data and plan their careers. They will also evaluate their progress. The researchers believe that linking students, computers, and counselors will help to individualize vocational counseling.

While students are working out career decisions, the researchers will study the students. They will try to learn how the students arrive at their original career preferences and how they combine the computer data with their personal interests, abilities, and values to make a final choice. The investigators also will study the relationship between a student's personal profile and his decision-making ability, career choice, and his subsequent school or job performance.

The project, which is expected to take about three years, is headed by Harvard professor David V. Tiedeman. To date the Office of Education has made about $600,000 available for the project under the Vocational Education Act of 1963.

Doctoral Fellowships at Indiana A-V Center

Six new doctoral fellowships for 1967-68 have been established by the Indiana University Audio-Visual Center.

The stipends amount to $2,400 for the first year, $2,600 for the second, and $2,800 for the third, plus an additional $600 for each dependent. Fees also will be provided.

Dr. Harvey B. Black, director of the research training program of the Audio-Visual Center, said that applicants must meet entrance requirements for the Ph.D. or Ed.D. degree.

Familiarity with mathematics and one or more sciences, including a behavioral science, is desirable.

The program involves behavioral research and the use of such techniques as the motion picture, television, programed instruction, and computer-assisted instruction.

In addition to the fellowships, there will be a limited number of graduate assistantships available.