CAREER COUNSELLING

A HANDBOOK

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Career counselling: A handbook
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Chapter 1

From the flint to the microchip

Work has been our constant companion ever since the hands of our ancient forefathers curled around a piece of stone and converted it into a tool – an instrument of production. The tendency to work is a natural and inherent human characteristic. Indeed it is the human being's highly developed ability to consciously and intelligently direct personal effort and energy toward a target, that lies at the heart of not just our survival but of our progress and development as a species. The meaning and purpose of work has undergone significant changes over time. Moulded by ideologies, shaped by the tenets of a variety of philosophies and transformed by revolutions, work has finally grown to include the idea of 'career'. The idea of a personal career appears to be a relatively modern one, yet its roots are intertwined with the history of work. As we begin our journey toward understanding work and career, the objective before us is not to chronicle events that have shaped the development of work but to try and obtain a glimpse into the psychological factors that underlie the evolution of this most essential of human preoccupations.

Early conceptions

'What would you like to be when you grow up?' was not perhaps a question the visiting neanderthal aunt asked the little five year old in the earliest human societies! Looking back at the evolution of work, historians have pointed to the possibility that in primitive societies, each individual secured personal survival by developing mastery over a wide range of tasks and skills. It is possible as a result, that developing expertise for a specific set of work skills was not a felt need during the earliest stages in the evolution of work. Small groups of individuals (families perhaps) through various activities such as hunting, fishing, building a shelter, rearing animals, farming and so on, produced the means of existence for themselves and their dependants. It is also likely that the individual was required to contribute as quickly and as comprehensively as possible to the group's survival needs. While it is possible that one individual in the group was better at hunting and another was better at fishing, it is likely that all individuals were expected to be effective at all the tasks and skills related to survival.

With the passage of time, expertise for particular occupational tasks began to develop. Skills linked to the satisfaction of particular groups of human needs began to cluster together and people began to develop expertise for specific sets of skills. This could have been the result of prevailing geographical and environmental conditions. Coastal areas

**Figure 1: Leaving home for higher education –
circa 600 BC- India**
Adapted from: Thapar, 1966, page: 52.

A young man of Vaishali – a small town in ancient India, wanted to become a craftsman. But training in this field was not available in his village. He consulted the wise people in his village. Where could he learn to become a craftsman? He spoke to traders – people who had travelled far and wide. And then he discovered that in distant Taxila, was a centre where he could learn the skills of craftsmanship. He undertook a long and arduous journey and arrived in this great city of commerce and trade. He studied there and worked hard to master the skills of craftsmanship. Finally one day his training was complete. The young man returned to his home in Vaishali where he is said to have practised his trade with great success.

for example could have stimulated the development of the skill for fishing, people living in rocky regions may have developed a proficiency for quarrying while reed-workers may have lived along the reed bearing banks of the great rivers. Specialisations began to evolve and thus emerged occupational categories such as fishermen, farmers, cattle breeders, weavers, healers, traders – a list that will continue to grow for as long as human needs exist.

Mindsets and meanings of work

Work by itself is *neutral*. However work is not performed in a vacuum. As with other human activities work occurs within a social context – a context characterised by patterns of beliefs and ways of thinking. It is within this environment that specific meanings and values are attached to work. As human society became larger, more structured and interdependent, the division of labour became a vital aspect of developing and maintaining social organisation. Across civilisations, the initial approaches to the division of labour seemed to be governed by the principle that a systematic division of work into categories would contribute to order and progress in society (Tilgher, 1930). Interestingly, even the earliest writings indicated that the most effective basis for the allocation of occupational roles ought to be the person's natural tendencies. These ability and skill based approaches to the division of labour were perhaps the earliest precursors to Career Psychology. With the passage of time, person-centered methods for the division of labour were overcome by a variety of social, moral and religious philosophies that defined the framework for the division of labour. This next step in the evolution of work proved to be a watershed in the way meaning was attributed to work.

Philosophies tend to create mindsets and attitudes, which in turn influence behaviour. This influence of the mind on behaviour is particularly significant when entire societies begin to think in a particular manner, internalise belief structures and demonstrate certain mindsets. Psychologists use term the *social cognitions* to describe patterns of thinking that have become habitual across social groups (Bandura, 1989). Social cognitions seem to have played a significant role in the evolution of work as well. Mindsets engendered by social and moral frames of reference began to give a particular colouring and interpretation to the meaning and purpose of work. Prevailing ideologies began to create what we will refer to in this writing to as *social-cognitive environments*. Within these environments, positive or negative values began to be attributed to work in general as well as toward occupational clusters. These social-cognitive environments fostered the evolution of a *work ethic*. A work ethic is a set of social norms that describe a particular approach to work. For example a certain work ethic may place a positive moral value on hard work based on the belief that work has innate value and must be pursued for

its own sake. Similarly another social-cognitive environment may promote a work ethic wherein some forms of work maybe attributed with a higher level of prestige than others. In other words a work ethic is the result of a collection of social cognitions about work, which then guide and influence people's work behaviour. As our examination of the evolution of work continues through the rest of this chapter, we will try to develop deeper insights into the possible interactions between social-cognitive environments and the orientation of a community or a social group toward work as an activity.

The evolution of work in the West

During the Middle Ages, the social order in the West seems to have been governed by the belief that the 'position' a person held in society that was determined by a divine, natural ordering of all people. It was a person's birth – determined by God's will that decided whether a person would be a king, a feudal lord or a peasant. The peasant worker's role was to do his job and pay the feudal lord his dues. The ideology that prevailed for many centuries in the West was that work was drudgery and a curse. It was the lowly who were expected to work and serve the upper echelons of society. The belief that those who worked for the church (monks and priests) were of the highest status (Tilgher, 1930) characterised the prevailing social-cognitive environment. Others were expected to pursue their professions and pass the family trade on to their children. Common people were not expected to pursue work activities that would take them beyond their social class (Braude, 1975). Since it was firmly believed that this was a divine decree, little thought was given to changing the existing social order. However this status quo was soon to be completely overturned by two powerful movements that swept across Europe and England. Between the early 1500s and the late 1800s the Protestant Reformation and the Industrial Revolution shattered the fabric of the prevailing social order and created a dramatically new approach to work. The following sections will take a brief look at the impact these movements had on the evolution of work.

The Protestant Reformation

Discontent with Church, its dogmas and way of functioning gradually grew into a massive political and religious upheaval in Europe during the sixteenth century. This protest movement that attempted to reform the Church was later called the Protestant Reformation. Martin Luther and John Calvin were two powerful figures that led the Reformation. According to Luther's reformatory theology all people – priest, noble, king and peasant were equal in the eyes of God. The Reformists emphasised that work was a 'calling' and Luther preached that work was a vehicle through which every individual could serve God. Luther challenged the prevailing belief that one form of work was superior to another and his teachings highlighted the usefulness of *all* professions. The clergy were described to be egotistical and accused of evading their duty to their fellow men (Tilgher, 1930). John Calvin built on Luther's ideas and further strengthened these new cognitions about work. According to Calvin, choosing an occupation and excelling at it to achieve the highest possible gain was a religious duty. The Reformists not only condoned the pursuit of profit but actually encouraged it. This was a dramatic and radical departure from accepted beliefs and created a new environment within which attitudes toward work were redefined. Max Weber, a German sociologist who later analysed the impact of the Protestant Reformation, described this new set of beliefs about work as the *protestant work ethic* (Weber, 1904). Attitudes toward work changed and within this new social-cognitive environment, all work was believed to be noble and important. Doing one's best, persisting toward work goals, postponement of need gratification, working hard, with sincerity, involvement and passion, were linked to social acceptance and ultimately to salvation. All people were expected to work, and those who were idle or did not work were ridiculed and condemned. The drudgery associated with work during the Middle Ages gradually faded away. Work was once again bestowed with dignity and pride was associated with the fruit of labour. The purpose of work was not limited to merely earning a living. Instead work now offered the means of gaining social acceptance and prestige. The masses responded to these ideas with urgency and high levels of motivation, particularly because the material prosperity that ensued from successful work efforts allowed them to be acknowledged as social successes. This new

work ethic which gave moral approval to making a profit by working hard, rational calculation and planning (Yankelovich, 1981) was not limited to a small group of people during a particular period of time. It spread all over Europe and England and was later carried to America. With time, the religious overtones that protestant work ethic initially

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Figure 2: No room for the idle!
Adapted from: Dickens, 1966.

These are sentiments expressed by preachers and leaders around the time of the Protestant Reformation. They may seem archaic and even amusing. But this seems to have been the work ethic that overturned the social order of the time.

- **To labour diligently is one's calling.**

- **Activities related to acquisition are ends unto themselves.**

- **The legitimate use of prosperity is to increase it.**

- **Economic forces must be such that people are allowed to sell their labour in the market with no restrictions.**

- **Poverty is a disgrace. A person who is a second generation pauper is not worthy of any public support. It is better that the stock of people who contribute nothing to society is eliminated. All support should be denied to such people unless they willingly submit themselves to being surgically sterilised!**

- **Children who were poor were to be given the facility of apprenticeships. The aged and feeble were to be supported with food and clothes delivered at their doorsteps. However, able-bodied unemployed youth were to be viewed with deep suspicion. They were to be sent to Houses of Correction to be taught the virtues of an honest day's work!**

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carried, became more secular. These beliefs, attitudes and mindsets about work became firmly woven into the social-cognitive fabric of work norms in the West (Super, 1982; Lipset, 1990). Today, western work behaviour continues to be significantly influenced by these social cognitions.

The Industrial Revolution

Another important milestone in the evolution of work in the West, is the *Industrial Revolution* that occurred almost in parallel with the Reformation. New inventions such as the flying shuttle, the spinning jenny, the steam engine and the discovery of electricity facilitated the application of power-driven machinery to manufacturing. Until now production was small in scale and much of it was accomplished through physical effort and the application of expertise by an individual or a small group of skilled workers. The Industrial Revolution transformed the concept of production. Goods could now be produced at greater speed, in larger quantities and at significantly lower costs. An immediate outcome of this change in production methodology was that the skilled artisans of the older order gradually found themselves to be redundant as machines began to mass produce the products they formerly hand crafted. The initial resistance of guilds and other professional groups that represented the earlier forms of small-scale production quickly weakened and by the beginning of the eighteenth century the use of machines in manufacturing was widespread across England and Europe. Until the Industrial Revolution, most of Europe's population was rural and as described above, work behaviour was governed by feudal systems. However, by the mid-nineteenth century, half of the English people had broken away from this social order and lived in cities as independent workers. The turn of the century saw the same to be true in other European countries as well.

The combined impact of the protestant work ethic and the Industrial Revolution brought about profound changes in the conception of work in the western world. Work, at this stage in its evolution was characterised by an older rural-agrarian sector and a newer, largely urban, industry-driven sector. The forces of mechanisation and industrialisation significantly influenced both these occupational sectors. Most importantly, work was now characterised by dignity and a greater freedom of movement across occupational categories. Before we begin our examination of how these led to further developments in the word of work we shift our focus to another social-cognitive environment and understand how a different set of philosophies shaped and moulded work behaviour.

The evolution of work in the Indian context

Work behaviour in India has also been significantly shaped by philosophic and religious influences for thousands of years. Most of these ideologies pre-date the Reformation and the Industrial Revolution by many centuries. At the outset, it is important to note that the concepts described by ancient Indian philosophies have many layers of meanings. When examined in their entirety these streams of thought refer to a *way of life* that has temporal as well as metaphysical connotations. Our focus in this writing is on specific segments that describe work behaviour and the division of labour. We will attempt to draw together various strands from Indian schools of thought to describe the social-cognitive environment within which the evolution of work progressed in the Indian situation.

Work role across life stages: The ashrama system

Ashrama is understood to be a stage in the journey of life and the ashrama system describes the unfolding of an individual's life. This system takes a life-span approach and provides guidelines for the discharging of specific duties and occupational roles as one progresses through the stages of life. Taking the average life span of an individual to be a 100 years, each stage is described to be about 25 years long.

Brahmacharya Ashrama is the first stage in the journey of life and is a time of education, learning and preparation for life. *Grahastha Ashrama* begins when the individual completes education, marries and starts a family. It follows simultaneously that the individual is now expected to work, produce the means of livelihood for the family and accumulate wealth. It is during this life stage that one of the individual's primary roles is that of a worker. Work during *Vanaprastha Ashrama*, the next life stage is described to have a different character and purpose. The individual is expected to continue to work and serve society with vigour – but without the objective of personal gain. *Sanyasa Ashrama*, is the final stage in the progress of one's life. From this point onward the individual breaks all worldly ties and is devoted entirely to the personal search for god and the spiritual service of mankind.

The ashrama system therefore describes work as a function of the individual's growth and maturation. Although the ashrama system was restricted to the upper castes and remained a largely theoretical formulation it offers a useful framework within which we can understand thinking patterns associated with implementation of work roles across the life span in India.

Classification of work roles: The varna and caste systems

Two important systems emerged within Indian thought that addressed questions pertaining to the division of labour – the system of varnas and the caste system. According the varna system work roles initially did not seem to have been hereditary. Allocation of work responsibilities was based on a four-fold classification of occupational roles. One of these classes was the *brahmin*, whose work roles gravitated around teaching, education and priestly duties. Work roles associated with the administration of the state, its defence and efficient governance were the duties of another occupational class called the *kshatriyas*. The *vaishyas* were specialists in occupations related to business and trade including the production of goods and services. The s*hudras* were required to play multiple roles and serve the other three groups.

One of the most important points to be noted about the varna system is that occupational role allocation was based on the individual's natural tendencies, orientations – or *guna*. According to ancient Indian philosophy the human personality comprises three gunas or qualities – sattava, rajasika and tamasika. The person with high sattvik characteristics would be oriented to intellectual and spiritual pursuits. A high rajasik orientation would be manifested in the form of intense activity and expenditure of energy for the attainment of a goal. A tamasik individual would be dependent on others for direction and motivation. Accordingly, the work roles linked to the pursuit of knowledge, teaching and religious duties were assigned to individual's who manifest the sattvik guna. Within the varna system these were the brahmins. Activities that required high levels of dynamism, energy and sharp reactivity were likely to be best executed by those of a rajasik disposition. These were the kshatriyas. In similar manner, the occupations carried out by the vaishyas were characterised by a combination of rajas and tamas. And finally, the shudra's work roles were said to be tamasik in character. The ultimate objective of this

system seems to have been to put the different traits and qualities of the human individual to proper and productive use and thereby maintain a well organised and balanced society.

While the varna system accorded the same level of dignity to all work roles, the system did order the four occupational classes on a hierarchy of prestige. Experts in the field of thought and spirit – the brahmins were given the highest position in society. The second place was given to the kshatriyas since they were the protectors of society. The vaishyas carrying the responsibility for production had the third place while the shudras, who were the servants had the fourth place within this hierarchy. While it is true that the higher classes were granted special rights and prerogatives, they correspondingly carried higher responsibilities pertaining to social obligations and the performance of work roles.

One of the outcomes of the system of varnas was the system of *caste*. This is a framework within which occupations were classified with significantly greater rigidity. Each group that arrived in India, with its occupational specialisation was placed in a separate sub-caste and thereby assimilated into the larger caste structure (Thapar, 1966). Over the centuries the caste system grew into a vast network of sub-castes based on which a wide spectrum of occupational roles were classified. The four-fold classification of the varna system became a theoretical framework and faded in importance. The complex network of sub-castes based on occupational characteristics and work specialisations began to control the social order.

What is important to note is the shift in the social-cognitive environment that caused profound and long lasting changes in peoples' attitudes toward occupational categories. Caste laws prescribed the duties and job responsibilities that a person of a certain sub-caste was expected to perform. Breaking these rules entailed serious punishment, leading ultimately to expulsion from the caste. In the 3rd century BC Megasthenes in his travelogues indicates for example that inter-caste marriages were prohibited and that an individual was not allowed to practise any calling or art except his own (McCrindle, 1901). The perpetuation of the caste system was ensured when it was made hereditary. Caste therefore was determined by birth and membership in a particular caste could not be assumed in any other manner. This division of people along caste lines into watertight compartments led to a high level of rigidity in occupational mobility. Movement

across occupations became almost impossible and was in fact prohibited. The evolution of work role allocations based on caste has a long history. The roots of caste run deep into the Indian psyche and have become intertwined with personal and occupational identity.

The meaning of work: The doctrine of Karma

The doctrine of Karma Yoga describes work as essential to survival and to the sustenance of life. In this sense work is the direction of focused and efficient action toward the completion of a task. Karma yoga's portrait of work upto this point runs parallel with other descriptions of the purpose and meaning of work. It is Karma Yoga's description of the individual's *involvement* in work that is particularly relevant to our understanding of the evolution of work behaviour in the Indian context. According to this doctrine, work is an activity in which every individual must be engaged. However, this engagement must be characterised by *nishkama* – the absence of passion. The *karma yogi* is an individual who can be completely immersed in the execution of work role obligations, without craving for the fruits of this labour. Accordingly, work is engaged in not because of what one gains from it. Instead, one is required to perform one's duty with the highest degree of effectiveness, without being driven by self-centered desires.

Figure 3: The Indian philosophy of work: a summary

The ashrama system sets the stage upon which the individual's work behaviour unfolds and manifests itself. The uniqueness of the individual as a worker is described by the system of three *gunas* that together create a personality characterised by unique abilities, talents and interests. These personality traits offer the basis upon which the system of varnas allocates work role specialisations to the individuals in a society. This system however degenerated into the caste system, which classified people according to birth rather than ability. Undergirding these various conceptions of work is the doctrine of karma. Accordingly, the highest form of work behaviour is the discharging of one's

duties with the utmost efficiency but with dispassion and a lack of attachment to the results of one's labour.

The world of work in traditional India

An examination of the world of work as it prevailed in India indicates fairly strong links between the philosophic, social and moral formulations (particularly caste descriptions) and the evolution of work. Megasthenes for example in his famous work *'Indika'* tells us that seven castes characterised the division of labour. These were philosophers, farmers, soldiers, herdsmen, artisans, magistrates and councillors (McCrindle, 1901). While Megasthenes may have confused caste with occupation his description indicates that by 300 BC work in India had crystallised into specific occupational categories.

Of particular interest to us is the manner in which work roles became organised and systematised. Artisans specialised in specific occupations. The expansion of small towns into larger urban centers, saw an increase in the numbers of artisans. Some artisans (e.g. armourers and shipbuilders) were in the employ of the state. The majority however worked individually in areas where the raw material for their craft or trade was found (Thapar, 1966). A certain region therefore developed a tradition for a certain craft and artisans practised their craft in pockets around this area. Gradually these individual workers came together and organised themselves into professional groups – or guilds, which were called *shreni* (Thapar, 1966). Artisans of all forms of craft were allowed to form themselves into a guild. Guilds were registered organisations and membership to a guild offered the individual craftsperson a higher level of work security and social status. Guilds that were based in towns tended to occupy a particular neighbourhood. Members of a guild therefore seemed to have lived close together and thereby developed close knit relationships that bound them together as sub-castes. Prevailing caste rules significantly influenced the formation and maintenance of guilds. Since caste had by now become hereditary, occupational mobility was restricted. Children born into these families learned the family profession and found employment within the guild to which the family belonged – conforming to hereditary regulations (McCrindle, 1901). The guild therefore was well supplied with workers across many generations. The social status enjoyed by a guild depended upon the caste of the

artisans of which it was composed. Artisans who worked with metal such as gold and black smiths for example along with carpenters belonged to a higher sub-caste than weavers, potters, oil pressers, toddy-tappers and leather workers (Thapar, 1966).

Figure 4: Indian Pay scales in 300 BC!
Adapted from: Thapar, 1966, page:83.

Salary scales in the 3rd century BC seem to be remarkably similar to patterns in modern India. Payments were made in *panas*. The value of a pana is not known nor the frequency at which salaries were paid. Government officials seem to have carried fat pay packets home. For example, the chief minister, the *purohita* and the army commander received 48,000 *panas.* The treasurer and the chief collector commanded a salary of 24,000 panas while ordinary ministers received 12,000 panas. In contrast the artisan received a paltry 120 panas. Even then government spending on itself must have been a drain on the treasury!

While guilds were associations of a particular professional group, there also existed *co-operatives* of workers. These were inter-professional organisations that comprised artisans and specialists from different walks of life within a broad occupational category (Hutton, 1946; Thapar, 1966). Building a road or a temple for example may have been entrusted to a co-operative composed of architects, engineers, masons and other allied professionals.

Functioning on the backdrop of a work ethic characterised by determinism and interdependence, the world of work in India seems to have been robust, with vigorous participation in trade and commerce. In fact except for the restrictive influence of caste, these traditional methods for the organisation of work seems to closely approximate modern methods by which companies are formed and maintained. This pattern of work role organisation seems to have continued from around 300 B.C up until the West began to colonise India.

**Figure 5: Saddalaputta, the ceramics magnate –
circa 200 BC – the banks of the Ganges, India**
Adapted from (Thapar, 1966, page: 110

Saddalaputa was born into a family of potters. Even as a young man he had a fire in his belly that fuelled big dreams!   He wanted to be *the* potter – not just another one that lived along the banks of the Ganges.   And so he set up his own kiln and began to produce pottery items of the highest quality.   Soon the demand for the Saddalaputa brand of pots and pans began to increase. He set up another kiln. The demand for his products was so great that he had to expand further. Distribution became an important question and a potential bottleneck. So Saddalaputa, the entrepreneur that he was, set up his own distribution system. He established a network of supply and distribution centres, all serviced by his own fleet of boats. Saddalaputta's enterprise grew and records show that he that he established more than 500 kilns all over the region.

Philosophies of work: a parting of ways between the East and West

As we discussed at the beginning of this chapter, occupational categorisation may not have been a reality in the earliest human societies. During the next stage, the systematisation of work behaviour seems to have corresponded to the thinking patterns and beliefs held by entire communities and to prevailing social-cognitive environments. While numerous subtle variations could be described in the evolution of man's conception of work during this stage, the allocation of work roles seems to have been characterised across civilisations by a high degree of *automaticity*. Skills and trades ran in families or within groups and expertise related to a particular profession was transmitted from the adult to the young within the family or through apprenticeships offered through guilds of professionals. But for minor, region-specific differences, this pattern of work behaviour seems to have prevailed across civilisations.

It is during the next stage in the evolution of work that sharp divergences are noted between Western and Indian orientations. Work behaviour began to be increasingly influenced by social, religious and economic philosophies that defined the structures of a given society. These philosophic orientations led to a parting of ways between Indian and Western conceptions of work behaviour. It is essential that we understand these differences in order to gain deeper insights into how social cognitions and habitual ways of thinking influence career development as it occurs in our day and age. Some of the most characteristic differences that have persisted over time and continue to differentially influence work behaviour in India and the West are discussed below.

Individualism vs. collectivism

The protestant work ethic brought the individual and his or her productivity onto centre stage in the West. The emphasis was and continues to be on the individual and his or her desires, interests and attitudes. Freedom of choice therefore has been a value deeply cherished by the Western worker. Conversely, work behaviour in the Indian environment was strongly influenced by the prevailing social philosophy that demanded that the role of the individual be subordinated to the collective. Independent decision-making was not directly nurtured, self-assertion could be perceived as selfish and divergence from family and parental directions could be taken as disobedience. Just as kinship influences influenced work behaviour in West during pre-industrial times, ties with the community have continued to play a powerful role in the individual's orientation to work in the Indian environment.

Ability vs. birth

Occupational role allocation in the West came to be closely linked to the individual's skills and abilities. Coupled with the freedom to choose, mobility across occupations became a function of the individual's effort and talents. As we have seen above, the system of varnas combined with the triguna system in India, also allowed for occupational classification on the basis of the individual's nature. Within certain limits, people could move between varnas according to the quality and type of work they performed. The caste system however drastically changed this

orientation and the work one was expected to perform was determined by the caste one was born into. Abilities and talents were no longer important. Instead the accident of birth determined the work one was allotted. Although the overt influence of the caste system has begun to fade, this class and prestige based approach to work roles continues to have a subtle but strong influence on work behaviour in the Indian situation.

Involvement vs. detachment

The protestant work ethic liberated the individual in the West to engage in work with passion. The individual is exhorted to apply the highest levels of effort and enjoy the fruits of this labour. Indian philosophy also encourages this vigorous engagement with the production of wealth and pursuit of personal prosperity. However the Indian system provides a broader frame of reference. The ashrama system for example restricts this activity to a certain stage in the course of the individual's growth and development. The individual is expected to grow beyond the desire for wealth and move toward the realisation of the spiritual self. While the protestant work ethic preaches passionate involvement with work, the doctrine of Karma Yoga preaches detachment and the performance of duty with dispassion. It must be noted that both these philosophies emphasise restraint, legal and moral correctness in all activities related to the acquisition of wealth. In fact the protestant work ethic advocates that the impulse to accumulate and acquire riches must be balanced by a disciplined and frugal lifestyle. The key difference between Western and Indian approaches seems to lie in the *position* attributed to work in the individual's life. Indian orientations describe involvement with work to be *one* of life's important developmental milestones. Every individual is expected to reach this milestone. What is important from the Indian perspective is that the individual must grow past this milestone. Work for personal gain is expected to wane in importance after its purpose is served. An individual's life is described to have other targets and objectives, the ultimate aim being the spiritual realisation of the self. Western approaches lay a similar emphasis on work and contemporary Western conceptions even describe work as a means of self-actualisation and self-discovery. However they do not seem to describe the meaning of work in terms that go beyond the temporal. Max Weber's (1904) comparative description aptly captures this difference when

he describes Western orientations to have a 'this worldly asceticism', while the meaning of work is influenced by an 'other worldly' orientation in the Indian context.

Dignity of labour vs. occupational prestige

In the pre-industrial period work in the West was equated with toil and drudgery. Those who worked were relegated to the lowest classes of the social order. The reformed work ethic drastically changed this attitude. Work regained dignity and was imbued with worth. As a result the value of labour both in economic and social terms increased. The dignity and inherent value of labour is an attitude that continues to strongly influence Western orientations to work. In India however, largely as a result of the influence of caste, the situation was different. Occupations were placed on a hierarchy of prestige and status and the social group that one was born into controlled entry into a particular occupation. Even today, certain jobs continue to be thought of as menial in the Indian situation, while others are placed at a higher level of prestige. The average, middle class Westerner would routinely clear the family garbage or dig a garden pit and fill it with manure. In India however, it is a small minority who would be willing to perform jobs such as these, without relegating them to another class of people.

It is clear that philosophic influences have had differential impacts on the evolution of work behaviour in Western and Indian environments. The important point to be noted is that the social-cognitive environment within which work behaviour developed in the West was quite unlike the environment that prevailed in India. Although trade and commerce was vigorous in India, the manufacture of goods remained largely unmechanised, smaller in scale and predominantly localised to guilds, within a *deterministic* society. These features continued to characterise work behaviour in India until the colonising efforts of the West began. Approaches to work in the West on the other hand were influenced by philosophic and technological revolutions. The western world moved toward a mechanised and industrialised work environment, characterised by an *individualistic* approach to work.

The emergence of the vocational guidance movement

Work as career – developments in the West

One of the most important outcomes of the Industrial Revolution was the creation of numerous *new* areas of occupation. This new work environment called for new sets of skills and expertise. Traditional systems of occupational role allocation were no longer relevant. For the first time the issue of *matching people for jobs* surfaced as a question that needed an urgent answer. The industry needed workers with specific traits and abilities, while the potential worker needed *guidance* toward jobs for which he or she was best suited. It is in response to these questions, at this point in the evolution of work, that Vocational Guidance surfaced as a discipline. Frank Parsons, who is today acknowledged as the father of Vocational Psychology, developed for the first time in 1909, a method to suit the new industrial work order. Accordingly, persons could be matched for jobs on the basis of their traits, abilities and talents. Within our examination of the history of work, the vital point to be noted is that Vocational Guidance as a discipline was a natural outcome of the Industrial Revolution, with the protestant work ethic providing a strong philosophic framework. The nature of work was no longer characterised by a set of activities that one performed for a lifetime, in order to earn a living. Work presented possibilities for change and progress. People now began to approach work as a field of activity within which they could follow a path of growth and reach for higher levels of personal development. Thus was born the concept of career – an occupational course that one could follow through one's life.

Methods and systems that facilitate career choice

The emergence and systematisation of methods for making career choices as a specialised form of counselling, marks an important milestone in the history of work. During the times when the allocation of work roles was automatic, there was perhaps little or no need for this form of counselling and guidance. The automaticity in work role allocation that characterised earlier periods in history, is significant in its absence in modern conceptions of work. The nature of work today is such that the individual is presented with a wide range of occupational possibilities and opportunities. Most individuals are free to choose the career path they want to follow. It is

precisely the burgeoning of opportunities coupled with the freedom of choice that has thrown up the need for counselling and guidance.

Individuals repeatedly encounter crossroads along their journey toward and within the world of work. Early along this journey, the question of which path one could choose to *enter* this world may be the most pressing one. Further ahead on this journey, issues pertaining to *progressing* within this world emerge as a part of one's growth and development as a worker. Further specialisation, making career changes, exiting from a certain career path, recovering from unemployment, retraining – these are all realities that the modern worker could encounter. It is in response to the individual's need for skills and support to steer through these career crossroads that specialised forms of counselling emerged. Vocational Guidance, Career Counselling and Career Psychology are three facets of this field of knowledge.

Career Counselling is a more contemporary version of the original Vocational Guidance movement. Although these terms are used interchangeably, Vocational Guidance is more often linked to vocational or skills based occupational categories. Career Counselling tends to be broader in scope and employs a variety of techniques from Counselling Psychology to facilitate effective career decision-making. In this sense, Career Counselling moves beyond guiding the individual toward a career choice and addresses such issues as the personhood of the career chooser, the dynamics of decision-making, the resolution of conflicts and so on. Given its broader scope, we will use the term Career Counselling more frequently.

Career Psychology has emerged today as a distinct branch of behavioural science. It is multidisciplinary in character and draws from a variety of disciplines such as Counselling Psychology, Educational Theory, Economics and Sociology. In effect Career Psychology provides the theoretical and research basis for the practice of Vocational Guidance and Career Counselling. In the West, these disciplines have shown vigorous growth over the last few decades, revealing their importance within the context of the history of work.

Work as career – the Indian context

It is important that we keep in mind the historical differences between Western and Indian approaches to work. Vocational Guidance first emerged as a strongly felt need from within an industrial, mechanised and individualistic work culture. The occupational choices before the young person in pre-industrial India were restricted. In a context where one's occupation was determined by birth, preparing for an occupation was a relatively simple activity. An occupational structure that was dominated by caste influences did not promote awareness of personal potentials or of the links between occupation and personal inclinations. Since one's occupation was almost certainly going to be the family trade or industry, choice was not likely to have been a matter for deep consideration.

The impact of Western influences through colonisation and its ramifications on Indian social and economic life are well known. The forces of industrialisation and mechanisation have had a similar impact on work behaviour in the Indian context as they
have had in the West. Work has grown from being merely linked to survival needs or to community dictates to something far more complex, requiring increasing amounts of specialisation and training. As in other parts of the world, work in India now carries connotations related to gender, socio-economic status, prestige and self-actualisation. Yet, even a cursory glance at the way career choices are made in India reveal various paradoxes.

As illustrated by the anecdote in Figure 6, at one level work in India continues to remain linked to

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Figure 6: Fate will decide – an anecdote

Just before one of our projects began in a corporation school, a group of boys came upto us. With the glint of mischief in their eyes they asked what we were doing in their school. We explained that we were there to help young people make career decisions. The group burst out laughing! We asked them why they were laughing. "We are all poor scheduled castes", one of them said. "You must go to schools where the rich kids study. They're the ones who *want* to study." We asked them what their own plans were. "I can tell you, " one of them said. He went on to say that he would begin working as soon as possible in a pavement shop that fixed bicycle punctures. "All this planning and so forth is only for those who can afford to be unemployed. I will get about Rs. 10 a day." The rest of the group nodded in agreement. "Anyway it's better than spending more money to study further." We asked him what he would do for the rest of his life. "Ah… who knows," the boy replied, "Fate will decide."

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survival, carrying connotations of earning a livelihood to take care of one's basic needs for food, clothing and shelter. Fate more than choice seem to remain determining factors. At another level, work is viewed as the vehicle for the satisfaction of higher order needs such as actualising personal potentials, expressing oneself and aspiring for things that one has learned to value. The important point to be noted is that work in modern India *has* grown from automatically following in the pre-determined footsteps of one's predecessors and offers the possibility of *building* a career. As illustrated by the anecdote in Figure 7, a sensitive career counselling programme could bring about the awareness necessary to inspire young people to begin career planning.

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Figure 7: "Even willing to do your long tests" – an anecdote

Six months had gone by after we had implemented a careers intervention in a private school. We had returned to collect follow up information. A group walked into the classroom and greeted the counsellor who had worked with them. The counsellor recognised two of the boys and asked who the others were. "They're our friends," one of them replied rather tentatively. The researcher said that was fine, but could the friends please wait outside the classroom, while the boys completed their tests. "No…no", one of them said, "we've brought them to meet you. We have explained to them that the career classes helped us find our aptitudes and that we learned how to plan a career. Now they too want to find their careers. Will you help them?" The counsellor was rather overwhelmed. Mistaking the counsellor's silence for disapproval one of the boys hurriedly broke in to say, "They are even willing to do your long tests sir! Will you help them now?"

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Indeed today, the question 'what would you like to be when you grow up' is not as innocuous as it seems and carries connotations of choice, decision-making, specialised study, excellence and competition. Formal vocational guidance services have been described to be a part of economic development, where the division of labour that follows industrialisation eventually extends to a point where traditional mechanisms of role allocation start to break down and formal guidance services are required to supplement them (Watts, 1996). Vocational Guidance and Career Counselling in India are currently at this stage of development. Guidance and counselling that would facilitate effective career decision-making therefore assumes a special urgency in the Indian situation.

However it is essential that we are aware that work and career are moving into yet another phase of development. We are today witnessing the emergence of a new work ethic within a post-industrial society.

Post-industrial society and the emerging work ethic

The evolution of work and career in the Western and Indian situations seemed to have moved along parallel pathways, within different social-cognitive environments. While cultural norms would continue to foster variations in social cognitions between the West and India, the outcomes of colonisation and the more recent trends toward globalisation have initiated a convergence in career preparation requirements. Around the world, workers and young workers-to-be, face a new horizon. Contemporary society is described to be post-industrial and career and work have taken on new meanings. We have entered a new period in the evolution of work – the *Information Age*.

The Information Age: Two important characteristics

The information age represents both a continuation of the earlier work ethic as well as the need for redefinitions. Two important characteristics of this new phase in the evolution of work that have brought changes into prevailing social-cognitive environments are discussed below.

Changes in conceptions of time and space

Information and communication technologies (ICT) have transformed ideas of space and time within the world of work. Today communication across vast distances can be almost instantaneous. Networks allow for the creation of virtual workspaces that need not have specific geographical locations. We seem therefore to be on the threshold of a work environment that will take us beyond the execution of a specific set of duties, during a set work shift, at a specific location. Today it is not uncommon for a person in India to begin her work day at 10 p.m. because her clients on the other side of world have just begun their work day at 10 a.m. It is not uncommon for workers in the information age to use a variety of ICTs to enter a virtual work

place within which they may daily interact with people who live in different parts of the globe and together complete units of work without ever 'meeting' each other. This de-linearisation and de-synchronisation of time and space (Tractenberg, Streumer Jan, & Van Zolingen, 2002), has created a new social-cognitive environment within which new patterns of thinking about the world of work have emerged.

Redefinition of skill requirements

Unemployment is a problem that has always characterised the world of work. The nature of and the reasons for unemployment however have changed as work has evolved. During the pre-industrial and industrial periods, unemployment quite often was linked to the vagaries of economic cycles. While this reason continues to persist, unemployment in the information age is also linked to *skill redundancy*. This difference today is that changes within the world of work are so rapid and continuous that skills that were relevant even six months ago could be redundant in the here and now. Career Psychologists compare industrial age jobs with the information age and point out that in the past work was broken up into simple units that were repetitive requiring minimal amounts of critical thinking or judgement (Yankelovich & Immerwahr, 1984). Jobs in the information age in contrast, are described as 'high-discretion' jobs requiring well-developed abilities for independent functioning and decision-making based on the effective manipulation of knowledge data bases (Miller, 1986). A new work ethic has emerged today where the worker-*machine* interface has given place to a worker-*knowledge* interface. Whether a person is an engineer, a psychologist or a computer programmer the worker of the future will be called a *knowledge worker* simply because all careers would require a high potency for manipulation and administration of information.

Characteristics of the emerging work ethic

The character of the information age is such that far reaching changes have been initiated within work environments. Social and cultural diversity within the world of work is growing. Gender divisions within the world of work are collapsing with increasing numbers of female workers entering the work force. The service sector is rapidly growing and is expected to become

significantly larger than the industrial sector. While a number of important factors of change are under discussion today, two issues stand out as essential to the newly emerging post-industrial work ethic.

Life long learning

Education-work-retirement has been the traditional approach to the unfolding of a significant portion of an individual's life. The emerging work ethic calls for a change in this linear and sequential way of thinking. The future world of work is no longer likely to offer jobs that could be pursued for the entire span of an individual's working life. The worker of the future is likely to be required to make several job shifts over one life time. This could be the result of skills becoming rapidly redundant or because the new world of work offers ever increasing opportunities for greater self-fulfilment. Furthermore, if the jobs of the future are going to be 'high-discretion' jobs, career success is going to be dependent on the constant updating of knowledge and skills. Within this context, learning must perforce be redefined. Careers in the future world of work require broad learning foundations that leave the option open for ongoing learning and skill development. Two suggestions have been made by Career Psychologists that are of particular relevance to the Indian situation. First of all, it is essential that educational systems reduce their focus on curricula that lead to closed specialisation paths (Tractenberg, Streumer Jan, & Van Zolingen, 2002). In other words training courses with long periods of gestation leading ultimately to just one career possibility are likely to decrease in their relevance. Educational foundations that offer the flexibility for career change over the course of one's life are the need of the hour. This requires a closing of the gap between knowledge transmission and skill acquisition. Embedding work-related experiences in the school curriculum for example could contribute to the closing of this gap (Nijhof, 1998). At the second level, employers also will need to devise strategies and methodologies that could contribute to the ongoing knowledge and skill development of their work force. A work environment where on going learning becomes an essential aspect of career development is expected to be the work ethic of the future (Nijhof, 1998).

If life long learning is to be possible, it is essential that mindsets also change to accept this reality. Social-cognitive environments that do not allow the worker to remain a learner could prove to be barriers to career success in the emerging post-industrial world of work.

Coping with diversity

The information age has created dramatic changes in conceptions of time and space within the world of work. The worker is today expected to discharge work roles in an environment that is characterised by social, cultural and economic diversity. Until now conceptions of preparing for the world of work were limited to *learning to know* and *learning to do* (Delors, 1996). The future world of work is going to be populated by individuals who come from varied cultural backgrounds, carrying their own social cognitions. One of the crucial elements of the new work ethic is that the individual is simultaneously aware of the diversity within the human race as well as the need for interdependence between every society. One facet of the emerging work ethic therefore would be *learning to live together* (Delors, 1996). A concern that has been consistently expressed about the world of work is that the forces of globalisation and technological advancement would lead to the loss of individual identities. Success in the new world of work would be linked to the individual's ability to maintain personal autonomy and freedom of thought and judgement within a shifting, changing and diverse work environment. On this background, *learning to be* (Delors, 1996), would be a vital aspect of the post-industrial work ethic.

Conclusion

Man's most ancient preoccupation – work, has today yielded the concept of career. Indeed career development has become an important aspect of the overall development of the human individual. Yet as we have discussed above, prevailing beliefs, attitudes and mindsets – the social-cognitive environment influences approaches to work and career. If they are to be relevant, career counselling services must be rooted in the contextual realities of which the career chooser is a part. Our examination of the history of work has revealed that prevailing

philosophies and ideologies influenced work behaviour differently in the West when compared to India. The concept of a career emerged from within a cultural environment that was characterised by individualism and was nurtured by a work ethic that promoted freedom of choice. Although westernisation and industrialisation have transformed the culture of work in the Indian situation, social-cognitive environment is quite different from the one in which the idea of a 'personal career' was born. Although 'career' has become an integral aspect of modern Indian culture, career *development* progresses in India in a manner that is quite different from the West. It is essential that these differences are taken into account. This could begin with understanding the links between social-cognitive environments and career development.

The development of Career Psychology in India is poised at a point when work and career are moving into a new phase in their evolution. No longer ascribed a position of under-development India is today described to be a developing nation. At the dawn of a new era the opportunities in the world of work are immense. Effective methods of guidance and counselling could play a vital role in drawing the young person and the worker closer to these opportunities. Pieces of flint from our ancient past and the complex microchip of the digital age do not merely chronicle the evolution of work. They reflect the wonderful workings of the human mind. Indeed the tool at the hand of the career counsellor is the human being's ability to cogitate, for it is the human ability to reflect and ponder that brings meaning to work and career choice.

Chapter 2

Career development: The person and the context

Work as Career

Career development is the result of an intimate and intricate interaction between the individual and the environment of which he or she is a part. As we have seen in the first chapter it is within a particular social context and an environment of social cognitions that work assumes the characteristics of career. We will now take a closer look at these interactions and develop a framework within which the development of careers could be better understood**.**

Work as survival

Work in purely biological terms is intrinsic to survival. The human body never ceases to work. Each cell in our bodies is continuously at work, fulfilling the functions of its particular specialisation. When the quality of work performed by a group of cells drops, the body as a whole begins to feel it. When larger and larger groups of cells are unable to perform their work roles and the quality of their work output suffers, the body becomes sick and can finally die. Extending this *physiologica*l link between survival and work to a broader context it is obvious that every human individual must expend energy and direct effort toward specific goals in order to meet survival needs. In its most basic form, work is a form of human activity that is necessary to meet survival needs.

Psychological connotations of work

Work in *psychological* terms carries a further connotation. The *purpose* behind performing a set of activities defines whether an activity is work. Let us take the example of Shanthi and Sukumar who plant a garden. Both these persons expend energy and effort in caring for their gardens and making them fruitful. However these two people are quite different in their *motivations* for gardening. Shanthi planted her garden with the view to make a living from the produce of her garden. She sells her mangoes and carrots and greens to make a profit and

support her survival. If her garden does not do well and is not optimally fruitful, her livelihood is affected. Sukumar on the other hand loves plants and watching things grow. He too devotes every spare moment to his garden and directs a great deal of effort toward his plants. 'Every spare moment' is the phrase that distinguishes these two ardent gardeners from each other. Sukumar is a stockbroker and spends most of his time on the stock market trading floor. His garden is his hobby. Unlike Shanthi, he does not depend on the outcomes of his gardening efforts for his survival. In fact he proudly gives his fruits and vegetables away as gifts! In physiological terms, both Shanthi and Sukumar are at work in their gardens. But in psychological terms gardening is work for Shanthi but a leisure time pursuit for Sukumar.

Career is an artefact that has emerged within the broader framework of the human activity called work. Work as we have described it in our first chapter, is as old as the history of mankind. Career on the other hand is a relatively newer construct whose emergence coincides with changes that characterise the evolution of work. These changes throw up new work roles that require specialisation in a particular skill set and the commitment to meeting the demands of these specialised work roles for a duration of time – sometimes for the entire duration of one's availability to the work force. It is the relatively modern concepts of specialisation and the focused development of specific work roles that define the term career. To illustrate, let us introduce Ravi into our gardening example. Ravi studied agricultural science and chose to specialise in organic farming and agricultural management. Shanthi in the meanwhile had realised that her garden needed to be professionally run and that she did not possess the necessary skills. Shanthi interviewed Ravi, assessed his skills and employed him to manage her garden. Gardening to Shanthi is work and perhaps in the broadest sense it is also her career. Ravi's approach to gardening however would be characteristically different. He brings schooled skills and professionalism, into this area of work. As a professional he will expect his work roles to grow, he will specialise further, aim for promotions and set higher career aspirations. He is free to choose to continue to work for Shanthi or seek other avenues to maximise what he gains from his career as a gardener. Ravi is a 'career gardener'.

All careers are forms of work, but the reverse may not be always true. As an area of human activity, work is broader, more ubiquitous and wider in what it encompasses. Career therefore is work imbued with certain characteristics.

Characteristics of career

Career has certain distinct characteristics that allow us to describe it as a form of work. It is these characteristics that create a matrix within which career counselling and guidance can occur.

Volition and choice

Career brings with it the question of choice, decision-making and the exercise of volition. Presented with numerous opportunities, the career aspirant is required to discriminate between various possibilities and identify the career that she wishes to follow. Having made this choice the individual then is required to identify and select the path that will lead to the chosen career. Decision-making however does not end at the crossroads that the individual faces at the point of initiation into the world of work. A career path is not a course that leads directly from one point to another. Career goals are not uniform, solitary targets that one must reach. A career path twists and turns often bringing the individual to new cross roads. New career goals emerge when one target has been reached. All through this course, the aspirant is required to take decisions, exert volition and make measured choices.

Suitability

A career implies specialisation in a clearly circumscribed area of skills. And specialisation brings with it the implication of the individual's suitability for a specific set of work skills. Discovering personal suitability for a career requires identifying personal interests, talents and inclinations. The question of suitability persists throughout the individual's career. Suitability is a particularly critical concept at the point of entry into a career. It is essential that the career aspirant discovers the career in which he or she is likely to excel and find the highest degree of comfort. Having entered a career, the moulding of personal suitability to career tasks is the challenge before the career aspirant. Further training would be necessary to sharpen basic

suitability for a set of tasks as one's career progresses. The individual is not likely to be completely suitable for all the requirements of the chosen career. Success at a career requires making adjustments and learning to cope with newly emerging career demands.

Preparation

Preparation for entry is an essential characteristic of the modern career. This implies developing knowledge about and skills for the career one has chosen. Career preparation presents two points for consideration. At one level preparation comprises study, training and skill development to meet the demands of the chosen career. Inadequate training or a poor knowledge base compromises the type of job for which one would be accepted. At another level career preparation is linked to the attitudes with which one views oneself and a career. For example the unwillingness to mould oneself to the requirements of a career could result in severe conflict. Career preparation also requires developing an attitudinal readiness to survive and progress in the world of work.

Ongoing development

A career usually spans a period of time – it has a beginning (entry into a career) and an end (retirement). We could perhaps link the term career to *carrière,* which is French for racecourse. In many ways a career is a course that one follows. Movement along this path calls for fitting into predefined structures and following prescribed rules, while simultaneously exhibiting excellence, creativity and initiative. By its very nature career offers opportunities for further development toward the higher reaches of an area of work specialisation. Promotions, switching employers, branching into other areas of specialisation are all examples of ongoing career development. As we have seen in th last chapter the post-industrial, information age that we are now a part of requires that life-long learning is integral to career development.

Social – personal dimensions

Running the course of a career is essentially the result of an intricate psycho-social process. A group of people (society at large) presents a wide variety of needs that demand attention. The dynamics of career development motivates individuals from within this larger group, to develop the expertise to meet one of these needs or specific components of a need in a professional manner. Career is a mechanism whereby society utilises the services of its members to contribute to its well being, progress and development. The larger society in return compensates the individual for delivering a particular service. An individual's career therefore has its being in the dynamic interaction between the garnering of personal gain and the services she renders to society at large. Career development suffers or even grinds to a halt when this delicate balance is disturbed. An individual places himself or herself between the traces of a career and willingly spends energy to meet its demands because this investment of effort yields some form of personal gain. At one level this maybe in the form of higher remuneration and material benefits. At another level the career one follows and the career progress one registers is closely linked to social status and prestige. At the deepest level, a career is a mechanism that can facilitate the unfolding of personal potentials, the realisation of one's dreams and ultimately the actualisation of one's self.

In summary then, a career is characterised by the volitional direction of energy and specialised effort, for a required duration of time, toward meeting societal needs through a specific area of work, for which one gains the means not only for a livelihood but also for the realisation of personal potentials. This description of career and its development is an ideal description. In reality, a variety of forces act together to facilitate, thwart or divert the unfolding of this process. A career rarely bursts abruptly upon the individual. A person's orientation to work and then to career is something that *develops* over a period of time.

> **Figure 9: Career: A story in process: Insights from Tony Watts**
>
> **Arulmani**: In one of your writings you have said, "Careers are now forged, not foretold." Could you elaborate on this important point to throw some light on the role of aptitude testing and the career counsellor?
>
> **Watts:** My basic point here is simply that most people's careers are determined not by a single choice made at a predictable point in their lives, but by a series of choices made at different points in their lives. Ideally, guidance (including, where appropriate, aptitude testing) should be accessible at all these decision points. Moreover, the way the guidance is offered should be sensitive to the continuous but also contingent nature of the individual's career narrative: in other words, the fact that it is still a 'story in process'.
>
> Personal communication between Watts & Arulmani (2003)

The development of a career

At the high school stage, the modern young person's career horizon is bustling with occupational possibilities. If you were to meet the same young person a few years later, you would notice that not all these possibilities have been converted into careers. It is most likely that just one of the many alternatives that were present earlier dominates this young person's role as a worker. This is the result of a process of development that is intertwined with the growth and maturation of the individual as a person and as a member of society. A good place to begin to examine the dynamics of career development is to place it within the broader context of factors that influence human development as a whole.

The first steps toward a scientific understanding of human behaviour began just about a hundred years ago, when focus was brought to bear upon the *'mind'*. Studying the human mind has presented and continues to present great challenges to scientific investigation. The mind cannot be seen, it cannot be observed, measured or quantified in its entirely. However, the *manifestation* of the human mind can be seen, observed and measured. This is *human behaviour*.

Behaviour is a generic term that describes the observable and measurable responses of an organism to itself and to its environment. Behaviour that is linked to the elaboration of the individual's role as worker and career aspirant is *career development behaviour*.

In the broadest sense, human behaviour is the result of two sets of influences. The first has its source *within* the individual and may be described to be *individual-specific* influences. Other influences that impinge upon the person emerge from the *environment*. The following sections of this chapter attempt to describe these various dimensions within the context of career development behaviour.

Biological influences

At the most fundamental level, human behaviour is rooted in biological and physical realities. And so is career development. Let us take a quick look at two broad categories of biological influences on behaviour and career development.

Heredity

Our genetic inheritance has the most obvious influence on our behaviour. Personal appearance, stature, the limits of physical strength and stamina all finally have a

hereditary basis. Some forms of talents and aptitudes – the building blocks of career development, could also be linked to genetic heritage. While not all aptitudes are the result of genetic loading, others do seem to run in families. It is more likely for example, that a child born into a family of musicians has a higher aptitude for careers in these areas than a child who does not have such an ancestry. It is quite possible that the child from the musical family will perform at higher levels of excellence than the child from the non-musical family, if both children are exposed to the same quality and quantum of training. Heredity bestows the individual with the 'raw material' with which to build a life and its influence on behaviour is one of the components relevant to understanding career development.

Biochemical factors

Biochemical factors act as biological triggers that stimulate the maturation of hereditary traits. Hormones are an example of biochemical triggers that initiate changes within the individual, which in turn have an impact on behaviour. An important effect of hormonal changes is the onset of puberty and adolescence. This is a stage in the individual's development that is particularly relevant to the career counsellor, since career development is intricately interwoven with the identity crisis experienced during adolescence. The formation of identity per se may not be entirely the result of biological forces. However, the physiological changes that occur during adolescence prepare the foundations for identity formation, which in turn are integral to the development of the individual's occupational identity.

Figure 10: Homo Faber

The human being, has only three times as many genes as a fruit fly and about a few hundred more than a mouse. Nearly all animals on our planet share close to 10 percent of our genes with us. Even the lowly fruit fly has genes whose DNA sequence is similar to human DNA. At the other end of the continuum, almost 99 percent of our DNA is identical to our closest chromosomnal cousin, the chimpanzee – just as though they were different spellings of the same expression. It is this minuscule variance that allowed the emergence of sapience and a capacity for learning that lies at the heart of the human ability to work and follow a career. Indeed, while our genetic inheritance entitles us to be homo sapiens it also moves us toward being homo faber.

Genetic and biochemical factors are examples of biological influences on behaviour. These influences are largely individual specific and the characteristics that we are born with manifest themselves across our life spans. It is vital to remember however that biological factors alone do not determine the manifestation of behaviour or the development of a career.

Influences from the environment

Development – particularly career development, is not limited merely to the unfolding of biological traits. The manifestation of inborn traits is reliant on the nurture they receive from external sources. Biological traits are moulded within a psycho-social environment. Our genetic

inheritance is the result of millions of years of biological evolution. In similar manner we also receive a cultural, educational and economic heritage that has resulted from years of psycho-social evolution.

Psychological and Social influences

Psycho-social factors are influences from society that shape the way we think and behave. Individual behaviour patterns are often reflective of the larger society – its norms, values, ideas, social structure, prosperity level and stage of economic development. Our behaviour is strongly influenced by assumptions we have learned to make about ourselves, our world and the relationship between the two. Starting from childhood, we *assimilate* information about 'right' and 'wrong', 'good' and 'bad', 'valuable' and 'worthless', 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' ways of behaving. These assimilations lead to assumptions that make up our frames of reference. We have used the phrase social cognitions to describe habitual patterns of thinking present within societies. Deeply rooted social cognitions that have become frames of reference influencing behaviour are described by behavioural scientists as *social schemas* (Arbib & Hesse, 1986). Taking recourse to an astrological framework as the basis upon which decisions related to marriage, business or career are made is an example of the operation of a schema common in the Indian ethos. Schemas by themselves are not right or wrong. They are an accumulated body of social practices and conventions that guide the way in which a community or an individual interpret information, make decisions - and *behave*. Schemas sometimes run so deep that they are highly resistant to change. We are not usually entirely *aware* of the schemas that influence our behaviour. Although our regular and routine behaviour occurs within and is shaped by these frames of reference, we may not be conscious of the assumptions upon which they are based. We may assume that we are simply seeing things the way they are, when in effect we are actually *interpreting* information we receive. Furthermore, a deeply entrenched schema can preclude the consideration of other viewpoints and worldviews, which engender other rules for behaviour. For example, the enduring belief that the woman's first responsibility is that of a homemaker while it is the male who should pursue a career reflects the operation of a specific schema operating within a community. Such an approach to work roles may not be taken in another community.

The influence of significant others, prestige factors, gender, caste and other forms of discrimination are all psycho-social factors that have a cumulative effect on career decision-making behaviour. By their very character such influences are unique to certain environments and cultures. The career counsellor must be acutely aware of the impact of these forces within the culture in which he or she works. A later chapter will discuss the characteristics of psycho-social forces and their influence on career development in the Indian context.

The influence of education

The quality of education one receives has a direct bearing on career development. Lower levels of education predispose the individual to discontinuities in career development. Education that is academically oriented as against courses that are skill based point the individual toward different career development trajectories. Earlier conceptions of career development tended to compartmentalise career development and education. In other words, once the individual was 'settled' in a career, it was unlikely that he or she would be required to go back to the world of education for training. As we have noted earlier, the demands from the world of work today require ongoing learning and training as one's career development progresses. The idea of 'life long learning' is a relatively new one and has revolutionised approaches to career development in the West. The individual today has the option of re-training, developing a new set of skills and educating himself or herself to make a career switch. Education plays an important role not only at the entry point but also through the course of one's career development. The Indian educational system throws up a number of questions that career counselling must take into account. We will consider these issues more deeply in a later chapter.

Economic factors

Unemployment, industrialisation, redundancy of earlier forms of production, the emergence of new career opportunities are all aspects of change in the economic environment that have a strong impact on behaviour. A strident example is the impact that the so called boom in the computer industry had on career decision-making behaviour in the late 1990s in India. The presence of this career area in the media, the descriptions of high prestige, including high salaries and the perquisites associated with this industry created a massive spurt in interest and drove large numbers of Indian young people toward qualifying for careers in this area. Subsequent changes in the labour market caused a corresponding depletion in interest levels. Movements

toward and away from career areas are closely linked to economic cycles. While an acute awareness of economic trends is essential, an effective career counselling system must be independent of these cycles.

Another factor that is known to have a powerful impact on career development behaviour is socio-economic status (SES). Characteristic differences have been noted between the schemas of upper and lower SES groups in India. The beliefs held by young people from economically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds for example seem predispose them to exhibiting lower levels of occupational aspiration when compared to their more privileged counterparts.

Manpower requirements, trends in the labour market, the economic benefits that a career offers are all economic realities that influence career development. These factors and their relevance to career counselling will be considered in greater detail in the following chapters.

The influence of maturation

Human development begins at the moment of conception and refers to the sequences of changes that occur over the entire life span of the individual. Intertwined with the biology of development is the concept of *maturation*. Maturation is the 'coming to fruition' or 'developing to full capacity' of an in born biological trait. In common parlance maturation is often linked to a particular stage in life. "He is now a mature boy" or "At last she has become mature", are statements we use to describe the emergence of socially expected behaviour. In psychological terms, maturation is not limited to one particular stage or moment in the individual's life. Maturation occurs continually, throughout specific stages in the life span. Maturation is closely dependent on nurture from the psycho-social environment. Biochemical forces stimulate the emergence of a particular ability, psycho-social forces nurture this manifestation, the ability 'matures' and development moves on.

Human development progresses through clearly definable steps and stages, called *developmental stages*. Each developmental stage is characterised by certain *developmental tasks*. Mastery over each set of tasks is considered essential for success in the next stage. Each stage culminates with a sharpening of the need to master the developmental tasks linked to that stage, which is

sometimes called a *developmental crisis*. The successful resolution of this crisis paves the way for entry into the next developmental stage. For example, an individual who did not develop the muscular maturation necessary for standing erect (because of biochemical imbalances or disease) would in all likelihood not be able to leap across a ditch, run a race – or enter a career that requires high levels of muscular co-ordination.

Not all developmental tasks are linked to the individual's chronological age. Merely growing older does not imply that mastery has been attained over the developmental tasks of an earlier

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Figure 11: So leans the tree

Modern genetics tells us that we share a large proportion of our genes with other species. If this is true then it is likely that almost all our genes were installed much before we parted ways with our closest primate cousins, got off our fours and descended from the trees. Sociobiologists attribute this to the evolutionary pressure on genetic material. Whatever the mechanism that caused this departure, it led to a dynamic and ongoing interaction between our genetic heritage and our environment – between nature and nurture. Heredity and environment are inseparable. Heredity provides the seed of personal potentials. The environment provides the soil upon which this seed can flower and flourish.

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stage. For example, you could have a 35 year old married male, who has still not gained autonomy from his parents, has not mastered the developmental task of independent decision-making and is unable to maintain an independent family unit with his own spouse. Similarly you could have a 20 year old college student who has not mastered the developmental tasks linked to being an independent learner and continues to rely heavily on teachers. Discrepancies between chronological age and maturity levels expected for that age are called *developmental lags*.

The concept of human development is one that has been central to understanding the way career development progresses. Occupational development is described to keep pace with the individual's maturation and career development is said to occur in steps and stages. Each stage throws up *career developmental tasks* – expectations of what is thought to be typical of a person at a given stage of development and what society would like to see happen at that stage. The resolution of these tasks enhances the individual's career maturity. These are concepts presented

by developmental theorists and have formed the foundations upon which theories of Career Psychology have been developed.

It is important to remind ourselves that career development goes beyond mere biological maturation. Biological and physical development is simultaneously under the influence of

psycho-social factors. In developmental terms the individual usually achieves sufficient cognitive maturation to be able to make independent decisions by the end of adolescence. However the actual manifestation of this skill is strongly influenced by the psycho-social environment that he or she is a part of. An 18 year old's skills for independent decision-making may be manifested differently in an environment that invites and expects independent decision-making as against an environment that frowns upon the young person who does not follow the advice of the elders in the community.

Human behaviour therefore is the result of a complex interaction between the individual and a variety of forces and influences that impinge upon this individual. It is within this interaction that behaviour related to career development is also manifested.

Personality – the individual behind the behaviour

Behind any unit of human behaviour is a human being who is unique. This uniqueness makes the person an *individual* – and gives the person a personality. The term personality has many interpretations. We often hear people say, 'He has become a famous personality', or, 'Shantha is not very good looking but she has a great personality.' Such descriptions imply that personality has something to do with charm, charisma and style. The psychological meaning of personality is quite different.

In psychological terms everyone has a personality. Personality refers to a person's *unique and relatively stable patterns of behaving*. It refers to that particular combination of abilities, interests, values, hopes, reaction patterns, likes and dislikes, preferences and habits that make a person unique.

Distinctiveness is a key descriptor of personality. While we all share common traits, we also have our own distinctive set of personality traits – characteristics that make us different from others. For example, 16 year old Sudha and Silesh may both be people who are usually friendly and outgoing. But when organising a get together, Sudha may tend toward addressing and talking to groups of people, while Silesh may prefer to let others do the talking while he organises things behind the scenes.

Consistency is the other key word that defines a person's personality. Consistency determines broadly how we will react in *any situation*. For example whether it is in a classroom, party or at a bus stop Sunder is a person who tends to keep to himself whereas Sohail usually seeks opportunities to interact with people. Consistency of traits implies that a person will behave in more or less the *same* manner in any situation. The pattern of remaining aloof consistently characterises Sunder in interpersonal situations, while Sohail's interpersonal behaviour would consistently be gregarious. Although none of us are completely consistent in our behaviour, the quality of consistency across situation lies at the core of an individual's personality.

Personal interests

Career interests are patterns of likes, dislikes and indifferences regarding career-relevant activities and occupations (Hansen, 1984b). Interests are activities that draw a person's attention and evoke curiosity. Things that a person wants to pursue further, activities that a person's considers worthwhile and enjoys, all reflect that individual's interests. During the initial stages of career development, the child may be drawn toward a wide range of activities. As the individual grows and matures, interests are said to crystallise into a unique pattern. At the age of 18 years, Sabir for example was consistently drawn toward machines, equipment and tools and showed a high level of curiosity about how engines work. His classmate Mohan, on the other hand enjoyed writing and expressing his thoughts and ideas through essays and poems. Sabir's pattern of interests points toward career families such as engineering, while it is likely that Mohan would find journalism interesting. Interests are factors of a person's personality that motivate and drive that person. Identifying interests is closely linked to identifying suitable career paths. A variety of psychometric devices have been developed that are designed to distinguish patterns of career interests that characterise an individual.

Personal aptitudes

Aptitudes are the individual's capabilities and talents – what one would be naturally good at. The key point to be noted is that aptitudes reflect the *potential* for achievement in a particular area. For example, at the end of an aptitude test Sohail, a student in class 10, discovered that he had a high linguistic aptitude and a low musical aptitude. This means that if he is provided the appropriate training, he would find it easier to master skills related to the linguistic aptitude than skills related to the musical aptitude. Aptitude tests help unveil a person's talents and potentials. An aptitude test may be focused on specific areas (e.g. manual dexterity, clerical skill). Aptitude tests could also be more broad-based (e.g. linguistic skills, spatial skills).

Interests and aptitudes are personal characteristics that form the building blocks of career counselling. Biological traits combine with psycho-social influences to produce unique personalities. It is this uniqueness that makes career counselling possible and necessary. It is because personalities tend to behave in a distinctive and consistent manner that career counselling is possible and necessary. The task before the counsellor is to identify factors that contribute to the person's distinctiveness and personality traits that are likely to be consistent over time. Career counselling collaborates with the career aspirant to identify his or her stable personality characteristics (e.g. interests and aptitudes). It is on this basis that career counselling can progress toward discovering career families for which the individual would be most suitable.

Individual differences – the corner stone of career counselling

Consistency and distinctiveness yield the concept of *individual differences*. Take the example of two sisters. They are exposed to the same genetic lineage and psycho-social environment. They are bound to be similar on certain features, yet, their personalities are unique - they are individually different from each other. This is the wonder of human development. Although its mechanics and dynamics are the same across individuals the outcome of development varies for each individual. The weft and warp of human development comprises certain common threads that run through the career development of all individuals. At the same time the dynamics of development create individual differences within these broad commonalties. For example, all individuals have interests, talents and abilities. But individuals differ from each other on the type of interest, the form of talents, the strength of motivations and their orientations to self and the world of work. If one were to engage in career counselling interactions with Silesh and

Sudha in the example above, the fact remains that they both have interests. However the differences in their interests would point the career counsellor toward different career families for each of them. It is in the blending of the unique configuration of individual differences with commonalties present across groups of individuals that career counselling makes its contribution.

Special career development needs

Biological and psycho-social forces interact with each other to create unique individuals. These individuals are different from each other. Sometimes these differences are manifested as needs that are *not common* to the group at large. The following section briefly describes impact of special needs on career development behaviour.

What are special needs?

A child may be said to have a special need when she requires educational support in ways that are unexpected or unlike the rest of her peers (Nag-Arulmani, 2002). One form of special needs arises from difficulties with *sensory motor* functions. Individuals who have difficulties with vision, movement, speech and hearing could experience unique difficulties with their career development. Other career aspirants could manifest special needs because of problems with *learning*. Difficulties such as dyslexia and dyscalculia are quite often not visible and an insensitive system could label these young people as lazy or unintelligent. A career development environment that is heavily dependent on acquiring academic skills and to achieving success in examinations, quite often is incapable of addressing the needs of career aspirants that comprise these groups. Others may manifest difficulties with *concentration* and may be unable to direct their *attention* toward a learning target long enough to acquire an effective knowledge base. Individuals who suffer *psychological* and *psychiatric* disturbances may experience a discontinuity in their career development that quite often is not adequately addressed. People with *personality* disorders are predisposed to approaching the world of work in manner that is incompatible with existing systems of career development. Others suffer from epilepsy, juvenile diabetes and other *chronic physical illnesses* that create difficulties both at the stage of preparing to enter a career as well as meeting the ongoing demands of career development. Those who are intellectually impaired and mentally handicapped manifest another category of special career

development needs. This group comprises individuals who experience difficulties and challenges because of intellectual impairments and require a very different kind of support for career development.

This is by no means an exhaustive list of special needs categories. However, it serves to highlight the importance of understanding that individual differences exist along a continuum of difficulties, disorders and impairments that need to be drawn into the purview of career counselling.

Impact of special needs on career development

It is not uncommon both for an individual with special needs and his environment to firmly hold the belief that 'he can't really make a career for himself' or 'he is not likely to go very far'. It is true that these individuals exhibit certain limitations. However other than obvious examples, it is not known which careers are inaccessible to individuals with special needs and at which point career development may plateau for these persons. History is replete with examples of those who have not been limited by special needs. The speech impaired have become great orators, those with physical handicap have scaled mountains, the hearing impaired have established a career in music, the visually impaired have risen in the academic world, dyslexics have grown to become great architects. Examples such as these speak volumes about the career development possibilities of those with special needs. More often than not psycho-social factors in the form of underlying beliefs and attitudes limit rather than augment the career development of those with special needs. When these artificial limitations remain unaddressed career development remains stunted.

Career counselling for special needs groups does not stop at the motivational level that inspires the disabled career aspirant to 'break free from limitations'. In fact counselling that stops at this point can do more harm than good. The fact remains that special needs present special requirements. These requirements are two fold. At the first level special needs must be addressed with relevant intervention techniques. A career counselling intervention that requires the dyslexic to respond to paper pencil tests for example, may be completely irrelevant to her needs and may worsen her already depleted self-esteem. Tests that are independent of reading

Figure 12: Special needs and career development

Arulmani: Could you enlist some of the core or 'pre-vocational' skills that a person with special needs requires.

Poonam Natarajan: The core requirements, are similar for both the disabled and non disabled. Perhaps, disabled people need to be trained in the following:

1. Pre-vocational skills training emphasises quality but never really focuses on speed. Most disabled people have a lot of time, and we let them work at the speed they want. The disabled must learn to do tasks much faster if they are to be suitable for open employment.

2. Tasks can be made simpler using adaptations or aids. Institutions working with special needs, must have therapists, who can design the appropriate aid.

Arulmani: What are the barriers to the career development of the disabled?

Poonam Natarajan: Even though they may have a job, the disabled are generally given no work. This is frustrating and demeaning. Most employers do not look for the strengths of a disabled person. Some specific barriers are:

1. Inability to travel independently. In India, public transport just does not meet the needs of disabled people. Buses, trains, roads, pavements, even access to most buildings are huge barriers. Most disabled people cannot really afford private transport. If employers can focus on this need, many disabled people will be able to contribute. Prabakar, a wheel chair user, has cerebral palsy and lives in a faraway slum. Today he is a dynamic receptionist and handles the PABX system for a huge institution. This has been possible, because we have supported his transport needs. If we had not done that, he would have wasted away, at home.

2. The People with Disabilities Act provides for a 3% reservation on all jobs for disabled people. This has not been implemented by any of the sectors.

3. The lives of the disabled have been controlled by their families and professionals. Very often, they do not have the confidence to take on the challenges of a career. They must organise themselves and represent their needs.

4. Special schools sadly, do not empower disabled people to take on the challenges of mainstream life. Inclusive education will give students the skills to cope with jobs in any institution.

Personal communication between Poonam Natarajan and Gideon Arulmani (2003).

and writing skills would be more sensitive and accurate. At the second level, counselling for those with special needs must be rooted in the realities of the world of work.   It is possible for example that a mentally handicapped person could work in a factory or similar environment with special career development inputs. Research has found for example that the most common reason for job loss among those with severe learning difficulties is not associated with work skills deficits as much as with self-management skills. These are indications of the ways in which career preparation could be planned for these individuals.

Special needs do have an impact on the trajectory of career development. A well informed career counselling intervention could facilitate and optimise the career progress that those with special needs could register. 'Your ignorance is my handicap' - Hellen Keller's words, could be the touchstone for the career counsellor who addresses special career development needs.

Conclusion

Sneha is a gifted artist with a natural talent for design. Would this child become a designer? The answer to this question is linked to the value placed on this talent by the psycho-social environment that this child is born into. If Sneha's environment holds the belief that design in a low prestige career, it is likely that she would also grow up placing a low value on her talent for art and design. If training courses for design are only available in a far away city and the family does not allow her to leave home because she is a girl child, her talent for design may never benefit from systematic training. If Sneha belongs to a lower SES home, the pressures of having to work to contribute to the family income may preclude even the recognition of her talent.

A career finds its being at the confluence of the two great streams of influences on human development – human biology and human socialisation. The manner in which a person orients him or herself to a career path results from the coming together of individual specific factors and external psycho-social influences. Career is a specialised activity that has emerged within modern conceptions of work. The development of a career keeps time with the individual's maturation. The vital point to be noted is that the career aspirant's personality – the personhood of this unique individual, lies at the heart of effective career counselling.

Chapter 3

The theories of Career Psychology:
Traits, life stages and beliefs

The psychology of career development is one of the most robust and vigorously growing branches of the behavioural sciences and Career Psychology has been an area of concentrated investigation. Research and methods dealing with career counselling have increasingly been incorporated into the mainstream of psychological research and practice. While at one time career counselling seemed to be an obscure sub-branch of counselling psychology, today applied psychologists in clinical, industrial, organisational and social psychology settings find career development issues of interest (Osipow, 1987). The ideas and concepts described by Career Psychologists – traits, life stages, social learning and career beliefs have gained relevance to professionals from other disciplines such as educators, youth workers, social workers, sociologists and even economists. Given its interdisciplinary nature, the literature dealing with career counselling has grown to become extraordinarily vast. Reviewers of this literature have suggested that theoretical traditions within Career Psychology could be broadly classified into three schools of thought, namely the trait-factor approach, the developmental school and the social learning / social cognitive position (Hackett, Lent, & Greenhaus, 1991). It is important to note that these traditions have had their origins in the West and to a large extent their research is based on samples drawn from the West. In addition to describing these theories of Career Psychology, this chapter will attempt to explore their relevance to the Indian situation. The final section of this chapter will present a collation of the information available from research into career development in the Indian situation.

The Trait -Factor Approach

What are traits?

In psychological terms, a trait is any characteristic that accounts for regularities and consistencies in a person's behaviour. A characteristic is said to be a trait if it is enduring and stable across time and situations. In other words, trait is a theoretical construct that describes an underlying constituent of the individual's personality, which explains the consistent and cohesive manner in

which a person behaves. Let us assume for example that being gregarious and outgoing is a trait and let us further assume that Mary's personality is characterised by this trait. According to the Trait-Factor approach it is likely that Mary will behave in a gregarious and outgoing manner in almost all interpersonal situations that she encounters.

The Trait-Factor theory was perhaps the earliest approach to career development and emerged in direct response to the need for accurately matching people to specific occupations. This theory rests on a set of assumptions. Firstly, it is assumed that individuals possess a unique combination of traits, which can be measured and quantified with accuracy. It is further assumed that the characteristics of occupations are such that workers must exhibit certain specific traits for successful execution of the job roles of a particular occupation. Based on these two assumptions the Trait-Factor approach attempts to identify and quantify the traits that characterise an individual and match this person with occupations that would draw from his or her unique profile of traits. This approach therefore describes career decision-making to be a simple process of matching personal characteristics with job requirements. Accordingly the closer this match the greater the likelihood of optimal productivity and personal satisfaction. In other words career success is contingent on finding the closest match between the individual's

Figure 13: Frank Parson's steps to rational career decision-making process
Adapted from: Parsons, 1909

- **First of all the individual using the expert services of a vocational guidance counsellor needs to inform him or herself of personal aptitudes, interests, and resources. This includes understanding personal limitations and the causes underlying these limitations.**
- **Next, the career chooser needs to acquire information about the conditions that promote occupational success.**
- **Finally, the individual arrives at a career choice through a rational and reasoned analysis of the relationship between the facts acquired at steps one and two.**

traits and the demands of a particular occupation. Frank Parsons in his seminal 1909 publication *Choosing a Vocation,* outlined the Trait-Factor approach. He described career decision-making to be a rational process of identifying personal traits and then matching them with suitable careers. Figure 13 describes the steps through which career discovery occurs according to the trait-factor approach.

According to the Trait-Factor formulation then, career decision-making is a rational process of problem solving, which is based on the systematic collection of information, the verification of this information and finally using this information to make a career decision. This was the approach that dominated career counselling in the West from the early 1900s to the around the 1940s.

Impact and relevance:

Any evaluation of the Trait-Factor approach must take into consideration the historical period during which it made its appearance, the attending social conditions and the profound changes in the world of work that characterised this period in history. The Industrial Revolution had transformed earlier conceptions of occupational choice and decision-making. Hitherto unknown forms of employment were created in an environment of social change that had weakened existing mechanisms for occupational role allocation. The urgent need was for an objective method based on which workers could be identified to effectively perform particular job roles. The Trait-Factor approach seemed to be ideally suited to a career decision-making environment that was limited to identifying the individual's suitability for a specific occupation. Interventions based on this school of thought made significant and timely contributions to the career development needs of young people aspiring to enter the world of work at that time. Career development however is a dynamic process that changes and evolves. It is in the context of contemporary career development needs that the continued relevance of the methods of the Trait-Factor approach has come into question.

First of all, at the heart of the Trait-Factor method is the necessity of identifying the career aspirant's traits. As a result, one of the most important outcomes of this school of thought was the emergence of an enormous array of psychological tools in the form of inventories, tests, checklists and similar devices. These tools were developed with the view to identifying, measuring and quantifying a wide range of human traits. This contribution continues to play a significant role and an important aspect of career counselling will always rest on data that is gathered through psychological tests. However as the knowledge base of Career Psychology grew in complexity, the Trait-Factor approach's reliance on the identification and measurement of traits came under severe criticism. The description of what traits are became and continues to remain a subject of controversy in the world of psychology. In the early days its was assumed that traits could be directly linked to neurological and physiological substructures. While some 'concrete' traits (e.g. height, weight, complexion, dexterity) could be described to be the result of biological factors a vast number of other human characteristics are not biological in nature. On this background, psychological testing itself has become the subject of intense debate. The validity and reliability of test results have been found to be dependent on a number of factors such as cultural background, language fluency, gender and psycho-social influence. In a country like India for example, test construction presents an enormous challenge. A single interest inventory would have to be standardised in at least a dozen different languages, with accompanying norms for interpretation of the test's results. Another important assumption of the Trait-Factor approach, namely the linking of personal traits with occupational requirements has also come under question. Researchers quickly realised that a given occupation presents requirements that are too varied to be reduced to a simple matching procedure. It seems therefore that while methods based on the Trait-Factor approach are simple and straight forward, they do not take into consideration the operation of a variety of other influences on the career decision-making process. The process of decision-making itself could be a crisis and a struggle for the career aspirant and decision-making styles could vary significantly across individuals. An aptitude test may indicate for example that a person's strongest traits are well suited for a career in carpentry. Whether that person would actually choose to become a carpenter depends upon a multitude of other factors emerging from social-cognitive and psycho-social environments. In the final analysis, while the Trait-Factor school of thought served an important function as the earliest form of vocational guidance, the complexities of contemporary career

decision-making are such that its relevance may have faded. The fact remains however that career counselling as a discipline has imbibed some of the key components of the Trait-Factor approach. Information from aptitude testing and interest analysis will remain an important pillar that supports the edifice of career counselling. To this end, the Trait-Factor approach has made a vital contribution to the foundations of Career Psychology and counselling.

Holland's Typological Theory

The theory of career choice propounded by John Holland more than 40 years ago (Holland, 1959), is perhaps the most well known and widely studied career theory in the history of Career Psychology. This is probably because the theory has yielded objective methods for the practice of career counselling. Furthermore the theory has been constantly revised and refined in response to criticisms and empirical evidence from research findings. Holland designed his theory to be simple and practical but at the same time rooted within a firm theoretical framework.

Key concepts

At the heart of Holland's theory are three propositions:

Firstly, it is possible according to Holland to classify people and environments into types. *Type* by definition is a conglomeration of traits, which can serve as a measure for categorising people into groups. In Holland's formulation, there are six types of people and work environments. These are the realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising and conventional (RIASEC). The *realistic* type is the person who is most comfortable being involved in activities that are concrete and based on clearly defined systems and norms. Conversely the realistic type of person is not comfortable in social contexts that require interpersonal skills, expressive ability and situations that require the expression of emotional sensitivity. Engineers, machine operators and mechanics are examples of professionals who would fit into Holland's realistic type. The *investigative* type is analytical in orientation and enjoys drawing conclusions from systematic

and objective observations. Repetitive and routine activities are likely to be avoided by this group of people. Researchers, doctors, detectives are examples of the investigative type. The *artistic* type thrives on being expressive and original. This type tends to be unconventional and deeply sensitive to personal feelings, thoughts and ideas. Activities that are orderly and mechanical are likely to be unattractive to this group. Actors, designers, musicians, authors would demonstrate the characteristics of the artistic type. The *social* type is strongly oriented to human interactions. These people are sensitive to human needs, nuances of emotions, thinking patterns and other aspects of human behaviour. Activities that occur in non-human situations (e.g. working with machines and tools) are likely to be avoided. Counsellors, nurses, teachers, social workers would fit into the social type. The *enterprising* type is typically self-driven. An individual from this group would enjoy organising people, objects and resources to create systems and structures for the attainment of goals and targets. The enterprising type is likely to be uncomfortable in work situations that are repetitive and do not allow for leadership or the expression and implementation of personal ideas. Sales people, managers, politicians are said to possess the characteristics of the enterprising type. The *conventional* type tends to find the highest level of comfort in situations that are organised and predictable. They are likely to enjoy activities that require routine and repetition. Unpredictable, disordered situations and activities that require innovation are likely to be avoided. Accountants, bankers, receptionists would fall into the category of the conventional type.

In Holland's formulation, work environments can also be classified into the RIASEC framework. This is because people belonging to a particular career area manifest similar personality traits and therefore create an environment that is dominated by these traits. Holland therefore categorises careers and occupations according to the RIASEC model.

Secondly Holland indicates that when making career decisions, people are inclined to seek work environments that will allow them to implement their personality characteristics. A realistic type is likely to be most comfortable in a work environment that carries the characteristics of the realistic type and will therefore search for such careers.

The third important proposition made by Holland is that patterns of behaviour result from the interactions between personality type and environments. For example, an artistic type of person would avoid work environments characterised by routine, repetition and a suppression of creativity. This person would instead be drawn closer to work situations that promote individuality and originality.

Holland's theory is therefore based on the interaction between a person and his or her environment and has been called the person-environment (P-E) interaction model. According to Holland's typological theory therefore career choice behaviour is the result of a dynamic, reciprocal interaction between personality types and work environments. The people who belong to a career create an interpersonal environment, which is an extension of their personality traits. New entrants into the world of work are themselves driven by the need to find a work environment that allows them to express their own personality traits. Career choice behaviour then is the conglomeration of activities that lead people toward work environments into which they are able to comfortably fit. Figure 14 gives some examples of how careers and personality types fit together according to Holland's RIASEC Model.

Figure 14: Careers and Personality Types according to Holland – some examples Adapted from: Holland, 1985	
Personality Type	**Suitable Careers**
Realistic	barber, truck driver, draftsperson, machine mechanic
Investigative	marine scientist, software designer, clinical psychologist, dentist
Artistic	Designer, sculptor, author, actor
Social	social worker, nurse, judge, priest
Enterprising	politician, real estate agent, salesman, manager
Conventional	accountant, receptionist, banker, typist

Methods for career counselling

One of the most attractive outcomes of Holland's typological theory of career choice is the development of concrete systems and methods for career counselling. Holland has developed

and standardised a variety of tests and counselling systems that can be readily applied in a counselling interaction. Some of the most popular of these devices are the Vocational Preference Inventory (VPI), the Self Directed Search (SDS), My Vocational Situation (MVS) and the Vocational Exploration and Insight Kit (VEIK). These devices first of all help the individual identify his or her personality type. The career aspirant is assigned a three-point code which describe his or her occupational personality. Assume for example that a person's scores are highest for the Artistic (A), Social (S) and Investigative (I) categories. This person would be assigned the three-point code ASI. The career aspirant can then match personal profiles with the relevant occupations using tolls such as the Dictionary of Occupational Codes (Gottfredson & Holland, 1989) or the Position Classification Inventory (Gottfredson & Holland, 1991). Based on this method, the career aspirant can identify the primary career choice which can then be backed up with secondary and tertiary choices.

Secondary assumptions

The Holland model based on the person-environment typology qualifies the operation of the propositions discussed above through five other assumptions.

Calculus

Holland has arranged the six RIASEC types according to a hexagonal structure. The ordering of the six types along this hexagon follow a certain order that is based on the nature of the relationship between the six types. According to Holland, each type exhibits high levels of certain traits and lower levels of other traits. For example the conventional type is high on the desire to conform and fit in to existing systems. The artistic type on the other hand shows a high tendency toward being non-conventional and unorthodox. The traits that characterise the conventional type and the artistic type of personalities are quite a distance away from each other. According to Holland's notion of calculus, the way traits are grouped, result in the placing of personality types close together or on opposing ends of a continuum.

Consistency

Consistency follows from the notion of calculus. Holland proposed that there are six personality types and corresponding work environments. The relationship between these six types of personality are represented by a hexagonal figure where the types are presented in a *fixed* order: R, I A, S, E, C. In other words, Holland makes the assumption that certain types are more closely interrelated with each other. According to the RIASEC model for example, the artistic and social types share a higher degree of commonality in their orientations than those with artistic and conventional personality traits. Consistency is the correspondence between the personality types present in an individual's three-point code (described above). Therefore a person with an ASE code is said to present a more consistent profile than someone else with an ISC code.

Differentiation

Some people manifest traits that are a comfortable fit for a specific type proposed by the Holland model. During career counselling, 16 year old Radhika came across as a self directed person who enjoyed identifying important goals and organising people, objects and resources to attain these goals. These traits would together draw her close to the enterprising type in Holland's model. People like Radhika who clearly 'fit into' a type are said to be well differentiated. Conversely others may exhibit traits that correspond with many types. Radhika's classmate Deepak on the other hand was a person who enjoyed making observations, analysing data and being creative. However Deepak was not a person who enjoyed unconventional and unpredictable situations. Deepak would be described as being poorly differentiated because his traits parallel many types in Holland's model. In similar manner Holland's model assumes that work environments could also vary along a continuum of differentiation. Accordingly some occupations maybe clearly differentiated while others may not easily fit into a minimum number of Holland's six types. In other words, differentiation is the indicator of the extent to which a person has clearly defined (well-differentiated) interests.

Identity

Individuals vary on the extent of clarity and stability they have achieved with regard to their interests and goals. Individuals whose interests are still in fluctuation are said to be lower down

in the process of identity formation. Those who are clear about their interests and career goals are said to be closer to identity achievement. Similarly environments could also vary in the extent of clarity and stability of their identities. A work environment may require the worker to perform a number of work roles. It is possible that these work roles conflict with each other. Such a work environment is said to be lower in the clarity and stability of its identity.

Congruence

This is perhaps the cornerstone of the Holland model. Congruence describes the extent of agreement and conformity between the individual's personality type and environment. Take the example of Rajeshwari an 18 year old, who is of the artistic type and currently studying to become a fashion designer. In Holland's model the congruence between Rajeshwari's personality type and work environment is likely to be high. Rajeshwari unfortunately could not complete her course in fashion design and financial reversals forced her to discontinue education and begin working. She had the opportunity of working as an assistant in a design studio, but chose instead to take up a government job as a clerk because of the greater security and higher salary. The congruence between Rajeshwari's personality type and work environment has significantly decreased. A higher degree of congruence would have been preserved had she taken up the job of a design assistant. Congruence is the degree of fit between the person and his or her work environment. Holland (1985), predicts that the failure to establish a career in an occupation that is congruent with one's three-point personality code, would result in low job satisfaction, stability and achievement.

Impact and relevance

Holland's model has generated an enormous amount of research and study. Information from these investigations indicates that some of Holland's propositions are empirically supportable. Evidence to support other propositions however has been mixed.

The *congruence* hypothesis has perhaps generated the largest amount of research and controversy. According to Holland's model, information about the congruence between personality type and work environment should enable us to predict the outcome of the

individual's career development. In other words low congruence would have outcomes characterised by low job satisfaction, while high congruence would have more positive outcomes for career development. Reviews of the voluminous research into the Holland model (e.g. Spokane, 1985) have indicated that many aspects of career development (e.g. persistence, career choice, job satisfaction) show a close correlation to Holland's assumption of congruence. Other variables (e.g. self-concept, sociability) show low and non-significant relationships to congruence. It has been found that prediction of academic achievements based on the RIASEC types is also fairly weak. The model predicts that students who are of the investigative and social types would be the highest academic achievers while the realistic and enterprising types are likely not to fare very well on purely academic tasks. Studies have found (e.g. Schneider & Overton, 1983) that it was the artistic and conventional types who earned the highest grades. It has also been found that academic performance did not vary significantly across the RIASEC types for females.

Similarly difficulties have been encountered with reference to the idea of *differentiation*. A question that remains poorly addressed is the validity of the assumption that a given individual will actually fit into a particular segment of the RIASEC hexagon. Those who are poorly differentiated according to the Holland model, would not find counselling inputs based on this model to be very useful. A similar question may be raised with respect to differentiation in work environments. Quite a large number of careers do not neatly fit into the RIASEC model. India for example is a developing economy and new employment opportunities are created at a high frequency. A large number of these opportunities require the individual to play multiple roles and the world of work is characterised by a high demand for workers who are capable of *multitasking*. This implies that employers seek workers who are able to demonstrate a *combination* of traits.

Another important question that has emerged is with regard to the consistency of the different career counselling techniques that rest on the Holland model. Research (Walsh et al, 1983) that compared two instruments (the Self Directed Search – SDS and the Vocational Preference Inventory – VPI), found for example that black and white women in the same occupation showed close similarity in type when assessed on the SDS. However, on the VPI black and white

women in the same occupation tended to be more different from each other than similar. Results such as these raise the possibility that differences could exist between the two most commonly used instruments to measure Holland types.

A final question that has not been adequately addressed is the cross-cultural relevance of Holland's model. The model has been developed in the West and a significant portion of the research investigating its effectiveness has been on Western samples. Investigations into implementation of the counselling tools developed by Holland and his colleagues in other parts of the world present findings that are ambiguous and it is not clear whether the model is relevant to non-Western contexts. An interesting study tested the VPI on 172 natives of India (Leong, Austin, Sekaran, & Komarraju, 1998). The findings indicated that congruence, consistency and differentiation did not predict job or occupational satisfaction. Furthermore, the frameworks within which the Holland instruments have been developed, do not allow for an easy fit into Indian ways of thinking. Leong et al (1998) found for example, that they could not use the VPI "as is", because it included occupations that would be considered too low for some members of their sample to even consider. These researchers go on to suggest that Holland's approach could be limited by cross-cultural boundaries. If at all these interventions are to be used, they would require to be comprehensively re-standardised to suit the Indian situation.

In summary, the Holland model may be described as an extension of the Trait approach to career counselling and to a large extent the model is characterised by the advantages and limitations of the Trait Factor approach. The greatest offering made by the Holland model is its contribution to the practice of counselling. The model is not merely an exercise in theorising about career development behaviour but is driven by the importance of translating theory into practice.

The Developmental and Life span oriented approaches

The principles that govern human development have been central to theory development and practice in Career Psychology. Career Developmental Theorists such as Eli Ginzberg, Donald Super, Linda Gottfredson and others put forth the idea that occupational development keeps pace

with the individual's maturation. As with other aspects of human development, career development is also described as occurring in *stages*. Each of these stages present *career developmental tasks*, the successful resolution of which is critical to the passage into and comfort in the next stage of career development (Super, 1957). Career developmental tasks are expectations of what is thought to be typical of a person at a given stage of development. For example, the typical career development task before the high school student in India is to choose between science, commerce, humanities and vocational streams for further education. Furthermore, career developmental tasks are what society would like to see happen at a particular stage of career development. For example, a middle class home is most likely to expect their child to have chosen to go to college after high school, while finding a job is what a large majority of lower income families would are likely to expect from their children on completing high school.

The stages in career development

Eli Ginzberg and Donald Super describe career development to occur in stages that stretch across the individual's life span. According to this school of thought, career development is closely interlinked with the individual's physical, cognitive, emotional and social maturation.

The initial stage in career development occurring during childhood has been called the *period of Growth*. In the beginning the child's cognitive maturation is at a level where fantasy rules her perceptions and interactions with the world. Time perspectives have not yet become tangible and the child's expressions are often not rooted in reality. Five year old Mamtha's 'career plans' provide an apt illustration! Visiting friends asked Mamtha, what she wanted to become. Much to the chagrin of her parents she looked up and said 'I want to become like 'tatamani'. It turned out that tatamani was an old lady who sat at the street corner selling sweets. Tatamani and Mamtha were great friends and the little girl wanted to become 'like her'. As development continues reality orientations become stronger. That there is a 'future' and that there are different kinds of jobs in which one could specialise, become more real to the child as he or she grows up. It is perhaps during these years that the rudimentary foundations of the individual's

vocational self-concept are laid. According to Super, the rest of career development reflects the individual's attempt to implement this vocational self-concept.

The individual then moves into the period of *Exploration* - a crucial period in the career development sequence. Crucial because this period also coincides with the developmental stage of adolescence. Resolving the identity crisis is perhaps the most important task faced by the individual at this stage of development. Finding the answer to the question *Who am I?* lies at the heart of the identity crisis. Career choice is an essential aspect of discovering one's personal identity. From the point of view of career development, this is the time when the individual has the opportunity to informally 'try out' and explore various career possibilities. These opportunities could emerge *spontaneously* in school, through interactions with friends, information from the media and so on. A vital point to be noted is that while exploration will present the individual with information, the validity of this information is not known. It is very likely for example that certain careers become popular during a certain period while others are not spoken about as frequently. Exploration might lead the individual to believe that certain careers are 'good' careers while others are not. It is important therefore that the family or the school formally create opportunities for *systematic* career exploration. Facilitating interactions with career counsellors, promoting self discovery, organising work experience programmes, are examples of career development activities that make significant contributions to helping the individual deal successfully with the career developmental task of exploration. Take the example of Suhail a student in class 10 who couldn't see the relevance of studying chemistry. As part of the careers education services offered by his school, he was placed for an internship in a well known factory that made chocolates. Suhail returned a week later, transformed! He had had the opportunity to explore and experience for himself a variety of careers within this industry. The fact that he was allowed to create his *own* chocolate had really caught his fancy! This exposure gave Suhail deep insights into the world of work and he concluded his report to the class saying "I realised that chemistry is also about food!" The story of Sunitha provides a counterpoint. She and her family had all along thought that she would become a doctor. She had even written the entrance examination and secured a seat in a medical college. Taking the advice of her career counsellor, she spent a few days with her family doctor to explore the world of medicine. A few days later, Sunitha went back to her counsellor and said, "I realise only now that being a doctor goes beyond a white coat and a stethoscope around your neck! Everyday, I

would have to work with those in pain. I don't think I want to do that." Sunitha went on to become a designer.

The next stage in career development has been called the period of *Establishment*. Occurring during early adulthood, this is a time when the individual actually makes a career choice and establishes him or herself as a worker. The career direction that is chosen could be strongly influenced by the nature of the individual's experiences during the preceding periods of Growth and Exploration. For example, if during childhood the person grew up to believe that medicine and engineering are the 'best' careers it is likely that this person will make an effort to establish him or herself in these career areas. If during the earlier periods of career development the individual did not have an opportunity for adequate career exploration, decisions are likely to be made on the basis of a restricted range of careers.

Maintenance is described as the next stage in career development and is a time mainly of building one's life as a professional in the chosen area through continuous adjustments and efforts to improve one's position.

The final stage is the period of *Decline* when one's outputs as a worker are said to decrease and preparations for retirement begin.

Each of these five stages have further sub stages. Figure 15 gives a summary of the stages of vocational development according to Donald Super.

Figure 15: Stages of Vocational Development according to Donald Super		
Adapted from: Super, 1957, 1980		
Career Developmental Stage	**Approximate age range**	**Orientations and career developmental tasks**
Growth	0 – 14	
Prevocational	0 – 3	Not oriented to work, career or vocation
Fantasy	4 – 10	Thoughts about career are fantasy based
Interest	11 – 12	Likes and dislikes begin to colour thoughts about work
Capacity	13 – 14	Career thoughts are influenced by ideas of personal ability
Exploration		
Tentative	15 – 17	Able to express career choices tentatively
Transition	18 – 21	Choices are increasingly oriented to realities and facts
Trial	22 - 24	Initial career commitment and first job
Establishment Stage		
Trial	25 – 30	Job changes could continue as experiences accrue
Stabilisation	31 – 44	Settles into a job and finds stability
Maintenance	45 – 65	Growth and development within the chosen career area
Decline	65 onwards	Preparation to leave the work force
Deceleration	65 – 70	Work activity decreases and slows down
Retirement	71 onwards	Leaves the world of work

Life span and life space

An important development in Super's later writings (1980) is the view that work is embedded within other life roles. Super (1980) presents his 'Life-Career-Rainbow' that incorporates life span and life space dimensions. The life span dimension is linked to the developmental stages in the individual's life. Life space on the other hand is related to the multiple contexts and roles that characterise an individual's life. Taken together life span and life space factors describe the individual's current status of career development and forecast the future career trajectory of that individual. The passage through the stages of career development – from growth to exploration and then to establishment and maintenance are described as 'maxi-cycles'. According to Super a significant amount of development also occurs *within* each stage and each stage is characterised by a series of 'mini-cycles'. The individual faces developmental tasks linked to growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance and decline at each stage. Career development therefore

is a life long process of making several decisions characterised by a recycling through the stages of growth, re-exploration and re-establishment.

This brings us to the important concept of *career maturity*. The developing person faces career developmental tasks at each stage in his or her development. Exploiting the opportunities offered by these tasks and acquiring the ability to meet the demands of these tasks results in career maturity. For example career exploration is a career developmental task that makes its appearance during childhood. The gain in career maturity that accrues at this stage provides the foundation for progress into the next stage of career development. The absence of opportunities to meet a career developmental task in effect inhibits the maturational process and causes a *career maturation lag*. For example if the child was not given opportunities for exploration, she arrives at the next career developmental stage in a state of immaturity for the tasks that face her at this stage. Lapses such as these have a cumulative effect on career development that ultimately reflect in the way important career decisions are made during late adolescence and adulthood. Take the example of an 18 year old boy in India. The important career developmental task before him is to choose between several specialisations and commit himself to one particular stream of career development. If this young person did not have the opportunity for career exploration when he was a child, he is likely to be developmentally immature to face the task of career decision-making that is currently before him. Yet, the pressure to make a decision in the typical Indian situation could be relentless and he must make a commitment. Given the lack of opportunities for career exploration, this young person's career decision is likely to be made on the basis of a narrow and restricted view of the world of work.

In a nutshell, the developmental approach indicates that every individual faces a set of career developmental tasks. These tasks are specific to a particular stage of development. Career maturity is the achievement of mastery over these career developmental tasks as they appear at each career developmental stage.

Circumscription and compromise

Linda Gottfredson (1981), expanding on these ideas describes career development to be a gradual narrowing down of occupational possibilities according to emerging self-concepts. Circumscription and compromise are two important constructs that describe this process.

Circumscription involves the inclusion and elimination of occupational alternatives through an age graded developmental sequence. According to Gottfredson (1981), children between age 6 - 8 years eliminate or choose occupations on the basis of *sex-type* preference. Between the ages of 9 - 13 years, children begin to recognise *prestige* differences among jobs and social class. Children at the high social level begin to recognise that they are expected and able to pursue higher level jobs. Those from lower social classes realise that there are lower-level jobs, which are accessible to them. Discussing the interaction between *ability* and *social class*, Gottfredson (1981) asserts that pronounced differences in social class and ability level in educational and occupational aspirations are found among high school students. More able students aspire to higher-level jobs and within all ability groups, higher social class youngsters have higher aspirations. Toward the end of high school, when youngsters begin to implement their choices in actually seeking training and avenues for specialisation, they become more sensitive to which particular occupational paths are most readily available to them. It is at this point that the issue of compromise enters the career choice process. *Compromise* is a process of closing the gap between the ideal and the reality in the world of work. Problems in obtaining or completing training are initial barriers the young person faces and these barriers may require the person to sacrifice occupational aspirations. According to Gottfredson (1981), when a choice compromise is needed, one's field of interest is compromised first, followed by prestige. Sex type preferences are least likely to be compromised.

Impact and relevance

The main contribution of the developmental and life span oriented theorists is their elucidation of the sequences of the developmental stages and associated career developmental tasks that lead to entry into the world of work. According to this school of thought career development progresses

in a 'normative' manner that ties in with the individual's development as a person and a member of a certain society. Accordingly, career development is a process of maturation. These theories provide a valuable framework within which career development could be examined. Constructs such as career developmental tasks and career maturity that are intrinsic to the developmental approaches are robust enough to have become the pillars upon which a multitude of career development techniques have come to rest.

However these approaches seem to propose the existence of an invariant sequence of stages, through which the individual must move. As critics have pointed out, decisions do not seem to be taken in this cool and rational way between clearly defined age ranges, in real life. An important point raised is that the developmental models ignore the vast range of individual and contextual differences. Research has found that the resolution of developmental tasks and the commitment to career choices is not related *only* to the normative aspects of career development, such as quality of exploration, decision-making skills and occupational knowledge (Jordaan, 1974; Blustein, 1988). It has been pointed out for example that the attitudes of significant others in the adolescent's life could have a stronger impact on his/her career orientations. Social expectations directed toward the young person could play a significant role in the direction he or she takes when making the transition from education to the world of work. Blustein (1988) makes the point that the resolution of career developmental tasks is in effect influenced by the simultaneous operation of various historical factors (e.g. economic slump or boom) and cultural factors (e.g. prestige attributes of an occupation). In other words, 'non-normative' factors that are not a related to the process of maturation could play a significant role in career development.

Career Developmental Theory: relevance to the Indian situation

On generalising the career developmental theories to the Indian context it appears that the theory departs in several ways from the Indian actuality. The Indian adolescent usually enters the final year of high school (Class 10), between the age of 14 to 15 years. Completion of Class 10, in the Indian educational system signals the beginnings of specialisation. Indian students who complete high school roughly fall into three categories (Thomas, 1997; Desai & Whiteside, 2000):

- *Group 1* comprises students who wish to go on for further education. The career developmental task facing this group is the necessity of having to make a choice between three pre-specified groups of subjects, namely, the Science, Commerce or Humanities streams of specialisation. Each of these streams lead toward a family of careers and 14 year old is expected to have developed reasonable clarity regarding the career family for which he or she is best suited.

- *Group 2* comprises individuals who choose to undergo vocationally oriented courses that prepare the student for direct entry into the world of work on completion of the course. Here options chosen lead to narrow band of careers and an even higher degree of career choice crystallisation is expected of the high school student.

- *Group 3* mainly comprises students from low SES backgrounds who cannot afford to remain financially unproductive and have to enter the world of work as unskilled workers.

According to the developmental theories, career developmental tasks such as these are expected at around the age of 17 - 18 years. In the Indian situation however, the young person is presented with these tasks much earlier and perhaps much before he or she is ready to deal with them. Socio-economic and psycho-social factors could place the Indian young person in a situation where he or she is required to make career decisions almost three years earlier than expected by the developmental theories. It may well be that the individual is not vocationally mature enough to deal with these tasks and perhaps is even unaware of the long term outcomes of decisions taken at this stage.

The framework offered by the developmental perspective, where 'readiness' is juxtaposed against 'tasks', is particularly useful and perhaps relevant across different cultures. It is at the next step, namely, the proposition that career development keeps pace with cognitive maturation that a departure is in evidence. Our research has found that a variety of non-normative factors such as contextual realities, economic factors, educational systems, socio-economic status and social-cognitive environments play a significant role in altering the normative trajectory of career development. Our findings are presented and discussed in greater detail in the following chapter. These observations are in keeping with other critiques of the developmental theories and point to

the strong possibility that career development may not progress in the prescribed normative manner.

In summary, 'developmental tasks' and 'readiness' are concepts offered by the developmental model, that have a high degree of relevance to understanding career development in any cultural context. It is when the developmental model becomes prescriptive, that its relevance diminishes. What is important to note is that career development *does* occur and developmental tasks *are* resolved in all cultural contexts. This resolution may not however occur at the time, stage or manner that is prescribed by developmental theory. Non-normative factors, that are not directly linked to the process of maturation play a significant role and in a sense 'short circuit' normative career development.

A vital point to be noted is that the edifice of career developmental theory rests on observations made in Western (mainly White middle class) cultures. Although career development theory has received wide attention, the validity of using existing developmental ideas and constructs to understand and explain the career behaviour of other cultural groups is not established (Arulmani, 2000). The developmental model offers a valuable framework that researchers in developing economies such as India could use. Filling in this framework would imply the identification of specific career developmental tasks, points of readiness and stages of development that must be investigated 'locally', within a specific context.

Social Learning Theories

An important development in the history of psychology is the development of Social Learning Theory initially put forth by Albert Bandura. The theory essentially points out that humans are thinking beings who are in dynamic and intelligent interaction with their environments. *Observational learning* is a concept introduced by the Social Learning school of thought that has particular relevance to career development. This is a form of learning that results from the individual's observation of the behaviour of others. These 'others' are called *models*, whose behaviour an individual *learns* to emulate. To illustrate, let us take the example of Sajjini an 18 year old girl who was just about to complete her higher secondary level of education. Although

Sajjini wanted to study further and develop a career for herself, she had resigned herself to her parents' belief that it is better for her to get married as soon as possible. Sajjini's friend Veda was also in the same situation. Veda however was determined to follow a career. She made her wishes known to her parents who were initially extremely resistant. Veda persisted, and finally convinced her parents that they should all at least visit a career counsellor. In the end, Veda's parents agreed with her and she began to plan a career for herself. Sajjini observed Veda's behaviour and she noted the positive outcome of her efforts. Sajini realised that she too could attempt to begin a similar interaction with her parents. According to Social Learning Theory, Veda is Sajjini's model and the learning that has occurred in Sajjini's life is called observational learning. At the heart of the idea of observational learning is the assumption that the individual's thinking or cognitive faculties play a vital role in interacting with the environment. The ability to pay attention, understand the information that results from attending to something and storing this information in memory are key cognitive faculties that underlie observational learning. Sajjini was drawn to Veda's behaviour (she paid close attention to everything Veda did), she was able to understand the meaning and reason for Veda's behaviour and finally she internalised these observations.

Social Learning theorists have convincingly demonstrated that children's behaviour is strongly influenced by their observations of adults or significant peers. It has been further pointed out that while the effects of observational learning may not be immediately seen, children could manifest the effects of such learning when they find themselves in the appropriate context or when they finally reach the age when the behaviour is required.

The propositions made by Social Learning Theory have clear implications for understanding career choice behaviour. Career decisions are made in a social context. At the most obvious level is the impact that role models have on career choice. At more subtle levels, attitudes prevalent in a community toward career preparation and toward specific careers influence the career development of the individuals who are a part of that community. As we will see in the following chapter, economic factors predispose families that belong to lower SES groups to place a lower value on education and long term career preparation. As a result young people from lower SES backgrounds tend to enter the world of work as unskilled labourers without

acquiring work skills competencies. On the other hand social expectations place a strong pressure on career aspirants from middle and higher SES groups to pursue careers that have been attributed with high levels of prestige. Social learning has a significant impact on career development, and career decision-making behaviour must be understood in the context of the career aspirant's family background and culture.

Social Learning Theory of Career Decision-Making

One of the most well known applications of Social Learning Theory to understanding career development is the work of J.D. Krumboltz and his colleagues who have outlined the Social Learning Theory of Career Decision-Making. The theory examines the impact on the career decision-making process of such factors as genetic predisposition, environmental conditions and events, learning experiences and skill development. Most importantly, the individual's cognitive and emotional responses to the environment are highlighted as important influences on career decision-making. According to this school of thought, individuals not only inherit genetic traits but social characteristics as well. Both these sets of traits are brought into the career decision-making process. This interaction occurs in a certain environment, which stimulates career development behaviour.

Influences on career development

Genetic endowments

Every individual possesses a set of traits, abilities and other characteristics, which are inherited. Race, sex and physical attributes (e.g. height, musculature etc) are examples of inherited, biologically determined influences on career development.

Environmental conditions

Career development is influenced by a variety of forces from the environment. Economic conditions, the type of job opportunities available, the educational system, prevailing attitudes to careers are all examples of influences from the environment.

<u>Learning experiences</u>

A vital point made by Social Learning Theory is that individuals have a particular history of past learning experiences. The quality of exposure to the world of work and the positive or negative impressions that have accumulated about a specific career area, work together to create a learning history that is unique to every individual. An individual's attitude toward work evolves over time and the quality of learning experiences mould career choices.

The outcome of influences

According to Krumboltz's formulation these influences work together to create certain outcomes that have a direct impact on career development.

<u>Self-observations</u>

The experiences that an individual has, lead this person to develop a picture of him or herself – a self-view. This orientation to one's self yields three key building blocks of career development:

- The first is the *interests* that characterise an individual. Genetic endowments, environmental conditions and learning experiences cause an individual to develop an interest in certain activities. He or she is drawn toward these activities. Other activities may not hold as much of an attraction.

- A second characteristic of a person's self-view is *personal values*, which reflect his or her opinions about the desirability, worth, importance and merit of experiences he or she may have had. Personal value structures influence the importance an individual places on a career. A career therefore may be placed low down in the person's scheme of personal values while others may be at the higher end of the continuum of importance.

- *Task efficacy* is the third important component of self-view. When confronted with a task, the individual assesses personal capability to successfully execute the task. For example, a person's self-view may be such that she firmly believes that she is not capable of performing the tasks related to career planning. Another person when presented with an array of careers may hold the belief that he does not possess the requisite skills be successful in a specific group of careers.

According to Krumboltz's formulation, personal interests, values and task efficacy emerge as part of a person's self-view, which has an impact on that individual's career development and choice behaviour.

Box 3.5. John Krumboltz: The person behind the Social Learning Theory of Career Decision-Making

Arulmani: What did you want to be when you grew up? Tell us about your career and how the Social Learning Theory of Career Decision-Making developed.

Krumboltz: I've never made a career decision! I was born a human being and plunked down on Planet Earth! I had not been consulted in advance about either my species or location, but both factors were to play a significant role in my subsequent career. Like almost every child, I was asked numerous times what I wanted to be when I grew up. I never knew how to answer that question. My peers could give an answer; I couldn't. I developed a neurosis about my inability to make a career decision. I toyed with many options: musician, baseball player, doctor, lawyer among them. I became interested in become a guidance counsellor because I had heard that counsellors had tests that could tell you what you should be. My thinking was, "I'll become a counsellor and counsel myself to find my future occupation!" I did of course learn later that counsellors did not actually have any tests that would tell me what I should be!

The notion that certain kinds of learning experiences influence career choice started me on a research theme that continues to occupy much of my time and effort. What influences people to enter a particular occupation? Why don't people know what they want to do? One hypothesis is that they don't know because they have never experienced any success or satisfaction performing it. I have tried to test that hypothesis by creating simulated occupational tasks to see whether enabling people to be successful in performing those tasks affects their career aspirations. With other colleagues, I constructed a Social Learning Theory of Career Decision-Making that explained the process in terms of an uncountable number of learning experiences. The presence or absence of various environmental facilities and persons at key times affects the learning experiences that could occur and thus influences career related aspirations and decisions. I certainly was influenced by the multiple learning experiences to which myself had, and had not, been exposed.

My journey continues and I still don't know what I want to be when I grow up!

Personal communication between John Krumboltz and Gideon Arulmani (2003)

World-view generalisations

In addition to the formation of a view of self, the individual also forms a particular view of the environment. That vocational courses are only for the poor and disadvantaged is an example of a commonly held world view generalisation among career aspirants in India. Such generalisations guide the individual's career decision-making.

Task Approach Skills

Individuals exhibit characteristic tendencies in the way they interpret experiences. Accordingly, habitual ways of thinking begin to characterise the individual's orientation to the world of work. These interpretations and beliefs influence the development of skills with which an individual deals with career development tasks. An individual who believes for example that barriers to career development can be dealt with, will approach these barriers with the intention to overcome them. On the other hand someone else who has learned to believe that his socio-economic status renders him helpless in the face of obstacles is likely when difficulties emerge, to give up without approaching the task that is before him.

Aspects related to career choice goals and actions

According to Krumboltz's formulation career choice intentions are goals that are set for career development. The career aspirant's movement toward these goals is initiated by a series of choice actions or entry behaviours. Krumboltz highlights three important contextual factors that influence entry behaviour.

Learning Environment

Discussing the process of enrolment into a course, the social learning theory of career decision-making asserts that an individual is more likely to take actions leading to enrolment in a given course if that individual has been exposed to learning and employment opportunities that view such enrolments as valuable. In India, for example, the middle and higher SES groups attribute a high value to education and hence tend to pursue it at all cost (Thomas, 1997; Arulmani, Van Laar, & Easton, 2001). Low SES groups on the other hand seem to hold beliefs that place a low value on further education for skill development and a high value on immediate entry into the world of work (Chadha, 1982; Arulmani, Van Laar, & Easton, 2001).

Attitudes to the Cost of Preparation

The theory points out that individuals are less likely to take actions leading to enrolment in a given course or occupation if they find that the cost of preparing for that occupation is excessive in relation to future economic, social and personal rewards. Low SES families in India, are often unable to the bear cost of education and show an inability to weather the waiting period between training for skill development and employment (Chandra, 1997; Singh, 1999; Arulmani, Van Laar, & Easton, 2001).

Resource Availability

This theory proposes that an individual is less likely to take actions leading to enrolment into a given course or field of work if that individual is denied access to the minimum resources necessary for entering that occupation. The minimum resources required in India, range from access to information and careers guidance services, to financial support for training and skill development. Resources such as these are not often not readily available to the career aspirant – particularly in the case of those who are from less privileged backgrounds.

In summary, one of the most important postulations made by the Social Learning Theory of Career Decision-Making is that people make many assumptions and generalisations about themselves and the world of work based on their experiences. Whether accurate or not, these assumptions and beliefs affect the way they behave (Krumboltz, 1979, 1994). These career beliefs exert facilitative or inhibitive influences on individuals' decisions and actions as attempts are made to develop and implement career goals (Krumboltz, 1994). It is particularly important to note that beliefs about oneself and about the world of work could influence the manner in which individuals *prepare* for career development.

Impact and relevance

By highlighting the role of the community, Social Learning Theory introduces an element into the discussion that is vital to understanding career planning in the developing world. The community plays a forceful role in the life of the individual in many Eastern and Third World

cultures. Career beliefs are passed from one generation to the next and give rise to career decision-making behaviours that are based on a structure of strongly held beliefs validated by the community. These observations are of particular relevance to career psychologists and it is important that the role of the family and the community in the career decision-making process is taken note of both by researchers and practitioners. Krumboltz's formulations, bring career beliefs to centre stage and offer a useful framework within which to understand the influences on career development in the Indian context. Our work in India has drawn significantly from these ideas and our applications of the social learning approach will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

Social Cognitive Theory

Social Cognitive Theory is the immediate successor to Social Learning Theory and is the result of refinements made by Albert Bandura to his original formulations. The theory analyses the diverse ways in which beliefs of personal efficacy operate within a network of socio-cultural and socio-economic influences, to shape life paths. They are structured around the central theme that people's beliefs in their personal efficacy to manage life's demands affect their psychological well-being, their accomplishments and the direction their lives take (McAuliffe, 1992). Social Cognitive theory has been gaining support as a framework for furthering our understanding of the career development process. Three social cognitive mechanisms, namely, self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations and goal conceptualisations, are particularly relevant to understanding career development.

Self-efficacy beliefs

Bandura (1977a) defines self-efficacy expectations as beliefs about one's personal ability to be successful in the performance of a task. The concept of self-efficacy rests on the premise that self-referent thought influences human behaviour. Bandura has been able to demonstrate that self-efficacy cognitions determine whether behaviour will be initiated, how much energy will be expended and the maintenance of this behaviour in the face of obstacles and adverse experiences.

Bandura (1986) describes four main sources of influence that contribute to self-efficacy beliefs. These sources of self-efficacy information continually and reciprocally interact, to influence performance judgements and finally human action itself.

Performance accomplishments

Performance Accomplishments describe the individual's actual performance on a task and the attribution of success on the task to personal effort. These accomplishments provide opportunities for mastery experiences and are the most authentic evidence of whether one can muster whatever it takes to succeed (Bandura 1986). Developing a sense of efficacy involves acquiring the cognitive, behavioural and self-regulatory skills for creating and executing appropriate courses of action (Bandura, 1995). Experiences of success strengthen the belief in one's personal efficacy and contribute to higher perseverance in the face of adversity. Failures undermine self-efficacy beliefs. This is especially true if failures occur before a sense of efficacy is established (Bandura, 1995).

The career aspirant could face failures when attempting to master career developmental tasks. Let us assume for example, that exploring careers and learning about the world of work is an important career developmental task at the high school stage. In the Indian context avenues for career exploration are not easily available and a young person's attempts to explore careers may be repeatedly thwarted. As a result, this young person may not acquire mastery over this career developmental task.

Vicarious experience

If one were to observe someone (a social model) similar to oneself succeed by consistent effort, this observation would raise that person's belief that he or she too can master similar activities (Bandura, 1986). In the same way, observations of others' failures despite strong efforts, undermines observers' judgement of their own efficacy. The greater the real or assumed similarity of the model to the observer, the more powerful will be the impact of the model's success/failure on the observer (Bandura, 1995).

Vicarious experience could be a powerful influence on career development. Those who have achieved career success could become role models and enhance young career aspirants' self-efficacy for career preparation. Being exposed to the failure of important role models could also have an impact on career development. The environment that socially and economically disadvantaged young people are a part of and the role models they are exposed to often reflect failure experiences, with the bitter and defeatist attitudes of adults often being transmitted to the younger generation. Negative vicarious experiences such as these could contribute to lower self-efficacy for career preparation.

Verbal persuasion

Verbal persuasion refers to the individual being persuaded and encouraged by someone else that they possess the capabilities to master a task. Consistent verbal feedback that questions a person's capabilities could lead to an avoidance of challenging activities and promote the tendency to give up quickly in the face of adversity. Bandura (1995) says that by constricting activities and undermining motivation, disbelief in one's capabilities creates its own behavioural validation.

Career development could be strongly influenced by the sort of messages and feedback one receives from one's environment. If for example a young person who is struggling with mathematics consistently receives the message that she is 'no good' in mathematics and therefore is unlikely to enter into a 'good' career, she is likely to have low self-efficacy for career planning. Similarly in an environment where the predominant message highlights the sciences as leading to 'good' careers, the young person who is not doing too well in the sciences is likely to develop lower levels of self-efficacy for a career in the sciences. It has been observed that children in poverty receive much lower levels of encouragement when compared to the more advantaged (Nag-Arulmani & Arulmani, 1996). It is the rare teacher who would strive to persuade the socially and economically disadvantaged to persist toward educational and career goals inspite of difficulties. An environment that is bereft of words of encouragement and verbal persuasion to persist toward success experiences undermines self-efficacy beliefs.

Physiological and emotional state of arousal

People partly rely on their physiological and emotional states to assess their own capabilities. Personal stress reactions tend to be interpreted as the precursor to poor performance. For example a young person who repeatedly experiences fear and anxiety when faced with a job interview may interpret this emotional state as the lack of skills to be successful at interviews. Such misinterpretations of physiological and emotional arousal could lead to low self-efficacy beliefs for that particular career development activity. Career decision-making is often associated with high levels of stress, confusion and bewilderment. Quite often admission into important courses is contingent on success in the face of intense competition. Sometimes career choice could be associated with disappointments. When a career aspirant repeatedly interprets negative emotional states, and uncomfortable physiological states as evidence of personal inadequacy for career development activities, self-efficacy beliefs for these activities could go down.

Outcome expectations

Outcome expectations are consequences that a person anticipates would result from performing particular behaviours. Bandura (1978a) describes an outcome expectation as a person's estimate that a given behaviour will lead to certain outcomes. Outcome expectations have a special relevance to career development that often occurs in an environment characterised by imperfect linkages between the quality of performance and outcomes. For example a person with high self-efficacy for the social sciences may choose to avoid careers related to the humanities if she anticipates negative outcomes from choosing to enter such careers. These anticipated negative outcomes might be non-support from significant others, work/family conflict, low levels of prestige attached to these careers and so on. On the other hand (particularly in the Indian situation) more positive outcomes maybe expected with careers in the sciences. Career decision-making therefore could be strongly influenced by what the career aspirant anticipates to be the outcome of making a certain kind of a choice.

Goal setting and planning

This is the third social cognitive mechanism described by Social Cognitive Theory and could be closely linked to career planning behaviour. Setting a goal may be defined as the determination to engage in a particular activity or to effect a particular future outcome (Bandura, 1995). Goals operate principally through people's capacity to symbolically represent future outcomes and to react self-evaluatively to their own behaviour, based on internal standards of performance. Career plans, decisions, aspirations and expressed choices are all essentially goal mechanisms. Goals are an integral aspect of career choice theories. Social Cognitive Theory holds that goals play an important role in the self-regulation of behaviour. Goals help people organise and guide their behaviour and sustain it over long periods of time, even in the absence of external reinforcement.

Social Cognitive Theory posits important reciprocal relations between self-efficacy, outcome expectations and goals. In an example to illustrate this interaction, Lent and Brown (1996) point out that robust positive beliefs about one's artistic capabilities and about the envisioned outcomes of artistic pursuits are likely to nurture personal goals (such as the intention to pursue training), that are consistent with such beliefs. The effect of this reciprocal interaction on career choice behaviour could be substantial.

Social Cognitive Theory: relevance to career choice behaviour

Critiques of Bandura's Social Cognitive theory warn that the potential effects of self-efficacy could be overemphasised (Eastman and Marzillier, 1984). Critics point out that the mere belief that you can be successful may not be sufficient to actually record success in the execution of a career developmental task. Bandura (1984) in his response to these critiques makes it clear that expectation alone will not produce desired performance, if the component capabilities are lacking. It is acknowledged that self-efficacy based intervention programmes must be mindful of the individual's objective ability levels along with motivational and environmental factors that could affect performance.

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)

Social Cognitive Career Theory is a direct extension of the Social Cognitive Model to career planning behaviour. Self-efficacy as a construct was first applied to Career Psychology to understand the career development of women (Hackett and Betz, 1981). Since then, a significant amount of research has been directed toward understanding the role played by social cognitive variables in understanding career development. Almost two decades of work led to the emergence of the Social Cognitive Career Theory propounded by Robert Lent and his colleagues.

Box 3.6: Social Cognitive Career Theory and Robert Lent

Arulmani: What were the circumstances that led your to researching social cognitions in the context of career development?

Lent: I had been working with first-year engineering students and noticed that many of my clients had impeccable academic qualifications to succeed in engineering, yet they were encountering academic problems or considering leaving engineering. The context was that they had been at the top of their high school classes, had high standardised test scores, and were used to being a "big fish in a small pond." All of a sudden, they found themselves competing against a large cohort of others with similar academic backgrounds and potential. Not all of them could receive an A in every test and every class. This experience was very humbling for some, who would become quite anxious and/or doubtful that they wanted to remain in engineering. In some cases, it was clear that students felt that parents or other family members had pressured them into majoring in engineering and, while they did not want to disappoint their families, they were not at all sure they were interested in the engineering field.

At the time, I was reading Bandura's initial work on self-efficacy, and it seemed to me that what I was observing was a situation in which (low) self-efficacy and/or social influences, rather than ability deficiencies, were at issue. I was able to begin studying the relation of self-efficacy to engineering students' academic performance and persistence. Twenty years later, my research on self-efficacy and other social cognitive variables has branched out quite a bit, but I am still impressed at the degree to which self-cognitions, expectations, and social factors can influence people's feelings and choices.

Personal communication (Lent & Arulmani , 2003)

Key concepts

Lent, Brown and Hackett (1994) have attempted to draw together the various propositions related to career planning behaviour that have arisen within the framework of Social Cognitive Theory and propose their Social Cognitive Career Theory.

SCCT asserts first of all that people are proactive shapers of their environment, not merely responders to external forces. Personal and environmental factors (e.g. socio-economic status, personality traits, heredity) qualify the individual's exposure to academic and career related experiences. These experiences lay the foundations for the development of important social cognitions such as self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations. The sources of self-efficacy described by Bandura (1986), namely performance accomplishments, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion and interpretation of emotional arousal, also operate in the case of developing self-efficacy for tasks related to career development.

Based on these assumptions SCCT puts forward an important proposition with regard to the *development of interests*. According to SCCT people will develop interests in activities for which they have (a) strong and positive self-efficacy beliefs and (b) for which they perceive desirable outcomes. Take the example of 22 year old Swaroopa who is just about to complete a Bachelor's Degree in the Humanities. She now has the option of choosing between two subjects – psychology and economics in which to specialise through a Master's degree. Swaroopa has had numerous opportunities to practice counselling as a volunteer in a helpline for the elderly and had done fairly well at this activity. Furthermore her vicarious experiences have been such that her acquaintances and seniors have done well in the world of work as counsellors. Her friends and teachers have also encouraged her to become a counsellor. On the contrary her mastery experiences for economics have been not as positive. She consistently experienced difficulties with the mathematical component of economics. According to SCCT Swaroopa would have significantly higher self-efficacy beliefs for psychology than for economics. She is also likely to believe that the outcomes of studying psychology are more desirable. Given her high self-efficacy beliefs and her anticipation of positive outcomes Swaroopa's interest in activities related to psychology would be higher than for activities related to economics.

SCCT goes on to highlight the role played by the environment in the conversion of interests into career goals. The presence or absence of environmental barriers and appropriate support from the environment influences the conversion of interests into academic or career development behaviours (e.g. enrolling into a course, job search activity). Going back to Swaroopa's example, high self-efficacy beliefs and positive outcome expectations could create a strong interest in psychology. However other factors may intervene in the conversion of this interest into career development activity. The males in Swaroopa's community rarely study beyond a bachelor's degree. If she were to go for higher education her marriage prospects would be severely compromised. Her parents therefore do not want her to study further. According to SCCT, environmental barriers such as these, along with the lack of support from her parents are likely to prevent Swaroopa from transforming her strong interest in psychology into career development behaviour. If, Swaroopa were to confront and overcome these barriers her self-efficacy would increase further. SCCT therefore holds that the strengthening of interests and the consolidation of choice behaviours are the result of repeated (perhaps lifelong) exposure to life events and experiences, cognitive appraisal of these experiences and the individual's response to environmental barriers.

It is important to note that environmental influences vary across cultures and communities. SCCT specifically highlights the importance of differential socialisation. A community different from Swaroopa's may encourage girls to study further. In yet another situation economic factors may preclude higher education and force the young person to begin working at the earliest. The extent to which the individual internalises these influences and is influenced by these forces has a direct impact, according to SCCT, on the manner in which his or her interests are converted into actual career development behaviour.

Impact and relevance

Social Cognitive Career Theory has effectively drawn from the basic tenets of Social Cognitive Theory to offer a valuable framework within which to understand career development behaviour. The social cognitive constructs of self-efficacy, outcome expectations and goal setting are particularly relevant to theory generation as well as to the development of comprehensive career

counselling interventions. A significant amount of research and investigations have been conducted into the ideas put forth by Lent and his colleagues and empirical support for SCCT is strong and growing. Built into the fabric of the theory is the postulation that environmental factors such as differential socialisation, socio-economic status, race and cultural background play a significant role in the process of career development. It has been pointed out that a potential application of self-efficacy theory would be to test its utility in explaining the career development of other cultural groups (Lent, 2000). SCCT therefore offers a framework within which to understand career development in the Indian context.

An important limitation however is the absence of an equal amount of vigour in the development of *interventions* that are based on the social cognitive approach. While the constructs described are attractive to the practitioner, the actual conversion of these theoretical ideas into practical applications is not easy. The authors of the theory have made two important recommendations that could be applicable to career counselling (Lent & Brown, 1996). They indicate that an effective intervention must address environmental barriers and that career counselling must help individuals explore beliefs about themselves and their environment. A small number of researcher-practitioners have attempted to develop counselling applications for enhancing career self-efficacy beliefs (e.g. McAuliffe, 1992; Fouad & Bingham, 1995; Chartrand & Rose, 1996; Arulmani, 2000; Prideaux, Patton, & Creed, 2002). It is anticipated that the crystallisation of SCCT's theoretical constructs will yield specific techniques for career counselling. The second part of this book will present a few techniques that we have developed and trial tested using the SCCT framework.

Indian research – salient themes

Career Psychology is in its infancy in India and not very many research efforts have been initiated. India does not as yet have a model or theory of Career Psychology that is uniquely suited to its environment. We however present information that we have gleaned from available sources. We have categorised this information into themes that could throw light on career choice behaviour as it occurs in the Indian context.

Socio-economic status and career development

A consistent theme that emerges from our review of Indian research is that career development varies characteristically across socio-economic status groups. Young people from lower SES groups seem to approach career choice and planning in a completely different manner when compared with middle and higher SES groups. Indications from Indian research that provide evidence for these differences are discussed below.

Attributional styles

Misra and Misra (1986) found that individuals from higher SES backgrounds held beliefs that made them more likely to attribute failure to luck, while disadvantaged individuals were more likely to attribute success to luck. Misra and Jain (1988) studying differences in the attributional styles of low SES groups in India found that their sample typically perceived achievement outcomes in one of two ways: either all outcomes were attributed to internal factors, or greater personal responsibility was assumed for failure while success was externalised. Jhaj and Grewal (1976) found that the level of occupational aspiration existed in a hierarchical order corresponding to the SES levels of the subjects. Mehta and Mathur (1987) studying the occupational aspiration of adolescents found that their low SES sample of adolescent boys and girls, exhibited low levels of occupational aspiration. Mehta, Bhatnagar and Jain (1989) examined vocational planning among tribal first generation learners and found that this sample had lower vocational aspirations when compared to those from higher SES levels.

Orientation to the future

Interesting links have also been found between SES and orientation to the future. Misra and Jain (1988) found that middle and high SES groups had an orientation to the future that was characterised by beliefs reflecting their ability to make long term plans and prepare for needs that could arise in the future. Conversely, the lower SES groups tended to have a short term view and the content of their beliefs did not reflect systematic planning for the future. Chandra (1997) also points to the tendency of the lower SES groups to focus primarily on the present with a low emphasis on preparing for the future. Furthermore investigations into career aspirations have indicated that greater percentages of low SES parents had no career aspirations for their children

and disadvantaged youth tended to limit their occupational aspiration to the class horizon (Chadha, 1982).

Career maturity

Reports in the Indian literature suggest that young people from more privileged homes demonstrate higher levels of career maturity when compared with those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Gupta (1986), for examples reports that the lower SES groups obtained lower scores on measures of career maturity when compared to those from higher SES homes.

Effect of career beliefs on career choices

Indian research provides some evidence in support of the proposition that social cognitive variables in the form of career beliefs play a significant role in career decision-making It has been reported for example that beliefs about the prestige attributes of a career significantly influences career choice behaviour (Akhilesh, 1991). A particularly important finding reported by Grewal (1973) is that the prestige attributed to a career path does not seem to be affected by economic and industrial advancement. In other words, the prestige of a career could be intertwined with perceptions, beliefs and mind sets. This trend seems to have continued and even in today's career choice environment in India, social cognitive variables play a significant role. Further evidence for the operation of career beliefs emerges when students' career preferences are analysed. It has been consistently reported that career choices are dominated by the belief that following a career path toward a college degree is more respectable (Thomas, 1997; Desai & Whiteside, 2000). In response to the manpower imbalances in the country the government has introduced vocationally oriented courses. The objective has been to enhance individual employability, reduce mismatch between demand and supply of skilled manpower and provide alternatives for those who are pursuing higher education without particular interest or purpose. Simultaneously, the industrial sector faces acute man power shortage and the demand for vocationally trained workers is growing in geometric proportions. Yet, the number of individuals opting for vocational training is few and these students largely come from lower income groups (Rao & Shankar, 1977; Desai & Whiteside, 2000; Arulmani, Van Laar, & Easton, 2001). Beliefs and mindsets therefore seem to play a significant role in the way individual's and

families are oriented to career preparation and development in India. We will examine this influence in much greater detail in the following chapter.

Academic performance and career choice

Indian research that has focused on achievements in school / college, throws some light on the links between academic performance and career development. Studies have found for example that high and low achievers differed significantly with regard to career development competencies (Bhargava & Sharma, 1995). Young people who were doing well in school seemed to be better equipped to deal with career development tasks and showed a stronger orientation to setting career goals and planning for a career. Another study reports that students who were not doing well in a chosen course of study at the higher secondary level, showed a significant discrepancy between personal interests and the curriculum they were studying (Sharma & Metha, 1988).

Indian research: a summary

We have throughout this writing highlighted the role that social-cognitive environments could play in orientations to career preparation and development. An interesting theme that emerges from investigations into career development in the Indian situation is that beliefs and mindsets could be closely intertwined with career choices. A closer examination of social cognitions could provide important insights into the mechanisms that govern career development in the Indian situation.

Another important theme that emerges is with regard to socio-economic status. It seems that young people from disadvantaged backgrounds move on a career development trajectory that is significantly different when compared with their more privileged counterparts. Young people from lower SES backgrounds could experience career development difficulties with greater intensity than career aspirants from higher SES groups. The nature of these difficulties for the disadvantaged could span a wide variety of factors ranging from financial restraints, economic worries and difficulties with academic performance to the absence of opportunities for success

experiences with career planning, low self-efficacy and negative career beliefs. Cognitive variables such as career beliefs seem to influence attributional patterns, career aspirations and orientations to the future differently across SES groups. Clearly there is a great need for career development theories and related interventions that particularly address the life situation of those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

India is a country that is just beginning to direct research efforts toward understanding career choice behaviour. It is important at this stage that theory generation includes in its purview the potential effects of social-cognitive environments, poverty and differential socialisation on career development.

Conclusion

The earliest forms of career counselling were based on the *Trait-Factor* approach. This school of thought was strongly oriented toward application and to the pressing need for objective methods to match individuals to jobs. Its most important contribution is the focus it brought to bear on person specific traits and methods to identify and assess these traits. Holland's *typological* approach could be described as a comprehensive extension of the Trait-Factor school. Holland successfully couched the idea of traits and types within an empirically derived theoretical framework and offered standardised systems for career counselling. The *Developmental* theorists rooted themselves within the well established tenets of developmental psychology and provided a framework within which to understand how career development occurs. The constructs of career development stages, tasks and career maturity will always remain crucial to understanding career development. At this point in the evolution of ideas an important lacuna was the lack of attention to environmental and cognitive factors. The *Social Learning* theories responded to this criticism. The constructs introduced by this school of thought brought the dynamic interaction between the individual and the environment into sharp focus. As we will see in the following chapters, Krumboltz's discussion of the influence of the community and the development of career beliefs are vital to our understanding of career development across cultures. *Social Cognitive* theory emerged as a result of Bandura's extension

and refinement of social learning constructs. The identification of specific social cognitive variables such as self-efficacy, outcome expectations and goal conceptualisations has added an important dimension to understanding career development. Most importantly, the work of social cognitive and social learning theorists taken together provide a strong theoretical foundation upon which career development across cultures can be examined.

Critical enquiries into Career Psychology have consistently pointed out that while significant efforts have gone into researching career choice behaviour, neither the translation of research findings into practical applications nor the direction of evaluative research into existing interventions have been as vigorous (Fretz, 1981). Since comments such as these were made almost two decades ago, development of theory driven interventions and research into the effectiveness of careers guidance programmes have increased somewhat, the lack of enough research effort in this area continues to be pointed out (Prideaux, Patton, & Creed, 2002). There is a tremendous need not only for theories of career development but also for corresponding interventions that are relevant to the needs of specific cultural groups.

Looking at the Indian situation it is clear that a variety of factors influence career development and that career counselling needs vary significantly across different groups within the country. The need in India is not merely for career counselling methods but for interventions that are rooted in a theoretical model validated for the Indian context. The following chapter will examine the factors that influence career development in the Indian context.

Chapter 4

Influences on career development - the Indian situation

The concept of a personal career as we saw in the first chapter, emerged as a response to needs expressed within western, industrialised culture. This specific expression of human work behaviour appeared at a time in history when approaches to work in the West had been transformed by powerful movements such as the Protestant Reformation and the Industrial Revolution. When examining career development from the Indian point of view, it is important to note that this idea of choosing a personal career was not intrinsic to the cultural and economic environment that prevailed in India at that time in history. So different was the Indian environment at the time, that one cannot help but wonder if the idea of a career would have emerged in India at all, had this cultural environment remained insulated from western colonisation. Today, on the background of westernisation and industrialisation the situation is quite different. With the rapid changes in the world of work leading to increases in opportunities and the breaking down of older social mechanisms for occupational role allocation, career decision-making is as much of a reality in India as it is in other parts of the world.

Our earlier analysis of the evolution of work pointed to the fact that prevailing philosophies, socio-economic changes, social practices and sanctions all work together to create attitudes and mind sets that mould work behaviour. These influences vary from culture to culture. Just as the protestant work ethic forged work behaviour in the West, philosophies of the past have had a definitive influence on attitudes toward work in India. Career development occurs in a very different manner in the Indian context because it is influenced by factors that are unique to this situation. This chapter will focus on these influences and attempt to identify the impact they have had on career development.

A.G. Watts (1996) one of the most well known analysts of career development behaviour provides a set of guidelines to understand these influences. Socio-cultural forces, the stage of economic development, the educational system and the organisational structures for the delivery of career counselling services are factors that have a profound influence on career development.

We will use this framework to examine observations made by Indian thinkers, findings from Indian research and our own experiences in the field.

Social and cultural influences

The influence of significant others

Characteristic differences exist between western and Indian cultures with respect to the influence of significant others on the young person's decision-making behaviour. In the West, child rearing practices and educational philosophy nurture this skill and independent decision-making is expected at quite an early age. On the other hand observations made in the Indian situation have pointed out that Indian child rearing practices do not directly foster the development of independent decision-making (Ramanujam, 1979; Sinha, 1979). The assertion of individuality may quite often be frowned upon (Neki, 1976). Indian child rearing practices, family structure, hierarchical social organisation and value systems promote social support and interdependence (Ramanujam, 1979).

From the standpoint of career decision-making, our research has thrown up some interesting findings. Studies 1 and 2 presented below throw light on the influence of significant others on the individual's career decision-making behaviour. The discussion below focuses primarily on the results and findings from these studies. Readers interested in methodological and statistical details are referred to the original papers reporting these investigations.

Study 1: Significant influences (Arulmani, 1995)

We attempted in this study to analyse the relative influence significant others had on career choice. We interviewed 654 Indian young people in the age range of 25 to 28 years, who had recently entered the world of work and had been working as professionals in different walks of life for periods ranging between two and three years. We found that 301 (46%) of this group had made career choices based exclusively on what their parents wanted them to do, with relatives and friends also playing a role. Decision-making that combined parental inputs and the individual's own desires had occurred amongst 156 (24%) of the individuals interviewed. The

number of individuals who had made their career decision on their own was the lowest. Further analysing information from this study, we found that close to 36% of those who had made career decisions based exclusively on parental directions – without participating in the decision-making process themselves, wanted to change their careers. On the other hand 98% of the group who had worked along with their parents and been actively involved in choosing their careers, expressed comfort with their choices. 80% of those who had made their decisions entirely on their own continued to be uncertain about their career choice.

Study 2: Parental education and employment status (Arulmani, Van Laar, & Easton, 2001)

We observed in our interactions with 755 high school boys that two specific types of parental influence operated on their children's career development. We found first of all that the percentage of students intending to study further (college or diploma) decreased with *parent education*. The lowest percentage of students opting either for college or diploma education were the children of illiterate parents. Interestingly, the largest percentage of students who had no career plans, had parents who were illiterate. The nature of parents' *employment* also seemed to have an influence on the young person's career choice behaviour. We found that among students whose parents' employment was uncertain (occasionally employed or unemployed) a large percentage expressed the intention to forego further education and begin working immediately. Conversely, almost all students who expressed the intention to study further and prepare systematically for a career, had parents who were comfortably employed.

Implications of these findings:

While information from studies such as these cannot be generalised to Indian culture as a whole, the indications point to the strong possibility that the influence of significant others, particularly parents, could be quite strong in the Indian situation. It must be emphasised at this at this point that the support of the family and the community is valuable and vital. It is true that the individualism that characterises western culture promotes the development of individuality and perhaps fosters the emergence of a coherent adult role. Taken to its extreme however, the premature breaking of ties between the young person and the family, could cut the individual away from benefiting from the tradition that he or she is a part of and gaining from the

accumulated wisdom of the elders in the community. Conversely, when family and community influences do not allow the emergence of individuality, this could have an equally debilitating influence on the individual's development. As we found in Study 1, the highest degree of comfort and effectiveness seems to result when career decisions are the result of the combined effort of adult (parent) and career chooser. At the cultural level, this seems to illustrate the adaptation of traditional mechanisms to meet contemporary needs. The career development needs of the contemporary Indian career chooser seem to be such that neither a rigid adherence to traditional mechanisms nor the replacement of these older methods offer the solutions required. It is in the blending of the influence of significant others with the young person's emerging individuality that the highest levels of effectiveness in career choices seem to be achieved.

Furthermore, information from the second study, seems to indicate that the influence of significant others include factors other than the dynamics of cultural evolution. Parental education and employment status could be implicated in the career development of the career chooser. The levels of *education* within the family create the psychological orientation necessary for career planning and development. Parents who have experienced the benefits of education are more likely to want the same for their children. A home that is characterised by illiteracy and low levels of education perhaps does not possess the wherewithal to raise the eyes of the young within that family toward wider horizons. The nature of parental *employment* introduces the socio-economic element. Low levels of income resulting from unemployment in the family, could offer the young career chooser no other option than to enter the world of work as soon as possible to contribute to the family income. On the other hand families with higher and more regular incomes may be better able to tolerate the gestation period during which the young person obtains education and training. The nature of the influence of significant others seems therefore to include issues other than conflicts resulting between tradition and contemporary needs. Factors such as the educational level of the significant others and the quality of their employment, seem to have an influence on the career development trajectory of the young within the family.

Counselling watch point

The influence of significant others seems to be substantial on the career decision-making process in the Indian situation. The effectiveness of careers interventions could be effective if parents and other significant adults in the career aspirant's life are drawn into the career counselling process.

The influence of prestige

Social and cultural forces grade occupations on a hierarchy of prestige and the respectability attributed to an occupation plays a powerful role in the way career choices are made in most societies. Studies 3 to 6 present some of the insights we have obtained through our experiences with a large group of Indian young people. The information presented in this section is drawn from research conducted over a period of 8 years through career guidance workshops and counselling sessions for 12,568 Indian young people in the age range of 14 to 22 years (Arulmani & Nag-Arulmani, 1996; 1998). These young people were from a wide range of socio-economic status groups from different regions around India and were in high school, pre-university, higher education courses or were already employed. This investigation focused on a variety of issues, and we will return to this sample in later studies. The information presented below focuses specifically on aspects related to the impact of prestige on career choices.

Study 3: Subject choices

The Indian educational system has categorised subject specialisations into the humanities, commerce, science and vocational groups and students are expected to choose one of these streams as their area of specialisation. The young people in the study were presented with these groups of subjects and asked to indicate their preferences according to the path they believed would lead them toward a prestigious career. The concept of 'prestigious' career was defined as careers that *provided a high social status and paid well*. A rating of 4 indicated the highest preference while 1 indicated the lowest preference. A majority of the students (43%) placed science courses at the highest level of prestige. Next came commerce based courses (21%) followed by humanities (18%). It was the smallest group (16%) that felt that vocational courses led to careers that were prestigious. This finding echoes prevailing attitudes to subject groups in the Indian environment. It is not unusual for example for people to hold the belief that 'the

sciences are for the most intelligent, commerce is for the average ones, those who are low performers study the humanities and those who are poor opt for vocational courses'.

Study 4: Prestige hierarchy

This study focused on specific careers. The same group of students who participated in Study 3, were given the Indian Classificatory System of Vocational Expression (Chadha, Nijhawan and Pershad, 1982). This is a standardised occupational checklist that classifies 232 occupations along ten vocational categories. The sample was asked to indicate their assessment of the prestige level of the jobs on this list on a scale of 1 to 7 where 1 indicated the lowest prestige and 7 indicated the highest prestige. Only jobs that all students had heard about (amounting to a total of 50 jobs) were retained for analysis. The prestige ratings for these 50 jobs were worked out by obtaining the average ratings given to each job by the sample. Certain jobs obtained a high rating while others obtained lower ratings, indicating the existence of prestige hierarchy in the way this group of students perceived different careers. As mentioned earlier, such hierarchies are likely to be present in all cultures. The interesting point that emerged was with regard to the *sort* of careers that were categorised as having high and low prestige. Occupations that received the lowest prestige ratings were those belonging to the vocational category.

What is interesting to note is that in keeping with the trends seen in Study 3, vocational courses were accorded lower levels of prestige. It is well known that across most cultures, 'blue collar' professions are usually evaluated as less prestigious than those that are described to be 'white collar' jobs. The important point to be noted is the level of *dignity* associated with these professions. When asked, 88% of this sample described vocationally oriented occupations as being dirty, of low value and associated with those who were not doing well in life. The respondents in this study felt that they that would not be respected if they opted for vocationally oriented careers.

Study 5: Degree vs. diploma

In the Indian system degrees are offered by the University system and are linked to a college education while diplomas and certificates are usually offered by polytechnics and industrial training institutes. Some well recognised institutes that provide specialised training in specific

areas (e.g. design, hotel management, software design) also award certificates and diplomas. Information regarding orientations to degree courses vs. diploma programmes was elicited from the group that participated in the studies reported above. A large majority of the sample (89%) placed a college degree at a higher level of prestige than a polytechnic diploma. We also found that this opinion persisted across socio-economic status groups. For example a sub group within this sample comprised students who were first generation learners from a scheduled tribe background. This group also indicated quite firmly that their first preference was for a college degree – although it was pointed out that vocationally oriented diplomas were more likely to fetch them a job. It was observed that no specific career goals were linked by this group of scheduled tribe students to going to college other than 'I must have a degree'. The impact of prestige was so significant that a large number of students intended to pursue college education, even if this did not lead to direct employment.

Study 6: Mindsets of vocationally trained youth
One of our deepest insights emerged when we focused on the young people within this sample who were already in vocational courses or were pursuing vocationally oriented careers. This amounted to a total of 2409 young people (about 20% of the total number of students in the study). Some of them indicated that they initially had misgivings about vocational courses and took them up because they had no other option. But once they entered the course, and tasted the occupational success that results from vocational training their opinions seemed to have been transformed. 89% of this group showed a strongly positive attitude toward vocational careers. We noted that this positive attitude extended also to students from middle class backgrounds. Students' responses indicated that they found that vocational courses prepared them well both with skills and sufficient theoretical knowledge imbuing them with confidence for employment in the future. Similar findings indicating positive approaches to vocational courses is also reported by other researchers (e.g. Mohan, Gupta, & Jain, 1990).

Implications of these findings
Other Indian researchers (e.g. Akhilesh, 1991; Thomas, 1997; Desai & Whiteside, 2000) have also found that prestige factors have a strong impact on career decision-making. It is clear that prestige does seem to play a significant role in the dynamics of career choice. This has special

implications for the Indian situation. First of all, it seems that careers that are accorded lower prestige, are also accorded lower dignity. People who are involved in vocationally oriented careers tend to be looked down upon. The prevailing belief among Indian families is that degree based courses lead to careers linked to regulatory, supervisory or managerial roles and are therefore superior to diploma based courses that lead to occupations involving actual production. Such attitudes also seem to prevail in the minds of employers. A direct outcome of such an approach to labour is that vocationally oriented occupations are not as highly paid as those based on college education. With large numbers preferring degree courses, a significant lacuna is created in the vocational area. The most recent reports indicate that a mere 5% of Indian students who actually opt for vocational courses, while the number targeted by the government is 25% (Deccan Herald News Service, 2002). The fact that the largest number of jobs are available in the vocational area, does not seem to significantly influence the career choice process (Ray, 1995). It seems however that if families are able to weather negative popular opinion linked to vocational careers, they stand to gain in the long run.

Counselling watch point

The impact of prestige on career choice is significant and seems to prevail across groups and communities. An important counselling target therefore seems to point to the necessity of circumventing the effects of prestige. Information (particularly from Study 6) discussed above, highlights the importance of *success* in a career as an antidote to the effects of prestige.

The influence of caste

As we have seen in an earlier chapter, caste is a degradation of the original varna system. While the varna system was flexible and rational, caste is rigid and discriminatory. However the impact of caste has outlasted the varna system and today this impact is strongly felt in the area of career development as well.

As we have just discussed, attitudes toward work in India, place occupations on a prestige hierarchy. One of the factors associated with this categorisation of careers could be the influence of caste. The early Vedic communities enjoyed a fair degree of inter-varna equality, regardless

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Box 4.1. John Krumboltz on the impact of prestige on career development

Arulmani: Would you comment on the well known finding that prestige significantly influences career decision-making.

Krumboltz: Occupationism is what I call it. I define occupationism as "discrimination on the basis of membership in an occupation" and compare it to racism and sexism. It's no secret that some occupations are accorded more prestige than others by the general population. One consequence is that individuals are judged on the basis of their occupational membership. A doctor may be treated more respectfully than a plumber regardless of character or competence. I object to individuals being judged on the basis of their membership in any group whether that group be an occupation, a nation, a race, or a gender. One consequence of occupationism is that young people aspiring to win the respect of their peers and parents may choose to enter a particular occupation, not because they would enjoy the work, but because they want to be deemed worthy of respect by virtue of their future occupational membership. An important target for career counselling could be to help the young person plan careers based on personal satisfaction, not occupationism. A question for research could be: "Are people who choose occupations on the basis of task enjoyment more satisfied with their lives than people who choose occupations on the basis of occupational prestige?"

Personal communication between Krumboltz & Arulmani (2003) based on Krumboltz's article on the relevance of psychological research (Krumboltz, 2002).

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of varna-defined occupations. In fact the common understanding was that the work roles performed by the Shudra placed the entire community under a debt of gratitude. The corruption of this system is well known. The insidious addition of class into the caste system affected attitudes toward occupations. The Shudra gradually came to be called the 'low caste'. Hence the manual occupations practised by the Shudra caste such as barber, sweeper, shoemaker and so on developed the connotation that they were 'low caste occupations'. Gradually the dignity of labour lost its significance and the 'lower castes' gradually sank also in their socio-economic status.

In the last one hundred years, powerful reformist movements have attempted to break the barriers of caste. These attempts have succeeded in providing at the formal and legal levels, equal opportunities to all castes. Post independent India has seen the emergence of a variety of reservations, scholarship schemes, employment opportunities and so on, that are intended to act

as support systems for those from lower castes. Today, a 'low' caste person is free to study and try to become whatever he or she chooses to become. However at a more insidious, informal level, attitudes toward caste that remain entrenched in the Indian psyche have a significant impact on mindsets toward work and career. While a person from a 'lower caste' may be able to break through the material disadvantages inflicted by caste, cultural forces may continue to influence mind sets and beliefs. As observed by Ilaiah (1994), today a low caste person could acquire wealth and become prosperous. This person however would remain outside the 'class' of higher caste groups. Ancient practices uphold deeply embedded beliefs, which strongly influence attitudes toward work. Studies 7 and 8 present our investigations into the impact of caste on career development.

Study 7: Caste and personal confidence (Arulmani & Nag-Arulmani, 1996; 1998)
The information presented below is drawn from the same group of students who participated in Studies 3, 4 and 5 described above. We observed in these studies that young people in India tend to rank careers according to a hierarchy of prestige. Further analysis of this data revealed that no statistically significant differences were present between high and low castes in the way they ranked the prestige levels of careers. In other words, the higher and lower caste groups were similar in their attribution of prestige to these careers. We now selected five careers that had obtained the highest prestige rankings. The sample was asked to indicate on a seven-point scale, their belief in their personal ability to be successful at each of these careers. Seven on this scale indicated the highest level of confidence and one indicated the lowest level. We found that when compared to higher caste groups, those from lower castes expressed a significantly lower level of confidence to be successful in careers rated as high prestige careers. Our personal interactions with students from lower castes have often been punctuated by comments such as: "I am the son of a sweeper, how can I succeed at a career", "As a low caste student I face many barriers to my development", and so on. These are indications of the manner in which caste seems to erode the young person's confidence for career development.

Study 8: Teacher opinions regarding the influence of caste (Arulmani & Nag-Arulmani, 2001;
Nag-Arulmani & Arulmani, 2002)

We interviewed 178 teachers from private and government-run schools and junior colleges, in urban, semi-urban and rural areas. We asked them to enlist some of the reasons that could underlie difficulties with career development. The list that emerged included emotional difficulties, financial problems, lack of career planning, belonging to a low caste and poor marks. The largest number of teachers (35%) were of the opinion that poor academic performance in high school (low marks) was the biggest barrier to career development. The second largest number of teachers (34%) indicated that belonging to a low caste was also an important obstacle to career development. The difference of one percent between the ratings of the two groups was not statistically significant. It seems therefore that this group of teachers felt that poor academic performance and belonging to a lower caste were equally significant barriers to career development.

Our interactions with other groups teachers and child care workers have also consistently revealed that in their opinion, it was students from lower caste families who were more vulnerable to irregular school attendance, failure in important examinations, dropping out of school and to child labour.

Implications of these findings

These findings along with similar reports made by other researchers indicate that the influence of caste runs deep and the mindsets engendered by social discrimination seem to have an impact at the behavioural levels as well. Students from lower castes consistently express lower levels of confidence for occupations that are associated with high prestige and as a result may not aim toward careers for which they do have a talent. Attitudes prevalent in the community at large seem to abet the perpetuation of this vicious cycle and allow the career development of lower caste groups to remain stunted.

Counselling watch point

Reformist movements beginning with the efforts of Mahatma Gandhi have led to the creation of a variety of supports for those who are discriminated against. It must be repeated that at the

formal and legal levels, numerous provisions have been made to clear the path for the upward mobility of lower castes. Earlier caste laws that prohibited movement across occupational boundaries are today not in evidence – particularly in urban environments. Reservations, special scholarships and government sponsored employment schemes do provide a means whereby these environmental barriers could be circumvented. While these provisions exist, the lower castes do not seem to have optimally capitalised on them. The importance of psychologically empowering the disadvantaged to consciously use these supports to break through barriers therefore becomes sharply evident. Career counselling services do need to link disadvantaged students with these support structures. However counselling must go beyond and address the invisible but immensely powerful influence that caste has on the mindsets of Indian young people. An effective counselling intervention would help the low caste career aspirant break the *psychological* stranglehold of caste and rise above its influence. Simultaneously counselling also needs to address the mindsets of young people who do not belong to lower castes and sharpen their sensitivity to the forces of discrimination.

Caste and occupational prestige – some observations

Before we conclude our discussion on the influence of caste, we would like to discuss the *persistence* of the linkages between caste and occupational prestige in contemporary India. We have not as yet formally investigated this relationship but would like to place some of our observations before the reader. In earlier times, occupations were linked to specific sub-castes and were thereby accorded high or low prestige. Our observations seem to indicate that the forces of modernisation have initiated a change in the nature of the linkages between prestige and caste. Let us take the example of the barber. Originally, this occupation was not accorded a high caste status. Today, however when the term barber is replaced with the term *hairdresser*, caste connotations seem to diminish. In contemporary India, hairdressing – associated as it is with fashion and beauty, has grown in stature. While 'barber' may still carry caste connotations, occupational labels such as hairdresser, cosmetologist, beauty therapist, hair-care specialist do not seem to carry insinuations of low prestige. Similar changes seem to have occurred in other occupational areas. Some examples are cobbler vs. footwear designer, carpenter vs. interior designer, cook vs. chef and so on. Subtle but important shifts in social cognitions seem to be in

evidence and the question of the persistence of the linkages between caste and occupational prestige invites further investigation

The influence of gender

Differential gender-role socialization – a process that has shaped and moulded behaviour across civilisations, has a significant effect on career development. Culture has and continues to have a significant influence on what is expected of boys and girls in terms of their occupational roles. Correspondingly individuals within a culture tend to absorb these requirements and internalise these gender based occupational roles. As a result certain careers have grown to become gender-linked. For example careers such as engineer, army officer, pilot and so on are considered to be 'male dominated'. On the other hand being a nurse, secretary, teacher and so on are linked to the female gender. A few careers (e.g. physician, lawyer) have tended to remain gender neutral. The influence of gender typing is so strong that when an individual needs to make a career choice compromises may be made on the basis of personal interests and even the prestige of the occupation, while compromises based on sex type preferences are least likely to occur (Gottfredson, 1981). As a result, greater numbers of males and females prefer careers that have traditionally been identified with their respective genders.

At the most fundamental level, the question of whether it is the male or the female who should 'go out' to work has been culturally defined. Traditionally the female role has been defined to be that of a 'homemaker' while the role of 'bread winner' has been allocated to the male. The extent to which this mindset has changed in response to evolving social ideologies has varied across cultures. Studies 9 and 10 report our research into the influence of gender on career choice.

Study 9: Occupational roles (Arulmani, 2000)

We interacted with 269 high school students (166 boys and 103 girls) from disadvantaged backgrounds, who had indicated that they intended to discontinue their education after the final examination. Both groups were asked to write a 100-word essay on the theme: *Why I want to discontinue my studies after the High School Examinations.* We examined each participant's

essay and listed the main reasons given. Interestingly, most of the reasons for discontinuation of studies were linked to students' impressions of what they thought their parents wanted them to do after high school. The important point that emerged from this study was that parental expectations (as reflected in the students' essays) for boys *differed* from expectations they had for girls. Parental expectations for boys centred mainly on the initiation of independent earning. With girls however, these expectations were linked to their taking over household responsibilities. We found that while 83% of the boys were likely to want to begin independent earning only 28% of the girls expressed a similar reason for discontinuation of studies. Conversely it was seen that girls were more likely to be given household responsibilities compared to boys.

Study 10: Breadwinner vs. Home maker (Arulmani, 2001)

In this study we interviewed 417 parents of children who had brought their children for career counselling. These families were all in the middle class and higher range of SES. Interactions with them revealed once again that orientations to career development were influenced by the gender of their child. Of the parents interviewed 75% indicated that the primary task before the girl child was that of a home maker. 24% agreed that household responsibilities were the combined responsibility of boys and girls. 1% parents were of the opinion that the boy could fulfil the function of home maker while the girl could pursue a career. The reason behind a majority of parents seeking career counselling for their girls was the intention of providing them with a secondary option, with marriage and family being the primary concern. In some instances planning a career for the girl was linked to enhancing her marriage prospects.

Implications of these findings:

Gender could have a strong influence on career decision-making behaviour in the Indian situation. Social expectations requiring the making of a career choice and pursuing independent earning seem to be higher for boys. For girls on the other hand career seems to be secondary to responsibilities associated with marriage and raising a family. An important implication to be noted is that given prevailing attitudes toward work, male dominated careers are held in higher value and esteem and are therefore better paid. Socialisation-based differences between male

and female could result in Indian women under-utilising their career talents and being underrepresented in a number of higher status and higher paying fields.

Counselling watch point

Gender has emerged as an important issue to be addressed during career counselling in almost all parts of the world. It is important however that gender sensitive counselling services are not reduced to merely encouraging girls to follow in the footsteps of their male counterparts. A sensitive counselling programme would account for cultural factors while simultaneously creating a firm foundation upon which women could fully actualise their careers.

Stage of economic development

In our discussion of the history of work, we found that economic factors have a significant influence on career development. It is important we note however, that although this impact could be powerful, economic influences tend to be tempered by the prevailing social-cognitive environment. Economic development in India has had certain unique influences on career development. Some of these influences are discussed below.

Rural - urban shifts

The forces of urbanisation in post-independent India have led to a steadily growing rural-urban shift especially over the last two decades. An increasingly large number of people migrate from their village homes to the cities in search of a 'better life'. In the Indian context, people from rural areas usually manifest lower levels of education and are often illiterate. Furthermore, their skills for the kind of occupations available in urban areas are poorly developed. The average rural migrant in the Indian context therefore has little to offer in terms of his or her employability. As a result, migrants from rural areas tend to enter occupations that require low skills, as casual labourers. They remain underpaid and are often unemployed. The young people from these families present career development needs that are special.

Another group of migrants are young people who have completed basic education in a rural school and are in search of further education. Many of them may exhibit severe difficulties with academics and perform at levels much below their true potentials. Their lower proficiency with English (which is the most common language of instruction at post high school levels) is one of the factors associated with their poor academic performance. They often fare poorly in the highly competitive entrance examinations into professional courses. The dynamics of occupational prestige moves them away from vocational courses that have higher employment prospects toward college based education, which has a long gestation and often does not lead to employment. The result of the impact of such forces compromises their career prospects and often leads to high levels of unemployment.

Furthermore information from national sample surveys (NSS, 1992, 1999) have revealed that the numbers of young people returning to their villages after further education is negligible. These surveys also indicate that traditional rural occupations (e.g. agriculture-based industries) have fewer and fewer fresh entrants. In reality however, the significant efforts that have gone into the modernisation of the rural-agrarian sector have begun to offer new occupational possibilities. Interactions with young people who have left their villages indicate once again that low levels of prestige are associated with these career options and they continue to exhibit a high preference for a career in the city.

Counselling watch point
Urbanisation is a reality that career counselling in India must take into account. Young people from rural backgrounds present unique career development needs that must be addressed. Furthermore, there is a pressing need for career counselling services that are designed for implementation in the rural parts of the country. Such services could have two objectives. The first would be to prepare those who are planning to leave their rural homes to pursue career development in an urban environment. The second would be highlight the value of careers that could be pursued within the rural environment subsequent to training and education.

Manpower mismatch

India's economic development is at a stage where the creation of jobs is largely in the industrial sector and the demand for vocationally trained, skilled workers has grown in geometric proportions (Ray, 1995). In an attempt to provide a wider range of career options for the young career aspirant, the Government in its various National Policies on Education has introduced the option of vocational education. The objective of this scheme was to sharpen the employability of an individual, reduce mismatch between demand and supply of skilled manpower and provide employment oriented alternatives for those who pursue higher education without particular interest or direction. Assessments of this effort (e.g. Desai & Whiteside, 2000) have revealed that the number of individuals opting for vocational training was few and the majority of those who did take this option were from lower income groups. An opposite trend is noted with regard to other career areas. For example the prestige linked preoccupation the Indian family has with science based courses has created an unrealistically heightened demand for courses such as engineering and medicine. In reality, jobs related to these specialisations are not as many as the students graduating. Students who have specialised in these areas therefore have to go on for further training, increasing the gestation between training and entry into an occupation.

Another factor that contributes to the manpower mismatch in India is the tendency to link career choices with occupations that are sometimes merely artefacts of economic cycles. The so called boom in the computer science industry that occurred in India in the mid to late 90s is a prime example. Large numbers of students chose these career paths in response to the burgeoning demand. When the market righted itself however, it was quickly realised that the quality and depth of training imparted to many of these students was not adequate and that they had not acquired the foundations essential for success in this field. It is a fact that the computer industry offers a wide range of occupational possibilities. However as with every other career, this area also requires systematic training. Today the employment market place for computer related careers is littered with the ruined careers of young people who specialised without strong foundations and whose skills became quickly redundant.

It is essential that governments scientifically monitor manpower requirements and plan decades ahead for accurate training to meet emerging needs. From a purely economic point of view gaps in this planning could lead to manpower mismatches. However as we have seen, social and cultural forces could thwart the best thought out plans for career development. This is an ever-present reality in India.

Counselling watch point

The career counsellor is required to be aware of manpower requirements and labour market trends. However, effective counselling is not chained to economic cycles. It is the personhood of the career chooser that lies at the heart of career counselling. Facilitating self-understanding, matching this information with the world of work and helping the young person make a career discovery is the real task before the sensitive counsellor.

The emergence of opportunities for employment

Career development is intricately interwoven with the nature of economic development occurring in a given country. In fact the question of career choice itself arose in the West in response to the many new occupations that where thrown up in the wake of industrialisation. Technological and industrial development seen in post independent India is unprecedented in Indian history. The significant diversification that has occurred in various sectors has resulted in the creation of new employment opportunities. Yet, unemployment is a spectre that has haunted the Indian economy for many decades. The causes of unemployment are complex and have been linked to economic policy, sociological factors, political instability and bio-cultural change. While a number of theories have been propounded, the translation of these theories into successful intervention programmes has been difficult, and the rates of underemployment and unemployment have continued to rise.

From the view point of career development, it is important to note that interventions targeting unemployment have largely focused on those who are *already* unemployed. These interventions mainly take a sociological and economic approach and address the problem in a cross-sectional manner. Very few attempts have been directed toward the *prevention* of unemployment. Cross-

sectional and 'curative' approaches would at best alleviate the problems of those who are currently unemployed. They do not provide long term solutions. Some of the factors that could be linked with preventing unemployment are now discussed. It is important first of all that we recognise that contemporary India is a *developing* economy. One of the outcomes of active economic development is the *ongoing* creation of jobs. The Indian career development situation is characterised by the continual creation of jobs, albeit at a rate that is slower than the number of

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Box 4.2: Tony Watts on the stage of economic development and career guidance services

What are some of the key issues that governments of resource-poor countries could keep in mind when planning to implement guidance and counselling strategies at a national level.

In developing their policies, countries have to take account of their distinctive economic, social and cultural features. Some common features can be identified across resource-poor countries. Policies tend to be dominated by economic labour-utilization considerations, channeling individuals into fields of education, training and work that are deemed necessary for the national economy. A common policy role for guidance services in such countries is to encourage young people to move into technical and vocational education rather than aspiring to higher education. It is only in conditions of relative affluence that greater attention may be given to individual human development. There are parallels here with Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of needs: the proposition that it is only once lower-order needs like physiological needs and safety have been adequately met that higher-order needs like self-actualisation can be addressed.

The process of economic development may at times produce significant disparities between supply and demand in the labour market, leading to substantial unemployment. This may mean people being drawn to accept any job, suppressing the concept of choice, and leading to career guidance being regarded as relevant only to those who are perceived to have choices – who might be quite a small minority.

A more specific policy issue may be the need to give greater priority to the development of accurate and comprehensive information on education and training opportunities and on the labour market.

A related issue is investment in the use of information and communication technologies. In resource-poor countries, the technical infrastructure is likely to be more limited. This means that investment in the use of such technologies may have more limited impact, with greater risks of a 'digital divide' between those who have access to them and those who do not. At the same time, however, the potential cost-effectiveness of such investment may hold greater possibilities for the rapid expansion of career guidance services than in countries where the human infrastructure of services is stronger.

Personal Communication between Tony Watts and Gideon Arulmani (2003)

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jobs required. India possesses one of the largest manpower pools in the world and perhaps there aren't as yet enough jobs to go around. The point to be noted by the career counsellor is that while there may not be a surfeit, jobs *are* being created and career opportunities do emerge quite rapidly. Such a situation has certain outcomes that influence career development.

Career development lag

One of these outcomes is the emergence of a *career development lag* – a delay between qualifying for a career and actually entering a career. One of the factors that seem to be associated with this lag is the nature of the career aspirant's career preparation. Our observations (Arulmani, 1995, 1998, 2000) have indicated that the longest lag periods are associated with the *lack of skill literacy* in the career aspirant. A student who has moved from one degree course to a higher one without the actual development of skills, is an unattractive prospect in the employment market place. The lack of career opportunities that this person experiences is not always because there are no opportunities. Quite often it is because such a person is *inadequately prepared* for the market place. On the other hand someone who presents herself with even just a bachelor's degree *along with* evidence for skills to *apply* and *practice* the subject in which she has specialised, is likely to experience a shorter lag between her qualifying and obtaining a job. This is because she has developed a higher level of skill literacy for the subject that she has studied. Skill literacy is the fluency that a person develops for the practice and application of the theoretical concepts that comprise a body of knowledge. Skill literacy could be developed through practical diploma courses, work experience, voluntary work, internship programmes and so on. A number of our university courses today enhance students' knowledge of a subject, but fail to enhance their literacy for the skills that are necessary for the application of this knowledge. This is one of the factors that keeps the basket of the educated unemployed brimming and full, in India.

Negation of emerging opportunities

A second factor that vitiates employment prospects is the negation of emerging employment opportunities by social and cultural factors. Mindsets that place occupations on a prestige hierarchy quite often prevent young career aspirants from actualising their talents for emerging careers. A large number of Indian career choosers are typically restricted in the range of careers

they are willing to consider. As we have discussed at length, attitudes toward vocational courses pre-empt career development in a number of career areas. It has been said that the career destinies of young aspirants are intrinsically linked with the employment potential of the country to which they belong (Mohan, 1999). India today presents a rapidly increasing range of employment opportunities. However the benefits of this development are more likely to accrue to those who approach the employment market place with high levels of skill literacy and an attitude that is unencumbered by social conventions.

Counselling watch point

The foregoing discussion highlights the importance of career preparation. In the Indian situation this includes facilitating career decision-making that is objective and based on accurate information, providing opportunities to enhance skill literacy, developing career paths and setting graded targets that the individual would work toward over a period of time.

Influences of the Educational System

Systems and philosophies of education create learning environments that shape the way people make decisions and deal with problems. At a more specific level, the educational system that prevails within a culture has a significant influence on the career development of the individuals who are a part of that culture. Let us take a brief look at how educational systems influence career development in the Indian context.

Teaching methodology

The typical Indian classroom, be it at the pre-school or the post graduate level, tends to be teacher-led. The student is expected to learn from the teacher, who is believed to be the expert – the repository of knowledge. This perhaps is a throw back to the guru-shishya parampara where the guru indeed was a fount of knowledge. Data that has come in from large scale surveys of the contemporary Indian schooling system (e.g. PROBE, 1999) indicate that prevailing teaching methods provide students with answers which they are expected to learn by rote and commit to memory. Individual approaches to learning are not usually encouraged. In fact the student who

disagrees from the teacher may be disciplined and even punished (Sinha, 1994). In addition to the inculcation of discipline in the student, this system presents the primary advantage of equipping the student with skills to acquire vast quantities of knowledge, store it and then reproduce this information accurately. On the negative side however, such an approach to education has led to the creation of generations of students who have remained teacher-dependent. The innate abilities of the student for independent thinking and problem solving have not been adequately nurtured.

This drawback in the Indian system of education becomes particularly cumbersome in a world of work that today lays a high emphasis on independent decision-making and a well developed ability for problem solving. The Indian way of problem solving has been described to be passive and dependant on the opinions of others, with a high degree of conformity to role expectations (Strohschneider & Guss, 1999). The demand from the contemporary world of work on the contrary is for active decision makers who are willing to take risks and the worker who is able to deal with problems independently is valued and sought after. In such an environment, it is important that the career counsellor is alert to the danger of young people to become counsellor-dependent.

Counselling watch point

Effective career counselling is not prescriptive. The counsellor who makes decisions on behalf of the career aspirant is in effect short circuiting the resolution of career developmental tasks. Facilitating career discovery and strengthening decision-making skills is an integral aspect of career counselling.

Career paths

According to the National Policies of Education (1986, 1992), two clear career paths emerge from within the Indian educational system. One of these paths is based on a system of degrees obtained through college and university education. The other is based on diplomas and certificates awarded at the end of polytechnic based training. This form of training leading to diplomas / certificates, is also provided outside the polytechnic system by institutions (some of

which are autonomous) that offer specialised training. Some of these specialised institutes carry high levels of prestige and their courses are much sought after.

University and degree based career paths

This path emanates from the 10 + 2 system i.e. 10 years of high school, followed by 2 years of pre-university education. Those wishing to pursue University education are required after successful completion of high school to enter pre-university courses for a duration of two years. At the pre-university level, the student is required to make a choice between three streams of study namely the Sciences, the Humanities or the Commerce groups of specialisation. Once committed, changing to a different stream is difficult and often not possible. The first degree (the bachelor's degree, also called graduation in India) follows pre-university education and is of two types. *Professional degrees* are designed to lead to specific *careers* (e.g. Bachelor's degree in medicine – MBBS, Bachelor's degree in Engineering – BE, Bachelor's Degree in Hotel Management – BHM and so on). The other type of first degrees could be described to be *non-professional* in character. The curriculum followed by these courses is more theoretical, focusing on specific *subjects* (e.g. Bachelor of Arts – BA, Bachelor of Science – BSc). While professional degrees attempt to prepare the student for a particular profession, non-professional degrees deepen the student's knowledge of a specific subject. The student then has the option of pursuing further education through the second degree (the Master's degree, also called post graduation in India), the third degree (Master's degree in philosophy – M.Phil.) and finally the doctoral degree (PhD). The non-professional career paths usually require a long period of study requiring the student to go on at least upto the second degree. This could amount approximately to eight years of study after high school, before the student can begin to consider entry into an occupational area.

Diploma / certificate based career paths

Students could also enter diploma and certificate courses leading to training in specific vocational skills. These vocational courses are quite different from degree based education. They are offered by systems of education such as polytechnics, industrial training institutes and specialised institutions. A vocational curriculum is typically designed to focus on skill development for a specific occupation. Carpentry, plumbing, turning and fitting, auto

mechanics, tailoring, book keeping, commercial practice, stenography and a host of similar skills based occupations are examples of careers that emerge from vocational courses. Other institutes offer similar diploma courses in design based carers, hotel management, computer hardware maintenance, some forms of software designing and so on. Vocational courses follow a different career path, in that they usually lead to diplomas rather than degrees. The eligibility for vocational courses in India begins quite early and even students who have only completed Class 7, can consider beginning a vocational course. Other vocational courses begin after high school or pre-university education. India also has a system of post graduate diplomas for which the eligibility begins with the first degree.

As we have noted above, the demand for professional degree courses is high and the competition to enter these courses is often unrealistic. A fact that the career aspirant is often unaware of is that enrolment into a professional course does not automatically lead to employment. Two important points must be noted within this context. First of all, over production of graduates in certain areas has led to a glut in the market place for these occupations. Secondly, although they are designed to prepare the student with skills for a career, a large number of professional degrees continue to remain theoretical and do not enhance the student's skill literacy. The student is therefore required to go on for higher and higher levels of specialisation, incurring increasing expenses. Non-professional degrees are further removed from the realities of the world of work and contribute even less to the enhancement of skill literacy. Prestige factors often override these facts and the majority of Indian students continue to prefer a degree course. The educational system in India has grown quite rapidly. The last fifty years have seen massive infrastructure being put into place in the form of schools, colleges and polytechnics. Large numbers of students pass through these institutions. Completion of courses within this system however does not adequately prepare the student for employment. Of course high quality training is imparted in National centres of excellence where students are well prepared with both theory and skills. However these are the exceptions rather than the rule.

The most urgent need presented by the world of work is for *skilled* manpower. Quite often the onus for work skills training falls on the world of work. Most Indian employers are resigned to the reality that the training requirements of fresh recruits are not limited merely to orientating

them to a given work environment. Quite often training must begin from the basics. If the need for skilled manpower is to be effectively met by the systems that educate young people for employment, significant changes in curricular structure are called for. On the background of the apparent failure of vocational courses to evoke adequate interest among large numbers of students, the development of courses that blend the curricular objectives of degree programmes with diploma courses could offer an effective solution. The concept of skill literacy offers a valuable touchstone that could guide the redesigning of existing curricula.

Counselling watch point
Students often approach career paths with biases. It is vital that degrees and diplomas are delinked from prestige attributes. An important target for counselling is to build an awareness of the characteristics and the final outcome of the various career paths available within the Indian system.

Socio-economic Influences

Socio-economic status is itself a complex concept and it has been variously defined. Earlier definitions were restricted to the economic aspect and evaluated on the basis of income levels. The list of variables indicating SES has subsequently been enlarged to incorporate a number of other factors that contribute to a person's position along the continuum of socio-economic status. Drawing from the ideas of Indian social scientists (e.g. Kuppuswamy, 1959; Srivastava, 1991; Kapoor & Singh, 1998) we will use family monthly income, educational and employment status within the family, living conditions and household material possessions, as indicators of socio-economic status in India. For our understanding, low SES would mean low scores, while high SES would mean high scores on composite measures of these factors. More specifically, we have followed the classificatory system used by Kapoor and Singh (1998), the details of which are presented in Box 4.3.

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│                                                                 │
│              Box 4.3.  Five-level Classification of             │
│                     socio-economic status                       │
│               Adapted from Kapoor and Singh (1998)              │
│                                                                 │
│    Level 1:        Lowest socio-economic status according to this│
│                    classificatory system                        │
│    Level 2:        Upper lower-level                            │
│    Level 3:        Lower middle level                           │
│    Level 4:        Upper-middle level                           │
│    Level 5:        The highest socio-economic status according to this│
│                    classificatory system                        │
│                                                                 │
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Variable attitudes to career planning

International research has consistently indicated that socio-economic factors play a significant role in the career development process. Indian society is characterised by many layers of socio-economic status and observations across these groups indicate that key differences could exist between the career development needs of higher and lower SES groups. It is essential that we begin to understand these differences and develop insights into how SES affects career development. Study 11 presents our findings with regard to the variable impact SES seems to have on career planning.

Study 11: The importance attributed to career planning (Arulmani & Nag-Arulmani, 1996, 1998)

Our most important insights into the operation of socio-economic influences emerged when we analysed the importance career aspirants placed on choosing a career and activities related to career planning. The information presented below is drawn from the studies conducted on the sample of 12,568 Indian young people described in earlier studies above. As part of this study students were asked to rate on a 7-point scale their response to the following statement: *Planning for a career is an essential and important part of my personal development*. A rating of 1

indicated that it was of the lowest importance, while 7 indicated the highest importance. The participants in the study were divided into five SES groups, where Group 1 comprised the lowest SES group and Group 5 consisted of students from the most privileged backgrounds (see Box. 4.3 for details). Students' ratings were averaged for each SES group. As indicated in Chart 5 below, the lowest SES group placed the least amount of importance on career planning. The participants' ratings increased with their socio-economic status, and peaked around the middle SES levels. What was most interesting was that the importance young people placed on career planning *decreased* beyond the middle SES level. In other words, it was the middle classes who placed the highest value on career planning, while both the lower and higher SES groups placed a relatively lower importance on career planning.

Chart 5: The importance attributed to career planning across SES levels

(1 = lowest importance; 7 = highest importance)
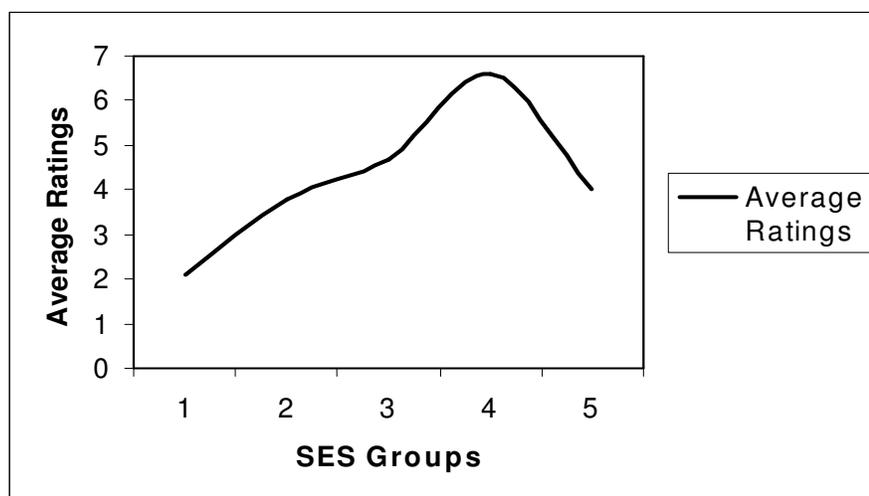
Implications of these findings

Young people from poor homes are required to make career plans, while simultaneously grappling with poverty, unstable family structures and severe financial restrictions. At a practical level, these impoverished families may have realistic concerns about their ability to pay for their children's further education. Other researchers (e.g. Singh and Nathawat, 1989; Punalekar, 1997; Singh, 1999) have indicated that day-to-day survival and meeting ordinary physical and emotional needs may be of greater importance to these individuals than seeking out information and making career plans. Survival needs in the present maybe so pressing that

planning for what could become a reality sometime in the future may not be consistent with the low SES group's conception of reality. The reasons underlying the low emphasis laid on career planning by higher SES groups maybe quite contrary to the experience of the lower SES group. While the less privileged groups may believe that career planning may not be a possibility for them - a luxury they cannot afford, the more privileged might be of the opinion that it may not be a necessity in their situation. The security engendered by wealth, social and economic status could push career planning to a lower level of urgency amongst the highly privileged.

The middle SES groups on the other hand present a picture that is typical across cultures. This SES level offers a comfortable life style, with enough left over to give the children in the family a start in their lives. Middle class families have usually been able to accumulate sufficient resources to offer their children a foundation upon which they could build their lives. However these resources are not sufficient to preclude the necessity of children from these families having to become independent earners. In the absence of surpluses therefore, the middle class family's primary concern is the utilisation of existing resources in a manner that would yield the highest benefit. Making effective career choices and developing a career plan that would optimally use the family savings is therefore an important concern for families at this SES level. Furthermore, the middle classes have tasted the fruits of prosperity and have also equipped themselves with the wherewithal to rise to higher levels of prosperity. The middle classes in almost all cultures are simultaneously confronted by the threat of slipping back to lower levels of social standing and the real possibility of rising up to higher levels along the status continuum. Indeed it is this group that has everything to lose and everything to gain. As a result, the highest levels of aspirations and the strongest motivations for success are noted amongst the middle SES groups in almost all cultures. Career success is one of the most important mechanisms available to these families to ensure that they keep moving higher up along the SES continuum.

In reality the importance of career planning is independent of socio-economic status. The important point that emerges however is that career development needs vary across SES groups. The preoccupation with survival needs resulting from the difficult circumstances that they are victims of force the lower SES groups to focus on the here and now. As we will see in a later section, it is this preoccupation and a lack of orientation to the future that prevents the lower SES

groups from breaking out of the cycle of poverty. Indeed career planning for the less privileged is not a luxury but a vital necessity.

It may be true that some among the privileged do not need to pursue a career in order to earn a livelihood. This however does not diminish the importance of career planning. The purpose of a career as we have earlier described it, is not merely aimed at earning a livelihood. It could be a mechanism that brings meaning into a person's life by facilitating the realisation of personal potentials. The 'poor little rich child' syndrome is well known and is closely associated with the numerous behavioural and emotional difficulties that arise from the luxury of 'having nothing to do'. Equally well known is the zest that a career infuses into the life of a bored, wealthy young person and the vibrancy that the resultant transformation brings. In another situation a young person from a wealthy home may plan to join the family business. Being aware of personal interests, talents and aptitudes could point to areas in which he or she could specialise, and thereby optimise contributions to the family business.

Driven as they are by high aspirations and the desire to reach higher pinnacles of success, the middle classes are at high risk to choosing careers based on what the career offers rather than grounding career choice on the personhood of the career chooser. Having to 'keep up with the Sharmas next door' quite often brings an almost overwhelming pressure on the career decision-making process within a middle class home. We are repeatedly presented with young people from the middle classes who were forced to choose careers that were popular and 'in demand', but who soon discovered that their real interests and talents lay elsewhere. The disillusionment that sets in leads to poor performances in courses leading to these careers. Those who do manage to complete their training and begin working show flagging motivation and often express the desire for a career shift. Of course this is not always the case. Yet, the number of young people who do express dissatisfaction with career choices is alarmingly high.

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Box 4.4. Robert Lent on socio-economic status, cognitions and self-efficacy

Arulmani: Social Cognitive Career Theory highlights the impact of self-efficacy on career choices. Could tell how a person's cognitions and thinking habits affect his or her self-efficacy?

Lent: Patterns of thinking may serve as filters through which people interpret self-efficacy relevant information. Thinking styles may cause errors in how one makes sense of say, personal performance accomplishments or social persuasion. If, for example, I overgeneralise the meaning of a particular failure experience, it may have an unfortunate and disproportionate effect on how I judge my self-efficacy in a given performance domain.

Arulmani: Do you have any comment on the finding that the low SES groups have a lower career preparation self-efficacy score than those from higher SES backgrounds?

Lent: Lower SES persons are likely to have access to poorer quality educational experiences and resources (e.g. role models, encouragement, teaching quality) for promoting a strong sense of academic self-efficacy.

Personal communication between Robert Lent and Gideon Arulmani (2003)

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Counselling watch point

Career counselling is relevant and necessary for all social classes. The crucial point to be noted particularly in the Indian ethos is that counselling needs vary significantly across social groups. A single, standardised intervention may not be able to adequately address career development needs over a wide range of groups. While the themes and targets of counselling are similar, the methods of implementation need to be finely tuned to the special requirements that emerge within socio-economic status groups.

Career development discontinuities

Career development is a process that is characterised by a stage wise progression from one decision-making point to another. It has been observed that socio-economic status influences the continuity of this development. In other words, socio-economic variables intervene at critical

decision-making points and either facilitate further progression or cause a discontinuity in career development. Study 12 presents information gathered from the sample we worked with in Study 3 and throws further light on how SES could cause discontinuities in career development

Study 12: Orientation to career preparation (Arulmani, 2000)

We found that a large preponderance of young people from the lower SES groups (65%) intended to discontinue education to begin working at the earliest. This finding concurs with the few other reports in the Western literature that indicate a higher predisposition amongst the low SES groups to begin working *before* their education is complete (Banks and Roker, 1993; Feather, 1993). In the Indian context, Satyarthi (1982), studying the effect of economic status on Indian students' attitudes to school found that low SES students placed a lower value on education and were predisposed to leaving school early. The middle SES groups in our study however provided a stark contrast with a vastly smaller number of students (2%) expressing a similar orientation. This group was strongly predisposed to pursuing further education and developing their careers as comprehensively as possible. Some of the students in the highest SES group (13%) also expressed the intention to begin working at the earliest. Interactions with these students however indicated that their responses were linked to a general disenchantment with having to go to school and reflected the desire to drop out of school rather than to begin working.

Closer examination of the lower SES groups provided information that was of deep interest. Some of these young people (34%) differed from the others in their socio-economic group and expressed a strong interest in pursuing a career through further education. We observed that this difference was closely related to the educational and employment status of the parents of these students. Almost all the parents of this 34% of students had studied at least upto pre-university and had regular employment. Conversely, students who placed a lower value on further education for career development had parents who were illiterate and who had a fluctuating and erratic employment history. A similar trend was reported in Study 2 above. Of the students in this lower SES group who did link education with career development, the majority (65%) intended to pursue college based education. It was a much smaller group that was oriented to short term, skills based training, obtainable through diploma and certificate courses.

Implications of these findings

The strong predisposition of the lower SES groups to begin searching for work before acquiring work skills implies that they will only occupy an unskilled status in the world of work. This has far reaching ramifications on the continuity of career development. Research in the West into the effects of premature entry into the world of work on later employment have indicated that poorly educated persons are at highest risk for unemployment in their later lives (Ekstrom, Freeberg and Rock, 1987). These researchers report that individuals who had completed more years of schooling and who had better reading ability were more likely to be employed and hold jobs of higher complexity than individuals with less education and/or lower reading ability levels. Other researchers found that young people who left school at the minimum age to get work, were likely to spend most of their lives in part-time, unskilled jobs or on social welfare (Banks, 1992). In the absence of social welfare in India, unemployment would mean a further sinking into poverty and disadvantage. Yet, the orientation to education and to career planning is significantly different amongst the lower SES groups in India. We have noted in other studies (e.g. Arulmani, van Laar, & Easton, 2001), that when a middle SES family suffers economic difficulties, children's schooling is one of the last expenditures to be cut down. The family may move the child to a less expensive school, but would exert strenuous efforts to ensure that the child continues to go to school. On the other hand schooling would be one of the first compromises to be made by a lower SES family that faces barriers and difficulties. It seems therefore, that in comparison to other SES levels, the lower SES groups seem to be most vulnerable to discontinuities in their career development.

It is important to note however that there are young people within lower SES groups who seem to rise above their predicament and orient themselves to career development. The educational and employment status of parents seem to be crucial mediating factors influencing orientations to career planning. Higher levels of parental education and the security of parental employment seem to act as insulating factors against career development discontinuities. It must be added however, that uninformed career choices could continue to present the young person with career development difficulties. For example, the orientation to a college education amongst the low SES groups does not always pave the way for successful employment. College based courses (particularly the non-professional degrees) require long term study and higher levels of

investment. In addition, these courses are not designed for skills development. Driven by factors related to prestige, low SES students intending to pursue college education are at risk to spending their meagre family resources on courses that could lead them not toward employment, but toward the ever growing ranks of the educated unemployed in India.

Box 4.5. Groups with constrained opportunities: Insights from Tony Watts

Arulmani: How can policy be more sensitive to the needs of lower income groups?

Watts: One of the traditional functions of career guidance services is to maximise the capacity for choice for groups with constrained opportunities. Policies sensitive to the needs of such groups need to acknowledge the realities of their lives, including work within the informal economies. On the other hand, there are dangers in focusing too narrowly on the needs of such groups at the expense of a more universal approach.

Personal communication between Tony Watts and Gideon Arulmani (2003)

Counselling watch point

A vital watch point for the counsellor who works with lower SES groups is the strong likelihood that young people from these backgrounds will enter the world of work as unskilled labourers. Career counselling must address these mindsets and take the young person beyond. It is well known that taking up skill based courses (even if they are short courses), dramatically alters career development trajectories. Courses such as these function as a *career development bridge*, which is an effective antidote to premature entry into the world of work. Interventions that help the young person postpone the need to immediately address economic difficulties with concrete career plans is an important point of focus for career counselling.

The Influence of Career Beliefs

One of our most consistent observations over a decade of working with Indian young people and their families on issues of career development is that habitual ways of thinking – social-cognitive environments, strongly influence career development. A conglomerate of attitudes, opinions, convictions and notions seem to cohere together to create mindsets and beliefs that underlie

people's orientation to the idea of a career. "Further study does not bring a better job," or, "A girl's first responsibility is to be a mother," are typical examples of firmly held career beliefs in the Indian context. Beliefs can become so deeply ingrained that they may not even be identified by their holders as beliefs - they are more like unquestioned, self-evident truths (Krumboltz, 1994). These patterns of thinking may or may not be grounded in rationality. Yet, whether accurate or not, these assumptions and beliefs predispose the individual to making career decisions in a certain manner. We have referred to these deeply held convictions about activities linked to career development as *career beliefs* (Arulmani, 1998, 1999, 2000; Arulmani & Nag-Arulmani, 2001, 2002). It appeared from our field experiences that the impact of career beliefs on the career development process within the Indian situation was marked and critical. In fact we found that the outcomes of career counselling were often rendered meaningless when they were not consistent with prevailing career beliefs. We therefore have directed a significant amount of our research efforts over the last eight years towards understanding the dynamics of this influence more deeply.

The notion of career beliefs is embedded within the larger theoretical concept of social cognitions, which are patterns of beliefs that exist within a community and guide the behaviour of the individuals in that community. Two important theoretical frameworks have emerged in the West based on the concept of social cognitions, namely the Social Learning Theory of Career Decision-making (Krumblotz et al) and Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent et al). These theories have been discussed in greater detail in an earlier chapter. In summary findings from these theoretical positions seem to indicate that beliefs strongly held by the individual and the community about decision-making, career preparation and the world of work, influence the career decision-making process. We present our description of career beliefs using these streams of thought as a frame of reference.

Box 4.6. John Krumboltz on career beliefs

Arulmani: What led to your beginning to explore and research career beliefs?

Krumboltz: My own career has been affected by a whole series of faulty beliefs that have interfered with my decision-making and confidence. Informal surveys of students and friends convinced me that I was not alone. I collected over 1000 anecdotes in response to this prompt: "Tell me a story about a belief you had at one time that led you to take some action or make some decision that adversely affected your career. The belief should be one you now know to have been incorrect or harmful to you in some way." I categorised the stories on the basis of the essential similarity of the beliefs reported and created inventory items which succinctly captured each central belief. With the aid of other colleagues in the U.S. and Australia, over 7,500 answer sheets were completed and factor analysed to produce the 25 subscales that now constitute the *Career Beliefs Inventory.* Counsellors can now use scores from the *Career Beliefs Inventory* to facilitate discussions with clients about beliefs they might want to examine carefully as they contemplate future career decisions and actions.

Personal communication between Krumboltz & Arulmani (2003) based on Krumboltz's article on the relevance of psychological research (Krumboltz,2002).

Our research into career beliefs began by articulating hunches emerging from our field observations, during careers workshops and counselling programmes. These careers education programmes were conducted among high schoolers, higher secondary students, college-going youth, school dropouts, child labourers and unemployed persons from varied socio-economic status groups. Three important points emerged from our field experiences. Firstly, our observations seemed to suggest that beliefs and thinking patterns about career planning and development varied quite markedly between low and high socio-economic status groups. Secondly, it appeared that the career beliefs held by the lower SES groups could be more negative than their higher SES counterparts. Thirdly, we observed that the content of these negative beliefs could be categorised into characteristic themes. These were informal observations that we subsequently attempted to verify scientifically. The studies reported below present information extracted from a series of investigations that we conducted in order to validate these observations. Readers interested in the procedural and statistical details of these studies are referred to the original papers cited in the text below.

The Career Belief Patterns Scale

The Career Belief Patterns Scale (CBPS) is a psychometric device that we constructed in order to examine the operation of career beliefs amongst high school students. The reader is referred to the Resources section (Resource 4) for a more detailed description of the construction of the CBPS. The original pool of items for the CBPS was collected in the course of careers guidance workshops held for 12,244 students. The current version of the scale comprises 18 vignettes that describe various career development situations. Participants are required to indicate on a 7-point scale, the extent to which they agree with these situations. A high CBPS score indicates high levels of negativity towards career planning. Studies 13 and 14 present information we have obtained through the CBPS.

Study 13: Career belief themes (Arulmani, 2000; Arulmani & Nag-Arulmani, 2002)
The current version of the CBPS was developed through a factor analytic procedure based on the responses of 1366 (808 females and 558 males) high school students between the age range of 14 to 16 years, drawn from 18 different schools. Our analysis extracted three specific career belief themes that characterised the orientation of this sample to career planning. These themes are described below.

Proficiency Beliefs: As we have noted above, developing proficiency for a specific range of work skills is necessary for effective career development. We found a consistent career belief theme that characterised the Indian career aspirant was linked to the importance laid on acquiring qualifications, skills and personal proficiency for an occupation before entering the world of work.

Control and Self-Direction Beliefs: Life situations and experiences influence the direction that one's life can take. This category of beliefs reflected the individual's sense of control over the trajectory of his or her life. Mindsets in this category were linked to the career aspirant's belief that he or she could deal with the exigencies presented by life situations. These beliefs also reflected the young person's orientation to direct and take charge of the way in which his or her life progressed.

Persistence Beliefs: Difficulties and hurdles usually punctuate progress toward a career goal. Successful career development requires the individual to face and attempt to overcome these barriers. The third category of mindsets toward career development that our analysis extracted comprises beliefs that support persistence toward career goals despite difficulties and barriers that could emerge during the process of career preparation.

The identification of these three career belief themes lends support to the observation that 'types' of career beliefs could exist within the minds of young career aspirants in the Indian context. It is emphasised that this study does not preclude the possibility that other belief themes could characterise orientations to career development. It is possible for example that belief themes could vary across age groups and cultural environments. The three belief themes identified by this study have served to highlight the possibility that such themes do exist and therefore must be taken into account by the career counsellor.

Study 14: Career belief themes across socio-economic status groups (Arulmani, 2000; Arulmani & Nag-Arulmani, 2002)

Our field observations had indicated that differences could exist between the career beliefs held by higher and lower SES groups. The sample in Study 13 was divided into two groups based on their socio-economic status. Individuals who had been categorised as belonging to Level 1 and 2 (as described in Box 4.3.) were combined and this group was called the Lower SES Group. Those categorised as belonging to Levels 3, 4 and 5 (as described in Box 4.3.) were combined to form the Higher SES Group. 51.5% of students in the sample comprised the Lower SES Group and 48.5% comprised the Higher SES group. The differences in the performance of these two groups on the three belief themes of the CBPS were further analysed.

Proficiency Beliefs:
In concurrence with some of our other studies reported above, we found that the beliefs held by the Lower SES Group in this sample reflected a lower emphasis on acquiring work skills proficiencies. As we discussed earlier, this could be the result of the high degree of pressure on lower SES groups to begin earning for survival at the earliest. Conversely, the Higher SES

Group's response to the CBPS revealed that they placed a higher value on acquiring skills that would enhance their proficiency for an occupation.

Control and Self-Direction Beliefs:

The performance of the Lower SES group on the CBPS demonstrated a lower orientation to exercising control over the trajectory of their lives. Their responses reflected helplessness in the face of barriers to career development with a tendency to view the future in terms of the deprivations they experienced in their present situation. The higher SES groups on the other hand showed a stronger orientation to creating opportunities for themselves. Their responses reflected a high motivation to engage with career development tasks and fight against the odds.

Persistence Beliefs:

Our observations indicated that the persistence toward career goals is lower and less consistent among lower SES groups. Their responses to the CBPS reflected a strong predisposition to sacrificing long term gains for more immediate gains in the here and now. The higher SES groups on the other hand demonstrated a higher degree of persistence. Their responses reflected a long term orientation to the future with evidence of planning, setting goals and preparing for the future.

Implications of this study

The information presented above from the Indian context indicates first of all that career beliefs could have a strong influence on the career preparation process. It is further noted that the negativity of these beliefs could vary across SES groups. The Lower SES Group's responses to the CBPS, indicate that exerting time and effort toward planning for a career that might be actualised sometime in the future may not be a felt need for lower SES groups. Conversely, the Higher SES Group in this sample is more likely to commit time and resource to acquiring proficiencies for suitable employment. Typically, middle and higher SES families in India plan for long-duration college education for their children. On the other hand, the lower SES groups could be at risk to enter the world of work as unskilled labourers. Families from higher SES groups are more likely to commit a significant amount of resource to the career development of their children. However, they could also show a characteristic confusion between preparing for the world of work with pertinent skills and merely acquiring degrees and qualifications. It is

possible therefore that the higher SES groups would value counselling and guidance services and would be more likely than the lower SES groups to seek such services for career planning.

Keeping in mind the discussions we have had earlier, it is important that we recognise the robust role played by the community in the life of the individual. Western research strongly suggests that cognitions and beliefs emerging from socio-economic and cultural sources influence skill development, interpretations of self-observations and world-view generalisations (Krumboltz & Nichols, 1990). It has been highlighted that career beliefs emerging from the community could contaminate the individual's ability to generate a suitable array of occupational possibilities (Lent & Brown, 1996). Other researchers in the West have suggested that career myths are passed from one generation to the next and give rise to career decision-making behaviours that are based on a structure of strongly held beliefs validated by the community (e.g. Lewis and Gilhousen (1981). Investigations into the impact of community held beliefs have not as yet begun to figure prominently in the Indian literature. In a context wherein the influence of socio-cultural factors such as caste and prestige hierarchies is strongly felt, it is likely that underlying beliefs could have a marked influence on career development.

Counselling watch point
Career counselling would be more effective when underlying belief structures are identified and dealt with. Social cognitions could vary from one cultural and SES group to another. These beliefs are enduring and resistant to change, so much so that they are transmitted across generations. Addressing these thinking patterns would mean first of all that the counsellor is able to identify the career beliefs in operation. Working on career beliefs with the individual alone may not be sufficient or effective. Drawing the family into the counselling process and highlighting the impact of career beliefs on career development is important.

The impact of self-efficacy on career development

Robert Lent and his colleagues have in their Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) interpreted Albert Bandura's ideas of self-efficacy beliefs within the context of career development. Details

about the theory and its relevance to India are presented in Chapter 3. In summary, self-efficacy beliefs are thinking patterns that reflect the individual's confidence in personal ability to be successful in the performance of specific tasks. Low self-efficacy beliefs for a set of tasks would predispose the individual to showing low interest in approaching these tasks. Within the context of career choice behaviour, women are known to show low levels of self-efficacy for male dominated careers. Little is known about the operation of self-efficacy in the Indian environment. Study 15 below reports our findings with regard to self-efficacy beliefs in the context of career preparation amongst Indian high school students.

Study 15: An exploration of self-efficacy beliefs in the context of career preparation among high school students (Arulmani, 1999; 2000)

Self-efficacy is a construct that acquires meaning within the context of a set of tasks. Our field experience indicated that an important career development task confronting the Indian high school student is having to make a decision regarding what he or she is going to do after high school. In its most fundamental form this decision centres around preparing for a future career by pursuing further education or discontinuing education to seek employment. These were the two career development tasks that our research focussed on. A self-efficacy measure was administered to 1,476 high school students that comprised items addressing self-efficacy beliefs for Seeking Employment vs. Further Education. A rating of 1 indicated low self-efficacy while 7 indicated high self-efficacy beliefs for these career developmental tasks. We found that self-efficacy beliefs for Seeking Employment decreased with SES, while self-efficacy for Further Education increased with SES. In other words, students from lower SES backgrounds expressed a higher self-efficacy for Seeking Employment at the earliest, while those from higher SES backgrounds were not confident of being successful at this task. On the other hand, lower SES students did not demonstrate as high a self-efficacy level for pursuing Further Education after high school when compared with their higher SES counterparts.

Implications of these findings:

Our earlier observations indicated that career beliefs characterising lower SES groups predispose them to seeking employment even before they acquire work skills. Alternatively, the career

beliefs prevailing in higher SES environments foster the development of self-efficacy for career preparation through further education. The impact of self-efficacy on career development therefore seems to be characteristically different across SES groups. Let us examine the manner in which SES impacts the sources of self-efficacy. The opportunities for performance accomplishments related to immediate earning are more frequent for the low SES young person than the higher SES groups. The need to earn pushes him or her into the world of work and earning quickly begins. The lower SES young person is surrounded by role models (vicarious experiences) who have all begun earning immediately. Conversely, the higher SES group is surrounded by role models who went on for further education, who emphasise the value of entering into a science based career and so on. The lower SES young person is strongly persuaded to begin working immediately while the other group is strongly persuaded to continue education. As a result, self-efficacy for seeking immediate work is higher amongst the lower SES groups while career preparation self-efficacy is higher for the higher SES groups.

Counselling watch point

Career beliefs and self-efficacy orientations create an environment wherein the lower SES groups are impelled toward seeking employment without acquiring work skills. In the short run, the young person from a lower SES background may find employment. However, the lack of a foundation of adequately schooled work skills places young people from disadvantaged backgrounds on a trajectory toward insecure employment in the long run. Counselling therefore needs to work toward enhancing self-efficacy for career preparation activities amongst the lower SES groups. On the other hand, career preparation that is sterile and devoid of work skills enhancement places the higher SES groups at risk for being well educated but not adequately fit for employment.

Counselling that focuses on skill literacy enhancement for these groups would ultimately contribute to their employability.

Professional and organisational structures

Organisational Structures for Career Counselling services - the Indian context

The importance of career counselling has been emphasised in India from as early as 1938 when the Acharya Narendra Dev Committee set up in Uttar Pradesh underlined the importance of guidance in education. Various committees and commissions (e.g. The Mudaliar Commission, 1952; the Kothari Education Commission, 1964-66; the National Policies on Education, 1986 & 1992) have subsequently made strong recommendations for the formalisation of guidance and counselling services at a national level. The earliest specific recommendations for the development of formal career guidance services in India were made almost five decades ago (Barnette, 1954). It was suggested at this time, that three specific areas be focused on, namely, occupational and educational information, problems concerning the formulation and standardisation of psychological tests, and the development of training services for careers teachers. Resulting policy formulations have provided for an organisational structure for the delivery of career counselling services. The existing structure provides services through two sources. The first is through *government agencies* such as the Central and State Bureaux of Guidance. These agencies have been established to provide guidance and counselling services at a national level. At the second level, career counselling is available through *private* organisations such as human resource development companies, non-governmental initiatives, psychological clinics, counselling centres and child guidance centres. In the recent past, some of the boards of education (e.g. the Board of the Indian Certificate of Secondary Education) have begun to offer careers advice through a distance-testing system. Careers cells have also begun to appear in private colleges and universities.

An evaluation of this structure reveals that government sponsored guidance bureaux have not been able to make much headway - the reasons cited being the paucity of funds and the lukewarm attitude towards guidance on the part of state educational authorities (Bhatnagar & Gupta, 1999). While systems for service delivery have been set up in the form of Guidance Bureaus at the State and Central levels, little or nothing has been done to optimise the effective operation of these centers. Meanwhile, the services offered by private organisations and

individual counsellors have been well received with a rapidly growing demand. Private organisations however are restricted to specific geographical areas and have not been able to expand their services to a national scale. Furthermore services offered by private organisations are concentrated almost exclusively in the cities and most often target the higher economic status groups. The career development needs of young people from rural or less privileged backgrounds are most often left unaddressed. While an organisational structure for career counselling does exist in India, its scope seems to be quite limited.

Professional Structures for Career Counselling services - the Indian context

From the point of view of training, the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) offers a one year post graduate diploma in Guidance and Counselling. A few university departments of psychology and education also offer training in counselling at the post graduate level. In addition to this private organisations that offer training in counselling skills, sometimes include career counselling as one of the topics to be covered.

An evaluation of the existing professional structure reveals that the training programmes currently in operation provide an effective deepening of trainees' knowledge of career counselling but do very little to enhance their skill literacy for the effective delivery of counselling services. An examination of existing curricula for counsellor training reveals that while a variety of theories are presented very little has emerged in terms of an Indian model of career counselling. Furthermore, India has not as yet defined the parameters for career counsellor qualifications. An alarming trend seen as a result is that 'counselling' is a term that is loosely used and in India, a career counselling service could be offered by anyone at all. Quite often well-intentioned individuals and social service clubs who are 'interested in youth' assume the role of career counsellors. In the school / college context, career counselling is a responsibility often carried by the teacher or lecturer who is deputed to be the student welfare officer. We found in our interactions with 26 colleges located in different parts of the country, that only 6 of the lecturers who were in charge of career counselling had a background in some form of behavioural science. Only 3 were trained in counselling.

An evaluation of the content of career counselling indicates that the majority of the programmes currently available in India do not move far beyond career information delivery. Career counselling workshops for students are often limited to presentations from professionals about their respective careers. The psychological aspect of career counselling that ought to focus on identification of personal interests and aptitudes, skills for decision-making, conflict resolution, career path planning, integration of community influences, psychological testing and so on, is available only rarely. At the popular level career counselling has almost become synonymous with obtaining information about different careers. Admittedly, providing accurate and up-to-date information is an essential aspect of career counselling. It is however vital to remember that dissemination of information is only one aspect of comprehensive career counselling. We have observed that exposing a career aspirant to information, without adequately preparing this young person for the larger task of career decision-making could affect career development. Study 16 presents information that emerged when we examined the impact of career information on a group of high school students.

Study 16: Career information delivery as a form of career counselling (Arulmani, 2000)
We studied the relative impact of two types of counselling interventions on the career development of a sample of 755 high school boys. The first intervention was a replication of the most common form of career counselling available and focussed only on the delivery of careers information. This was called the Careers Information Intervention (CII). The second offered a more comprehensive form of career counselling that included activities for deepening self understanding (through aptitude and interest testing), dealing with influences on career decision-making (such as career beliefs, prestige factors etc), integrating family influences, understanding the world of work and finally developing a career path. This intervention was called the Self Efficacy Intervention (SEI). Both interventions were offered for an equal duration of time amounting to a total of 24 hours in 8 modules.

When assessed before the interventions were implemented, the two groups did not show any significant difference on measures of career decision-making, negativity of career beliefs and career preparation. After the interventions, the SEI Group recorded significant improvements on each of these measures. Career preparation outcomes improved and confusion related to making

career choices and the negativity of career beliefs were significantly reduced. On the contrary, the CII Group's scores for career decision-making and negative career beliefs worsened after the intervention. The CII Group tended to show an *increase* in confusion related to career decision-making and in the negativity of career beliefs. "I now know all about many, many careers. But how do I make a choice? It all seems too much for me," – a comment made by one of the students the CII Group aptly summaries the effect of this intervention.

Implications of this finding

The students who went through Study 16 were in high school and the career development inputs that students of this age group typically receive is usually limited to career information. The critical point to be noted is that students at this stage in their development are usually not mature enough to receive, interpret and use this data. Findings from Study 16 seem to indicate that the reduction of career counselling to career information delivery, is not merely ineffective - it could even have a negative outcome. This appears to be particularly true in situations where students are exposed to large amounts of career information *before* they are prepared to receive and use this information.

Counselling watch point

Career information is no doubt a vital aspect of career counselling. However counselling inputs must first of all enhance the young person's career maturity. Career counselling therefore must begin by focusing on enhancing self-understanding. It is after the young person has developed some insights into personal interests, aptitudes and career beliefs that career information can be effectively absorbed.

Conclusion

Career development is an aspect of modern human life that is influenced by a number of factors. These influences vary from one culture to another. We attempted in this chapter to understand some of the influences that impinge upon the career development of the Indian young person. Career Psychology as a scientific discipline is in its infancy in India. Although organisational

and professional structures have been put into place, they are not as yet well developed. Career counselling as a theoretically grounded, model driven service for the Indian young person does not seem to be available for large scale use. The tremendous changes in the world of work simultaneously place a high degree of pressure on the Indian young person to make effective career choices. In the absence of effective systems for career counselling, the career decision-making process could continue to be influenced by the various psycho-social , educational and socio-economic factors that we have described in this chapter

India is urgently in need of a model for career counselling – a model that has been derived from systematic research and interpreted within a valid theoretical framework. It is also essential that this model is a dynamic one and constantly remains pertinent to labour market trends. Efforts to develop such a model could keep the following indicators in mind. Firstly an effective model would provide a clear indication of the nature of the impact of psychological, socio-cultural, socio-economic and educational factors on career development behaviour. This framework would guide the development of psychometric devices and the standardisation of intervention techniques, including a system for categorising and updating careers information. An effective intervention would necessarily be able to accommodate the demands imposed by age, language, cultural difference, socio-economic status, special needs and similar variations. Secondly such a model would provide a framework for delivering career counselling services. Finally an effective model of career counselling would describe the parameters for the systematic training of individuals who provide career counselling services.

The following chapter attempts to address some of these issues.

Chapter 5

Career Counselling – A Model for India

The earlier chapters in this section examined some of the essential elements associated with career development and career choice behaviour. First of all we discussed some of the key factors that influenced the evolution of that essential human tendency – work. We then attempted to define and describe the meaning of career – an important artefact of work in the contemporary context. We moved on to try and understand the influences on career development and examined the main theoretical trends that have emerged in the history of Career Psychology. The last chapter examined factors that influence career choice in the Indian context. One of the most important themes that has consistently emerged over these discussions is the pressing and urgent need for a systematic approach to career counselling that is theory driven and based on research findings from the Indian context. Most importantly our earlier chapters have tried to focus on transformations in work ethic as social-cognitive environments changed down the ages and across civilisations. The current chapter will draw from these earlier discussions and observations from our research to present ideas that could lay the rudiments of a foundation on which a model for career counselling in India could be developed.

The Background

Theoretical frames of reference

Our initial efforts began with little more than intuition and field experience to go by. The first challenge was to find a firm theoretical vantage point from which to examine these experiences. Our review of theories of Career Psychology (Chapter 3) revealed that a large proportion of investigations into Career Psychology have been notably oriented toward the white middle class in developed economies and critiques of existing careers research have described this to be lacuna in the literature (Richardson, 1993; Harmon, 1994; Tractenberg, Streumer Jan, & Van Zolingen, 2002). Some effort has subsequently been directed toward filling this gap (e.g. Fouad & Bingham, 1995; McWhirter, 1997; Siann, Lightbody, Nicholson, Tait, & Walsh, 1998; Tang, Fouad, & Smith, 1999). However, most of these studies focus on racial minorities (primarily

migrant population) *within* developed, western industrialised countries. Although the earliest recommendations for the development of formal career guidance services in India were made almost five decades ago (Barnette, 1954), systematic research into the career development process in the Indian situation does not seem to have gone much beyond exploratory work. As a result, career psychology has remained an infant science in India and career guidance services are not as yet theory driven or based on adequate research.

Our first step was to identify Indian research into *related* aspects of human behaviour and extract findings that have a bearing on career development. These indications from Indian research are described in Chapters 3 and 4. Secondly, rather than dismiss all Western models as unsuitable, the extent to which existing theoretical frameworks could be adapted to the Indian ethos was explored. The schools of thought that have made important contributions to understanding career development have been discussed in Chapter 3 and their potential relevance to the Indian situation have been highlighted. Based on these reviews we draw primarily from three theoretical sources, namely, the Developmental approaches, the Social Learning theories and the Social Cognitive theories.

Field investigations

Our starting point was to articulate hunches emerging from observations made during direct interventions and careers workshops conducted in the field. These observations emerged from careers education programmes we have conducted among approximately 45,000 school children, college-going youth, children with special needs, school dropouts, child labourers and unemployed persons from varied socio-economic status groups over a period of 10 years. Our observations were then systematically investigated within the framework of related Indian research and the theoretical formulations described above. Our findings have been reported in Chapter 4. India presents a situation where the paucity of resources and urgency of need do not allow for the luxury of research that is not directly linked to application. Our approach therefore rests on the 'action research' model that has constantly been guided by the reality in the Indian situation. An important consideration before us therefore has been to direct our efforts towards

developing interventions based on our findings from field investigations that could be applied and used to help young people make effective career choices.

The point of focus

As we have seen in earlier discussions, career development is a process that spans the entire life span of the individual. It is not our current objective to describe a model that would outline career development across the entire life span in the Indian context. We will focus on a specific developmental stage and address the issues of career development surrounding that particular life stage. Given the urgency of the career development needs emerging at the end of high school and the persistence of these needs until early adulthood when the individual settles into a career, our point of focus will be the age group between 12 to 21 years.

The transition from school to work is a crucial stage in career development. A closer look at this stage of career development in the Indian situation indicates that a key developmental task is linked to *preparing* to enter the world of work. On this background our discussions will focus on the career *preparation* behaviour of young people from the middle of adolescence to early adult hood.

Our goal for this chapter is to draw from findings in the Indian literature, theories that have held sway in the West and our own research to formulate propositions based on which a model for career counselling could be derived. It is highlighted that these propositions are only a preliminary attempt at formulating guidelines for career counselling. We invite and urge social science researchers to further investigate these ideas and examine their validity.

The Career Preparation Process Model of Career Counselling

Our model for career counselling is undergirded by the important tenet put forth by the developmental theorists that career preparation and decision-making is a *process*. The individual's vocational self-concept and orientation to the world of work are closely linked to the nature of personal growth and development. According to theory, career development ought to keep time with the normative forces of maturation. Normative career development is expected to

result from the maturing of career interests and aptitudes, the matching of this personal profile with suitable careers and then preparation for entry into one of these careers. In reality however a number of non-normative factors influence the career preparation process. Career development occurs within a social and cultural context. If counselling is to be relevant and accurate, it is essential that we acknowledge and account for the contextual factors that influence the process of career preparation. Our investigations into some of these non-normative factors have been presented in greater detail in Chapter 4. The salient findings from these observations are now presented in the form of propositions that could contribute to urgently needed systematic research in the field of Career Psychology in India and to a career counselling model for India.

Significant others

Observation:

Career preparation in India, is not driven by purely individualistic motivations, and the community often plays a significant role in the career decision-making process (Ramanujam, 1979; Sinha, 1979). Within this context, an observation that has emerged from our experiences is that *significant others* in the career aspirant's life play a vital role in his or her career development behaviour. As reported in Study 1 (page: *****) the most significant of these influences seems to be the role played by parents.

Proposition 1:

Career preparation in the Indian context is mediated by the community of which the career aspirant is a part, with parental influence having a defining impact.

Socio-economic status

Observation:

A closer investigation into the influence of the community throws up the possibility that socio-economic status differentiates between communities' orientation to career preparation and

planning. We have reported in Study 11 (page: *****) for example, that it is the middle SES groups that attribute the highest importance to career planning, while communities from lower and higher SES levels do not seem to lay as high an emphasis on preparing for a career.

Proposition 2A:

Career development behaviour will vary in a characteristic manner across the lower, middle and higher SES groups.

Proposition 2B:

The importance laid on career preparation will rise with SES levels, peak around the middle SES level and then show a decline. The emphasis laid on career preparation by higher SES groups is likely to be lower than the middle SES groups, but higher than groups from lower SES backgrounds.

Career beliefs

Observation:

Our next observation points to the possibility that social cognitive variables in the form of career beliefs influence the career decision-making process. Some of these career beliefs are *common* across communities and SES groups. The attribution of *prestige* to occupational categories seems to be consistent across SES groups. Careers seem to be placed on a hierarchy of prestige across SES groups. Study 3 (page: *****) indicates that varying levels of prestige are attributed to subject groups and career paths. Science based subjects are attributed with the highest level of prestige, with commerce and the humanities coming next. Career paths that are linked to vocational courses are attributed with the lowest prestige levels. College degrees tend to be placed at a higher level of prestige than skills based diploma courses. Another belief theme common across SES groups is with regard to *gender* and career choices. Studies 9 and 10 (page: *****) indicate that individuals as well as their parents seem to be committed to the career belief that the role of breadwinner is largely associated with the male, while the female's primary role is that of home maker.

While some career beliefs seem to be common across communities our observations also indicated that other career beliefs differentiate *between* SES groups. Study 13 (page: *****) reports our investigations that identified three such career belief themes using the Career Belief Patterns Scale. It seems possible that the career preparation behaviour of lower and higher SES groups could be differentiated along the categories of Proficiency Beliefs, Control and Self-Direction Beliefs and Persistence Beliefs. Study 14 (page: *****) reports our finding that the beliefs held by lower SES groups reflected lower levels of self-direction and a tendency to give up easily in the face of barriers to career development. They placed a lower emphasis on acquiring work skills and a strong tendency to enter the world of work as unskilled labourers. The beliefs held by the middle and higher SES groups on the other hand reflected relatively higher levels of motivation to prepare for a career.

We have argued all along that career beliefs are in constant interaction with socio-economic status and community characteristics. However the possibility that some career beliefs could be independent of this interaction has not been directly addressed by our model of career preparation behaviour. This possibility invites further investigation.

Proposition 3A:

Career beliefs mediate the career preparation process, both directly and indirectly.

Proposition 3B:

Belief structures attribute varying levels of prestige to subjects, courses and career paths. These prestige hierarchies influence the career preparation process.

Proposition 3C:

Beliefs pertaining to gender mediate the process of occupational role allocation leading to restricted career development among women.

Proposition 3D

Beliefs pertaining to abilities and disabilities mediate the career preparation process, leading to restricted career development.

Proposition 3E:

Certain career belief themes differentiate career preparation behaviour across SES groups.

Proposition 3F:

Lower SES groups will place a lower emphasis on activities related to acquiring work skills proficiencies and are more likely to enter the world of work as unskilled labourers, with out acquiring work skill proficiencies. The middle and higher SES groups are more likely to place a stronger emphasis on further education and acquiring work skills proficiencies before entering the world of work.

Proposition 3G:

Lower SES groups will demonstrate a lower orientation to exercising control over the trajectory of their lives and are more likely to express helplessness in the face of barriers to career development. The middle and higher SES groups are more likely to create opportunities for themselves and take responsibility for personal development and prosperity.

Proposition 3H:

The persistence toward career goals will be lower and less consistent among lower SES groups and these groups are likely to sacrifice long-term gains for more immediate gains in the here and now. The middle and higher SES groups are more likely to have a long-term orientation to the future and are likely to demonstrate systematic planning and a higher persistence in the face of barriers to career development.

Career developmental tasks, career interests and aptitudes

Observation:

The propositions made above suggest that the *social-cognitive environment* that the career aspirant is a part of influences career preparation and planning. Career developmental theories indicates that career development is a process that progresses in steps and stages, with each stage being characterised by a set of career developmental tasks. The emergence of career developmental tasks is described to keep pace with the individual's personal maturation. The propositions made above suggest that the community (significant others) transmits career beliefs to career aspirants within the community. Based on these observations we suggest that community influences create a *career decision-making environment*, that is typically

characterised by the presence of certain career beliefs. These belief structures mediate the emergence of career developmental tasks and career interests.

At the end of high school the most fundamental career developmental task before the Indian young person is to choose between two career paths, namely further education for the acquisition of work skills proficiencies (through college or vocational education) or seeking employment immediately. According to career developmental theory this important career developmental task ought to be resolved by the manifestation of the individual's interests and aptitudes. In reality, career beliefs seem to mediate this resolution. For example, an individual may demonstrate a high interest for careers linked to the humanities. It is most probable that this interest is overshadowed by prevailing beliefs that push this person away from personal interests toward science based courses and careers which are believed to be more prestigious. Another career aspirant from a middle class family may show a high aptitude for practically oriented careers and training through vocational courses. Here again the firmly held belief that vocational courses do not lead to 'respectable' jobs makes it more likely that this person would aspire for a college degree. In another situation, a young person from a lower SES group may show a high interest in further education. This interest may not have the opportunity to bloom within a context of career beliefs that lay a higher emphasis on immediate earning. We have reported in Studies 3 to 6 (page: *****) that all SES groups tend to place the highest value on college education and the lowest on vocational education while, opting to work immediately, is almost exclusively linked to the lower SES groups. These observations indicate that any attempt at understanding the factors that influence the resolution of career developmental tasks would be incomplete without taking into account the career beliefs prevailing in the social-cognitive environment. Developmental factors such as the maturing and manifestation of personal interests and aptitudes are pushed to the background.

Proposition 4A:
Career interests are influenced by career beliefs. In a situation where the influence of career beliefs is significant, discrepancies between career interests and aptitudes will be seen.

Proposition 4B:

The resolution of career developmental tasks at the end of high school is mediated by prevalent career beliefs. The role played by personal interests and aptitudes in the resolution of these tasks will be less significant.

Self efficacy beliefs

Observation:

It is at this point that the question of self-efficacy becomes interesting and sharply relevant. As we discussed earlier (Chapter 3) self-efficacy acquires meaning within the context of a specific set of tasks. The young person from a lower SES background has grown up in an environment where career beliefs emphasising early earning have been dominant, while beliefs linked to career preparation have not been as prominent. On the other hand the young person from a higher SES background has grown up in an environment where further education is believed to contribute to career development. Our earlier studies indicated that career beliefs and SES work together to create an environment of differing career developmental tasks. Let us look specifically at two such tasks – finding employment and seeking further education. While the lower SES environment presents tasks related to seeking and finding employment at the earliest, the higher SES environment presents the career development task of preparing for a career through further education. As reported in Study 15 (page: *****), we found that self-efficacy for the task of seeking employment seems to be higher for lower SES groups while career preparation self-efficacy seems more well developed at higher SES levels. Career beliefs therefore seem to create an environment wherein the sources of self-efficacy operate differently across SES groups.

According to the Social Learning Theory of Career Decision-Making, career beliefs are transmitted across generations and give rise to career decision-making behaviours that are based on a structure of strongly held beliefs, validated by the community. The important point to be noted of course is that career decision-making that leads to premature entry into the world of work without the requisite work skills, places the career aspirant on a trajectory toward uncertain

employment in the long term. Although the lower SES young person's self-efficacy for employment may be high, he or she does not possess the professional skills that will foster stable and secure career development in the future.

Proposition 5A:

Career beliefs create an environment wherein the sources of self-efficacy for specific career development tasks operate differently across SES groups.

Proposition 5B:

Socio-economic status will affect career development trajectories through its influence on career beliefs and self-efficacy beliefs. Self-efficacy beliefs will create different outcome expectations and goal conceptualisations across SES groups.

The Career Preparation Process Model: A summary

The Career Preparation Process Model suggests first of all that career preparation is a process that occurs within a particular social-cognitive environment. Within this environment, socio-economic status variables and career beliefs interact with each other and have a unique influence on the sources of self-efficacy. These factors in turn influence the manner in which choice and volition are exercised and career developmental tasks resolved. Some groups imbibe career beliefs and are exposed to sources of self-efficacy that predispose them toward immediate, unskilled (possibly unplanned) entry into the world of work. The career beliefs and the sources of self-efficacy that other groups are exposed to, move them toward further education. The dynamics of this process of career preparation has the final outcome of insecure or fruitful employment in the future, according to how personal potentials and career satisfaction are actualised. The figure overleaf presents a schematic illustration of this model of the career preparation process.

Illustrations of the model

Ram – a boy from a low SES home

Ram is a boy, living in extremely difficult social and economic circumstances, who is doing poorly in his studies and whose parents are illiterate and unemployed. The career beliefs prevailing in this environment are likely to place a low value on career preparation, self-direction and persisting toward career goals. The Career Preparation Process model postulates that this environment could impact Ram's sources of self-efficacy in the following manner: Ram's vicarious experiences through the role models he is exposed to could reflect failure experiences, with bitter and defeatist attitudes (e.g. his father's earnings after a day of extremely strenuous physical labour could be a mere Rs. 80). Social persuasory forces (verbal persuasion) could be such that Ram experiences a high degree of pressure to begin contributing to the family income at the earliest (e.g. "What you have studied so far is good enough; now go out and get a job"). It is possible that significant others in his environment express scepticism toward career preparation activities (e.g. "Look at that college graduate, he doesn't even have a job."). His own poor academic performance could create negative emotions toward education (e.g. "In any case I'm failing in my exams; I'm no good in my studies."). Overall, Ram's environment places constraints on the success experiences (performance accomplishments) that he could have with career preparation. At the end of high school Ram would be confronted with the career developmental task of seeking employment or going on for further education. The Career Preparation Process model postulates that by this time Ram's social learning experiences have been such that his thinking patterns are characterised by negativity and scepticism about the career preparation process. Ram could have learned to believe for example, that "undergoing further education to enhance work skills is a waste of time", or "studying further is only for rich folk". The model goes on to postulate that this combination of socio-economic factors and social-cognitive factors, would have led to the development of a higher self-efficacy for seeking immediate employment than for career preparation activities. As a result it is most likely that Ram would enter the world of work as an unskilled labourer, which in turn places him on a career development trajectory toward uncertain employment.

Swamy – a boy from a middle class home

Swamy is a boy who is doing reasonably well in his studies and whose parents are educated and hold secure government jobs. This family is likely to believe that certain careers are valuable, prestigious and that these careers must be sought after. Career preparation is likely to be associated with strenuous efforts to enter courses that lead to these careers. According to the Career Preparation Process model this environment could impact Swamy's sources of self-efficacy in the following manner: Swamy's vicarious experiences through the role models he is exposed to could reflect success experiences as a result of career preparation. Swamy would be strongly encouraged (social persuasory forces) to apply the utmost effort toward preparing for high prestige careers (e.g. "If you become a doctor, you will be highly respected"). His socio-economic environment could be such that it offers numerous opportunities for success experiences (performance accomplishments), related to preparing for a high prestige career. At the end of high school Swamy would be confronted with the career developmental task of seeking immediate employment or going on for further education. Swamy is likely to have developed a higher self-efficacy for pursuing further education and it is most likely that he will persist along the path toward the chosen career.

The prevailing social-cognitive environment while providing every support for career preparation, has not accommodated Swamy's personal interests and aptitudes. The crucial question now is with regard to *outcomes*. If Swamy possesses the interests and the aptitudes for the chosen career it is likely that he will do well at this career and experience satisfaction with his career. If this were not the case, Swamy would enter a career for which he does not have the suitability and it is likely that his employment status would be insecure.

In summary, the Career Preparation Process model views career development as a process that moves along with the individual's physical, cognitive and social maturation. The model highlights however that social cognitive factors and social learning experiences concurrently influence this process. It is into this tapestry of development that counselling for the effective elaboration of career progress must be woven.

The Career Preparation Process Model

Social Cognitive Environment

Resolution of career Developmental Tasks

Short Term Outcomes

Long term Outcomes

Socio-economic status

Career Beliefs

Sources of Self Efficacy

- Self Understanding

- Understanding the world of work

- Developing Career Alternatives

- Career Preparation

Entry into the world of work

Further Education

Insecure employment

Fruitful Employment
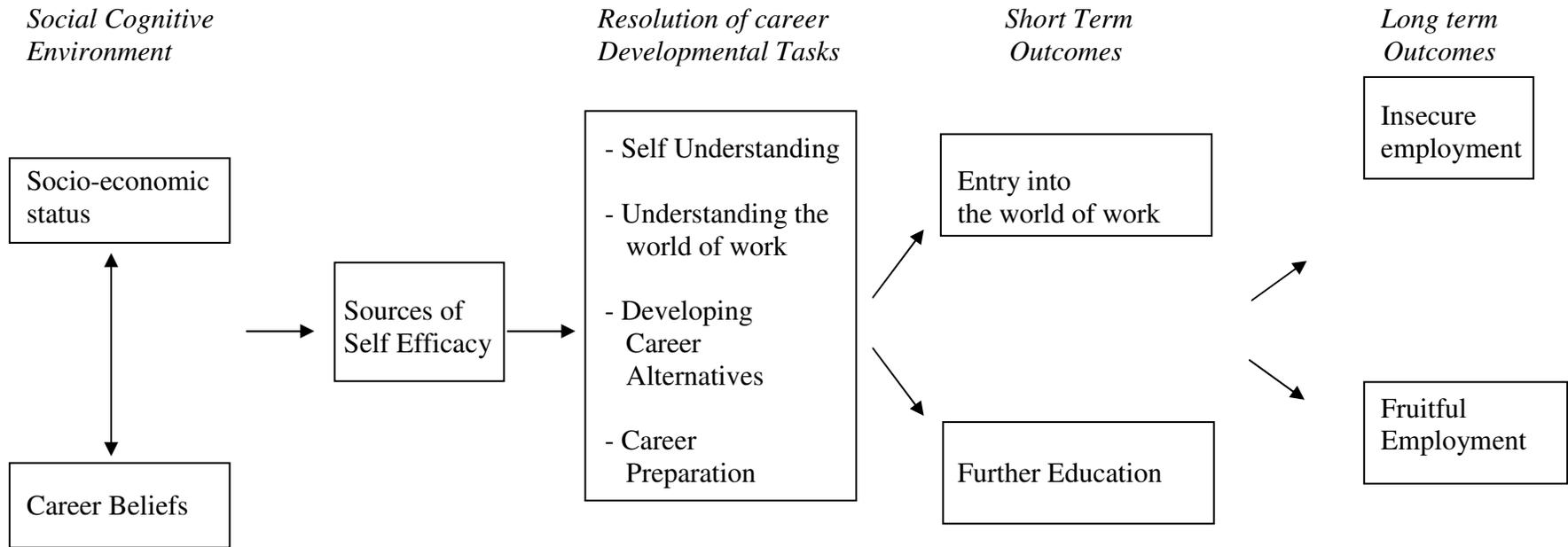
Sources of Self Efficacy: Performance Accomplishments
Vicarious Experiences
Verbal Persuasion
Physiological / Emotional Arousal

Principles for career counselling

The following discussion will attempt to apply the Career Preparation Process model to career counselling. We will draw from the observations and propositions made above along with descriptions of counselling watch points made in Chapter 4, to outline some of the key principles for career counselling. This discussion lays the foundation for career counselling methods, to be described in greater detail in Section 2 of this book.

Principle 1:

Effective career counselling addresses both the *normative* aspects of career development as well as the *non-normative* influences on the process of career preparation.

Normative career development
Our discussions are focussed on the career developmental stage spanning middle adolescence and early adulthood. Exploration is the key career developmental task before the young person during this stage of development. Career exploration at this stage has two points of focus.

Exploration related to oneself
The career aspirant would benefit significantly from activities that systematically and scientifically provide insights into *personal interests* and *aptitudes*. Standardised interest inventories and aptitude tests are mechanisms that can help enhance the young person's self-understanding.

Exploration related to the world of work
Career decisions are often limited to careers that the young person has heard about. Activities that provide opportunities to learn about new careers, understand career paths and eligibility criteria for entry into courses, highlighting the differences between degrees and diplomas, exposure to the functioning of the world of work, work ethics and life long career development are all integral aspects of career counselling. These inputs are essential to enhancing career

maturation and helping the young person deal effectively with the developmental task of career exploration.

Non-normative influences on career development

As we seen the normative unfolding of personal interests and aptitudes is often confounded by the operation of a variety of non-normative factors.

Influence of the community and significant others

An effective career counselling intervention needs to acknowledge the impact of significant others (parents and the larger community) on the career decision-making process. It is essential that counsellors working in the Indian ethos are sensitive to the role that the community and the family could play in the career decision-making process of a young person. Including the family and the community in the career counselling process may have a more effective outcome than focussing on the individual alone.

Gender sensitivity

Gender sensitive career counselling is an important necessity in the Indian context. This need not mean that career counselling ought to exhort young girls to emulate their male counterparts. A sensitive intervention would draw community and cultural factors into the counselling process, while simultaneously widening the young female career aspirant's career horizon.

Forces of urbanisation

Career counselling in India occurs in an atmosphere of economic development that is characterised by a high level of urbanisation. New entrants from the rural into the urban environment present with special career development needs. It important that counselling methods are developed to address these needs. A vital counselling requirement however is for interventions that are designed for implementation directly in the rural sector. At one level these interventions could adequately prepare the potential migrant to deal effectively with career development mechanisms that operate in the cities. At another level, counselling could highlight the value of modern careers that can be implemented in rural areas. Quite a large number of young people could thereby continue to pursue careers in their own villages. While they might

need to come to the city for effective career preparation, career counselling could help them develop a career plan that includes the possibility of returning to the rural sector equipped with a wider range of modern skills.

Labour market trends vs. personhood

Trends in the labour market are a powerful non-normative influence on career development. An important target for career counselling is to enhance the individual's awareness of manpower requirements and indicators from the labour market. However the truly effective career counselling programme is one that is not driven merely by economic trends and labour market cycles. While these are essential factors in any systematic career counselling process, it is vital that the personhood of the career chooser is firmly kept at the heart of career counselling. An individual possesses talents for more than one career. If this is not acknowledged, the large numbers of career aspirants (the majority perhaps) whose interest and aptitude profiles do not match prevailing demands from the labour market, may not find their place in the sun. Instead they may be impelled to choose careers that are popular – forsaking careers for which they might have a higher suitability. Being equipped with the methodology to strike this essential balance is the hallmark of effective career counselling.

Principle 2:

Career counselling goes beyond the identification of careers for which a young person may be suitable. Effective career counselling facilitates *career preparation*. Career preparation has three important facets.

Skills for decision-making and taking personal responsibility

Career choices comprise a series of decisions. Facilitating effective decision-making is perhaps the cornerstone of effective career counselling. The recipients of career counselling in India are young people who are a part of a cultural and educational system that does not directly nurture independent decision-making. As a result a common expectation that young career aspirants who come in for counselling have, is for the counsellor to provide the solutions to career

decision-making questions. An effective counselling programme does not provide career choice prescriptions, instead it helps the person discover careers paths and take personal responsibility for these decisions.

Skill literacy

Career preparation is often equated with strenuous efforts at getting ready to face school / college examinations and compete in entrance examinations. Career preparation goes beyond developing the proficiency for successful completion of examinations. Skill literacy is an essential ingredient of career preparation and the concept has been described in greater detail in Chapter 4 (page: *****). Effective careers interventions could help young people create opportunities to enhance their skill literacy. Volunteering, internship programmes, work shadowing, work experience are all effective methods of promoting skill literacy. The idea of developing a career plan that incorporates both academic training and skill literacy is often quite a new one to the young career chooser in India. The ideal career plan would incorporate both forms of qualifications. For example, a student who is enrolled for a bachelor's degree in psychology could enhance skill literacy by taking up a diploma in career counselling. Similarly a student who is pursuing a vocational course in commercial practice, could enhance career prospects by planning for a degree in commerce. These 'extras' could be planned for in the form of evening courses, vacation time courses or even after the first level of study is completed. The onus is on the young person to blend skills with theoretical knowledge. The career counsellor can help develop a career plan that incorporates both elements.

The Career Development Bridge

The lower SES groups' predisposition to enter the world of work as unskilled laborers is an important factor to be noted by the career counsellor. Entry into the world of work with some work skills places the low SES young person on a career development trajectory that has better future prospects than if he or she were an unskilled labourer. Short, skills based courses could be planned as the young person's 'first step' into the world of work. Courses such as these act as a career development bridge based on which further plans could be made. In other words, a career development bridge could provide a lower SES young person with a mechanism to delay the

need to seek employment in order to meet pressing economic and financial needs. In similar manner relevant activities could be planned for middle and higher SES career aspirants. Work experiences, opportunities to travel, interactions with professionals, internships – all add up to enhancing the young person's career maturity. The concept of the 'gap year' practised in some countries (e.g. the United Kingdom) is a good illustration of an institutionalised manner in which space is created for the enhancement of career maturity. Students who have completed the equivalent of higher secondary education (approximately at 18 years of age) are given the opportunity to 'take a year off' to travel, work within an organisation and interact with other cultures. These are examples of activities that are a bridge between the world of education and the world of work and serve to facilitate effective career preparation.

Principle 3:
Effective career counselling is tailored to suit the needs of the client.

In the few situations where career guidance services are available in India, they almost exclusively focus on giving students information about various careers. In fact careers guidance has become almost synonymous with career information delivery. Not all individuals may benefit from standard, information-oriented careers education classes. While it may not be practically possible to develop special interventions for every individual, it is necessary that certain guidelines be followed while interventions are developed or implemented.

Special needs

Career counselling for individuals with disabilities is an area that remains poorly addressed. Being prepared to meet these needs implies that the counsellor must be flexible in the application of counselling techniques (particularly the use of psychological tests). Assessment and career counselling for an adolescent with dyslexia for example needs to link current reading age with textual demands in various careers or the written language difficulties with written language demands in various courses (Nag-Arulmani & Arulmani, 1996).

Skill literacy and the career development bridge assume a different meaning in the special needs context. Helping the special needs career aspirant develop pre-vocational skills is one important aspect of career counselling. For example, a career aspirant with learning disability would significantly benefit from skills training that help her circumvent difficulties with reading and writing (e.g. advanced use of a word processor, use of visual organisers like mind maps and flow charts to reduce text, proof reading strategies). Recruitment outcomes are known to be more positive when job applicants with special needs are able to demonstrate skills related to *actual production* (e.g. filing, cutting, drawing, marking, drilling, typing, craft making). Employment survival for those with special needs is also known to be closely linked to *self management* skills (e.g. attendance, punctuality, reliability, honesty, ability to get along with others, ability to delay need gratification, awareness of work safety). A further career development input that we have found to be useful is to prepare the special needs career aspirant for failure experiences – *innoculation against failure* (Arulmani, 1998, 2000). The insensitivity of employers and co-workers, the lack of mastery over work skills and other factors make it quite likely that the first attempts to enter and survive in the world of work may result in failure experiences. Being prepared, would insulate the special needs career aspirant against the emotional fallout of such failures and allow her to try again.

Social class and economic status

Individuals from all social classes would benefit from planning and preparing for a career. However counselling targets need to be sensitive to the effects of socio-economic status. Counselling a boy to become a neurosurgeon without accounting for the yawning chasm of poverty before him, would be ineffective if not downright cruel. Career counselling for the less privileged needs to take their pressing economic difficulties into account while simultaneously providing them with mechanisms for a gradual widening of career horizons. With the more privileged, the counsellor may need to be skilled in the ability to cut through cynicism and highlight the relevance of career planning. Counselling techniques that balance the effects of social pressures, with identifying career options in which the young person is most likely to excel, would be critical to the success of career counselling for middle class groups.

Influences of caste

Young people from scheduled castes and tribes have been provided with a variety of supports both by government and social service organisations that are intended to help them build their lives. From the career counselling point of view, interventions that merely give the career chooser information regarding reservations, financial assistance and other programmes, may not be sufficient. It is vital that the subtle but powerful influence of caste is addressed. Counselling in this context would need to offer the lower caste career aspirant methods whereby he or she could rise above caste defined mindsets and move toward effective career development. It is also likely that the lower caste career aspirant would be confronted with negative attitudes and discrimination by others in his environment. Effective counselling would prepare this young person to deal with such forces of discrimination.

Principle 4:

Effective career counselling addresses career beliefs that influence the career preparation process.

We discussed in an earlier section that the family and community play a powerful role on the career decision-making behaviour of the individual in the Indian context. Career beliefs point to a specific area in which the community could exert a powerful influence. It is critical that career counsellors are aware that strongly held beliefs (particularly when they could extend to an entire community) could play a significant role in limiting or nurturing the expression of the career aspirant's aptitudes and interests. Career beliefs could vary from one community to another. The impact of career counselling may be maximised when techniques that address underlying cognitions about career development are incorporated into the counselling process. Effective career counselling would require the skills to elicit and address career beliefs. Facilitating insight into the impact of career beliefs on career planning, addressing conflicts between family / community and the individual's career beliefs are further examples of counselling targets that could be relevant in the Indian context.

Dealing with the effects of prestige

Career beliefs linked to the prestige attributes of a career significantly influence career preparation. This is true particularly with middle and higher SES level groups. An important implication for counselling is that careers interventions need to enhance students' awareness of the influence of prestige on their career choices. An effective programme would focus on helping a young career chooser look beyond the prestige attributes of a career.

Dealing with career belief patterns

Negative career beliefs regarding the relevance of work skills proficiency, self direction and persistence seem to place the lower SES groups on a trajectory toward unstable employment in the future. Career beliefs that cause the middle and higher SES groups to be unidimensional and restricted in setting career goals can also have negative outcomes. Addressing these habitual ways of thinking would enhance the effectiveness of counselling interventions.

Principle 5:

Effective career counselling provides inputs that would enhance career preparation self-efficacy.

Career preparation self-efficacy refers to the career aspirant's belief that he or she would be successful in activities related to preparing and planning for a career. In the final analysis the outcomes of counselling for career preparation would by nullified if the individual's self-efficacy for these activities remain unaddressed. Creating opportunities for performance accomplishments, vicarious experiences and social / verbal persuasion related to career preparation is essential if career counselling is to be fruitful. Counselling must also address negative states of emotional arousal (e.g. fear, anxiety, apathy) that could be associated with career preparation.

Conclusion

A thread that runs through this writing is our emphasis on the role played by cognitions and thinking patterns. Prevailing mindsets and beliefs particularly when they are endorsed by the community could quite easily override the outcomes of a career counselling interaction. It is vital that this invisible but powerful influence on career development is addressed and taken into account.

The spontaneous gesture of a young person who had attended one of our counselling programmes, provides an apt ending to this chapter. Quite some time after we had first met him this young man came to visit us. Full of confidence he walked in and said that he had completed his education and now had a regular job. Then, rather shyly he said he had something to give us. He drew a crumpled envelope from his pocket and said "I received my first salary today. I want you to use this to help someone else in the way you helped me." Inside the envelope was a fifty rupee note. Moved, but curious we asked him, which of our counselling groups he had belonged to. He looked up and said, "The group where we learned to *think* differently."

Section 2

Core skills for career counselling

Chapter 6

Understanding the skills for career counselling

Skills for career counselling: Western models and Asian culture

The previous section presented a theoretical and conceptual overview of career development. We now move into the application of these ideas to the *practice* of career counselling. An important point to be borne in mind at this juncture is that psychology as a discipline in India has been significantly influenced by western ideas. It has been said in fact that that modern psychology has been imported to India from the West, as a part of the general transfer of knowledge resulting from colonisation (Sinha, 1993). These western approaches have tended to sweep away the traditional indigenous frameworks of psychology. The practice of psychology has been criticised as being tied to the apron strings of the West with very little concern being directed toward the social realities prevailing in India (e.g. Sinha, 1990, 1993; Misra, 2000). This trend has also been seen in other Asian countries where modernisation is often perceived as the wholesale adoption of western models of science (Leong, 2002). The practice of career counselling has also been under similar western influences. Even a cursory review of existing textbooks on career psychology would indicate that most models of career counselling have western origins. The need for indigenous models of career counselling is an urgent one.

In contrast to the Indian situation, a number of other Asian countries have begun to examine Eurocentric models of guidance and counselling critically. Countries such as the Philippines, Taiwan, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Singapore, China and Japan have begun to seriously work toward adapting existing models and developing new techniques to address the career development needs of their young people in a culturally relevant manner. Figures 19 to 26 in this chapter present the challenges faced by career counsellors around Asia. Their experiences closely approximate the Indian situation. What is impressive is that systematic efforts have and are being directed toward addressing career development issues in these countries. The rest of this chapter will, focus specifically on skills for career counselling within the Indian context. We

will begin with an attempt to understand what career counselling is and then move toward specific career counselling skills that could be relevant to the Indian situation.

Figure 19: Skills for career counselling: Western models and Asian culture
Adapted from: Leong, 2002

Asian countries grappling with the need to develop their own systems of career counselling are under pressure to accept Eurocentric models of guidance and counselling. Many Asian countries experience the fear of assimilation into a western form of civilisation with its many evils as perceived by these countries. Therefore there has been a rallying cry of 'modernisation without westernisation'. These sentiments are also echoed in efforts to develop systems for career counselling

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What is career counselling?

In days of yore, the 'counsellor' perhaps was the 'wise person' of the village who, based on personal experiences and common sense, helped people deal with questions, decisions, problems and difficulties that cropped up in their lives. The role of the counsellor has grown and today the scientific study of human behaviour has yielded various techniques for counselling. Counselling has become a specialised activity with specific sets of skills being described for specific target groups. Career counselling is one such specialised branch of counselling psychology.

Counselling targets could perhaps be classified into two broad categories. One aspect of counselling addresses the needs of those who are already in distress and manifesting symptoms of emotional and mental upheaval. Another important counselling target is the *prevention* of emotional distress and the *promotion* of personal effectiveness in clearly defined areas. Most often career counselling focuses on the promotion of emotional well being by helping people make effective career decisions. It is also possible that the career counsellor maybe called upon to deal with the distress of an individual who is uncomfortable with the career choices he has

made and wants to now consider possibilities of making career changes. In another situation, a young person maybe in severe conflict with her family on the issue of career choice and counselling may have to focus on the strife that results from this discord.

Figure 20: Counselling skills: The Taiwanese context
Adapted from: Chang, 2002

The idea of a personal career seems to have become popular in Taiwan around the 1980s. Taiwanese career counsellors have in the recent past attempted to link counselling to Chinese culture. The Chinese characters that come close to the concept of career give the meaning 'life development' or 'life assessment'. Life development is compared to the grass that grows at the edge of a water body. The edge of the water signifies the border of something – just as life long development implies the boundary between life and death. Life assessment gives the meaning of calculating with care, just as career counselling is linked to helping individuals plan how they could spend their lives.

Career counselling in India

In response to the pressing need for career guidance in the Indian situation, various career guidance programmes have begun to make their appearance. An appraisal of these programmes indicates that a large majority of them fall into one of two categories:

- Programmes that are strongly driven by tests of various sorts
- Programmes that present the student with large quantities of careers information

As we have seen in our discussion of Career Psychology, career development is a process that is influenced by a variety of factors. Our own research has indicated that merely testing a student and telling her that she has a high logical ability or a low design ability does not really help her

make an effective career choice. Similarly it is well known that merely presenting young people with careers information can heighten their confusion. An effective career counselling intervention blends information that emerges from tests, with career information to help the young person discover suitable career paths. Interpreted in the light of existing careers intervention literature and the research reported in the earlier chapters, the following points could have important implications for the practice of career counselling in India.

- The *existing* method of career guidance in India, namely the dissemination of careers information and the aimless use of psychological tests may not be suited to the career aspirant's needs. The delivery of careers information *before* these young people are adequately prepared to receive and use this information, may in fact increase their confusion and negative career beliefs.

- It is essential that the career counsellor is equipped with skills to help the career aspirant gain insights into personal interests, talents and cognitions. If tests are used to facilitate this, it is essential that the career counsellor is trained not only to administer tests but also interpret test findings effectively. This book does not focus on psychological testing. Instead we present later in this section, *process* oriented techniques that could facilitate self-understanding, without heavy reliance on standardised psychometric devices. What is most vital is that the career counsellor has well developed skills to help the young person discover career paths based on objective information about self and current career information.

- Interventions that address *self-efficacy beliefs* and enhance the individual's conviction in the ability to be successful in career preparation activities offer a useful framework within which to address career development needs. This is particularly relevant in the case of young people who come from backgrounds that have caused a depletion in their confidence to prepare and plan for a career. Skills to *enhance career preparation self-efficacy* are therefore essential for effective career counselling.

- The durability of the outcomes of a careers intervention could be contingent on prevailing *career beliefs*. The effectiveness of an intervention can quickly fade away if attitudes, beliefs and cognitions about career choices are not addressed.

- The *community* and *family* could have an important bearing on the young person's career preparation activities. It is important that interventions incorporate activities that would draw the family into the career counselling process. For example, parent workshops could be held along with the student workshops, through which the community / family's career beliefs are addressed.

- Loss of intervention effect over time, is to be expected. Career preparation tasks such as keeping track of courses, entrance examinations, dates and deadlines are ongoing activities that the career aspirant could lose track of. Short *follow up* programmes close to the time when effective career preparation is most required, would help maintain and refresh the effect of the interventions.

- It is important that the crucial link between *skill acquisition* and career development is highlighted. As we have discussed earlier, a career path that exclusively focuses on acquiring qualifications does not guarantee the development of relevant work skills. An individual who is able to present him or herself to the labour market with knowledge *and* skills is much more attractive to the potential employer. Particularly at the high school and higher secondary levels, career counselling must focus on career *preparation* and help the career aspirant discover career paths that incorporate skill literacy into overall career development.

- It is essential that career counselling interventions are designed to suit the *needs* of the career aspirant. We have seen for example that career development needs vary across *socio-economic status* groups. It is also well known that a significant proportion of any population presents with *special needs*. The effective career counsellor must be equipped to deal with these variations in career development needs.

**Figure 21: The iron rice bowl: Jobs in
Communist China**
Adapted from: Zhang, 2002

In the communist economy all important occupational entities were
state-owned. Those employed by the state were assured of lifelong
jobs. This was called the 'iron rice bowl' system. When a worker
retired the children were given their parents' jobs. These jobs could
never be lost, just as an iron rice bowl could never be broken! In
China today however things are different. In a market-oriented
economy career has taken on a more modern significance.
Vocational guidance and career counselling services as a
professional field are now rapidly being developed to meet the
growing demand for career counselling in Chinese society.

Skills for career counselling

Career counselling draws from two sets of skills. It rests first of all on *certain basic principles of counselling* at which all career counsellors need to be adept. At the more specific level, career counselling is characterised by a group of skills that are linked primarily to aspects of career development.

Basic skills for career counselling

Career counselling is an interpersonal *relationship* in which one person (the counsellor) attempts to help another (the client), to *understand* and *cope* with questions, decisions problems and difficulties pertaining to career choice and development. The vital point to be noted is that effective counselling is *not* an exercise in advice giving. The career counsellor never loses sight of the fact that the responsibility for decision-making lies upon the shoulders of the career aspirant. The counsellor's role is to skillfully create an *environment* within which the client discovers ways of helping herself. Counselling is a personal relationship in which the client

aided by the counsellor, *examines* his life and *learns* to deal effectively with the challenges of career choice, preparation and development. The career counsellor is required to be adept and skilled at providing guidance and direction, while simultaneously ensuring that the career aspirant is an active participant in the process of decision-making and career planning.

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Figure 22: Career counselling skills – the Singaporean context
Adapted from: Tan, 2002

Career counselling in Singapore appears to have been responsive to emerging needs and has gone through various stages in its development. The earliest stage focused on career information delivery. This grew to a curriculum-based approach and careers education became a part of the school syllabus. Currently career counselling is closely linked with information technology. Counsellor training and the development of indigenous resource materials are focus points for the new millenium.

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Specific skills for career counselling

At the more specific level, the primary target of the career counselling intervention is to establish a counselling relationship that helps the career aspirant deal with the following career development tasks:

- identify personal interests and aptitudes
- understand personal beliefs and attitudes that have a bearing on career development
- learn about the work of work
- match personal profiles with the world of work

- make career choices

- develop and implement a career plan

A variety of methods and techniques have been developed to facilitate this process of counselling which will be presented in subsequent chapters.

Career counselling for individuals and groups

At the *individual* level, the counsellor helps the career aspirant address needs linked to career development in an individual-specific manner. Career counselling themes at the individual level have an almost unlimited range and could extend from making subject choices and career preparation, to personal fears and inadequacies about choosing a career, parental pressure and conflicts. Career counselling at the individual level usually comprises a combination of pre-prepared intervention tools (e.g. interest inventories, aptitude tests, questionnaires) and personalised interactions with the client and the family. In situations where the issues to be addressed are clearly located around career choice, the number of counselling sessions could range between 5 and 8 sessions of an hour each.

Group counselling extends the principles of counselling to simultaneously address the career development needs of more than one person. At the group level the intervention is almost entirely pre-planned and based on the counsellor's knowledge of a 'common' need that prevails amongst a group of individuals. In effect, it is the efficient delivery of a 'package' or a 'workshop' that addresses the needs of a group of career aspirants. This could be *small groups* of upto approximately 15 students. For example, a small group counselling workshop may be a careers information session on a specific career (e.g. aviation, protection services) for interested students. A *large group* counselling intervention targets a class and could go upto approximately 40 – 50 students.   The implementation of a Std. 10 career guidance programme through one period a week classes over the 1st and 2nd terms, is an example of a large group intervention. 8 to 12 such periods, each period covering one module, would complete a comprehensive group counselling programme. A sample of a plan for a 12-session careers programme is described in

Appendix 25. Individual counselling where specific needs are addressed in personal interactions with the career aspirant could follow group counselling interventions.

Figure 23: Kapwa – a Filipino value for career counselling
Adapted from: Salazar-Clemena, 2002

The Filipino concept of self is rooted in kapwa – which is a shared identity, a self in relation to others. Filipinos place a high value on intimate family ties and making personal sacrifices for family welfare is common. Career choice as a result, is a family matter. Career counsellors in the Philippines today recognise the necessity of creating alternative paradigms that will factor in this core value. It is thought that using the family counselling approach to bring the family into the career guidance process would yield more positive counselling outcomes.

Stages in the career counselling process

Most counselling relationships progress through *three* stages. These stages are not watertight compartments but tend to lead from one to the other. Each stage has a set of skills at which the counsellor must be proficient. Some variations are present between individual and group counselling interventions.

Stages in individual career counselling

Stage 1: The initiation stage

This stage marks the beginning of the counselling programme and is usually completed in the

first session.   Some of the important targets to be met during this stage are briefly described below.

- As with all forms of counselling, establishing *rapport* with the client is an important first step. This includes explaining the nature of the relationship and communicating to the client that the counselling interaction would be a collaborative effort between the client and counsellor.

- It is important during the first session that the *objectives* of the counselling interaction are discussed and identified. This is necessary because quite often the client does not know what to expect out of career counselling. It is possible for example that related issues such as parental pressure or conflict between the client and the family must be dealt with before career counselling can meaningfully begin. In another situation, the client may not as yet be developmentally ready for interest or aptitude tests and the target for counselling here may be career exploration rather than career decision-making.

- The client and counsellor could then develop an *action plan* based on which targets of the interaction are *prioritised*.

Figure 24: Challenges before the Japanese career counsellor
Adapted from: Tatsumo, 2002

The rates of unemployment in contemporary Japan seem to be unprecedented. In 1998 unemployment hit a postwar record high of 5%. Career counsellors say that this is not merely because of economic decline; changes in employees' work values and companies' attitudes toward human resources have a significant influence. A related trend is that of voluntary unemployment – those who drop out of work of their own free will. Furthermore, the number of young people who postpone career decisions is also increasing in Japan. Counsellors are actively trying to understand the dynamics of these factors in order to address them with relevant counselling techniques.

Stage 2: The implementation stage

Most of the actual work occurs during this stage and this could be the longest and perhaps most intense part of the counselling relationship with the client. Some of the important targets for this stage are as follows.

- This stage usually begins with activities to help the client develop *insight* into his or her career development situation. The facilitation of insight focuses on two specific areas – one's self and the world of work. Insight into self is accomplished through the judicious use of devices such as inventories and tests and interpreting the information from these instruments in such a way that the career aspirant's self-understanding is enhanced. The counselling intervention then moves on to systematically exposing the client to careers information, with the objective of helping her develop deeper insights into the world of work.

- At the heart of the career counselling intervention is the objective of helping the client make career choices based on the insights obtained. It is during this stage that the career aspirant actually makes commitments to specific career paths.

- Preparing to implement the career decisions made is the next step. Developing a career plan, learning to use a career development schedule, creating opportunities for internships, identifying opportunities to enhance skill literacy are all examples of career preparation activities.

- Meeting the family could also be a part of this stage. Including the family in the process of career decision-making and career preparation would enhance the effectiveness of counselling outcomes in the Indian situation.

Figure 25. Career assessment tools: The Hong Kong experience

Adapted from Leung, 2002

Counsellors in Hong Kong have relied heavily on American career assessment instruments. However, the use of these devices has not been very effective for the following reasons:

- Chinese translations of the most popular tests are not available.
- These tests are too expensive to be used widely.
- The reliability and validity of these techniques have not been established for the Hong Kong Environment.
- Methods of occupational categorisation are usually based on the American classification system. The occupational structure in Hong Kong is quite different.

Developing a culturally appropriate system for guidance and counselling for the country is the challenge before career counsellors in Hong Kong.

Stage 3: Closure

Effective career counselling also requires skills to bring the counselling to an end. It is important that the counsellor demonstrates to the career aspirant that he is now ready to continue with career planning *independently*.   The finalisation of monitoring systems and follow up details brings the career counselling interaction to an end.

Stages in group career counselling

Some of the *stages* in group counselling are similar to individual counselling. Group counselling interventions usually progress through *three* stages. Some of the skills necessary for each stage are as follows:

Stage 1: The Pre-intervention stage (before the workshop)

- It is essential that the counsellor first identifies and specifies the *group's career counselling need* (see Appendix 24 for a description of a method). Since this is an interaction between

the counsellor and a group of career aspirants, the themes that the counselling intervention addresses must be relevant to the needs of the group.

- Having identified the need, the counsellor must then prepare an intervention. This includes the compilation of the relevant activities and the development of a careers intervention package that will be executed either in modules over a period of time or as a 1 to 2 day workshop.

- It is also important at this time that the administrative aspects of the intervention are worked out. If the intervention is to be conducted within an institution (school or college), then, sorting out time tabling details, the location for the workshop (classroom, school hall), seating arrangements, are all examples of pre-intervention preparation.

Stage 2: The implementation stage (during the workshop)

- Rapport building with a group is usually quite different from rapport building in an individual situation. This could include activities to bring the group together (e.g. icebreakers) and activities to inform the group about the programme.

- The structure of the workshop could then be explained, including a brief overview, the break times, the methods to be used, the content of each session and the number of sessions.

Figure 26: Family, religion and career choices – the Malaysian context
Adapted from: Pope, 2002

Malaysia like other Asian cultures is collectivist in character. Obligations to the welfare of the family are strong. The larger, extended family participates in decision-making. Malaysian career counsellors recommend involving the extended family in the counselling process.

Religious values play a strong role in the individual's life. If for example a student from the Islamic faith has been selected to study overseas, the local religious head (imam) will visit the family to discuss the possibilities of the young person attending mosque in the new location. If there is no mosque the student may well choose not to go to that college. These are critical issues that the

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- The programme is then conducted following the structure of the activities planned for each session.
- Obtaining participants' feedback at the end of each session, is a valuable source of information and helps the counsellor stay in touch with the group.

The following chapters will describe specific activities and career development exercises that may be used both with individuals and groups.

Strategic foundations for career counselling

The last few years have seen a massive increase in programmes that claim to contribute to career development. The best careers interventions are extensively researched and located within well established theories of personality and career development. Effective careers education programmes consist of a system of interlocking activities that facilitate movement toward clearly defined career development targets. These activities do not exist in a vacuum – they are based on a counselling strategy. They derive their rationale from a well defined framework of theoretical constructs. The strategic foundations for career counselling could be derived from three points of reference, which we now describe.

Links to theoretical frameworks

The career development activities within a system of career counselling are firmly rooted in the tenets of the theory that drives that particular strategy of career counselling. Working within a theoretical framework provides meaning to the information a particular activity yields. For example, the Vocational Preference Inventory (VPI) is a career counselling activity that is a part of Holland's theory of career development. The information that emerges about a career aspirant's interests might indicate that her vocational preferences are highest for Realistic careers. By itself, this information is meaningless. It is when this information is interpreted within Holland's RIASEC model (described in Chapter 3), that meaning emerges and this person can be supported in her progress toward deeper self-understanding and exposure to career families, which culminates finally in making a career choice. Similarly, a career counselling

system that draws from Social Cognitive Theory would comprise activities that focus on the cognitive aspects of career development such as career beliefs and self-efficacy conceptualisations. A system that is based on Career Developmental Theory would lay an emphasis on career developmental tasks such as career exploration and decision-making. The counsellor therefore needs to work within theoretical such frames of reference as he or she implements career development activities.

Framework for analysis

An effective framework for career counselling allows for the *concomitant* analysis of two sets of data, namely, information about the individual and information about the world of work. One without the other cannot bring the career choice process to completion. A career counselling system that is practically relevant should be capable of offering a *common* framework for the following.

- A scientifically validated basis upon which careers could be categorised into families based on the core aptitudes, competencies and interest profiles required for success in these careers. This would yield methods based on which occupations could be classified and categorised.
- A system whereby an individual's suitability for these career families could be assessed in a standardised and reliable manner. Such a system would facilitate the implementation of activities and methods to promote the individual's *self-awareness*. These methods would include aptitude tests, interest inventories and similar devices that promote self discovery. Secondly, a well developed career counselling system would facilitate the *exposure to the world of work* using the same framework as the one applied for self discovery. This could be through standardised occupational lists wherein occupations are categorised according to the common framework. Finally, such a system would facilitate career decision-making based on a matching of personal profiles with occupational profiles.

In other words, an effective career counselling system rests on a theoretically validated framework that allows the use of identical constructs, terminology, and methods for assessment and classification to promote both self-discovery, as well discovery of the world of work.

Framework for career preparation

A further characteristic of an effective system of career counselling is the recognition of the impact of factors, other than personal characteristics and occupational profiles, upon career decision-making. For example, while career counselling may indicate that an individual is perfectly suited for a career in law, his self-efficacy beliefs might be such that he feels he will not be successful in such a career. In another situation the career beliefs prevailing in the career aspirant's environment might place a low value on further education and persisting toward long term career goals. Influences such as these have a direct and powerful impact on the manner in which an individual prepares for career development. An effective career counselling strategy would offer methods and techniques to address these issues.

The section on *Resources* (Resource 1) at the end of the book presents a brief overview of some of the most well known career counselling interventions in the world. Information about some of the instruments standardised for India is also presented.

The following section will present a simple framework within which career counselling interventions could be planned and executed.

The Career Discovery Equation

Earlier chapters summarised the last decade of our research and experimentation in the field of Career Psychology. Our observations were presented in the form of five sets of propositions that could lay the foundations of a model for career counselling in the Indian situation. These propositions were drawn together to describe the *Career Preparation Process Model*. A vital point to be noted is that career choice does not complete itself at the end of a few hours of test taking. Nor does the mere delivery of careers information help the young person make a career discovery. Career choice is a process that ought to occur over a period of time – a period during which careers *education* occurs. Any application of the Career Preparation Process Model must take into account the social-cognitive environment within which career development occurs.

The translation of this model to the applicational level indicates that comprehensive careers education could consist of four interlocking components. For easy understanding we describe these aspects of career counselling as the *Career Discovery Equation* - schematically described in Figure 27.

Figure 27: The Career Discovery Equation

UNDERSTAND YOURSELF + UNDERSTAND THE WORLD OF WORK → DEVELOP CAREER ALTERNATIVES + CAREER PREPARATION
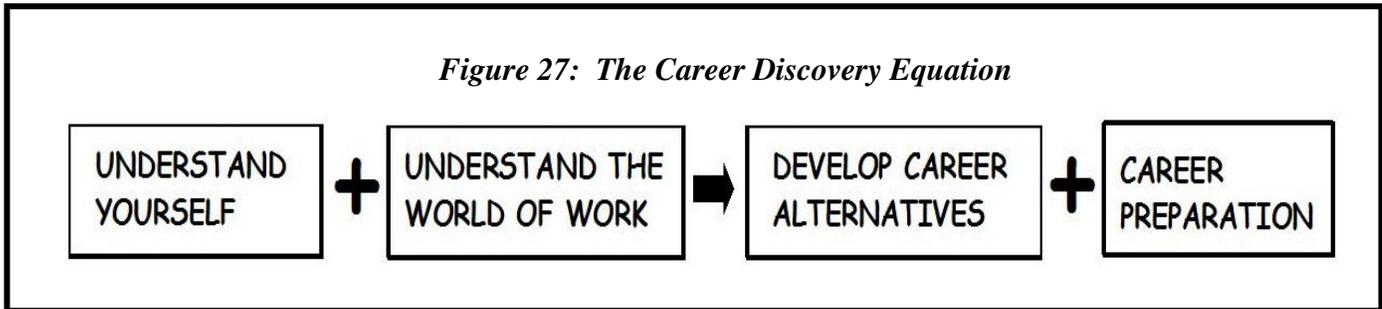
We will now present the application of the Career Preparation Process Model focusing on the four sets of skills for career counselling described by the Career Discovery Equation.

Skill Set 1: Skills to Facilitate Self Understanding

In the absence of career counselling, the young person's natural instinct is to consider a variety of careers and then make a career choice based on what is most attractive and in consonance with prevailing career beliefs and attitudes. Effective career counselling begins by helping the young person become more self aware. Discovering *oneself* is the beginning of discovering one's career. Self-understanding in this context is not intended to carry metaphysical or spiritual over tones. It refers instead to something that can be made concrete and real to the career aspirant.

Self-understanding for effective career decision-making focuses on the following themes:
- Personal interests, desires and motivations
- Personal talents and aptitudes
- Personal cognitions

What are interests?

Personal interests are:

- activities that draw a person's *attention*
- things that a person is *curious* about
- matters a person wants to *pursue* further
- activities that a person considers *worthwhile*
- activities a person *enjoys*

Interests are like the steam in a locomotive. They are essentially factors of a person's personality that motivate and drive him or her. Two vital points need to be noted about interests:

Interests can change.

 A rule of thumb that a career counsellor can keep in mind, is that interest profiles are likely to go through great variations upto around the age of 16 to 18 years. It is only after this stage (when the person is closer to adulthood), that interests are likely to be more stable. The strength of an interest is closely related to:

- personal experiences with an activity
- the belief that one can do well at an activity (self-efficacy)
- attitudes and preconceived notions held by the individual and significant others in the person's life (e.g. career beliefs) about an activity

Let us take the example of Parvez and Rajaram who at the age of 14 years were both deeply interested in design. As their career development progressed, Parvez's experiences with design were repeatedly met with lukewarm responses from his teachers, parents and friends. In fact his family and parents believed that careers in design were more for girls. Rajaram's experiences however were different. His family were open to careers in design and encouraged Rajaram to persist at developing his design skills. Furthermore, Rajaram was quite successful in inter-school design competitions. The development of these two young people's interest in design

should be obvious. With the passage of time, Parvez's interest in design decreased while Rajaram's interest increased.

As the person moves through the stages of career development, personal experiences and external influences could strengthen existing interests or could cause a shift of interests to some other activity area. This is normal and natural. Sensitive and person-centered career counselling does not chain the young person to a group of interests that he was oriented to at a certain stage in his life. On the other hand effective careers education helps the young person *explore* her interests *before* making a commitment.

High interest does not signify high ability.

This is an essential point to be noted by the career counsellor. An interest in a particular activity indicates that the individual is drawn toward it and derives enjoyment from it. It *does not* necessarily mean that he or she is good at that activity. Success in a career is achieved in an environment of intense competition. Merely being interested and motivated, however strong this motivation, does not guarantee that the individual could develop a sufficiently high level of skill to succeed in the face of competition.

Let us go back to the example of Parvez and Rajaram to illustrate this vital point. An analysis of their interests through a standardised interest inventory indicated that both of them were strongly interested in design. However, although both of them applied equal effort at developing their design skills, Rajaram was more successful than Parvez. In other words, Rajaram was better than Parvez at the *skills* a designer needs.

Helping an individual identify personal interests is an essential aspect of career counselling. Becoming aware of activities that one is attracted toward makes a significant contribution to enhancing self-understanding.   However self-understanding for making effective career choices needs to go further.

What are aptitudes?

Aptitudes are the second component of self-understanding. Aptitudes reflect:

- a person's *talents* and *capabilities*
- the person's *potential* for *achievement* in a particular area
- what one would be *naturally* good at

If interests are the steam in a locomotive, aptitudes could represent the engine – the actual ability to move toward and be successful in the execution of a specific set of tasks. Talents and capabilities could be identified through aptitude tests. An aptitude test may be focused on specific areas (e.g. manual dexterity, clerical skill). Aptitude tests could also be more broad based (e.g. linguistic aptitude, spatial aptitude). The key point to be noted is that aptitudes reflect *potential*. For example, at the end of an aptitude test 16 year old Bhagya discovered that she has a high linguistic aptitude and a low musical aptitude. This means that if she is provided the appropriate training, she will find it easier to master linguistic skills rather than skills related to the musical aptitude.

A further point to be taken note of is that at the heart of a career lie a *group* of skills or skill sets. In other words, most careers require *combinations* of aptitudes. A career in architecture for example would require spatial as well as logical skills. The aptitude profile of a successful jewellery designer is likely to be characterised by sensitivity to colour, shape and form, along with fine motor skills. A brilliant diagnostician who is rough and callous toward human feelings and emotions does not necessarily make a good medical practitioner. The point that emerges therefore is that a career comprises a group of tasks. The aptitude to do well at as many of the tasks linked to a particular career as possible contributes to success at that career.

Interest and aptitude – it is the combination that matters

Interests and aptitudes are *both* essential aspects of self discovery. A limitation of some systems of career counselling is that focus is brought to bear on just one of these two facets of the individual's personality. Some systems are driven by analysis of interests, while others lay

emphasis on aptitude tests. According to our model the analysis of interests and aptitudes for self-understanding is not an either-or question. The task before the counsellor is to help the young person discover her interests as well as her talents. Comprehensive career counselling therefore consists of methods whereby interests *and* aptitudes could be assessed and compared with each other.

It is here that a vital point emerges. An interest inventory would facilitate the delineation of a person's interest profile, while an aptitude test would help discover personal talents and capabilities. Closer analysis would reveal that some of the interests identified might not match the individual's aptitude profile. Similarly, it is also possible that the individual may not show an interest in careers linked to some of her aptitudes. The all important task before the career counsellor therefore is to help the career chooser discover the point of *overlap* between a person's interests and aptitudes. Figure 28 provides a schematic representation of this interaction between interests and aptitudes.

Figure 28: Interests and Aptitudes – the point of overlap

Aptitude without interest

Interests

Aptitudes

The point of overlap

Interest without Aptitude

Helping the career aspirant discover the point of overlap between personal interests and aptitudes is an important aspect of career counselling
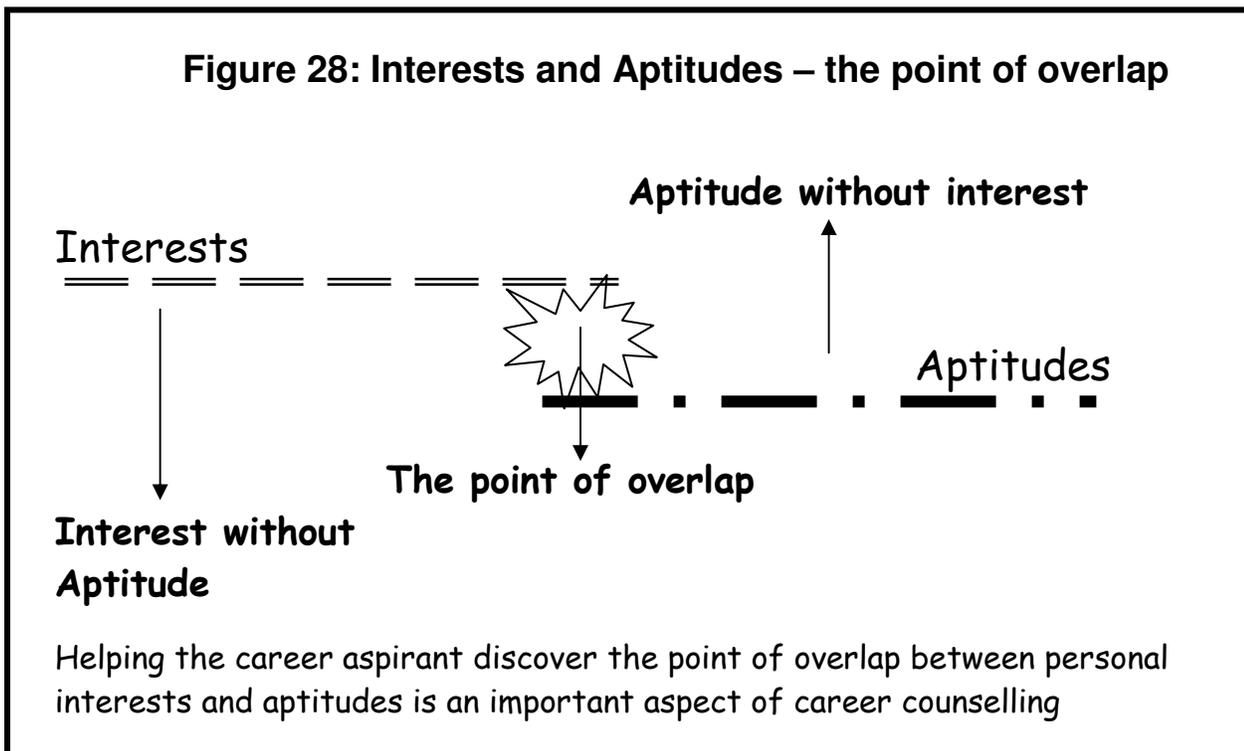
Systematic analysis of data emerging from tests and information gleaned through interactions with the career aspirant would unveil this link between interests and aptitudes. Discovering this connection would help identify specific career areas in which the individual would not only be interested but for which he would also possess talents. The following example would help illustrate this critical (but often unaddressed) aspect of promoting self-understanding during the process of career preparation. At the end of testing, David a higher secondary student's interest profile indicated that he was deeply interested in activities related to computer programming, working with colours and designs and inventing new products from his ideas. His aptitude profile indicated that his highest talents were linked to spatial abilities (skills related to the management and manipulation of three and two dimensional spaces) and fine motor skills, while his capabilities for logic, reasoning and analysis were significantly lower. A career as a software programmer matches David's *interests*. However the core *aptitude* required for this career is logic and reasoning ability – a set of skills for which David has a relatively lower aptitude. On the other hand, David's profile shows a closer match between his interest in design and his higher aptitude in spatial skills. While David could pursue a career as a software engineer and work hard at developing his logical skills, he is likely to have to struggle to rise up to high levels of excellence. On the other hand, his chances for success and satisfaction are likely to be higher should he decide to become a fashion designer. Computer science draws mainly from David's interests while fashion design would draw both from his interests as well as his aptitudes.

One method of teasing out this interest-aptitude overlap is to use statistical techniques. Scores on interest and aptitude tests could for example be combined and averages worked out. A more powerful method is the careers interview. Discussion between the counsellor and the career chooser that draws upon information from tests, work experiences and exposure to the world of work would draw the career aspirant closer to identifying the overlap between personal interests and aptitudes.

Understanding Personal Cognitions

Cognitions are thinking patterns that influence behaviour. As we have seen in our earlier discussions two specific categories of cognitions – self-efficacy beliefs and career beliefs, have an impact on the career decision-making process.

Self-efficacy cognitions are beliefs about oneself that reflect the confidence in personal ability to be successful in the performance of a task. Core beliefs about personal worth could underlie the dynamics of an individual's definition of personal career plans. Three specific aspects of self-efficacy emerged in our earlier discussions that are immediately relevant to career counselling.

- The first is with relation to *career preparation self-efficacy*. Some young people demonstrate low levels of career preparation self-efficacy. As a result they do not engage in career preparation activities and tend to enter the world of work without adequate planning. Santosh for example was an 18 year old with dyslexia. His difficulties with reading and writing skills had placed his overall performance in school at the below-average level. When Santosh was brought for career counselling, his belief in his ability to successfully plan a career for himself was low. "I am no good at studies," he said. "How can I plan for a career?" Career counselling for Santosh had to begin by addressing his career preparation self-efficacy.
- Another area where the operation of self-efficacy beliefs is obvious is with regard to *self-efficacy for specific subjects*. Experiences with teachers, feedback from examinations and methods of education work together to sometimes create lower levels of self-efficacy for specific subject groups. For example, high school students quite often report a lack of personal confidence for mathematics and science subjects. An outcome of low self-efficacy for subject groups is reflected in low self-efficacy for careers linked to these subjects.
- The third area where self-efficacy beliefs are seen to operate is in conjunction with gender. Girls typically demonstrate lower self-efficacy for male dominated careers and vice-versa.

Career Beliefs are strongly held convictions about the process of career choice or about the world of work. Even a cursory glance at the career decision-making process will demonstrate that attitudes and career myths could strongly influence career decision-making. Prestige, for example is a powerful influence on career choice. Certain occupations are *believed* to be 'prestigious', while others are not. Most young people and their families in India for example are quite sure that Medicine is the most prestigious of careers with Engineering coming next. Competition for these 'prestigious' careers is so intense, that selection criteria become unrealistic and often corrupt. This race toward a handful of careers, leaves in its wake a large number of young people who don't 'make it'. It also causes disinterest in the various other careers that are available and perhaps even more lucrative. As we have earlier discussed, beliefs about acquiring work skills proficiency, persisting toward career goals and taking personal responsibility are all underlying cognitions that affect career development.

Enhancing self-understanding implies helping the individual become aware of how self-efficacy factors, beliefs and cognitions influence personal orientations to career choice and development.

Beliefs and career development behaviour

The Social Learning Theories provide a valuable framework to understand career choice behaviour and articulate the dynamics of the interactions between the various socio-cognitive mechanisms. However these theories have not as yet yielded applications that could be used to address these beliefs. A specific branch of psychological therapy called the *Cognitive Behavioural* school provides specific guidelines to develop interventions that could influence cognitions and beliefs. Cognitive therapies have been used successfully not only for psychological problems such as depression (Beck, Rush, Shaw and Emery, 1979) but also with non-psychological difficulties such as unemployment (Proudfoot, Guest, Carson and Gray, 1997). Although few interventions have been reported, applications of cognitive behavioural techniques have been attempted with career development problems as well. In essence these therapies rest on the observation that thinking patterns become *habitual* and *automatic*. Events and experiences trigger a particular automatic thought. This thought in turn triggers a set of emotions, which in turn cause the individual to behave in a particular manner. Take the example

of a middle class higher secondary student who is presented with the polytechnic as a possible career path. It is most likely that this will trigger automatic thoughts in his mind such as, 'Low prestige', 'Poor pay', 'Not respectable'. These thoughts could in turn trigger emotions that ultimately cause this student to move away from such a career option. Using this thought – emotion – behaviour link offers a valuable guideline for the development of interventions that address career beliefs and help the career aspirant discover effective career development trajectories.

Tests as a mechanism to facilitate self-understanding

Using psychological tests to identify an individual's career interests and aptitudes has been and continues to be a topic of intense controversy. One of the sources of this controversy is the relevance of a test to the group on which it is used. For example, if an interest inventory developed in the United States is used in India without being scientifically adapted for use with Indians, the test taker's performance on that test is not likely to be an accurate reflection of his interest / aptitude profile. As famous as it is in the Western context, a trial of Holland's Vocational Preference Inventory indicated that its relevance to the Indian situation was severely limited (Leong, Austin, Sekaran, & Komarraju, 1998). Figure 25 reports some of the reasons given by other Asian counsellors that limit the use of European-American psychological tests in their countries.

Interest inventories, aptitude tests and tests of career beliefs and self-efficacy are useful when they are:
- standardised and statistically validated for the group for which they are intended
- age appropriate
- administered by a qualified psychologist / counsellor
- scored accurately
- interpreted on the basis of accurately developed norms

It is vital that the test taker is able to give the test his 'best shot. Anxiety, fatigue, scepticism, can all affect test performance. Similarly it is important that the test taker is honest about his or her answers. Tests provide cross-sectional information about interests, aptitudes, career and self-efficacy beliefs. This information provides a very useful window into the career chooser's personality.

Assuming that the various criteria described above have been met, there is one further point to be noted about testing. Tests are sometimes accorded (both by the counsellor and the client) a status of infallibility. This is a danger that must be guarded against. A psychological test is merely a tool that could yield information. It is vital that career counselling is not reduced to a variety of test taking exercises and that the career aspirant is not limited to the results of aptitude and interest tests. Career counselling ought to go beyond – placing the individual and *not* the test at the centre of the counselling process.

A test by itself is a one-way communication. Test results need to be interpreted and explained to the client. According to the Career Preparation Process Model understanding oneself and understanding the world of work are important career developmental tasks. A vital task before the career counsellor is to help the career aspirant make the links between *test and career information*. Merely giving the client information about her interests and aptitudes does very little to help her resolve the various career development tasks that she faces. At the end of the career guidance interaction the young person is more keen to know what careers she is suited for, rather than merely being told what her interests and aptitudes are. This takes us to the next set of skills within the Career Preparation Process Model that moves the counselling process forward.

Skill Set 2: Skills to facilitate an understanding of the world of work

What is the world of work?

The world of work is the other side of the coin of effective careers education. Simply put, the world of work comprises all the different career opportunities open before the young person. Career choices are often limited to the careers that the young person knows or has heard about. Facilitating an understanding of the world of work widens the young career chooser's horizons. A second dimension to the world of work describes factors associated with a career within a specific field. This includes characteristics of a career, its projected scope for development, eligibility criteria for entry, entrance procedures and so on. Figure 29 provides an overview of the important components of a unit of career information.

Figure 29: Components of careers information

A unit of career information comprises the following categories:

- The *name* of the career
- A brief *definition* of the career
- An idea of the *main aptitude – interest* area that the career draws from
- The *path* to entering and progressing in the career
- The future *prospects* of this career
- Information about *courses* leading to this career.

Sources of careers information

India does not as yet have a centralised source of valid and accurate careers information. Quite often it is upto the career counsellor to collate and manage a careers information data bank. Some of the sources of careers information that are available in the Indian context are described below.

- Career Encyclopaedia

  These are careers information books published by private and government sources that are available in the market.

- University Information

  The Association of Indian Universities (AIU) on occasion publishes *The Universities Handbook*, which is a compendium of all recognised universities, with some information about affiliated colleges. The AIU also publishes smaller handbooks on specific career areas. Some of them are:

  - Management Education
  - Medical Education
  - Engineering Education
  - Agricultural Education
  - The Indian Equivalence of Foreign Degrees

- Other Government Publications

  One of responsibilities of the National Council for Education Research and Training (NCERT) is to collate and publish up-to-date careers information. These booklets focus on specific careers and provide fairly detailed information.

- Employment News

  Information available in books and encyclopaedia tends to get out-dated in a rapidly changing educational scenario. The Employment News is a Government of India weekly newspaper that publishes the most current information. It is essential that all careers centres use this resource to its maximum.

- The Daily Newspapers

  Admission notices, entrance exam details, policy matters are all carried regularly in the careers columns and educational supplements of national dailies. Most local careers information is often available only through the newspapers of the region.

- Magazines

  A few magazines are dedicated to careers information and career development issues. Almost all youth and family magazines carry a section on careers information.

- College information

  College prospectuses provide in-depth information about specific institutes. Writing directly to colleges and collecting information from ex-students provides prospective career aspirants with the most current information about a given college. A career counsellor could also write directly to colleges and request to be included in their mailing list.

- The Internet

  Most leading colleges have their own web sites on the internet. The most accurate information about a specific college would be available on its website (though it is advisable to check when the website was last updated). The internet also offers specialised careers web sites. However these websites are to be treated with caution since the accuracy of the information provided very often is questionable.

The Careers Library

The careers library forms the heart of an efficient career education programme. New careers emerge every year. Entrance examination procedures undergo changes in an unpredictable manner. A careers library provides information that is upto date and presented attractively.

- Career Information resources

  A good careers library will provide the student access to some, if not all the careers information sources described above.

- Career Files

  Career files provide current information extracted from the sources described above. The various information bits that a unit of career information must have are described above.

Files must be organised uniformly. Most well developed career information systems are based on the same framework used for self-understanding. Fashion Design for example would be found in the Spatial category, while Computer Science would be found in the Logical category. Most European and American systems of career counselling have a standardised method based on which career information is coded.

- Careers News Board

  This is a notice board that presents information about new careers, entrance examinations, deadlines, admission notices and other current careers information. The career achievements of unusual personalities and past students, controversies within the world of work, pointers on work ethics and values and similar issues add interest to the careers news board.

- Careers Posters

  The counsellor can prepare posters that tell students about new careers. Quite a few colleges and other organisations (e.g. Defence Services), also supply posters about careers in their field. Thematic posters may also be developed. Figure 30 gives examples of career themes that a poster display could follow.

Figure 30: Career themes for poster displays

Careers within subject groups: E.g. Careers in the humanities, Careers with geography, Accounting careers, Careers in the life sciences

Linking careers with aptitudes: E.g. Design careers, Physical careers, Language Careers, Musical Careers

Careers and topical issues: E.g., Flexi-time careers, Rural careers, Virtual careers

Careers and the Environment: E.g. Green careers, Waste management, Pollution Control

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The Careers Day

This is an activity designed to allow students to interact with professionals. A careers day comprises a series of activities (lectures, demonstrations, exhibitions) that are organised for students by professionals from various walks of life. During the careers day, career aspirants have an opportunity to meet professional face-to-face and gain a first hand account of their careers. Focusing on lesser-known careers widens students' exposure to the world of work. Speakers also act as role models that students could emulate. Some organisations such as the Rotary Clubs offer a ready-made source of professionals who are usually willing to come in and make presentations. This is also a good opportunity for drawing parents into the career counselling programme. Parents could be invited to make presentations on their careers or even as guests who will learn about new careers.

Skill Set 3: Skills to Facilitate Development of Career Alternatives

What are career alternatives?

At this stage in the counselling interaction the career aspirant has reached the stage where she has been able to identify her interests and talents. Most importantly she has located the link between her interests and aptitudes. She has also gone through exercises that have helped her become more aware of the influence of cognitive factors such as career and self-efficacy beliefs on her career preparation and decision-making. Furthermore, she has gone through a variety of activities that are designed to enhance her awareness of the world of work. The next step in the career education process is to help the career aspirant arrive at a *set* of careers that she would be most comfortable with and for which her interests and aptitudes are best suited – these are her Career Alternatives. Career Alternatives emerge from the information the student has gained about herself and about the world of work. Students sometimes commit the error of planning for just one career. Career Alternatives are a set of two to three options that provide back up options should the first choice fail to materialise.

The Standardised Occupational List

A important tool that helps facilitate the development of Career Alternatives is a standardised occupational checklist. This is a list of careers that have been classified into families. A comprehensive career counselling system would use the same frame of reference used for interest / aptitude analysis as the basis upon which careers are classified into the occupational list. For example, the occupational lists in the Holland system would categorise careers within the RIASEC framework.

One of the methods used to develop these families of careers is to first make out a comprehensive list of careers. These lists could be obtained from Government departments of labour or from international organisations such as the International Labour Organisations. Individuals who are thoroughly acquainted with the theory upon which a particular career counselling system is based then use the theory and their knowledge of each of the careers on the list to categorise them into families. Various methods of verification are then used to statistically standardise the list.

Another more complex but far more reliable method is to select a sufficient number of individuals who are practising professionals from each of the careers on the list. These individuals are administered the same interest and aptitude tests used by a given system of career counselling. Data obtained from their performance on these tests is used to categorise careers into occupational families.

Developing career awareness

An important stage before career alternatives are developed is to help the career aspirant develop a wider and deeper awareness of the world of work. Usually a well-developed occupational list stimulates questions about careers that the career chooser has never heard about. Learning about as wide a range of careers as possible provides a broader matrix within which career alternatives could be examined.

Developing career alternatives

The counsellor and the career aspirant work on an occupational list together, using information about interests, aptitudes and the world of work. The counsellor usually points the career aspirant to those sections of the occupational list that contain careers linked to her interests and aptitudes. To illustrate – Rasika's personal profile indicated that her interests and aptitudes were the highest in the areas of spatial and personal skills. Based on this information she along with her counsellor, examined careers in the spatial and the personal sections of the occupational list as well as careers that require a combination of personal and spatial skills. Some of the careers she discovered in the spatial section were fashion design, architecture, product design and toy design. In the personal section she came across careers such as behavioural sciences, career counselling, hospitality industry and so on. Apparel merchandising was a career she found in the section that combined personal with spatial skills.

It is at this stage in the career discovery process that the counsellor's role becomes special and vital. At the most superficial level the counsellor is required to merely help the career aspirant move through the occupational list and explain the nature of each career, scope and future prospects of each career. At a deeper level the counsellor might be required to help the career aspirant reflect on her own reactions to each career. It is now that the effect of factors that are likely to prevent her from making effective choices become sharply evident. Rasika may for example be resistant to considering architecture as a career – although her personal profile is ideally suited to this career. Counselling interactions with her may reveal that her self-efficacy beliefs predispose her to place a low value on her skills for mathematics and as a result she may feel that architecture is beyond her abilities. Career beliefs she holds may cause her to reject product design as a career alternative, because she believes that this is a career for males only. Working through issues such as these, lies at the heart of helping the career aspirant arrive at suitable Career Alternatives.

The development of Career Alternatives in a context where career aspirants face *poverty and socio-economic disadvantage* requires certain special considerations. As we have discussed earlier, prevailing socio-economic conditions create career beliefs and self-efficacy

conceptualisations that preempt disadvantaged young people from even considering Career Alternatives for themselves. The counsellor's role in this situation goes beyond merely enlisting suitable career options. The objective is to help the young person develop *viable* Career Alternatives. The Career Preparation Process Model is particularly relevant in this situation. Accordingly the following steps may be kept in mind:

- First of all the same procedures used with other socio-economic status groups could be followed to identify personal profiles of interests and aptitudes

- Analysis of cognitive factors such as career and self-efficacy beliefs are particularly important when working with the disadvantage. Counselling interventions must address negative career beliefs and enhance career preparation self-efficacy. Techniques to deal with these issues are presented in subsequent chapters.

- Most importantly, Career Alternatives generated at this stage in the counselling process must be such that they can be implemented in the short term as well as in the long term. In other words, the disadvantaged young person needs to have a long term goal – which is his actual career development target. He also needs to have short term career goals which could function as a bridge across his status of disadvantage toward long term career development. Careful generation of Career Alternatives at this stage creates the foundation upon which a career development bridge (discussed with Skills Set 4 below) could be created for the career aspirant who is a victim of poverty and disadvantage.

Skill Set 4: Skills to Facilitate Career Preparation

Once Career Alternatives have been chosen, the counsellor's next task is to help the career aspirant begin *career preparation*. It is at this point that the careers interaction could include parents. Sharing Career Alternatives with the family is vital to helping adults collaborate with the younger career aspirant. Developing a career development plan *with* the family makes career preparation more effective. Some of the specific themes for career preparation are as follows.

The career development plan

This is a clearly enunciated blueprint for career development that the career aspirant develops along with the counsellor. The target before the career aspirant is to find out more about each of the Career Alternatives chosen. This includes defining the careers, developing a detailed description of the path leading to these careers, a listing of the eligibility criteria, entrance examinations, important addresses and dates and deadlines that the career aspirant must follow. It is important to remember that it is the career aspirant who develops the career plan – not the counsellor!

Skill Literacy and Work Experience

Promoting skill literacy is an essential aspect of career preparation. Skill literacy refers to helping the career aspirant gain work experience through internships and placements. Parents are a valuable network that can be used to plan internship programmes. In group situations, students could share their internship experiences with the rest of the class and this in turn disseminates careers information.

The Career Development Bridge

Helping the career aspirant plan for skill literacy and work experience opportunities is an example of a career development bridge. We earlier discussed the idea of the Gap Year, during which the young person takes a year off after a certain level of education to explore, travel, work as a volunteer to gain exposure. Helping a family plan and structure this career development activity is one of the roles the career counsellor could play.

In situations of disadvantage and socio-economic disadvantage, the Career Development Bridge plays a further function for career development. Young people from disadvantaged homes tend to prematurely enter the world of work as unskilled labourers. The most immediate target before the career counsellor therefore is to help these young people begin to consider career development as a real possibility. Career Alternatives that require long term planning and large investments may discourage these young people. The Career Development Bridge offers a

stage-wise approach to career development. Take the example of a boy from a poor home whose personal profile indicates that he would do well as a graphic designer. Career counselling that merely makes this recommendation would discourage this young man and perhaps push him even more firmly toward unskilled employment. According to the Career Preparation Process Model, this young person would benefit significantly from counselling interventions that address negative career beliefs and enhance his career preparation self-efficacy. The Career Alternatives he develops could first of all focus on inexpensive short term courses within the broad spectrum of careers in the design industry. The counsellor for example could guide him toward a short course in screen printing. The skills obtained would place him in a position to command a better salary. The counsellor's role now is to facilitate his movement toward the long term objective of becoming a graphic designer by helping him plan his career development accordingly. The counsellor could help him identify government sponsored part-time courses in design. Alternatively he could be linked up with voluntary organisations, financial institutions such as banks and other supports available at the community level. The counselling objective is to facilitate career development in short, affordable steps that lead toward long term goals. This form of career development is far more arduous and the disadvantaged young person could falter. Therefore on the background is the vital necessity of continued and regular counselling inputs that address career and self-efficacy beliefs.

Developing a Career Development Bridge is in effect a counselling technique that facilitates career preparation for the disadvantaged. The role of the counsellor in this context is to first of all help the young person move from a 'no skill' status to at least a 'low skill' status. Subsequent career development would then be the result of encouragement, reinforcement and networking to help the disadvantaged move more deliberately toward prosperity.

Box 6.11. The usefulness of career counselling: Insights from Arnold Spokane

Arulmani: You have focused some of your research on the outcomes of counselling. From your analysis, are the outcomes of guidance and counselling, worth having? How would you say a resource-poor developing country stands to gain from counselling and guidance services for its youth?

Spokane: Guidance and Counselling interventions are most effective for individuals who have a degree of choice but have spent little time thinking about what is possible for them with respect to career and life options.   When there is some choice but little consideration of career issues, the information and frameworks provided in career counselling have positive and cost effective results. The more choice, the more relevance for career issues.

We can apply this to a developing, resource-poor nation.   When basic needs such as food, shelter or security are met, development occurs, and as Prof Amartya Sen argues, development results in more freedom of choice. As development increases, choice increases, and career and educational/vocational guidance become crucial to long term progress. Where this development occurs, guidance and counselling interventions are not only worth having, they become essential to further progress. As the array of work and options widens, it becomes increasingly difficult for young people to understand and navigate a personal pathway through the array. Repeated empirical investigations in Western industrial and post-industrial societies show consistent, moderate positive outcomes for a variety of career interventions, including individual and group counselling, classroom interventions, workshops, and so on.

Effective utilisation of human resources, even in the absence of other resources in a developing nation can have beneficial effects on both the efficiency and effectiveness of it's labour force, the growth of its economy and the well-being of it's inhabitants.

Personal communication between Arnold Spokane and Gideon Arulmani (2003)

Activities for implementing career development interventions

The foregoing pages have described applications of the Career Preparation Process Model through four sets of skills linked to career counselling. This description of skill sets could also be understood as the primary targets for career counselling. The following chapters will present

specific activities that could be implemented with individuals as well as with groups to facilitate career development.

We have over the last decade developed, tested and standardised a variety of career development interventions that address the career counselling targets discussed above. These interventions are based on the Career Preparation Process Model and have reached over 100,000 young people over the last decade. The following chapters will present activities, techniques and methods from these standardised interventions that could be used by teachers, counsellors, youth workers and others who are involved in helping young people prepare for career development. We now briefly describe the organisation of the following application chapters in order to facilitate the effective use of the activities described.

Organisation of the Application Chapters

The presentation of the activities for career development in the following chapters are organised within the framework of the Career Discovery Equation discussed above and will present a variety of methods and techniques from which the career counsellor could choose. Each chapter focuses on methods to address a specific component of the equation. These careers education activities are designed to be implemented at a group level. However the same activities could also be implemented in one-to-one sessions. Given below is brief overview of each chapter.

Chapter 7 will present the first set of activities and will focus on *orienting* career aspirants to career decision-making. These activities could be used to 'set the stage' for career discovery.

Chapter 8 focuses on *self-understanding*. This chapter is organised into three sections focusing on methods that could facilitate the identification of personal interests, aptitudes and cognitions. This book does not present aptitude tests that we have developed since the use of these tests requires advanced training and supervision.

Chapter 9 moves on to the *world of work*. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first focuses on understanding the word of work. Activities presented help the counsellor enhance the

career aspirant's orientation to work activities and systematically widen career development horizons. The second section focuses on Career Opportunities. Methods that impart skills to identify and understand career families are presented.

Chapter 10 draws earlier chapters together to present methods whereby *career alternatives* could be generated and *career preparation* initiated. The first section describes techniques to use information about self and the world of work to identify career alternatives and options. The second section presents activities that promote skills for career path planning and the enhancement of skill literacy.

Chapter 11 is the concluding chapter and focuses on the important aspect of setting up a *career counselling service*. The various components of a careers service are described. Worksheets for the facilitator describe frameworks within which a comprehensive careers intervention could be designed and implemented. Other important points covered are the levels of expertise required for career counselling. A brief overview of careers services at the college level is also included.

Work sheets

Every activity is supported by material for the counsellor's use during counselling interventions. These are photocopiable worksheets and are compiled in the appendices. Each worksheet carries a footer or a header that indicates the source and copyright details of the worksheets. It is requested that users always ensure that this information is retained when the sheets are photocopied and thereby acknowledge the source of these materials whenever they are used.

Structuring of careers interventions

Given the wide range of people who are likely to use this book we do not present ready-made interventions. At least 2 activities for each component of the Career Discovery Equation are presented, with clear instructions for implementation. Users are required to choose the most appropriate activity for each component in the equation and compile their own interventions.

Box 6.12. Basic training in counselling and guidance: Insights from Tony Watts

Arulmani: In a context where trained counsellors are few and far between, what is your response to the training of adults who work with youth (e.g. teachers, college lecturers) in the basic skills of career counselling through short term programmes?

Watts: This is often a good place to start, and indeed in most countries many services are provided by teachers and others for whom guidance is a secondary task, rather than by guidance professionals. For good practice to develop, however, it is desirable for the former to be supported by the latter.

Personal communication between Tony Watts and Gideon Arulmani (2003)

Conclusion

Guidance and counselling have been regular and integral features of educational institutions in the West. Furthermore, as we have seen throughout this chapter, careers services are also high on the agenda of a large number of Asian countries. Today career guidance and counselling is a well organised and highly respected branch of specialisation as evidenced by the existence of numerous national and government recognised associations in most parts of the world.

Turning to the Indian situation, even a decade ago, guidance and counselling was not seen as relevant or necessary in the context of the Indian schooling system. This has changed in the recent past. Today a large number of heads of institutions, experienced teachers and Boards of education, acknowledge that helping students make effective career decisions is integral to their education. While the need for these services is rapidly becoming acute, trained career counsellors are not many in India.

As indicated by Tony Watts (Box. 6.12.), it is accepted that in a situation where skilled expertise for guidance and counselling is not yet available, some of the core skills can be transferred to teachers and others who work with young people. It is our objective that the ideas and activities that we will describe in the following chapters will provide teachers and others the means with which to initiate the delivery of career education services in the classroom.

Chapter 7

Getting Oriented

Objective

The methods presented in this chapter are designed to build rapport and introduce career aspirants to career counselling. These activities orient participants to the main components of career counselling and their career preparation status.

Activity Code: 1

Activity 1.1.

Title:	Your Career is your Person
Content and Objective:	The manner in which you introduce your careers intervention sets the stage for the effectiveness of the rest of the programme. *'Your career is your person'* is a short article that highlights the importance of making appropriate career decisions and could be used as an interesting starting point for a career guidance programme.
Key Messages:	• One of the most important decisions made during one's life is linked to career choices.
	• Choosing a career does not begin with the career – it begins with understanding oneself and then finding a career at which one could excel.
	• Inappropriate decisions could lead to stress, unhappiness and a lack of satisfaction in later life.
	• Appropriate decisions place you on a path toward finding a satisfying career. It is excellence that brings success, wealth, prosperity and happiness.

Duration of the Activity:	15 to 20 minutes

Material:	*Your career is your person*
	<u>Source</u>: Appendix 1

Method:	Read the story in the article to stimulate a discussion on what career preparation means. Use anecdotes, personal experiences, material from newspapers / magazines about occupational trends that could illustrate the importance of career planning. Lead the interaction to the point where the necessity for taking time to plan one's career is highlighted. Draw the activity to a close by communicating the key messages described above.

Activity 1.2.

Title:	Check Your Career Preparation Status

Content and Objective:	A person's career preparation status reflects his or her level of preparedness to face career development tasks. This is an activity that uses *the Career Preparation Status Questionnaire (CPSQ)* to help participants begin observing themselves by assessing their personal levels of career preparedness. The most important objective of this activity is to help the career aspirant become more aware of:

- his or her status of personal career preparation.
- the importance of planning.
- the importance of taking active control over career development.
- identifying areas of career preparation that could be focused on.

Key Messages:	• Effective career development depends on how well you

prepare for your career.

- Career preparation has many specific parts.
- You can identify the areas that you need to focus on for effective career preparation.

Duration of the activity: 20 to 30 minutes

Material: The Career Preparation Status Questionnaire

Source: Appendix 2

Method: All participants are to have their personal copies of the Career Preparation Status Questionnaire (CPSQ).   Ask the participants to complete the CPSQ by marking the options that are most appropriate to their situation. Point out that there are no right or wrong answers and highlight the importance of being honest in responding to the questionnaire. Write out the following scoring key on the board and ask participants to score their performance on the CPSQ. Participants are to total up their scores and find their Career Preparation Score.

Scoring Key:

Q.No.	Answer	Q.No.	Answer
1	a = 1, b = 0	6	a or b or c = 1, d = 0
2	a = 1, b = 0	7	a = 2, b = 1, c = 0
3	a = 3, b = 2, c = 1 d = 0	8	a = 2, b = 1, c = 0
4	a = 1, b = 0	9	a = 2, b = 1, c = 0
5	a = 1, b = 0	10	a = 1, b = 0

- *Interpretation:*   Higher scores indicate higher levels of preparedness for career development. Scores below 8 reflect low levels of career preparedness. Interpret the meaning of low scores. Point out that low scores indicate that the participant is not adequately ready to meet the challenges of career decision-making. This could place

him or her in a situation of stress and confusion when confronted with career decision-making tasks. It is important to particularly highlight that ignoring or not giving importance to career preparation tasks place the individual at risk to making inappropriate career decisions. In individual sessions take time to identify items where the career aspirant's scores are low. This would help the participant list out specific targets for career preparation.

Draw the activity to a close by communicating the key messages described above.

Activity 1.3.

Title:	Life Lines.
Content and Objective:	Young people at the high school level are usually not developmentally mature enough to understanding the long term implications of career decisions made at this stage in their lives. This is an activity that sharpens the career aspirant's orientation to the future. The *Life Lines* activity concretely links the present with the future by describing the evolution of career paths and the outcomes of different career decisions. The most important objective of this activity is to help the young person understand that decisions taken today have an impact on career development in the future.
Key Messages:	• The impact of a decision taken in the present is not seen immediately.
	• The outcomes of decisions are seen only after you have taken the decision.
	• The impact of what you do or do not do today has an impact on your future career development.

Duration of the activity: 20 to 30 minutes

Material: The Life Lines worksheet

<u>Source</u>: Appendix 3

Method: Explain the four potential career paths before a student

after the high school / higher secondary level of education

described at the top of the worksheet (e.g. Begin Working

Immediately, Enter Professional Degree Course etc). The section

on *Career Paths* in Chapter 4 provides further details for the

workshop facilitator's reference

Explain the potential outcomes of career development described at

the bottom of the worksheet (e.g. unemployed, underemployed etc)

and what each of these terms mean.

Participants are now to link the activities described in the

circles to draw the 'life line'. As the circles are linked, the most

likely outcomes at the end of 3 years for each career option

emerge. A completed worksheet is included in Appendix 3 for the

facilitator's reference.

It is true that outcomes cannot be predicted with certainty. In fact

such predictions cannot be described as career counselling.

Someone who *enters a professional degree course* for example

could at the end of 3 years be *settled in a good job*, *unemployed*,

underemployed or *still studying*. The objective of the *life lines*

activity is not to make rigid links between career paths chosen and

outcomes. Instead, this activity presents a method to discuss the

impact that decisions can have. It also provides an opportunity to

describe the most *likely* outcomes of career paths chosen.

Accordingly, a person who takes up a non-professional degree is likely to learn more about a subject, learn the theories about a subject, obtain a degree, and at the end of three years is most *likely* to be unemployed or involved in further studies. The purpose of the activity is to help participants link career decisions taken in the present with career development outcomes in the future. Draw the activity to a close by communicating the key messages described above.

Activity 1.4.

Title:	The Career Discovery Equation.

Content and Objective: The objective of this activity is to introduce participants to the four key components of career decision-making. Helping the career aspirant see the career planning process in clearly definable steps and stages contributes to higher clarity and delineates specific career planning goals to be reached. Discussing the Career Discovery Equation creates a well defined framework within which counselling can progress.

Key Messages:
- Career discovery is a process that has four stages.
- Understand yourself: find your interests, aptitudes and identify your career beliefs.
- Understand the World of Work.
- Develop Career Alternatives.
- Focus on Career Preparation.

Duration of the activity: 20 to 30 minutes

Material: The Career Discovery Equation worksheet
Source: Appendix 4

Method: Use the worksheet to introduce the equation. Explain each category in detail.

- Self Discovery = Interests + Aptitudes + Beliefs
- World of Work = career information, exploration, skill literacy.
- Career Alternatives = career selection and development of alternatives
- Career Preparation = career path planning, scheduling

The facilitator could refer to further details about the equation provided in Chapter 6.

Participants are to write down what each category means in the space provided below the boxes. Draw the activity to a close by communicating the key messages described above.

Concluding Comments

Each of the activities described above, have specific teaching - learning objectives and outcomes. The workshop facilitator may choose one or two of these activities as part of the introductory component of a complete career counselling intervention. Factors such as the age of the workshop participants, their previous exposure to career development activities and their current level of education could be kept in mind when choosing the activities. From our experience, the activity focusing on the Career Discovery Equation is essential to placing the entire career discovery process in perspective. The activity has been designed to be relevant across a wide range of groups and career development needs. The primary objective before the facilitator is to use these activities to establish rapport and to create the appropriate environment for the implementation of the rest of the programme.

Chapter 8

Self Discovery - Interests, Aptitudes and Cognitions

Objective

Self discovery lies at the heart of effective career preparation. As we discussed at length in an earlier chapter the Career Preparation Process Model highlights the importance of focusing on three specific targets to promote self-understanding. These are interests, aptitudes and cognitions. This chapter is divided into three sections each of which focus on one of these components of self-understanding.

Understanding Interests

Note to the facilitator:

We had earlier discussed the importance of using a well defined theoretical framework within which to analyse personal interests and aptitudes. Some of the psychological theories that have emerged over the last three decades have moved away from the traditional, unidimensional description of human intelligence and approach the human potential from a much broader and multidimensional viewpoint. Howard Gardner (1983, 1993) for example, through his Theory of Multiple Intelligences argues that the human potential is multifaceted. A brief overview of the theory is provided in the *Resources* section (Resource 3) at the end of the book, which the facilitator is requested to read and become familiar with. For a deeper and more thorough understanding of the theory, you are requested to read Howard Gardner's books. His *Frames of Mind* is particularly recommended as essential reading.

We have adapted these ideas and take a *multiple human potentials* approach to understanding interests and aptitudes. This framework has been used to develop and standardise a variety of instruments and techniques that facilitate interest and aptitude analysis.

The activities described below focus primarily on interests. Those of you who are interested in learning more about our aptitude tests are referred to the *Resources* section (Resource 2) for further details.

Activity Code 2.1.

Activity 2.1.1.

Title:	I Like… I Want!
Content and Objective:	This activity is designed to help the career aspirant understand what interests are. Interests are activities that draw a person's *attention;* things that a person is *curious* about; matters a person wants to *pursue* further; activities that a person considers *worthwhile;* activities a person *enjoys*. It is also important that participants learn that interests can change and that being interested does not mean that one is also talented in a given career area. The facilitator is referred to the section on Self-Understanding in Chapter 6 for further details.

Key Messages:

- Our interests are what we like and enjoy.
- Finding a career than matches your interests means finding a career that you would enjoy.

Duration of the activity: 10 to 15 minutes

Material: I Like.. I Want! Worksheet
Source: Appendix 5

Method: All participants are to have a copy of the *I Like… I Want* Worksheet. Use the worksheet to discuss what interests are. Participants are to fill in the blanks in the first part of the worksheet describing interests. Use the illustration of the locomotive given on the worksheet to discuss how important it is to link one's career with one's interests. Use the second part of the

worksheet to highlight the link between interest and ability. Give participants time to think about interests for which they might have a high aptitude and vice versa. Move on to the final section of the worksheet and discuss some of the factors that influence interests and how interests can change. Give participants a few minutes to think back over their lives and write down how and why their interests changed. Ask a few volunteers to share what they have written with the rest of the group. Draw the activity to a close by communicating the key messages described above.

Activity 2.1.2.

Title:	Frames of Reference

Content and Objective: The primary focus of this activity is to give career aspirants a frame of reference within which to observe themselves and get to understand themselves better. As mentioned earlier, the concept of multiple human potentials is used to provide this framework. *Frames of Reference* is a collection of five articles each of which focus on one aspect of the multiple potentials framework for self-understanding. The articles cover the linguistic, analytical-logical, spatial, physical-mechanical and personal categories of the human potential.

Key Messages:

- all of us have interests
- these interests could be categorised into families

Duration of the activity: 30 to 40 minutes

Material: Frames of Reference

<u>Source</u>: Appendix 6

| *Method*: | Divide your group into five smaller groups and give each group one of the articles. Give them about 15 minutes to read and discuss their article. Ask each group to make a brief presentation about what they have learned about the human potential from their article. At the end of the presentation draw the various ideas together to present multiple potentials as a framework for self observation. |

Activity 2.1.3.

| *Title:* | My Interest Profile |

| *Content and Objective*: | This activity provides a structured format that could be used to help career aspirants systematically observe their work related interests. My Interest Profile is a checklist that comprises a variety of activities, categorised into five families: linguistic, analytical-logical, spatial, personal and physical-mechanical. An important point to be communicated through this activity is that a person's career interests (interests related to work life) could be different from interests that are not related to work (interests one pursues in one's personal life). |

Key Messages:	• I have a number of interests.
	• Some of my interests are related to what I want in my work life while others are related to my hobbies and my personal life.
	• I can identify my work interests.

| *Duration of the activity:* | 30 to 45 minutes |

| *Material*: | My Interest Profile Worksheets |
| | Source: Appendix 7 |

Method: All students are to have a copy of the *My Interest Profile*
                             Worksheets. Begin the activity by discriminating between
                             interests in Personal Life and Work Life. Provide illustrations to
                             differentiate between work and personal interests. 'Personal'
                             interests are activities that a person would like to pursue outside
                             the world of work. These are activities from which the person
                             does not expect remuneration and could be hobbies or leisure time
                             activities. 'Work' interests on the other hand are activities that the
                             person wants as part of his or her career. These are activities in
                             which the person would specialise and for which he or she would
                             acquire the highest levels of proficiency. Further, these are
                             activities from which the person would expect to gain
                             remuneration. Work interests are associated with activities that one
                             wants to be involved in through one's career. Highlight for
                             example that many of us are interested in 'spending a lot of time
                             outdoors'. But only some of us may want to *work* outdoors. Read
                             through a selection of the interest items (or all if time permits).
                             Discuss what each item means. Students are now to rate their level
                             of desire to be involved in each of the listed activities in their work
                             lives. Once all the ratings have been entered, students are to total
                             up their scores for each interest area. Total scores are to be
                             converted to Average Scores, by dividing the Total by 10 (i.e.
                             number of items in each Factor). Use the *Interest Categories*
                             section on the worksheet to describe the various interest families.
                             As your description continues, ask students to go back to the *My
                             Interest Profile* worksheet and enter their average scores for each
                             area into the box on the last page of the activity.

- *Interpretation:*   Higher scores indicate higher levels of interest in each

category. The participants are now to select the two highest interest areas that emerge from their profile. Discuss the meaning of these scores. Check particularly on participants who do not agree that their profile truly reflects their interests. Such individuals may go through the checklist again to 'fine tune' their interest orientations. By the end of the activity each participant should be able to describe his or her interests in terms of the five interest families within which the checklist was administered. Draw the activity to a close by communicating the key messages described above.

Understanding Aptitudes

Note to the facilitator:

Aptitudes are the other dimension to the career aspirant's self-understanding. As we discussed in Chapter 6, Aptitude Tests are standardised psychometric devices designed to identify an individual's personal potentials. It is essential that certain criteria (development of the test, method of administration, norms for interpretation etc.,) are met if the results of an aptitude test are to be valid and reliable. The facilitator is referred to Chapter 6 for further details regarding the use of aptitude tests. Information about the most well known Aptitude Tests is also provided in the *Resources* section (Resource 1). Since testing requires the counsellor to have received specialised training, this section will not focus on the tests and other psychometric instruments that we have developed. Instead, the activity suggested below draws from a technique for self-observation that we have found immensely useful and effective. This activity promotes introspection among career aspirants and can be facilitated by parents, teachers and careers co-ordinators. We will continue to use our multiple potentials format.

Activity Code 2.2.

Activity 2.2.1.

Title:	The Self Discovery Diary

Content and Objective: Aptitudes are usually analysed using standardised psychological tests. The use of these tests requires specialised training. While aptitude tests provide useful and vital information this data is usually crossectional in nature. In other words, most tests assess the individual in the 'here and now'. Anxiety, lack of interest, poor comprehension of the test, and a large variety of such factors could compromise the validity and reliability of the test result. It is well accepted that longitudinal information widens the assessment framework since this form of assessment occurs over a period of time. Information from a wide range of sources adds to its reliability and validity. *The Self Discovery Diary* is a technique that uses the longitudinal technique to help deepen the career aspirant's self-understanding. The technique uses the career aspirant's everyday experiences as the basis for analysis. Different experiences cause us to dip into different facets of our personalities and capabilities. This is a self-discovery exercise the career aspirant could do on her own, with your supervision. The key outcome expected at the end of the activity is the identification of personal talents based on a systematic analysis of personal experiences.

Key Messages:

- Aptitudes are personal talents and capabilities.
- Careers that are linked to aptitudes would help you function from your areas of strength.

Duration of the activity:	This is an activity that is conducted in three parts over a period of approximately four weeks. The introductory section during which the participants are taught the method usually takes between 45 to 60 minutes. The second part occurs over about 4 weeks during which time participants work on their *Self Discovery Diary*. The concluding part usually takes 45 to 60 minutes, when the facilitator helps participants interpret their records and identify their talent areas.

Material:	The Self-Discovery Diary Worksheet
	<u>Source</u>: Appendix 8

Method:	All participants are to have a copy of the *Self Discovery Diary* Worksheets.

<u>Step 1</u>: Use the first two pages of worksheet to discuss what aptitudes are.

<u>Step 2</u>: Present the idea of the *Self-discovery Diary*. A completed worksheet is included in Appendix 8 for the facilitator's reference.

<u>Step 3</u>: Go over the steps described in the worksheet. Use the completed worksheet as an example to illustrate how the diary is to be maintained. Describe what sort of experiences participants could select and who the raters could be. Use illustrations to help participants learn how to categorise the different activities across the five potential areas. Both successful and not-so-successful experiences are to be entered. Once participants have understood the technique, they are to start working on their diaries for the next four weeks.

<u>Step 4</u>: It is essential that at least 10 experiences are recorded and rated for each of the potential areas. It is therefore important that

the facilitator keeps in touch with the participants over the four weeks. In situations where a career aspirant is unable to find opportunities for experiences in a particular potential area, the facilitator is required to try and create these opportunities. The success of the exercise depends directly on the range of experiences the individual is exposed to. In some cases the career counsellor has continued to have one meeting a week to check on participants' progress. This meeting could be a time when individuals share their experiences with the others in the group. The facilitator could use this meeting to network participants with each other and ensure that each member in the group is systematically moving forward on this self-discovery exercise.

Step 5: Once a sufficient number of activities have been recorded, the facilitator focuses on helping participants score their diaries.

Scoring:

- Participants are to total up the ratings for each potential area separately to get their *Total Score*

- The Total Score is to be divided by the number of experiences recorded for each potential to obtain the *Average Score*. The Average Score will always range between 1 and 5.

Step 6: The Average Scores are used to help the participant obtain a profile of personal aptitudes. The last page of the worksheet may be used to plot Average Scores onto a graph across the five potential areas. Higher scores reflect higher potentials.

The top two potentials are usually selected as indicative of the career aspirant's highest aptitude areas.

Limitations of this technique

The effectiveness of the *Self-Discovery Diary* rests on the individual's exposure to a variety of experiences, the accurate classification of these experiences into the most relevant potential area and finally the accuracy of the rating. If sufficient attention is not paid to these factors, the results obtained are likely to be inaccurate. The role of the facilitator therefore is crucial. It is our experience that this technique yields rich information when it is used appropriately. Appropriate use implies monitoring of exposure to experiences, categorisation of experiences and validation of the ratings by the facilitator.

Understanding Cognitions

Note to the facilitator:

Cognitions are thinking patterns. The third aspect of deepening the career aspirant's self-understanding is to facilitate the development of insights into how thoughts, beliefs and attitudes affect career decision-making. We have seen in earlier chapters how prevailing beliefs about career choices, planning for the future, the value attached to specific careers and such thinking patterns predispose individuals to certain career paths. Quite often career beliefs reflect thinking patterns that have become habitual. The individual is usually unaware of how his cognitions affect his behaviour. As we discussed in an earlier chapter a branch of Psychological Therapy called the Cognitive Behavioural school has demonstrated that cognitions – emotions and actions are closely interlinked. In other words, habitual ways of thinking trigger a specific array of emotions. These emotions then affect the way the individual behaves. The facilitator is referred to Chapter 6 for a brief overview of the links between thinking patterns and behaviour. This section will focus on activities that could enhance the career aspirant's awareness of career beliefs and understand the links between beliefs and career planning outcomes.

Activity Code 2.3.

Activity 2.3.1.

Title: Career Beliefs – Career Actions

Content and Objective: Career beliefs could affect career planning. The objective
                            of this activity is to enhance participants' sensitivity to the links
                            between career beliefs and career planing actions. The *Career*
                            Beliefs – Career Actions Worksheets are designed to trace the links
                            between thoughts, feelings and actions. The worksheet presents
                            students with vignettes (short verbal descriptions of situations)
                            featuring a character similar to themselves. The potential
                            outcomes of two types of thought content are described. The
                            activity requires the student to trace each outcome depending on
                            the thought content of the character in the vignette. A sample of
                            completed worksheet is provided in Appendix 9.

Key Messages: • The beliefs we hold influence our actions.
                            • Our carer beliefs affect our career development.

Duration of the activity: 30 to 40 minutes

Material: Career Beliefs – Career Actions Worksheets
                            <u>Source</u>: Appendix 9

Method: Divide the group into 5 smaller groups. Give each group
                            one of the worksheets. The group is required to work out the links
                            between career beliefs and career actions by drawing a line linking
                            options A and B to trace the consequences of each set of reactions
                            given by the character in the worksheet. A representative from

each group then is invited to present the group's opinions to the rest of the class. The links between thoughts, feelings and actions are discussed. The facilitator draws the discussion points together to highlight how the thinking patterns influence the outcomes of career planning.

Activity 2.3.2.

Title: The Career Belief Patterns Scale.

Content and Objective: The Career Belief Patterns Scale (CBPS) is a questionnaire that assesses thinking patterns associated with career preparation and planning. The scale has 18 vignettes that describe events that commonly occur in career aspirants' lives. Each vignette reflects a particular career belief. Participants are required to indicate the degree to which they agree or disagree with the beliefs described in each of the statements. The CBPS is designed to measure three specific career belief patterns. These are:

- *Proficiency Beliefs* (items 1 to 8): The vignettes in this factor tap the respondent's beliefs about the importance of acquiring qualifications and skills that enhance personal proficiency for an occupation before entering the world of work (e.g. All exams are too difficult to pass. So, it is better to try for a job without trying to pass exams).

- *Control and Self-Direction Beliefs* (items 9 to 15): These items describe circumstances that reflect the individual's sense of control over his or her life situation and orientation to directing his or her life. (e.g. Going to a training programme means, I cannot earn during the training period. Therefore I cannot go to any training programme).

- *Persistence Beliefs* (items 16 to 18): The content of these vignettes suggest situations reflecting persistence toward future career goals in spite of difficulties and barriers encountered during the process of career preparation (e.g. Sanjay went to learn welding. After a few days he fell sick. He feels welding is not suitable for him and he must stop).

Note to the Facilitator

The CBPS is particularly useful when working with boys from disadvantaged backgrounds. We have found that young people from socially and economically difficult environments approach career planning with defeatist and negative mind sets. A judicious use of the CBPS would help enhance awareness of underlying career beliefs and how these attitudes could affect career preparation. Some of the vignettes are relevant across all backgrounds. These items could be used as discussion material with all types of groups. Further details regarding the construction of the CBPS are provided in the *Resources* section (Resource 4).

Key Messages:	• Our beliefs influence the direction in which our career planning moves.
	• Our beliefs can cause us to avoid career planning.
	• We may believe that we cannot control or direct our lives or our careers.
	• Our beliefs sometimes cause us to give up when faced with difficulties or barriers to career development.
Duration of the activity:	60 to 90 minutes
Material:	The Career Belief Patterns Scale (CBPS)
	Source: Appendix 10
Method:	Distribute the CBPS to all participants. Go over the instructions taking care to highlight the manner in which responses are to be

given. Participants are required to indicate how much they agree or disagree with the responses and reactions of the characters in the vignettes. A rating of 7 indicates complete agreement, while 1 at the other end of the scale indicates complete disagreement. After everyone has completed their CBPS they are to score their responses by totalling their ratings for each vignette.

Scoring:

Responses are to be totalled separately for each of the 3 sections and entered into the appropriate cells at the end of the CBPS. High scores reflect higher negativity in career beliefs and indicate that a low value is placed on career preparation. Scores obtained in each of the 3 sections maybe totalled to obtain a *total score*. A total score above 70 (for those from disadvantaged backgrounds) and above 48 (for those from more privileged homes) are to be interpreted as high. Statistically validated percentile norms are provided in the *Resources* section (Resource 4, Table 7). It is useful also to interpret scores across the three career belief themes. Scores above 20 for section 1, above 15 for section 2 and above 5 for section 3, are interpreted as high.

Once participants' responses have been scored, the facilitator could spend time with the group interpreting the meaning of these scores. It is particularly important that outcomes of career beliefs are highlighted. Given below is a brief summary of what high scores mean across each of these belief themes:

Interpretation:

High scores on Proficiency Beliefs
The emphasis on acquiring work skills or other qualifications before seeking a job is low. In other words high Proficiency scores on the CBPS could indicate that the respondent is likely to enter the world of work as an unskilled labourer. These individuals

place a low value on the acquiring of work skills through further education. Economic pressures and/or social cognitions might be such that they would enter the world of work with little or no skills for specific occupations.

High Scores on Control and Self Direction Beliefs:
These individuals are likely to feel that they have little or no control over career development and life events in general. Respondents with high scores on the Control and Self Direction scale of the CBPS, usually have difficulty in taking responsibility for their lives and developing a career path toward success and prosperity.

High Scores on Persistence Beliefs:
High Persistence scores could indicate that the respondent's continuance toward career goals is likely to be erratic. These individuals are likely to give up in the face of adversity. They are unlikely to make an attempt to face barriers to career development and work at overcoming these barriers.

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                                                           │
│         Box 8.1.  Enhancing self-efficacy:  Insights from Robert Lent     │
│                                                                           │
│   *Arulmani*: Could you give us an idea of how self-efficacy for career   │
│   preparation tasks could be enhanced?                                    │
│                                                                           │
│   **Lent**:  In general, we could think in terms of Bandura's 4 primary   │
│   sources of efficacy information.  Interventions that offer a            │
│   combination of efficacy sources – particularly exposure to personal     │
│   performance accomplishments, social support and encouragement, access   │
│   to role models, and anxiety-allaying experiences – would be likely      │
│   help to enhance self-efficacy.  The intervention should be structured   │
│   around the target behaviour.                                            │
│                                                                           │
│   *Arulmani*: Is it possible that counselling / training inputs could     │
│   enhance self-efficacy without focussing adequately on the actual        │
│   development of skills?  If this could happen, what are the safeguards    │
│   a counsellor needs to put into place?                                   │
│                                                                           │
│   **Lent**:  Yes, I think one could try to promote self-efficacy without  │
│   focusing on the development of skills.  This would be the case where    │
│   one has demonstrably adequate skills to succeed at a given task, but     │
│   is hampered by low self-efficacy.  Review of past performance           │
│   successes, attribution training (e.g., examining the client's           │
│   performance attributions and making sure that these are                 │
│   efficacy-supportive), support and encouragement from the counsellor     │
│   and other important persons, and access to successful role models who   │
│   are perceived to be similar to the client on important dimensions may   │
│   all help to promote self-efficacy in such a context.  Where             │
│   self-efficacy is low but consistent with inadequate skills, an          │
│   intervention designed both to promote skills and self-efficacy might    │
│   be indicated.                                                           │
│                                                                           │
│           Personal communication between Robert Lent and Gideon           │
│                             Arulmani (2003)                               │
│                                                                           │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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Concluding Comments

This chapter presented a range of activities that are designed to facilitate a deepening of career aspirants' awareness of their interests, aptitudes and career beliefs. Each of these activities are based on well defined theories and frameworks. It is essential that the facilitator is familiar with these frameworks. Some guidelines have been provided in the *Resources* section (Resource 3 and 4) as well as in Chapters 3 and 4. In addition, the facilitator is encouraged to also read these theories in the original in order to enhance the effectiveness of the career counselling interaction.

Chapter 9

Understanding the World of Work

Objective

Understanding the world of work is the next component in the Career Discovery Equation. Having gone through exercises for self-discovery the next step is to match the individual's profile of interests and aptitudes to the world of work. Several issues pertaining to the world of work have been discussed in Chapter 6. In summary, we describe the world of work along two important dimensions. The first is with regard to the *characteristics* of the world in which the career aspirant will develop and build his or her career. Activities described under this section will focus on what the world of work is, work ethics, aspects related to the environment and gender, dignity of labour and so on. The second section will focus on *career opportunities*. These activities will orient participants in a neutral manner to a wide range of work roles and career options. The key objective underlying these activities is to help career choosers develop an orientation to careers they may not have heard about and thereby provide a broader matrix for making career choices.

What is the World of Work?

Note to the facilitator:

Our approach to the world of work rests on the premise that career development is an ongoing process. Therefore effective career planning rests on helping the career aspirant plan for career paths and courses that offer as wide and deep a foundation as possible. Helping the career aspirant develop a wide foundation is where the sensitivity and skill of a career counsellor is vital. The rate at which India is throwing up new job opportunities is perhaps unrivalled anywhere else in the world. Helping the young people capitalise on these opportunities goes beyond merely matching the individual to a job. It requires educating the career aspirant with skills for success through excellence – in the long run.

Activity Code 3.1.

Activity 3.1.1.

Title:	From School to Work.

Content and Objective: *From School to Work* is an activity that is designed to orient career aspirants to the characteristics of the world of work. It is particularly useful with younger students (Class 8 – 9 is ideal) and contrasts the world of which they are a part (the world of school) with the world they will enter when they begin to work. The objective of the activity is to help them begin to understand the world of work. The activity is designed to stimulate a discussion that leads to the communication of the following key points.

Key Messages:

- Some of your experiences are similar to the experiences your parents have in the World of Work. However the outcomes of these experience and the objectives behind work activities are quite different.
- Other aspects of the world of work are quite different from the world of school and college.

Time: 30 to 45 minutes

Material: School to Work Worksheet.

<u>Source</u>: Appendix 11

Method: All participants are to have a copy of the School to Work Worksheet. Go over the instructions with them and explain the activity. Give the class about 20 minutes to complete the

worksheet. Then discuss each point with the class. Highlight the differences between School and the world of work. Draw the activity to a close by communicating the key messages described above.

Activity 3.1.2.

Title:	Your Advice

Content and Objective: *Your Advice* is designed to introduce career aspirants to the world of work. It is a questionnaire that uses vignettes (short verbal pictures of experiences / situations) to describe a variety of career decision-making situations. Participants are to recommend a career to the characters in the vignettes, by rating the suitability of the career options given. It is important to note that this activity does not have absolutely correct answers. The *Cue Sheet* in Appendix 12 provides the facilitator with information about the one career alternative that is least suitable to the character in the item. The objective of the activity is to promote discussions about the world of work. This activity provides the opportunity to also discuss issues such as gender typing, occupational prestige and dignity of labour. Links between exam performance and subsequent course options could also be discussed. It also gives the facilitator an opportunity to introduce new careers to young career choosers.

Key Messages:
- Career decisions are influenced by a variety of factors.
- Career Beliefs can affect career choices.
- Every career has its own characteristics and outcomes.

- The most suitable careers for an individual are careers linked to personal interests and aptitudes.

- Exam performances are linked to future courses of study.

Duration of the activity: 30 to 40 minutes

Material: *Your Advice* Work Sheet

<u>Source</u>: Appendix 12

Method: Ensure that all participants have a copy of the *Your Advice* Worksheet. Go over the instructions with the group and give a few illustrations on how they could 'counsel' the characters in the vignettes. Participants are likely to ask for further information about the meaning of some of the careers on the worksheet as the activity progresses. It is essential that the facilitator is prepared with appropriate career definitions. After the questionnaire has been completed, discuss the careers advice that could be given to the characters in the vignettes. Use the cue sheet given in Appendix 12 as a reference to guide the discussion. Particularly highlight issues pertaining to gender, occupational prestige and dignity of labour.   Draw the activity to a close by communicating the key messages described above.

Activity 3.1.3.

Title: Career Quiz

Content and Objective: This is a collection of questions related to different aspects of a variety of careers. The objective of the exercise is to stimulate participants to think about what careers mean, entrance procedures, environmental issues and ethics.

| *Key Messages*: | • Build up your career information data base. |
| | • Effective career decisions are based on accurate career information. |

| *Duration of the activity:* | 20 to 30 minutes |

Material:	The *Career Quiz* questionnaire.
	<u>Source</u>: Appendix 13
	<u>Note</u>: This activity does not require student worksheets.

| *Method*: | Conduct a quiz using the *Career Quiz* questionnaire. Stimulate a discussion at the end of the questions to address some of the important underlying aspects of professionalism in the world of work. Some of the questions address aspects related to the environment (e.g. q. 9). Use this opportunity to talk about waste, pollution and the importance of being sensitive to these issues. Other questions deal with ethics (e.g. q. 13). Talk about ethics and the commitment to deeper values such as excellence, as the most essential components for success in a career. The most appropriate answers have been marked with a ✓ for the facilitator's reference.   Draw the activity to a close by communicating the key messages described above. |

Career Opportunities

Note to the facilitator:

The earlier section focused on the broad and foundational aspects of helping orient career aspirants to the world of work. This section is more specific and will describe activities that expose participants to a wide range of careers. Choices are often limited to the careers the young person has heard about or has been exposed to. It is important that this horizon is made wider so

as to provide a broader range of choice. Furthermore career choices are often made on the basis of information that is not altogether accurate. Some of the activities in this section will help students learn to accurately collate careers information and develop a deeper understanding of occupations in which they are interested.

Most of the activities in this section use *The Occupational Checklist*. This is a standardised list of careers that have been categorised into families. This categorisation is based on the multiple potentials framework. Accordingly *The Occupational Checklist* comprises 5 sections, namely, Linguistic, Analytical-Logical, Spatial, Personal and Physical-Mechanical potential areas. Careers have been categorised into these sections, based on the core potential that a given career requires. It is underlined that no career rests on a single potential. Most careers require combinations of potentials and talents. We have developed various versions of the *Occupational Checklist* . The more advanced versions describe the use of combinations of potentials to categorise careers into families. Learning to use combinations of the 5 potentials in helping students make career choices requires specialised training. The checklist provided in this book is a simplified version and is called *The Occupational Checklist (Basic)*. A career counsellor could use this tool to *initiate* career exploration in a systematic manner. Further details regarding the construction of *The Occupational Checklists* are provided in the *Resources* section (Resource 5).

Activity Code 3.2.

Activity 3.2.1.

Title:	Career Families.
Content and Objective:	This is an activity that is designed to orient career aspirants to the links between careers and the aptitudes they require. This is also an opportunity to enhance exposure to careers that the career aspirant may never have heard about. It is important therefore that the facilitator is familiar with the careers on *The Occupational Checklist (Basic)*.

Key Message:	• Different careers require different types of skills.
	• Career choices are more effective when you choose from a wide range of careers.

Duration: 30 to 40 minutes.

Material: 1. The Occupational Checklist (Basic)

Source: Appendix 14

2. Career Cards: A sample of these cards is provided in Appendix 15. The card carries the name of the career and a brief description of the career (Career Definition). The facilitator is required to use the sources of career information described in Chapter 6 to develop a set of cards that covers all the careers listed in the *Occupational Checklist (Basic)*.

Method: At the beginning of the activity ask the participants for names of careers they have heard about and write their suggestions on the black board. Now briefly go over the 5 potential areas that were discussed through earlier activities (e.g. Frames of Reference and My Interest Profile). It is important that all participants are reminded of these potentials and what they mean. Hold a brief discussion focusing on the characteristics of five to six of the careers written on the board. Identify along with the group, the main potentials they require. Then divide the group into 5 smaller groups. Give each group a set of 10 to 15 Career Cards. After about 10 minutes, each group is to describe to the rest of the class, the characteristics and the main potential required by the careers on their cards. Draw the activity to a close by communicating the key messages described above.

Note: The cluster of cards for each career family makes a good Career Poster that could be displayed .

Activity 3.2.2.

Title: Collect Careers Information.

Content and Objective: This activity is designed to help career aspirants explore the
world of work in a systematic manner. Quite often career choices are
made on the basis of inadequate information or even spurious
information. This activity orients career aspirants to valid and accurate
sources of information and provides a format for the collation of
information about different careers. The activity uses *Sources of
Information* – a cue sheet that gives the career aspirant clues to where
career information is available. The *My Career Information* worksheet
provides a format for maintaining and documenting careers information.

Key Messages: ● Effective career decisions require accurate career
information.
● You can collect and organise careers information.

Duration of the activity: 60 minutes.

Material: 1. Sources of Career Information cue sheet
<u>Source</u>:   Appendix 15
2. The My Career Information Worksheet
<u>Source</u>: Appendix 16
3. Career information material. Please refer to Chapter 6
for a detailed list of sources from which career information could be
collated.   Some examples are: Newspaper cuttings, career encyclopaedia,
career columns from magazines, college prospectuses.   This activity
should ideally occur in a careers library if available.   An example of a

completed Career Information Worksheet is provided in Appendix 16 for the Facilitator's reference.

Method:

Give the participants an example of planning the path to enter a particular career, using the *Career Information worksheet*. Give them a sample of a completed worksheet. Now break the group into as many sources of information (e.g. books, newspaper cuttings etc) as you have. Give each group the names of 5 careers along with the relevant source of information and a sufficient number of worksheets. Each group is now required to collect information and complete the *Career Information* worksheets for each of the careers given to the group. After about 20 minutes each group is to present the information they have collated to the rest of the group. At the end of each presentation provide any further information you may have. Highlight the fact that careers information is available all around us. Particularly emphasise the use of the daily newspaper to acquire careers information.

You could extend this activity by asking students to use the Sources of Career Information cue sheet to collect careers information as an assignment for the next careers education session. Draw the activity to a close by communicating the key messages described above.

Activity 3.2.3.

Title:

The Careers Day

Content and Objective:

This is an activity designed to expose students to the World of Work through interactions with professionals. A careers day is a special day in the school calendar when professionals from various walks of life are invited to interact with students through lectures, demonstrations, exhibitions and other activities that could

enhance students' awareness of a particular career area. A careers day is particularly useful when presentations are made on lesser known careers as this will widen participants' career horizons. Speakers also act as role models that students could emulate. Some organisations such as the Rotary Clubs, local entrepreneurs and associations of small scale industry offer a ready-made source of professionals who are usually willing to come in and make presentations. This is also a good opportunity for drawing parents into the career counselling programme. Parents could be invited to make presentations on their careers or even as guests who will learn about new careers.

***Key Messages*:**	• Effective career decisions require accurate career information.
	• You can collect and organise careers information.
	• Build networks that can aid your career development.

Duration of the activity:	This can vary depending on the number of presenters invited. The minimum time usually required is 4 hours (half a school day).

Material:	1. The My Career Information Worksheet
	<u>Source</u>: Appendix 16
	2. Careers Day – Speaker's Presentation Outline
	<u>Source</u>: Appendix 17
Other	
Requirements:	Presentation spaces (Classrooms are ideal)
	Audio visual equipment (over head projectors, public address system etc.,) as required by the speakers.
Pre-presentation	
Details:	Identify the speakers and provide them with the *Careers*

Day – Speaker's Presentation Outline. Check on what supports they require (audiovisual equipment etc). Spend time with your students to orient them to the Careers Day. All students are to make notes of the presentations on their *My Career Information* worksheets, and be prepared to make their own presentations to the rest of the class after the Careers Day. If you are going to use Method 2 as described below, then students are to be oriented as to how they will move from one session to another.

Method 1: The Careers Day follows the Panel Discussion format. Each speaker is given a specified amount of time to make their presentation to the whole group. The time that is usually ideal is 20 minutes for the presentation and then 10 minutes for questions.

Method 2: Speakers do not make presentations to the whole group. Instead they are given a separate presentation space (e.g. classroom) and a time duration (e.g. 30 minutes). Several such parallel presentations are planned in other classrooms. A specific number of students attend each session. At the end of one session students move to another presenter. The main drawback of Method 2 is that speakers are required to repeat their presentations a number of times. The primary advantage is that students get to choose the career session they want to attend and thereby interest is sustained.

After the Careers Day

In the next careers education session, students are required to make presentations to the rest of the class of the information they collected during the Careers Day. Highlight the importance of developing networks and 'contacts' with the outside world that could stand career aspirants in good stead as their career development progresses. Draw the activity to a close by communicating the key messages described above.

Activity 3.2.4.

Title: Use the Internet

Content and
Objective: This activity addresses a particularly powerful tool for information

collection, the internet. A vast amount of information is available on the

various web sites available through the internet. These websites are of

two types. The first are sites that are presented by specific organisations

(e.g. Specialist institutes, colleges, universities, government organisations

and so on). These are the most reliable sources of information. Other web

sites are those that claim to be dedicated career guidance web sites. Our

assessment of these sites indicated that information presented is quite

often inaccurate or insufficient. However the fact remains that the internet

offers the widest range of information. The objective of the activity is to

encourage students to use the internet to collate information while at the

same time learn to discriminate between accurate and inaccurate sources

of career information.

Key Messages   • The internet offers a useful source of careers information

• Learn to establish the validity of information you collect from the

internet

Duration of the
activity: The orientation activity may last for about 30 minutes. Students are then

encouraged to continue to collect careers information from the internet and

present it to the class at periodic intervals.

Material: 1. The My Career Information Worksheet

<u>Source</u>: Appendix 16

2. Samples of information you have downloaded from the internet.

Method: Orient students to accessing careers information through the

internet. Use the information you have downloaded as an illustration. Give each student (or small groups) a set of careers about which they need to collect information. Students are to use their *My Career Information* Worksheets to collect information from the internet and make a report to the class in the next careers session. Draw the activity to a close by communicating the key messages described above.

Concluding Comments

The activities described above focused on a variety of techniques to address the second component of the Career Discovery Equation – the world of work. We conclude this chapter with two comments. Firstly, it is essential that the facilitator lays a high emphasis on educating him or herself about the world of work. In the absence of a centralised source of careers information to which you could readily refer, it is important that you keep yourself updated with information about new careers, courses, eligibility criteria and labour market trends. Secondly, an effective career counsellor guards against the danger of focusing on the world of work without first helping students through Self-Discovery. As we have pointed out in earlier chapters, information that is presented in a vacuum creates more confusion and a disenchantment with the career counselling process. It is essential therefore that efforts be made to blend Self-Discovery with careers information.

Chapter 10

Career Alternatives and Career Preparation

Objective

As described by the Career Discovery Equation, Self-understanding and exploring the World of Work culminate in the identification of Career Alternatives and Career Preparation. Section 1 of this chapter will focus on activities that facilitate the development of Career Alternatives. Section 2 will go on to present ideas that could strengthen the individual's preparation to enter the careers chosen.

Developing Career Alternatives

Note to the facilitator:

The earlier activities oriented the career aspirant to personal interests and talents, helped identify career beliefs and provided insights into the World of Work. Drawing this process toward culmination implies that the counsellor and the career aspirant collaborate to discover a small *group* of options that match the individual's profile. Having too many options does not allow the career aspirant to develop a clear focus and target for career development. Too few options do not allow for flexibility in career development. In our experience the ideal number of Career Alternatives for career aspirants between age 15 (Class 10) and 20 years (final year degree) is between 3 to 4 careers.

A further point to be noted is that Career Alternatives could be broad at the high school stage of career development. For example a young class 10 student may arrive at Engineering, Behavioural Science and Design as her career options. Career exploration rather than commitment to one career path, is still the target at this stage. Creating a framework for exploration is an important task before career counsellor. Career Alternatives *continue* to play a role as development progresses. Of the three chosen at the high school stage, one maybe

selected as the final option. At the next levels of education (e.g. after higher secondary) the young person in the illustration above may zero in on the Behavioural Sciences. It is important to note that an option earlier approached in global terms continues to present opportunities for choice. Within the Behavioural Sciences for example is a vast array of careers (e.g. Clinical Psychology, Child Development, Human Resource Management). Helping the individual develop an awareness of the scope of these choices would contribute to enhance career maturity.

Activity Code 4.1.

Activity 4.1.1.

Title:	Blending interests with talents
Content and *Objective:*	As we have discussed in earlier chapters, the accuracy of career choices is enhanced when the individual's interests as well as aptitudes are blended together. Information regarding interests is available through some of the activities described in Chapter 8 (e.g. Activity numbers 2.1.1. and 2.1.3.). In the absence of formal aptitude tests the Self-Discovery Diary (Activity 2.2.1) offers a useful informal technique with which the individual could explore personal talents. In similar manner, the counselling systems described in the Resources section (Resource 1.1 and 1.2) offer techniques and devices for the identification of personal interests and aptitudes. When interests and talents are examined together, it is important to ensure that the same frame of reference is used both for interests as well as for aptitudes. This activity draws from the self-discovery exercises covered earlier and operates within the multiple potentials framework.
Key Messages:	• Base your Career Alternatives on a comprehensive understanding of yourself. • Base your Career Alternatives on your interests as well as your aptitudes.

Time: 25 to 30 minutes

Material: 1. My Personal Profile Work Sheet

                      Source: Appendix 18.

                      2.   Information from the *My Interest Profile* and the *Self-Discovery Diary* worksheets.

Method: Ask participants to go back to their My Interest Profile and Self-Discovery Diary worksheets. The Average scores obtained for interests and aptitudes are to be entered into the appropriate columns of the My Personal Profile Worksheet. Now help participants work out their Personal Profile Scores. This is calculated by totalling the average interest and aptitude scores and dividing this number by 2. This score averages the interest and aptitude scores recorded by the participant and yields a composite Personal Profile Score.

Interpretation: Higher scores reflect higher suitability for careers in a given potential area. The two highest potential areas are identified as the framework for the development of Career Alternatives. Help all participants identify their two highest potential areas. Draw the activity to a close by communicating the key messages described above.

Limitations of this technique:

It is important that the facilitator makes note of the fact that the reduction of scores into summaries such averages and percentages also implies that the finer details of the individual's interests and preferences could be lost. Our experience with using this method has indicateq2d that information from the information from the *My Interest Profile* and the *Self-Discovery Diary* worksheets do provide a useful framework for more detailed discussions and further counselling. The method of developing a *personal profile* described in this activity, is recommended

primarily as a guide for further exploration. Scores obtained are not to be interpreted as absolute, psychometrically validated indices of personal ability.

Activity 4.1.2.

Title:	My career alternatives.

Content and
Objective: This activity is a continuation of blending interests and aptitudes. The primary focus of the activity is to now help the career aspirant develop Career Alternatives that he or she could further explore based on personal interests and aptitudes.

Key Messages:
- Identifying definite Career Alternatives is an important part of career development.
- Link your Career Alternatives to your interests and aptitudes.

Time: 45 to 60 minutes

Material:
1. My Career Alternatives Worksheet.
   Source: Appendix 19
2. Information about the two highest potentials from the My Personal Profile worksheet
   Source: Appendix 18
3. The Occupational Checklist (Basic)
   Source: Appendix 14.

Method: Participants are to start by entering their two highest potentials into the first part of the My Career Alternatives worksheet. The facilitator is then to explain the manner in which careers are categorised in the Occupational Checklist (Basic). Participants are then to examine the careers listed under the potentials for which they have recorded the highest scores. The career

aspirant is to select three careers that he or she finds most interesting under his or her highest potentials. These careers are to be entered under the Career Overview section of the worksheet. Participants are likely to have questions about the careers on the Occupational Checklist. Questions are usually linked to what a particular career is. It is important that the facilitator is able to answer these questions with simple and clear career definitions.

Once the Career Overview is completed, Career Exploration begins. Participants are encouraged to use the Sources of Career Information to learn more about the 6 careers they have chosen. It is here that the Careers Library plays a vital role. Close interactions with the facilitator could help the young person arrive at a clearer idea of the careers chosen. Finally, the participant is required to reduce the 6 careers in the Career Overview to the 3 that he or she finds most interesting. These 3 careers comprise that young person's Career Alternatives. Draw the activity to a close by communicating the key messages described above.

Note: It is important to remember that developing Career Alternatives should not be reduced a mere matching of personal profiles with occupational lists. On occasion, career aspirants may not find careers they really want to take up within the framework of the two identified potentials. Sometimes the exposure to the Occupational List inspires career choosers to consider careers outside the framework of their Personal Profile. It is most likely that careers linked to personal interests and aptitudes are careers that offer the highest probability for success. However it is also important to let the young person know that choices outside the Personal Profile need not be discounted. The facilitator could encourage the career aspirant to add these careers to the list and explore them in greater detail.

Career Preparation

We now come to the final step in the career counselling process. Having made choices and identified alternatives, the career aspirant must now begin systematic career preparation. Preparation to enter a career has two components. One aspect of career preparation is related directly to a specific career and is closely tied in with preparing for entrance examinations, academic performances and so on. Our concern is focused on the deeper, foundational aspects, which are essential for all career aspirants irrespective of the careers they have chosen. Some of these issues (e.g. career beliefs, occupational prestige) have been addressed earlier. The activities in this section will focus on three specific areas related to effective career preparation.

Activity Code 4.2.

Activity 4.2.1.

Title:	**My Career Plan**
Content and **Objective:**	A Career Plan is a blueprint for career development. At the Career Alternatives stage it is most likely that the Career Aspirant does not as yet know enough about the careers chosen. It is vital that further information is collected particularly to understand the various nuances of career paths leading to the chosen alternatives. This is an activity that helps the career aspirant approach career preparation in a systematic and structured manner. Career aspirants in the final years of each level of education (e.g. Class 10, Class 12, Final year degree) find this activity to be particularly relevant to their situation.
Key Messages:	• Career planning helps prepare for a career effectively.
Time:	45 to 60 minutes
Material:	Career Schedule worksheet Source: Appendix 20

Method: Demonstrate the use of the Career Schedule worksheet. A partially completed schedule extracted from a Class 12 student's worksheet is provided for the facilitator's reference in Appendix 20. Participants are then given sufficient blank copies of the worksheet to practise formulating a career plan. Each participant is required to plot stages in personal career development for the next one year. It is particularly important that participants incorporate monthly check points into the schedule that help them self-monitor their progress. Draw the activity to a close by communicating the key messages described above.

Activity 4.2.2.

Title: Skill Literacy

Content and
Objective: Skill literacy is a concept that has been discussed throughout this book. One of the most significant drawbacks in our system of education is the disbalance between theory and practice. Our research has repeatedly indicated that skill literacy greatly enhances the career aspirant's attractiveness to an employer. Chapters 4 and 5 provide a detailed description of what Skill Literacy is. *Dressed to Skill* is an article written for career aspirants that orients them to the importance of becoming skill literate. The activity uses this article to first of all present the concept of skill literacy to the career aspirant and demonstrate its importance and relevance to career development.

Key Messages:
- Skill literacy reflects your dexterity for practical and application oriented tasks.
- Skill literacy may be general and necessary for all types of tasks.
- Skill literacy may be specific and related to particular careers.
- The person who is skill literate is attractive to the employer.

Time:	This activity would require about 30 minutes. But the development of skill literacy is a life long process.
Material:	1. Dressed to Skill article Source: Appendix 21. 2. Skill Literacy worksheet.
Method:	Introduce the concept of skill literacy and highlight its importance as a vital aspect of career preparation. Divide the group into 5 smaller groups and give each group a copy of the Dressed to Skill article. Each group is required to fill up the Skill Literacy worksheet using the article and finally make a presentation to the class on Skill Literacy. Draw the activity to a close by communicating the key messages described above.

Activity 4.2.3.

Title:	Internship Programmes and Work Experience
Content and Objective:	Work Experience has one of the most powerful influences on career preparation. Young people could be exposed to Work Experience opportunities from Class 9 onwards. We use the term *Internships* to describe Work Experience programmes. Internship programmes contribute in a significant manner to the student's career maturity. It is becoming increasingly common these days for top level training institutes to place a high value on the work experience of students who apply for their courses. Furthermore, when the young person finally enters the world of work and applies for a job, a set of certificates that demonstrate her experiences in the world of work go a long way in helping her get the job. This activity describes the implementation of a school based Internship Programme.

Key Messages: • Work experience teaches you about a career.

• Work experience gives you an advantage in the competition for the best colleges and jobs.

Time: 10 days approximately. The holidays offer the ideal opportunity for Internship Programmes. Internships could also be organised over three or four week ends.

Material and other requirements:

1. The Internship Programme first of all requires a list of professionals who would be willing to take students on as   interns. Here again, involving parents to provide internships, is ideal. Once you have a list of individuals / organisation who would be willing to accept your students, write to them explaining the nature of the programme and its purpose. It is important that you clarify the number of students a given person / organisation is willing to accept, board and lodge facilities if the location is out of station, the departments to which the student will be exposed. It is also important to check the manner in which the internship providers plan to structure the programme. They maybe encouraged to offer guided tours of the facility, lecture-demonstrations of certain aspects of their work, access to annual reports and publicity material, opportunities to interact with workers and so on.   Underline the importance of giving the student a certificate / letter describing the nature of the programme. It is also important that you get parents' approval for their child's participation in the programme.

2. Internship Report Checklist
   Source: Appendix 23

Method: Describe the Internship Programme to the students. Circulate the various internship offers and allow students to choose the internships they want to

take up. It is essential that students document their experiences. All

students are to prepare an Internship Project Report that they present to the rest of

the class. Orient students to the Internship Report Checklist and underline the

necessity of preparing a report that describes their internship experience.

Encourage students to illustrate their reports with photographs, samples of

products and other details.

After all internships are completed, students make presentations to the rest of the

class about their Internship Programme. Ensure that all students receive

certificates from their internship locations that documents their participation.

Work Experience – other examples:

Opportunities for exposure to the World of Work could be organised through programmes that are variations on the Internship theme. The examples given below are particularly relevant to the college age groups.

Sandwich Courses: These are programmes that break up a course into practical as well as theory inputs. Periods of work experience are incorporated into the main course.

In-Term Placements: These are the result of industry – university collaborations. Students taking a particular course are placed during their studies in a relevant work environment for experience and exposure.

Work Shadowing: This is an interesting expansion on the internship theme. During an internship the student is required to 'shadow' a worker to observe the various work roles that he or she performs.

Concluding Comments

This chapter focussed on the final components of the Career Discovery Equation – Career

Alternatives and Career Preparation. We must underline here that the validity of the information

sources being used to help career aspirants develop career alternatives, is clearly established.

The Career Alternatives stage is the point from which involvement of parents is vital. Draw

parents into the counselling sessions from this juncture onwards. The final stage is Career

Preparation. This is perhaps the longest part of the counselling interaction. The wider the young

persons' range of exposure to the world of work, the more stable will be the final career decision. It is during the Career Preparation stage that the subtle but powerful influence of cognitions and career beliefs would emerge. Working through these issues is essential.

As the career aspirant and the family develop increasing control over career preparation, the role of the counsellor begins to diminish and careers interactions enter the closure stage of the counselling process.

Chapter 11

The Career Counselling Service – An Overview

Points of focus

The urgency and pressing need for career counselling in India has led to the emergence of a variety of services in the Indian context. As we have seen throughout this book, career counselling is a service that ought to be based on well established theory and adequately validated research. This chapter will draw from the ideas presented in this book to delineate the key components of an effective and relevant careers service.

The first point to be considered when setting up a career counselling centre is with regard to the *client group*. As we have discussed in earlier chapters, the delivery of career counselling services is closely linked to career developmental stages. Each of these stages present tasks and needs that vary and change as the young person's career development progresses. These needs and tasks are influenced by chronological age, educational status, gender, socio-economic status, special needs and so on. Since this book has primarily focused on the high school and early college years, our description of a careers service will continue to be located within the context of an institution (school, college). A few pointers relevant to the college years will be presented toward the end of the chapter. The ideas presented below are also relevant to individuals who work as independent career counsellors.

A second point to be discussed is the *location* of the service. A career counselling centre could be located within a school or college and the services delivered by a trained career counsellor. A centre that functions within an institution has certain unique functions to perform. Alternatively a counsellor could set up an independent career counselling centre and offer services to individuals or to institutions as a consultant.

Finally, any discussion about the delivery of career counselling services must focus on two vital issues. The first is related to the *competencies* that the counsellor requires. The second is with regard to the *elements of the service* itself. The Indian context presents a situation where the emphasis on professionalism within the world of counselling unfortunately, is not very strong. This chapter presents on the basis of a review of international literature some guidelines based on which an efficient careers service could be set up. The details pertaining to the setting up of a careers counselling centre and delivering career counselling services will be described within the theoretical framework of the Career Preparation Process Model and its applicational dimension – the Career Discovery Equation.

Core Components

An effective Career Counselling Service is composed of certain key components that have an influence on the quality of services delivered. We present a brief overview of these components.

Physical Aspects

As obvious as this may seem it is essential that some thought is directed toward the location of the careers centre. It is important that the centre is located within a well-defined space that is easily accessible to students and other users. Ideally this space must be large enough to hold a small *library* where careers information is stored and made available to clients. It is within this space that *individual counselling* sessions would be held. Group counselling sessions would require larger spaces and are usually held in classrooms or the auditorium / hall.

It is also important that careers information is *displayed*. The latest information about applications, interesting bits of career news, posters from other institutes, job opportunities, changes in eligibility criteria and so on must be made available to students. Space to display this information in the form of a *Careers Bulletin Board* is therefore an important aspect of the careers service. This board could be right outside the career centre or located in a place that provides easy accessibility and high visibility (e.g. the lounge, the main corridor).

A *computer* with access to the internet is a valuable tool. A vast amount of careers information is available today on computer diskettes and CD-ROMs. Quite a few testing systems are also computer based. As the career counselling programme takes root student data (e.g. school records, interest and aptitude test information, career reports) will begin to come in. The careers service also needs to deal with administrative issues (e.g. planning internship programmes, careers days). Storing this information and accessing it easily could be quite a task without a computer.

Careers Information

An effective careers centre is well stocked with careers information. The most important sources of career information are described in detail in Chapter 6 and it is important that the careers service provides students with access to these sources.

A critical point that is often encountered is with regard to the *currency* and *local relevance* of careers information. Information available through careers encyclopaedia is limited to the date of publication. Furthermore, books that are published at a national level often cannot incorporate information pertaining to smaller institutes, colleges and training programmes. As a result 'local' information is lost. An effective careers service provides the most current information as well as careers information that is locally relevant. This would include changes in entrance procedures, new rules for admission, new courses, information about new careers and so on. It is here that *Career Files* become particularly relevant. Career Files maintain information about specific careers and allow for regular updating. Further information about Career Files is provided in Chapter 6.

Methods of Service Delivery

A careers service could be delivered in various formats. Two of the most common are now described.

Individual based services

Within this format, the availability of the careers service is made known to the student, teacher and parent community. Individuals then make appointments for using the service. Career counselling then is provided on a one-to-one basis. On occasion, parents also wish to make use of the careers centre to inform themselves on behalf of their children about careers and career development.

Institution based services

This is a more comprehensive format for the delivery of careers services and rests primarily on the principles of group counselling described in Chapter 6. The institution-based approach requires the careers service to devise intervention packages that are delivered through structured careers workshops for groups of students. The *Careers Service Checklist* presented in Appendix 24 is a worksheet for the facilitator that provides a list of the points to be kept in mind while planning an institution based careers intervention. The group intervention is usually followed up with individual sessions. It is likely that larger numbers of students would desire to use the careers centre after the group intervention. In this context it is important that the *timings* of the careers centre suit students' convenience. It is essential that the centre is kept open during all break times. Ideally the centre should remain open for some time after school, and perhaps on holidays when students could come in for further help.

Service implementation

Having decided on the details, the intervention itself must now be compiled. Services could be implemented at the group level or individual levels.

The Career Service Checklist provides the framework within which the *group counselling* sessions could be executed. The checklist requires the counsellor to first clarify details such as the age group, the duration of the programme, the sessions, group composition and other characteristics of the client body. The intervention must accurately fit the needs of the clients' group profile. *Preparing the Careers Intervention* is a worksheet that the facilitator could use to compile and plan the intervention. Appendix 25 provides a completed worksheet as an illustration. As is clear from the completed sample, careful scheduling is vital for the successful

execution of the group careers intervention. In almost all situations students from the group intervention will seek individual counselling services to clarify points that emerged during the group sessions. It is important that a careers service that is committed to group interventions also has space in its schedule for individual work.

In situations where the careers service will offer *individual counselling*, compiling of the career discovery activities maybe taken up after the initial session when the counsellor attempts to understand the client's need. The action plan for the implementation stage of individual counselling could then draw the most relevant activities together. In situations where clients come in after or during a group counselling programme, some of the activities may be repeated or clarifications made in a more individual-specific manner.

The Careers Service in the College Situation

The delivery of Careers Services in the college situation is similar to the school based service. However college students are closer to actual career entry and therefore present career needs that are different from the younger age groups. Some of the specific programme requirements from the careers service are described below:

Skills for Self-Presentation

College students would benefit from inputs that impart skills for *Self-Presentation*. This includes the following:
- Preparation of a curriculum vitae
- Job Application Skills
- Communication skills
- Skills to face interviews and perform effectively in group discussions
- Information about entrance examinations and linkages to services that help preparation for these examinations.

Placement Services

Another typical career development need at the college level is for *placement* services. College based careers services provide information about job opportunities and link students with potential employers. On-campus recruitment programmes organised by the college careers service are highly effective in helping the student make contact with potential employers. The careers services' 'presence' in the employment market place and the contacts it has is essential to providing users of the service with effective career options after college education.

Enterprise Education

A further area in which the careers service could make a significant contribution is linked to *enterprise education*. The government offers numerous incentives, schemes and support programmes for college graduates who are interested in *self-employment*. Orienting students to setting up personal enterprises for self-employment could go a long way in the battle against the high rates of unemployment amongst educated young people. Self-employment workshops that bring students face to face with loan making agencies, government schemes and ideas for employment generation are particularly relevant to the college student.

Interface with curricula and subject content

An important objective that a careers service could have is to integrate itself with the institution's curricula. This would allow the issues of career development to be blended with the subjects students study. Within a class, individual students show differing interests and aptitudes for subject groups. However prevailing career beliefs could lay a higher emphasis on certain subjects. The fact that every subject has relevance to the World of Work could be highlighted when the careers service is integrated with the teaching process. For example workshops could be held for subject teachers that link their subjects with career options. Teachers could be given the skills with which to communicate career development messages in their classes. An integrated approach enhances the relevance of a careers service.

Personnel

An important point to be discussed in the context of an efficient careers service is linked to the qualifications of those who provide this service. Speaking broadly two levels of expertise could be delineated.

The Career Counsellor

This is a person who has undergone comprehensive theoretical and skills based training in counselling psychology and then specialised in career counselling. The career counsellor usually has a background in the behavioural sciences and holds a master's degree or postgraduate diploma in counselling. This training is expected to have provided a firm orientation both in the theoretical and the practical aspects of service delivery. The career counsellor's expertise therefore extends to aspects of counselling that go beyond meeting career development needs. The career counsellor is therefore expected to posses the competencies to deal with the entire range of counselling requirements. This includes the use and administration of the relevant psychological tests. The trained career counsellor is usually *licensed* to use tests relevant to career counselling. This also extends to the interpretation of test information and the writing of comprehensive careers reports. Given the depth of training and exposure to counselling as a whole, it is expected that the career counsellor is also equipped to deal with issues of conflict, career development delays and personal difficulties that a client may present.

The Careers Co-ordinator

This is a person who is required to operate at a relatively lower level of expertise. He or she has been trained in aspects of delivering careers services that do not require a deep-rooted knowledge of counselling psychology. This level of expertise *does not* extend to the use of psychological tests and the writing of reports. However a well-trained Careers Co-ordinator is usually equipped to interpret a careers report and guide the career aspirant. The Careers Co-ordinator is qualified to handle most other aspects of career counselling. All the activities described in this section of the book fall within the role of the Careers Co-ordinator. However when the Careers Co-ordinator is confronted with the need for aptitude and other specialised testing or with

counselling issues that go much beyond the scope of the activities described in earlier chapters, the services of a Careers Counsellor would be required.

Affiliations

This is another important question to be answered in the context of delivering careers services. The career counsellor / co-ordinator has two options to choose from.

Independent service delivery

The career counsellor/co-ordinator could choose to function as an independent person who is not affiliated to a larger system of career counselling. Within this format interventions are compiled from a variety of sources and delivered to career aspirants at the discretion of the career counsellor/co-ordinator. Upgradation and establishing the statistical validity of interventions are the responsibility of the career counsellor/co-ordinator who functions independently. The primary advantage of the independent service delivery mode is that it offers a greater degree of freedom and is less expensive.

Affiliated service delivery

Within this format the careers service is part of a larger system of careers guidance and counselling. Most well known careers intervention systems require those who wish to use these systems to be trained and obtain a licence for the use of the material. Being affiliated to a system allows the career counsellor/co-ordinator to use the various services offered by the system. This usually includes authorisation to use the testing devices, report writing formats, careers information packages, worksheets and other techniques developed by that system of career counselling. While this could be a more expensive proposition, affiliations provide the advantage of being integrated within a more comprehensive system and provide higher levels of credibility with regular opportunities for skill and material upgradation.

The question of qualifications is being addressed all over the world. The most useful document that has relevance at the international level is one that has been recently prepared by the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG). At its 50th

Anniversary Conference in Paris, the IAEVG affirmed a Declaration on Educational and Vocational Guidance. This declaration describes a number of principles for quality career guidance and sets guidelines for policy-makers. Interested readers are directed to these documents (International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance, 1996; Van Esbroeck, 2002) which have been compiled after intense international debate and consultation.

Conclusion

We conducted a survey in 1993 to assess the importance attributed to career counselling services by heads of institutions and experienced teachers. At this time a bare 5% of the educators interviewed agreed that career counselling was an important service to be offered by their institution. The same group was interviewed 7 years later. The change in their perceptions was dramatic! An overwhelming 95% of those interviewed indicated that career counselling was essential. These heads of institutions further indicated that they were actively seeking trained personnel for the delivery of careers services in their institutions. A similar change has been noted in almost all Boards of education, universities and similar institutions. The careers service today occupies a position of great importance. An effective careers service brings meaning to the subjects students study, helps them discover themselves, widens their horizons and helps place them on a trajectory toward fruitful employment.

Chapter 12

Going beyond the Career Plan

"We have ensured that our son has been preparing for all the important entrance examination ever since he entered Class 8," announced a father at the beginning of career counselling session and continued by saying that the boy was now in Class 12 and that he would like some 'finishing touches' from a career counsellor! Is this determination and single minded approach to career planning accompanied as it has obviously been, by years of sacrifice and a great deal of hard work, to be admired or mourned? "All this aptitude testing and career planning is a load of nonsense," a mother said in a parent-teacher meeting. "My son couldn't get into science and since arts is no good he has taken commerce. It is his destiny. We have no control over these things." A different approach that perhaps represents the other end of the continuum of attitudes to career planning.

We have over the course of this book, discussed data from research, various theories of career psychology and essential skills for career counselling. The importance of understanding oneself, understanding the world of work, developing career plans and then preparing for career entry have been described. However an important question remains. Does *chance* play any part at all in the career one finally enters? Does career planning mean setting clearly defined goals as early as possible and then working resolutely and relentlessly toward achieving these goals? Alternatively, would relying on luck and chance, border on being artless and naïve in today's highly competitive world governed as it is by rigorous (and sometimes ridiculous) entrance examination procedures? Rational planning versus chance – is one better than the other? The answers to questions such as these seldom lie at the extremes but more often somewhere in between. Career counselling theorists have used phrases such as 'positive uncertainty' (Gelatt 1989), 'planful sernedipity' (Watts 1996) and 'planned happenstance' (Mitchell; Levin, and Krumboltz 1999) to describe that crucial in-between point.

> **Box 12.1. Planned Happenstance: John Krumboltz elucidates**
>
> **Arulmani**: Planned happenstance is a fascinating approach to career development that you have described. Could you tell us about it?
>
> **Krumboltz**: Planned Happenstance was in the title of an article by Kathleen Mitchell, Al Levin and myself that emphasised that "indecision" about future career directions is not harmful but instead is beneficial in a rapidly changing world. It is not necessary to map out your entire career in advance. The idea holds that one should remain open-minded about career possibilities. People change and the environment changes. We advocated *active exploration* to liberate people from the belief that they have to plan the rest of their lives. They only need to plan an interesting activity to try next. I'm not saying that you have to accept what happens to you. I'm saying that what happens to you gives you choices. It's not that you have a destiny or a fate that you have to accept. If you are active you are going to have opportunities to do things that may not be the opportunities that you thought you were going to have. The notion of trying to pin down the future is not only impossible but is counter-productive to leading a happy life.
>
> Personal communication between John Krumboltz and Gideon Arulmani (2003)

Preparation and planning are essential aspects of career decision making. However preparation is sometimes reduced to a listing out of popular careers and then spending vast amounts of resource (personal effort, capitation fees and what not), to try and secure a 'seat' in a course leading to these careers. If this is what career preparation is, then the career chooser is at risk to remaining blind to the array of other opportunities that are constantly emerging. Planned happenstance describes an open minded and exploratory approach to making career decisions. For the career counsellor, this implies helping the career aspirant tolerate ambiguity and contradiction for awhile, in an attempt to *discover* a career path that he or she would enjoy.

Tolerating ambiguity

Exploring and being open-minded does not mean drifting about waiting for opportunity to knock or hoping that fate would take a hand. Paradoxical as it may sound, career preparation does not begin with identifying a career. It begins instead with oneself. It is vital that the career aspirant steps out of the headlong rush for a moment to ask those all important questions: What are my

interests, what are the things that I truly enjoy, what are my talents? This is where career preparation actually begins. Let us take a look at the world of work as it exists today. It is at that (most probably transient) stage when computer based careers are in high demand. Large numbers of career choosers and their families strive hard to get into a course that would lead them to a career in the software industry. The fact however is that in a few years from now, another career area will emerge and become popular. The question at hand is, when the perquisites of these careers are set aside, would it still be the career one would want to spend the rest of one's life involved with? Allowing for this ambiguity and working through these important questions, is the corner stone of successful career building.

Opening up to chance events

Effective career building implies being open to the unpredictable and chance events that a person experiences. Everyday is filled with unplanned, chance events that could not have been predicted and which flow past us. These opportunities need not be allowed to ebb away. They could be used as opportunities to learn more about oneself and one's relation to the world. Unpredictability is a part of all our lives. Chance factors and unplanned events have played a defining role in the career development of countless individuals. Sohail for example, was a young man who came in for career counselling and began the session with the words, "I'm studying to be a chartered accountant. I've even enrolled into the course… but I'm not certain. Something isn't clicking." Sohail and his counsellor went through a variety of career tests and a theme that repeated itself was his strong interest in using his hands and in repairing things. The tests also indicated that he did have an aptitude for mechanical activities. The counsellor laid the test results aside and began to talk with Sohail. He asked him to think back and describe experiences he had had that had really interested him. Sohail thought for a while and then spoke about a chance event. During a game of hockey his friend had dropped and broken his watch. Sohail offered to try and repair the watch. And then with a sparkle in his eye Sohal said to the counsellor, "I had never done something like this before. But I worked at it. I enjoyed it. I fixed the watch!" That was the 'click' Sohail was waiting to hear. He is today a happy horologist. His career discovery occurred when he examined a happenstance in his life. And most importantly, the sparkle has remained in his eye!

Uncertainty has lain at the heart of most great discoveries. Most people are uncertain about making career decisions. This uncertainty could be ignored and pushed away as something antithetical to the 'serious business' of career planning. On the other hand, exploring this hesitancy and helping the young person grapple with career uncertainty could lie at the heart of making a career discovery.

Putting happenstance to work

Kathleen Mitchell (1999), a careers researcher who has been involved in Planned Happenstance theory points to *curiosity* as an important aspect of putting planned happenstance to work. Children learn because they are curious. Their curiosity drives them incessantly to explore their world. Yet, as we grow up, curiosity begins to fade. Curiosity about careers is often extinguished when overwhelming popular opinion identifies a small group of careers as 'good' careers. As we have seen in earlier chapters, strongly held career beliefs about *oneself* (e.g. "I'm not very intelligent so I'm no good for the sciences"), about *subject* groups (e.g. "the arts subjects are no good"), and about the *world of work* (e.g. "become a soft ware engineer if you want to make a lot of money"), kill curiosity. Helping career aspirants explore chance events that have evoked curiosity in them, could go a long way in helping them make *discoveries* about themselves that could lead toward careers they would truly enjoy.

Flexibility is another key ingredient to making planned happenstance work says Kathleen Mitchell (1999). Moving in the direction of careers that the crowd is scrambling toward is relatively easy. That's because one would be doing what everyone else is doing. Being flexible implies helping the career chooser and his or her family cope with popular attitudes that may not match their own.

Making plans that accommodate chance

A counselling approach to accommodate chance does not mean not flipping a coin in the air nor is it the absence of thoughtful effort. Tony Watts who is renowned specialist in the area of

manpower planning, guidance and counselling says. "People need to be encouraged not only to set trajectories for themselves, but to revise them constantly in response to the changing context and the new possibilities offered (Watts 1996)."

What does this mean to the career counselling process in a country such as India? Of course the counsellor needs to help the young person develop career plans and set goals for themselves. The next step (or perhaps the parallel step) is to help the career aspirant learn to recognise the relevance of chance events and experiences. This means helping the young person open up to the dozens of events that constantly occur around us. The counsellor could help the young person recognise chance events as opportunities and transform them to become the building blocks of career development.

Conclusion

The career counsellor occupies a position of great importance in modern society. It is the career counsellor who can liberate young people to realise their potentials and set life trajectories for themselves. When individuals move onto the path of successful career development they push forward the progress of the society of which they are a part. People often ask the career counsellor to tell them what they are best suited for. Over the years we have learned that careers cannot be *foretold* by gazing into the crystal ball of aptitude and interests inventories. Careers must be *forged* in the crucible of excellence. There is no such thing as a 'good' career. The best career is one that grows with the individual and allows that person to find joy and personal satisfaction. Helping the individual make this discovery lies at the heart of successful career counselling.