

The Real Game

Pilot and Evaluation

July, 2000

Scope of the evaluation

As part of the contract with the Ministry of Education, Career Services agreed to conduct on-going monitoring of the pilot and provide an evaluation report on the effectiveness of The Real Game for New Zealand students in relation to the intended outcomes of the pilot, and the extent of the modifications required for further use in New Zealand.

Because the Ministry of Education appointed an external contractor to evaluate the pilot, including viewing how the Game was operating in schools Career Services decided to focus its evaluation on feedback from Career Consultants and information gathered at the De-brief day. We didn't want to overlap with the evaluation carried out by the Ministry's external contractor and place extra pressure on schools. This was communicated to those who attended the training day in April.

On-going monitoring of the Pilot

This was carried out by regular consultation amongst the project team including Career Consultants who were monitoring progress in schools. This ensured the smooth running of the pilot in all of the schools.

The Debrief day

Career Services ran a de-brief day for schools who had participated in the pilot. School representatives were asked to prepare a short presentation on how the pilot went in their schools. These presentations were very informative and school representatives were unanimous in their belief that The Real Game should be introduced nationally. There was also a general consensus on what changes would need to be made.

Attached is a summary of the comments received from schools.

Effectiveness of The Real Game for New Zealand students

Career Consultants considered that The Real Game would be very effective for New Zealand students and they consider it met the objectives of the pilot as outlined below.

Does The Real Game give students practice using problem-solving skills in real life contexts?

Career Consultants identified that the Game does give students practice using problem-solving skills in real life contexts. Many of The Real Game exercises provide the

opportunity for problem-solving skills including, the budgeting exercise, students balancing their “wish list” with their level of income, exercises on how to use time, what happens when you lose your job, and practice working as a community. Career Consultants believe the Game does this in a guided decision-making process which is appropriate for the year level.

Does The Real Game give students an insight into the relationship between skills and knowledge acquisition and their own life choices?

The Real Game did give students an insight into the relationship between skills and knowledge acquisition and their own life choices. Students were able to identify the relevance of subjects to particular careers and increased their knowledge of occupations. The Real Game acknowledges the use and value of a variety of skills. The leisure and income/expenditures exercises were particularly relevant. Students learned the day to day realities of careers and the need to live according to their occupational income by being “in role” throughout the Game.

Is The Real Game appropriate for the New Zealand context?

The Real Game fits well within the social studies curriculum and the Game is a good way for schools to meet some expectations of the careers National Administration Guideline. The Real Game fit well within the New Zealand context both in term of work and values and in relation to the curriculum. In New Zealand, the options available to young people are very similar to those in Canada and other developed countries. Therefore, students didn't have too much difficulty relating to the programme material of the Canadian Game. Teachers indicated that they were able to easily use The Real Game for assessments required by the New Zealand system.

Extent of modifications required for use in New Zealand

Overall the extent of the modifications are not considered significant. Schools and Career Consultants considered that changes could be easily made by a working party including the schools that participated in the pilot. Most of the changes were identified early on and are at a reasonably superficial level as students still understood the Game even using the Canadian resource. Recommended changes include:

- Language modifications in terms of general vocabulary and terminology or jargon in some instances;
- Modifications to some of the exercises to place them in a New Zealand context. For example, some occupational information and job descriptions, the holiday destinations exercise, different pictures for the exercises, dollar values, tax information, housing and real estate information;
- It would be useful to have a summary of sections and how they relate to the New Zealand curriculum. For example, what objectives are covered and at what level.

Contributions towards and detractions from a successful pilot

The commitment of schools and enthusiasm of teachers contributed to schools successfully running pilots. Career Consultants were on hand to give extra support or advice if needed. Interest from parents and the community was also a feature.

The main issues were to do with the short-time frames the pilot operated under. The lack of clear curriculum statements in the careers area made it harder to identify which objectives The Real Game met. However, none of these issues impacted significantly on the schools' ability to play the Game.

Summary of Comments from The Real Game Debrief Day 24 July 2000

Teachers overall impressions of the Game

Teachers were overwhelmingly positive about The Real Game for a number of reasons:

- It engaged normally uninterested students and triggered students curiosity;
- Students enjoyed learning this way and learnt intrinsically through the process;
- The resources were very good and on the whole easy to use;
- Most students improved as a result of playing the Game. Eg. increased understanding of the world of work and the link between school, and an appreciation of real life issues such as budgeting.

Fit with the curriculum and assessments

- All teachers considered The Real Game a good fit with the Social Studies curriculum and felt that it met the required objectives;
- Most teachers were able to use the Game for assessments with some teachers doing 7 or 8 assessments from the Game;
- Teachers reported that most students increased in understanding from 7 to 10 points between the pre-test and post-test;
- In general teachers found the Game good for doing assessments.

Contribution towards closing the gaps

There was a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds in the schools trialing The Real Game. Teachers reported that the Game successfully engaged low achievers and put them on a par with other students.

Who played the Game

- The Game was trialed in six schools from the Wellington, Christchurch and Auckland areas;
- Students were all in Year 10 and covered the range of low, medium and high ability; The ethnic representation of students was very multi-cultural with many schools including Maori, Pacific and new immigrant students from a range of socio-economic backgrounds;
- Most schools played the Game over 1 or 2 classes, one school trialed the Game over 12 classes and another schools played the Game as part of an extension programme. The Game was played in the Social Studies class and also in English.

Highlights

The vast majority of comments about the Game were positive. Below are a selection of “highlights” mentioned by teachers who attended the Debrief:

- Students very real reaction to job losses and the disaster activity;
- Students working together (eg. to buy a house) and discussing The Real Game with other students after class and sharing their knowledge;
- Students enthusiasm for the Game and even to do assessments;
- The way different cultures including new immigrants participated in the Game;
- Students seeing the relevance of school to working life and students beginning to think about different careers;
- Students ability to cope with a Canadian resource;
- The way the Game engaged all students including under-achievers;
- Students grasping real-life reality through exercises such as budgeting and the cost of leisure activity;
- Students realising the link between school subjects and future jobs;
- The way the guiding principles focussed the students;
- Easy to use resources;
- Community involvement: being interviewed on local radio, MPs visiting to hand out diplomas, articles in newspapers and class visitors who talked about their occupation.

Practicalities and Issues

- Preparation time was not too onerous as all the resources were provided;
- Good planning helps;
- Running the Game in the same room where materials can be left helps;
- Some schools used the extension activities, others didn't have time to do the extras;
- Extensive photocopying was an issue;
- Difficulties if students miss a session as it was hard for them to catch up as each session builds on the last;
- Students lack of basic maths skills which impacted on the Game;
- Striking a balance for lower and higher level students: lower level students found it hard but no more so than other activities; higher ability students found some aspects a bit junior;
- Some schools found it difficult to get buy in from parents or community visitors;
- Most schools found they had to modify the budget blocks game.

Recommended changes

In general teachers considered the foundations of the Game to be solid and the modifications needed to be straightforward. Students managed well with the Canadian resource. Some of the recommended changes include:

- Change the disaster exercise and gender proclamation to something more relevant for New Zealand;
- Alter the budget sheets exercise so that it is easier to understand;
- Provide more background information in the teachers manual;

- Provide more elaboration on job qualifications, eg. use job requirements in KiwiCareers;
- Alter the redundancy activity, eg some teachers made all students redundant rather than just a few or allow students to pick new jobs;
- Make more explicit the analysis tools;
- Possibly allow students to pick their own occupations;
- Document the assessment activities;
- Alter the language for the New Zealand context.

Comments from parents, other teachers and students

- Feedback from parents was very positive. Some parents wrote in with comments, other provided them on parent-teacher interviews. Schools found parents to be supportive and enthusiastic of The Real Game;
- Other teachers some of whom were called upon as part of the Game were very positive also;
- Students were very positive about the Game. Comments provided by students on evaluation sheets included the following: provided a glimpse of the real world; made you aware of options when you leave school; puts everyone on the same level including students that have difficulties; the budgeting exercise rated high; most practical aspect in school so far.

Role of Career Consultants

Career Services asked its Career Consultants to dedicate time to supporting The Real Game in schools for the duration of the pilot. All schools considered the support of consultants was nice to have during the pilot but not essential.

- Some consultants visited the schools a few times and helped with the Game, others took a more hands off approach as schools preferred to be more independent;
- One school asked for staff training and training on KiwiCareers.

Consultants' feedback included the following:

- students were positive and motivated to learn. They used lateral thinking and tapped others for knowledge;
- They started modifying their initial thoughts on careers and saw the relevance of school subjects to life after school;
- Students of mixed ability were all engaged and for most students there were noticeable changes after having played The Real Game;
- Cultural backgrounds were largely irrelevant;
- The Game fits in well with Career Services Junior/Senior Maori and Senior Pacific Student days.