

Organization of Eastern Caribbean States
OECS Education Reform Unit



OERU Career Guidance and
Counselling Initiative

*Case studies for professional development for career
counsellors in secondary and tertiary educational
institutions in the OECS*

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Preface

The content of this booklet comprises cases in career counselling from OECS educational institutions. These cases were contributed at a sub-regional career counselling workshop held in Grenada in March 2007. These cases were edited and questions for professional development included by Ms. Ruby Thomas, school counsellor, St. Kitts and Nevis. Also included in the case studies are summaries of the professional discussions held during the workshop.

To set the cases in a contextual framework, aspects of the Grenada workshop have been included in this case study booklet. Two of these inclusions are the role of career counsellors and the proposal for establishing an 'agency' that links counselling in educational institutions with the world of work. In addition, the main outputs from an earlier career counselling workshop held in Antigua in July 2006 have been included.

In order to provide some foundational knowledge of the complexity of career development and its complexity this booklet includes a brief outline and discussion on the conceptual background of career counselling and application of some theories in counselling activities.

The OERU expresses sincere gratitude to all professionals who have contributed to the development of this booklet and who have participated in the two workshops and have brought cases. Specifically the following persons need to be recognized:

The OERU is grateful to the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) through the Eastern Caribbean Education Reform Project (ECERP) for funding and providing the opportunity for yet one more exploration into the conceptualization and operation of our OECS educational systems. The OERU staff, including Mr. Johnson Cenac, ECERP Officer, and Ms. Emma Mc Farlane, Secretary, has contributed in no small measure to the realization of this project. They deserve praise and thanks.

Henry Hinds,
Head, OERU

August 2007

Introduction to Career Counselling booklet

The cases in this volume are intended to be a resource for career counsellors. They were compiled from “cases” supplied by counsellors from OECS Ministries of Education, secondary and tertiary education institutions who participated in workshop experiences in Antigua and Barbuda and Grenada in 2006 and 2007.

The cases depict actual interactive situations that have occurred in our educational institutions. They provide information on the prevalent patterns of counselling that are present and available. The most obvious feature in these cases is their commonality of treatment of clients. While this feature may be interpreted as evidence of a normative process guided by underlying principles in the professional field, it may also be seen as epitomizing a restricted range of options available to counsellors. While there is significant emphasis placed on providing guidance for choice in tertiary education and to some extent in solving a problem of choice between further education and seeking immediate employment, the methods used do not display a foundational sense of a thorough understanding of the various conceptualizations of career counselling.

Therefore, while the cases give actual solutions, the *professional discussion* included after each case for the most part captures the group discussions that may inform the actual solution or examine the context of the intervention. The *questions* accompanying each case, attempt to raise issues that may widen the scope of understanding and application of career counselling in the OECS.

Synopsis of theoretical approaches to Career Counselling

Based on an analysis of materials submitted and group discussions involving counsellors, career counselling in the OECS seems to operate within the **trait and factor** model. In this model *traits are conceptualized as measured characteristics of the person. Factors are the characteristics required for successful performance of a job* (Patton & McMahon 2006). Traits originally were considered inherited, but this view has been modified to the point where they are considered learned and subject to change; traits are measured through forms of assessment. “Trait and factor” suggests a matching between the individual and the job; career selection, in this paradigm is the result of matching of one’s knowledge of his/her attitudes, aptitudes and interests and knowledge of the job. Patton & McMahon note that this model of career guidance and counselling is closely associated with vocational guidance. One feature of the trait and factor model that emphasizes its limitations is the assumption that choice is available for all; also, career choice is seen as static; there is only one right answer (Patton & McMahon 2006).

The process in the model is matching traits in persons to factors in the job and work environment. Application of the model is characterized by tests, assessments, and matching social and intellectual attributes to potential career paths. Little attention is paid to the paradigms that careers conceptualized as a developmental process through one’s working lifespan.

A modification of the trait-and-factor model is the **person-environment** approach. Three key assumptions in this modified approach are as follows:

- people are seen as capable of making rational decisions;
- people and environment differ in reliable, meaningful and consistent ways; and,
- the greater the congruence between personal characteristics and job requirements, the greater is the likelihood of success (Chartrand, 1991).

A central feature of the person-environment approach is its dynamism; it takes account of the need for personal adjustment. The person-environment paradigm underlies all the major conceptualizations beyond the trait and factor model. Holland (1992) whose work has been most influential in the practical aspects of career counselling adopts a person-environment approach. Holland has been noteworthy for his characterization of personalities and model environments into six dimensions: *Realistic; Investigative; Artistic; Social Enterprising and Conventional (RIASEC)*. He argues that people search for environments that provide the greatest opportunity for them to use their skills and express their attitude in behaviour.

For Holland, behaviour is a *determinant* of the interaction between personality and environment. Four key components that produce dynamism for diagnostic

purposes in Holland's conceptualization are: *consistency, differentiation, identity and congruence*.

- ? An individual who measures high on consistency and is well differentiated has a greater chance of being more focused in interests.
- ? Strong identity, measured as clarity and stability of goals and degree of fit between person and environment (congruence) depicts a purposeful individual with a great high probability of being successful.
- ? The proposition on congruence assumes that persons who are in incongruent interactions most likely will change their attitude and behaviour to become more like the dominant persons in that environment, or will seek other more suitable environments.

A related theoretical approach is the **Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA)** advanced by Dawis, (2005). The major shift in this conceptualization from the person-environment model is the conception of *adjustment over time as a dynamic relationship between person and work environment*. The theory is built on four psychological ideas: *ability, reinforcement value, satisfaction and person-environment correspondence*. The developers of this theory argue that skills and needs are *surface traits* that are subject to change over time and in response to situations, but *source traits* (abilities and values) are generally enduring. In this model "reinforcers" for the individual include achievement, advancement, co-workers, activity, security, social service, social status, and variety. On the other hand, the environment benefits from the individual worker's experience, that is, when the person meets the expectations of the work environment.

A fourth conception of career development theory lies in the belief that "*values*" is central to the choice of life roles as well as the satisfaction derived from those roles (Brown 1995; Brown & Crace 1996). Individuals decide on the outcomes they wish, based on their core set of values and are motivated to take decisions based on the expectation that they will likely achieve those outcomes. Brown's theory sees values as central to decision-making, especially in relation to career counselling, and broadens the conceptualization to include cultural (family and ethnic ties, leisure preferences) values as well as work values (Brown 2003).

For Brown, values develop in interaction between a person's inherited characteristics and experience. Over time, a small core of values is crystallized and prioritized in the mind. *It is this well-defined scale of values that guides decisions about one's life, including choice, retention and change of careers*. The difference between Brown's conception of career counselling and other conceptualizations (trait-and-factor; person-environment approach) is outlined in the following assumptions:

- ? people function holistically; career counselling must be seen in the context of the person's entire life roles; intra-role and inter-role conflict may lead to lack of satisfaction and change of job;

- ? counsellors need to assess the degree of crystallization and prioritization of values and role relationship problems;
- ? counsellors need to be able to assess level of anxiety and/or depression, suggesting a link between career and personal counselling;
- ? clients must understand their values and have values-based information in order to make good decisions.

Earlier than Brown, Ginzberg (1972) considered career development as *a condition that develops over time and characterized by distinct phases theoretically*. Originally Ginzberg conceptualized career development as comprising three key elements:

- ? *Process* – an adolescent/a young adult makes a serious occupational commitment;
- ? *Irreversibility* – the assumption that education and training prepares the young person for a specific career; there is little probability and opportunity for a change in direction; and
- ? *Compromise* - choice among career paths is a trade-off between the individual's interest and abilities and the realities of the world of work.

Although there is the hint of a developmental approach, the emphasis on matching skills/abilities and nature of work is still evident in this conceptualization. Arguably, one may see this trend still prevalent, though tacit in some cases, in the streaming process evident in secondary education in the OECS.

Ginzberg (1984) reformulated his conceptualization of career development by placing more emphasis on change over the course of the individual's lifespan. In the new form, career development consists of *a lifelong process of decision-making if one seeks satisfaction from work*. This view also takes into account that there are other roles which are included in one's life. This conceptualization resembles Brown's value-based approach to careers.

Super (1990) has produced one of the most up-to-date conceptions of career development. His *life span, life space* propositions place the theory in the realm of developmental theories. The key elements of the theory are:

- ? Career development continues through one's lifespan; it is a dynamic evolutionary process;
- ? Emphasis is on career counselling, representing a shift from vocational guidance;
- There is a shift away from a concentration on vocational identity (occupational identity) defined as a constellation of traits that apply to an individual, as observed by others (an objective viewpoint).

- There is a focus on occupational self-concept, a subjective process, developed over time and consisting of an interaction of factors, such as aptitude and opportunity to perform certain roles.
- Super's life-span resembles Ginzberg's early conceptualizations of life stages. Super identifies five stages in a life-span:
- *Growth* – (childhood) stage of acquisition of an education as well as work habits, gaining control of life processes and developing futuristic orientation;
- *Exploration* – vocational identity develops; career choices are selected and education becomes focused; training for specific vocations begins and the individual enters employment;
- *Establishment* – individual is employed, stabilizes position in the organization and learns culture of organization; individual seeks promotion;
- *Maintenance* – individuals hold on to their jobs, keeping up with innovations;
- *Decline (disengagement)* – individual seeks reduction of workload and prepares for retirement.

There is flexibility in this overall cycle, so change may occur at any point and the stages start over as *mini-cycles*. It is the idea of mini-recycling that makes Super's theory dynamic and characterizes it as lifespan.

Super interprets life-space as the various roles that comprise one's life. These are: child, student, "leisurite", citizen, worker, spouse, homemaker, parent and pensioner. These roles are enacted in four contexts: home, community, school (college), workplace. It is the interaction of these roles during the various life stages in life-span that comprise one's life. Super takes into account all possible roles, in addition to work, in presenting a theoretical approach to career development.

Also, modern conceptualizations of career counselling consider the active role the individual plays in constructing careers. Constructivism, the concept that puts each individual in charge of developing his or her own ideas in a situational context, sees choice as an important element. Further, as the career process evolves it changes the individual; as well the individual changes the career as he or she becomes integrated into its fabric.

One of these recent conceptualizations of career development is that put forward by Savickas (2005) who argues that individuals construct their own careers by putting meaning into their vocational behavior and occupational experiences. Savickas' approach emphasizes *vocational personality, career*

adaptability and *life themes*. Following are the main propositions of this approach:

- ? A society and its institutions structure an individual's life course through social roles.
- ? Occupations provide a core role and a focus for personality organization for most people. Personal preferences for life roles are grounded in the social practices that engage individuals and locate them in unequal social positions.
- ? An individual's career pattern is determined by parents' socioeconomic level and the person's education, abilities, personality traits, self-concepts and career adaptability in relation to the opportunities presented by society.
- ? People differ in vocational characteristics such as ability, personality traits and self-concepts.
- ? Occupational success depends on the extent to which individuals find in their work roles adequate outlets for their prominent vocational characteristics.
- ? Career construction is developing and implementing vocational self-concepts in work roles. Self-concepts develop through the interaction of inherited aptitudes, physical make-up, opportunities to observe and play various work roles, and approval of peers and supervisors.

The presentation of the main conceptualizations of career counselling and their application is intended to form a framework for understanding the case studies included in this volume. One point worthy of note is that most of the literature refers to careers from a vocational perspective. While most of the emphasis in the OECS is mainly on college-oriented counselling, attention ought to be paid on the wider approach, given that the majority of the population in this sub-region will be engaged in practical work for the foreseeable future. Practical work must not only be interpreted as “hammer and saw” or “needle and thread”, but with the integration of technology into work processes, practical work will include the use of electronic and other forms of modern technology.

While the expressed intention in this volume is not to examine each case analytically, an appreciation of the major paradigms helps to evaluate the intervention of the counsellor and assess the quality of the educational environment as preparatory for career development. Also, these major conceptions suggest bases for modification to the professional preparation and work processes of career counsellors in the OECS.

Career Counselling in the OECS/Caribbean environment

Career counselling is a process that attempts to help clients, mainly students in the Caribbean context, to explore the various opportunities that are available to seek out those economic pursuits and the related educational requirements.

In the OECS career counselling has to be conceptualized as one component of a wider array of initiatives intended to democratize secondary education and to provide multiple pathways into the economic and labour environment. Virtually all OECS countries have implemented universal access to secondary education through a variety of modalities. While much political and institutional legitimacy is to be gained through this process, much greater effort and resources must be put into the actual formulation of the curricular and delivery process at the secondary education level.

A diversified curriculum with vocational options related to the work environment locally and regionally is essential to the development of the youth potential of the Region. Career counselling, then, plays a critical role in presenting viable options for youth to enter the productive arena. Moreover, career counselling has to visualize sets of careers as non-hierarchical relationships, and as presenting a variety of choices for young people. In fact, the concept of 'career' needs clearer articulation, given the particular emerging trends in employment opportunities in the OECS and wider Caribbean.

In July 2006 career counsellors met in Antigua and Barbuda and developed the following attributes in the context of the OECS:

Career guidance and counselling should:

- ? be flexible, capable of being adapted to various administrative and organizational contexts, and should reflect the dynamism of current employment trends;
- ? be non-discriminatory and delivered in an unbiased, impartial manner, relevant to the needs of the individual, country and region;
- ? be integrated into the curriculum framework and should be made available and accessible to all students at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels;
- ? be used to help students to identify their skills, interests, and aptitudes, and to fit them to a suitable occupation;
- ? encourage students to be innovative and exploratory in making informed choices from the wide range of available career options and opportunities;
- ? help students to think realistically, set achievable career goals and to develop the requisite job and tertiary education preparation skills;
- ? be set in a multi-disciplinary framework that meets the needs of all students;

? value all jobs and occupational sectors.

Although most areas identified by the counsellors have been mentioned in the literature discussed in the previous section, two essential issues need to be emphasized. One is flexibility in terms for adaptation to different work environments; hence there is the need to conceptualize career choice as a process along a continuum, subject to change, as both the environment and the individual change. This flexibility is particularly important as the Region responds to global demands in terms of technology in production and the need for skills and attitudes to interact beneficially in the unfolding environment. Another point is the need to consider the importance of cultural values both individually and in the context of ethnic, religious and national island-states' environment. Modernization theories argue for a citizenry that holds modern values in relation to work relationships and the role of technology. Therefore, there is the need to strive for a balance between retention of desirable traditional values and the adoption of appropriate market skills that will give competitive advantage in a globalized environment.

An important feature of career counselling in the OECS is that the intervention is almost entirely reserved for students nearing the end of their secondary or in their tertiary cycle of formal education. The emphasis, as seen in the case studies provided in this volume, is on certain traditional career/jobs and tertiary/further education that may address individual personal needs with little reference to the developmental imperatives of the OECS in the context of a shrinking world.

There is the need therefore to identify properly the requirements of the new working environment in terms of the skill, value and attitude set that will bring satisfaction to workers, as well as the skill, value and attitude set that potential workers bring to the work situation. Then, with the relative rapidity of technological change, active roles of the environment and the workers have to be fashioned to integrate experienced but traditional workers and work processes into a mutually productive relationship with less experienced but more innovative recruits and processes. Counselling as a lifespan process is a recommended approach.

A third feature is the lack of systematic initial professional education for career counsellors. In fact, the prevalent mode is for general personal and behavioural counsellors to adopt career counselling as educational systems expand and diversify without the concomitant professional resources being made available in a timely manner. One disadvantage in this approach is that because of the potential for work overload, the professionals find it a challenge to maintain connections with the demands of the real world of work. This phenomenon leads to a potential "disconnection" between the school and the workplace.

At the second meeting of career counsellors held in Grenada in March 2007 a representative of the world of work noted the following linkages that need to be forged:

The growing points of the economy should help to inform the human resource demands of a country; in turn, these demands should provide valuable direction to career guidance and counselling interventions. There is therefore a challenge to the educational system. One of the components of education noted by the private sector is the development of a culture of risk-taking in terms of economic ventures.

In addition to human resource development, including risk-taking orientation, the private sector in that forum suggested that tertiary education should develop competence in strategic planning and business management.

As part of the Grenada workshop participants developed the following set of guidelines for career counselling in the OECS:

- ? Ensure that all students are functionally literate in information technology.
- ? Ensure that parents understand and are involved in the career counselling process, but that they do not solely make the decisions for their children.
- ? Devise a curriculum for entrepreneurship development, and so encourage students to take risks.
- ? “Re-invent” apprenticeship programmes so that students gain work skills from on-the-job training.
- ? Develop a career resource centre/area which includes resources for career exploration.
- ? Provide opportunity for the development of special skills, talents and aptitudes.
- ? Develop co-operation among students through workshops and co-operative learning strategies, e. g. group work, group projects, and creative activities.
- ? Develop a curriculum to prepare students for the job market. This process should include proper individual guidance for all students in subject choices. The following are relevant:
 - o Resume and cover letter preparation
 - o Interviewing skills
 - o Job search
 - o Attitudes to work
 - o Application process
 - o College culture, entry requirement etc.
- ? Ensure that there is a directory of locally available entry-level jobs and careers with necessary requirements for employment. The list should be updated regularly. This database should include a list of available jobs, descriptions, remuneration, training and expectations.

- ? Introduce students to career counselling as soon as they enter formal education. This awareness should be tailored to the developmental needs of the students.
- ? Ensure that school-leavers are adequately prepared for the job market. This preparation should include “soft skills” development, inter- and intra-personal skills, conflict resolution etc.
- ? Familiarize students with the requirements and environment of the work place by providing opportunities for interaction with key persons in the respective sector, e. g. job fair, mock interview, job shadowing.
- ? Equip students with entrepreneurial skills through work experience, self-direction and community-oriented projects.

AJOB – A proposal for Career Preparation

One of the group assignments in the Grenada workshop consisted of developing a programme to bridge the gap between the more academic tertiary level education and the practical world of work. Therefore, to address the need for a better prepared prospective workforce, the group recommended a proposed agency, *Agency for Job Opportunities and Beyond (AJOB)* as an institution to bridge the gap. Such an agency is designed to

- ? prepare graduates for the field of work;
- ? provide opportunities for job placement and employment, where feasible.

In terms of implementation, this agency may be conceived as an arm of a community college in the initiatory period, instead of as an independent entity for the following reasons:

- ? Although many persons within the current labour force may have had a primary, secondary or even no formal education, a significant number of secondary school students now actually seek access to college programmes prior to joining the workforce.
- ? Employers prefer college graduates who will tend to emerge with more certification than those from the primary or secondary school. Given the new economic thrust with CSME, where standards across professions are deemed necessary and inevitable, certification (whether academic and/or technical) is paramount. Therefore, college students are perceived to be the initial target population.
- ? Colleges are public education institutions and as such are entitled to duty-free concessions for educational materials and equipment. Therefore, this facility should lower start-up costs and consequently AJOB as a reality should be more easily accomplished.

Human Resources

With regard to the composition of AJOB, at the **micro-level**, the coordinator is envisaged as a professional who is already attached to the institution. In addition, colleges already have the services of at least one secretary and office attendant who may provide much needed assistance at this micro-level.

In addition to those persons within the college community who will be attached to the AJOB pilot project, there are many retired and civic-minded persons in the wider community who are willing and able to assist, at least initially, to offer staff assistance, e.g. language arts lecturers, IT specialists, counsellors. These resource persons, on a part-time basis, may tend to be willing to volunteer their time and experience.

An initial **micro-level** approach for a pilot of AJOB will allow for a more controlled programme that first needs to be developed and then implemented, evaluated and refined. When the necessary adjustments have been made and the programme is deemed efficient and effective, then the service may be extended to include the wider population. Since any **macro-level** (large-scale) service will have implications for physical, human and financial resources an initial **micro-level** approach that is successful will lend credibility to the programme and thereby help to facilitate sustainability for the projected **macro-level**.

At the **macro-level**, there will be a need for full time staff (inclusive of a Coordinator, Career Counsellors, IT specialist, Communications Trainers, Secretary and Office Attendant). Resource persons to help in this type of training will also be required to ensure that the programme runs both efficiently and effectively. Further, unlike a college-based, micro-level service where sessions can be run after hours, a permanent physical space will have to be made available for the macro-level service. These factors therefore have implications for funding and sustainability.

Students' Needs

Another issue to be taken into consideration is that the needs of graduates entering the workforce may be quite different from the needs of those persons already in the workforce. Therefore, needs assessment research for current workers will need to be undertaken before AJOB can offer courses suited to the needs of those already employed. An incremental approach therefore lends itself to more manageability and consequent effectiveness of AJOB.

The Value of Cases in Professional Development

[This section has been adapted from A Case Study for professional development for principals and teachers in the OECS (OERU 2005)]

Case teaching has been used in many disciplines including law, medicine business and education. For Doyle (1990), working with a case typically is intended to draw the student (guidance professionals and career counsellors) into situations, problems and roles that are represented in the case. The cases provide variations in the situations, actors, acts, thoughts and feelings reported by the cases. In so doing, the case serves as a means of stimulating thought that may lead to action. In fact, the purpose of using cases in our OECS educational environment should be to facilitate initiatives in career counselling.

Another process facilitated through the study of cases is enquiry, as the practitioner (counsellor) turns over in his or her mind alternatives, competing considerations and various moves that may be applicable. A study of cases, therefore, will encourage career counsellors within the OECS region to seize the opportunity to go through a critical thinking and problem-solving process before making decisions.

Analysis of case studies also promotes “strategic understanding”, conceptualized as the wise application of knowledge to situations where principles are in conflict and no simple solution is easily recognizable. In this light, counsellors will be given the opportunity to apply relevant knowledge in conflictual situations. Formal knowledge of concepts and theories in personal and career counselling, for example, is combined with practical knowledge gained by practitioner experience to devise solutions to cases. Therefore, the same set of circumstances may be interpreted differently and solutions proposed will reflect the particular blend of events and experiences. The role of the presenter in the case study learning session is to attempt to gain consensus that may be applicable in similar settings.

The main objective of presenting these case studies is to place career counsellors into the “case situations” where counsellors are allowed to experience vicariously the setting of the cases, assess the evidence presented, take a critical look at pertinent questions, and arrive at workable, practical solutions, supported by a rationale. The professional discussion in which the workshop participants engaged in Grenada, the questions posed in the cases, together with the range of responses that these questions will elicit, together comprise stimuli for counsellors to make informed decisions on similar “situations” that may occur in their actual work settings.

Another objective of the presentation in this compilation is to extend the educational and organizational knowledge base of career counsellors. The interactive processes anticipated are intended to encourage these professionals to reflect on their practice. The questions challenge counsellors to provide insights into possible approaches arising from issues that develop. Career counsellors should be able to improve on and transform their practice.

The cases may provide ideas to solve problems, or for taking action to bring about change in specific situations.

Using Case Studies

Case studies may be used in a variety of ways to support career counsellor development. One use is for individual self-study, reading and reflection. In addition, recently-appointed counsellors may wish to read as many of these studies to appreciate the range of situations that are possible within the school or college setting. Third, as a resource booklet, these cases may serve as a point of reference when an unusual event occurs within the school or college setting.

The fourth use may be in formal professional development sessions where the intention is to focus on specific concepts and situations. It is this use that will be elaborated at this point. The counsellors may be allowed to read through specific cases prior to the workshop/seminar session. At the seminar, they will form groups and talk about specific issues based on the required reading.

The arrangement of the cases into categories in this volume will aid in this design of the learning session. Opportunity should be provided for both independent as well as group approaches to the study of these cases. The learner has the privilege and right to bringing her repertoire of practice and experience to the table for discussion and critique. This critique may be done through the case in hand, or in a more direct way where participants realize that the learner is resolving a personal or institutional issue of concern to her.

The questions that have been devised for each case serve as a stimulus for delving below the surface of the issue. Generally, they are non-judgmental. The intention is to treat the issues as human encounters in an institutional social setting concerned with learning. It is this broad view that is expected to be considered in the discussion. It is wise to remember that every position advocated or supported must be defensible in an authoritative way.

The learner/participant will retain the actual cases that may be re-visited from time to time after the session. A useful exercise will be for the presenter/coordinator to record and disseminate the gist of the discussion without identifying specific participants. The general trend and tone of the discussion itself will be an indication of the interest and/or controversial nature of the issue at hand. Counsellors therefore will be able to build on their professional knowledge through experience and reflection. Through this exercise, learners will appreciate that professional knowledge is not static, but is informed by evolving practice. The counsellors as learners may then weave this newly acquired experience into their repertoire.

Career Counselling Cases

The cases are grouped under the following headings:

- Choice in further education [Cases 1 – 16]
- Choosing a career [Cases 17 – 25]
- Overcoming obstacles [Cases 26 – 29]

Group 1: Choice in further education

Cases in this group deal with counsellors' interventions in assisting clients to grapple with decisions in relation to selecting institutions and programmes in further education. More than half of the number of cases falls into this category. One explanation may be the academic nature of the institutions (tertiary level) involved in the counselling process.

1

Category: Choice in further education

Title: Searching with Mariah
(MR=Mariah; GC= Guidance counsellor)

Mariah made an appointment to see the counsellor. Upon her arrival, I greeted her and asked how I could help.

MR Teach, I have no idea what to do with my life, what career I want to go into. I want to go to College but I do not know where, how and why. How I am going to get there, not what I am going to do. I hear a clock in my head ticking and I feel that if I do not go now, I won't even get on the path or it will take a really long time to get there.

GC O. K. That was a mouthful. Let me clarify what you just said in order to get a true picture of what you are dealing with. (Counsellor repeats what the young lady said). Did I summarize it correctly?

MR Yes, you did.

GC let's begin with the last part of your statement. What do you mean by you feel like a clock is ticking?

MR There is this clock in my head, every time I have to think about the future, it's as if it is telling me that time is running out, and if I don't decide soon what I am going to do, I won't ever get to do it or it will take too long.

GC Are you feeling any pressure from your peers?

MR (smiles). To some extent, yes. I mean some of my classmates know exactly what they are going to do, where they are going, which college they are going to. Actually, some have even planned their lives ten years down the road.

GC Do you really think that everybody in your year group knows exactly what they are doing?

- MR Probably not
- GC O. K. Let me try to ease your mind a little
It is O. K. not to know what you want to do as a career.
- MR It is????????????
- GC Yes it is O. K. Actually, in many US Universities, there is such a thing called, undecided. Actually that's one of the things I like about US Universities, you can go in without declaring a major. However, it is expected that by year 3, you would have made up your mind.
Not everybody goes to University at age 18. (Scenarios were then given of persons who attended University later in life – including the Guidance counsellor). So you see you do not have to push it if you are not ready. However, as long as you have a goal, and keep your focus, you will go far. So don't pressure yourself by thinking that you have to go right away. How do you feel?
- MR A little better.
- GC Let's address the issue of not knowing what career you want to follow - I am going to give you a career and then we will work from there. Before we do that though, are there any general career areas which you seem to like?
- MR I did the job training twice. I liked the judiciary, but I don't think that I want to be a lawyer. I really, really enjoyed working at Community Development though.
- GC Why?
- MR Because it helped me to see the difficult social issues which are affecting Anguilla, and the challenges which the youths face.
- GC Do you think that that is an area in which you would be interested?
- MR It is a possibility, but again I am not so sure, but I do like the area.
- GC O. K. Let's focus on the Career Test though. At this time I logged on to www.schoolfinder.com for the 3-step career quiz.
- MR Oh man, these are interesting.
- GC What is interesting?
- MR The list of careers which came up. Actually these were some of the areas that I was thinking about.
- GC if you click on each area, it will show all the list of possible careers in each area. It will also help you in your research.
- MR Thanks teach.
- GC We are not done yet, but for now we will concentrate on your findings. Make another appointment so that we can explore the other issues that you have.

Professional discussion

- *The counsellor could explain how interest and the need to identify a career path may be blended.*
- *Counsellor has demonstrated patience; client was not allowed to feel humiliated.*

Questions

- 1. Assess the counsellor's technique in dealing with Mariah's dilemma?**
- 2. What practical advice counsellors may offer to students to increase their chances of selecting an appropriate college/university?**

2

Category: Choice in Further Education

Title: Applying for college/university
(GC = Guidance Counsellor; (JW = Jennifer)

Jennifer came to the Counselling Unit, stating that she wanted to attend Liberty College in the US, and needed to know what she had to do in order to begin in August 2007.

The following took place.

GC: Jennifer, why Liberty College and not some other school?

JW: Mainly because my sister is going there and they offer the programme in which I am interested.

GC: And which programme is that?

JW: Psychology

GC: Did you do any research on Liberty?

JW: A bit, yes.

GC: Ok Jennifer, since you did not do a great deal of research, let us go on-line and check out this school

At this time we both went to the school's web page to see what the school was like, its requirements and programmes. Notes were taken on the school's entrance requirements for international students.

Jennifer noted the following.

- Official transcript from the High School
- SAT's
- Letters of recommendation
- Application form or registration on-line
- At least 5 CXC subject passes, Grades 1, 2 or 3

JW: Okay, Teach. How do I get information and register for SAT's?

GC: I do have some books, Jennifer, which give information about SAT's. I will give you one of these and the registration booklet. You can either use the paper application or register online at collegeboard.com. When do you want to do the SAT?

JW: In January

- GC: O. K. Jennifer, in looking at the SAT Calendar the SAT will be done on January 27th but you must register by December 20th. Do your parents own a Credit Card?
- JW: Yes, they do. Why?
- GC: Because it is much easier to register on-line, and you get instant confirmation. In addition you need to purchase a practice book which you cannot get in Anguilla. You can either order it from the same College Board or have your sister purchase one and send it to you.
- JW: But Teach, where will I do this test?
- GC: The test is administered in many places, but for Anguillian students I recommend, St. Maarten or St. Thomas. I will circle the St. Maarten code for you but you need to check the Public Library for the St. Thomas code. Make sure you sign up soon. We already gave you information about SAT during college prep, so I know that you know what it is about. I am encouraging you to do it in January because if it is done in May, the results will arrive at your school late.
- JW: Teach, how do I get a transcript and what is it?
- GC: The transcript is an official record of all your grades while in High School. To get one, you go to the main office and request one.
- JW: Teach, you could write a letter of recommendation for me?
- GC: I would love to, but I never taught you. It is better to ask three persons who know you very well and will be better able to write about the person who you truly are.
- JW: What about the College Application Form?
- GC: We can download it, and you can fill it out. I'll work with you – or you can apply on-line. It depends on you.
- JW: Do you have any other advice for me?
- GC: Now you must pass at least 5 CSEC in order to attend Liberty, so work hard in your June Examinations. The other thing, Jennifer, is that you never send your official certificates. You photocopy them and have them certified either by the Department of Education or at the Notary Public. Keep copies of everything you send to the University, in case they say that they did not receive them.
- JW: Thanks for your help.
- GC: By the way, how are you going to fund school?
- JW: Why?
- GC: In order to get your I-20 form - which you need to take to the US Embassy for your Visa – you must send the school information about how you will pay for your four years of school.
- JW: But how can my parents pay for school?
- GC: If they can pay for your four years, great, but they can go to the National Bank of Anguilla (NBA) or Anguilla Development Board (ADB), to enquire about their student loans. You can also check out the Government's Training Office.
- JW: Teach, where is that and why should I?
- GC: O. K. The Training Office is situated upstairs the JRW Building. The Training Office deals with Government scholarships and funding for Anguillian students.

JW: Thanks Teach. You've been very helpful. Can I come back to see you?
GC: Of course, that's what I am here for. Any other information you need, I will be willing to assist. I really want to help you with the entire process. It can be very discouraging at times, but I am here to help.
JW: Thanks, teach.

Professional discussion

- *The case depicts a student who has made a decision on a college without enough research on other possible candidates.*
- *The counsellor, while providing good step-by-step guidance, does not open the discussion for the client to consider other options. The end of the case leaves one with the impression that the client will most likely seek admission to the college in question.*
- *The case suggests that there is the need for general guidance with regard to further education in the broader curriculum.*

Questions

- 1. Comment on the counsellor's approach to assisting Jennifer to achieve her goal.**
- 2. What is the risk of counsellors becoming preoccupied solely with gathering information for clients?**
- 3. Justify the need for counsellors to present clients with a wider array of choices of institutions of further education.**

3

Category: Choice in Further Education

Title: Indecision

In an effort to guide students in selecting the best academic department according to their needs, the college introduced an open day for prospective students and parents. They are given the opportunity to converse with faculty and current students.

One student was referred to the counsellor for assistance. She was becoming rather frustrated as her colleagues were able to identify their preferences or had clear-cut ideas as to the area of study they wanted to pursue their intended career path. When questioned, she had absolutely no idea as to what she wanted to do and even had difficulties in identifying her general interest areas.

In an attempt to assist her, she was referred to a group that was onsite, Profiles Antigua Inc; who utilize a variety of assessment tools to measure a person's thinking style, occupational interests, and behavioral traits, and match their attributes with jobs and careers. The student revealed that the exercise helped

her to focus and she applied to two departments in order to keep her options open.

Professional discussion

The case does not provide any information on the academic attainment of the student.

The student apparently experienced some difficulty in making a decision with regard to further education.

Process of guidance should continue after the assessment to enable a more informed decision to be made, taking academic requirements into consideration also.

Questions

- 1. What consideration ought to be given to commercial products that claim to measure personal attributes and fit them to occupational/career choices?**
- 2. How should a trained counsellor advise students on the reliability and accuracy of career test instruments?**
- 3. What factors may account for the slow development of some students' competence at choosing career options?**
- 4. What assurance may a counsellor provide to students who experience this problem (in 3)?**

4

Category: Choice in Further Education

Title: Indecision (2)

A student interested in Business Studies could not decide in which department she should enroll. She had the option to pursue an Associate Degree in the Department of Business or attend the A' levels department and pursue studies in Accounting, Management of Business and Economics. In assisting the student through this process the following areas and the associated options were looked at:

- Going to work after college**

The Department of Business offers a variety of courses that prepares students for the world of work and also includes an internship component. In addition, over 50% of students are retained for the entire summer period following the internship or offered permanent positions. As such this may be a better option in this situation.

- Pursuing a Bachelor's Degree**

The student was questioned about where she intends to study.

In the United States most students who completed the Associate Degree had received credits equal to one year or more. The Department also had articulation agreements with two colleges and an understanding with others that allowed students to be accepted as transfer students to complete two years for their degree.

However, the student from the A' levels department often only gained credits or exemptions from first year introductory courses in the said subject even though they had studied for two years and received passes at CAPE. Of note, also, the Ivy League schools in the United States require A' levels for entry.

For further studies in the Caribbean and the United Kingdom: The entry requirements for most universities in this case is 2 A' level passes. Students also have the opportunity to complete two years of the three-year degree offered by the University of the West Indies at the Antigua State College, a financially viable option for many. However, negotiations are still ongoing in terms of the acceptance of students from the Associate Degree Programme.

With these options noted by the student the next step was for her to discuss these with her mother. They decided that she was most likely to enroll in the UWI programme and as much as she had great interest in the 6-week internship, the A' levels option was more in-keeping with her long-term plans

Professional discussion

- *Counsellor presented student with options that enabled student to choose the one that suited her best.*
- *Student should have been provided this option at the secondary school level.*

Questions

- 1. To what extent should academic and intellectual capacity influence the career path of the prospective further education student?**
- 2. From the data given, evaluate the prospective student's tentative educational decisions.**
- 3. What is the merit in allowing clients to weigh different educational choices for themselves? What is the counsellor's main role in this situation?**

5

Category: Choice in Further Education

Title: The University search

This student is in the process of completing her Associate Degree in Accounting. She would like to continue her education in the United States and wanted assistance in locating colleges. She also stipulated that she would prefer smaller institutions in the Florida-Georgia area, where the weather conditions would be milder.

From information gathered from the department personnel, we looked at one small college, Florida Memorial University, who had come to the Antigua State College to recruit students; persons who enrolled thereafter had their credits from Antigua transferred. The Hobsons USA Education Guide text along with online searches was utilized to find small colleges in the designated location.

In advising the student we also looked at some key areas that concerned the application process for US schools:

- Schools that offer in-state tuition for International students – (this can cut the tuition in half.)
- Entrance examination requirement, SAT, or ACT; (taking these examinations can determine if a student qualifies for scholarships)
- The requirement by most schools that international qualifications be evaluated before credit can be transferred
- The student visa process

The student has made applications to three colleges and is awaiting responses; she has widened her search area in order to access a more viable financial option.

Professional discussion

- *The counsellor has provided valuable support.*
- *Additional searches for accredited institutions, student composition and reasonable financing should be encouraged.*

Questions

- 1. What guidelines should counsellors follow in recommending choices to students with respect to institutions of study?**
- 2. What considerations other than financial are essential in making choices in further education?**
- 3. Why is it important for the prospective applicant to obtain accurate information about scholarship possibilities for a number of colleges?**

6

Category: Choice in Further Education

Title: Getting the facts

A nineteen year old male student had written the CXC examinations in ten subjects (seven grade 1 and three grade 2) at general proficiency level. He was interested in science and has been a good student, but was unsure as to the career he should choose. The science subjects were Physics and Biology. He wrote four subjects at A Levels and was second in the country for the island scholarship.

It was suggested to the student that he should complete the 'Career Coach' in order to have a fair idea of his likely options. While he was in the 1st term of his A' Level class he completed the career coach. He was in constant dialogue with his counsellor and parents concerning his tertiary education.

The Career Coach Report suggested that he had the potential for different career options namely

- Chemical Engineer
- Biologist
- Chemist
- Industrial Engineer among other options.

He studied the report with his parents and he decided to pursue tertiary education overseas. He is now pursuing a degree in biochemistry and is doing well. His first semester grade showed 4 A's and a GPA of 4.00.

Doing the career coach enabled him to match his skills to his career choice. The Career Coach not only provides a job match but detailed information on behavioural traits, occupational interests and thinking style.

His parents and counsellor were able to work with him to make some of his weaknesses more acceptable. His parents are professionals and were able to guide him in the correct way.

Professional discussion

- *The case represents an excellent presentation of useful information.*
- *There is also evidence of good exploitation of resources, including Web searches.*

Questions

- 1. Are intellectual capacity, measurement instruments and parental advice sufficient in determining the career path of a student?**
- 2. How significant ought a parent's influence to be in charting the career paths of a child?**

3. To what degree should school leavers rely on career testing processes to determine their career choices?

4. What is the purpose of follow-up of past students by counsellors? What considerations should guide this tracking procedure?

7

Category: Choice in Further Education

Title: To be a primary school teacher?

Amethyst was interested in planning her career direction. She discussed with the school counsellor her desire to become a primary school teacher. She is a fourth form high school student. During her first three years at school her academic performance was below average. Her fourth year at school has been very successful. All her grades are in the 80's. She has attributed her success to hard work.

Amethyst lives at home with her father, mother and a baby sister. Her father is a joiner and her mother is a secretary for the local church. She has never discussed her career goals with her parents.

The results of a personality inventory revealed that she was reticent and non-assertive. Amethyst stated that the personality inventory results were accurate. She agreed that these characteristics would make it difficult for her to achieve her goal of becoming a successful teacher. Her work experience was very limited. She worked for one week as a cashier in a nightclub.

Guidance Counsellor Interventions

Step 1 Improve personal skills

Interviewed Amethyst and discussed her assets and limitations. She talked about the interpersonal and social skills required for positive interaction as a teacher. She consented to personal counselling.

Step 2 Counselling sessions

Planned for six to eight counselling sessions on interpersonal relationships and communication skill building; [A component of the counselling process was to help the client to prepare to consult with her parents about her future]

Step 3 Classroom Activities

Panel Discussion - Organized panel discussion on the characteristics of adolescents. Guided panelists to include the following in their discussions:

- The adolescent period and its effects on student performance
- Overcoming the crisis of the adolescent period

- Dealing with issues related to sexuality and study habits

Classroom discussion - Created opportunities in the classroom for students to articulate their feelings. Held sessions that focused on changes those adolescents go through. Prepared lessons that focused on feelings, attitude and beliefs.

Step 4 Interview: Decision Making

I interviewed Amethyst to provide her with the opportunity to examine her strengths, interest, accomplishments and experiences.

Strengths	Interests	Accomplishments	Experiences
Good listener	Music	1 st prize in essay competition	Cashier
Above average intelligence	Poetry		Baby sitter
	History		

Weaknesses

- Her shortcomings were reticence, abruptness and non-assertiveness.

Step 5 Job seeking skills

Discussed the specific abilities and knowledge needed to find, apply for, and obtain a job.

Step 6 Job market exploration

Invited speakers to discuss new career options based on social and economic trends.

Step 7 Work experience

Amethyst was sent on a work experience programme after she completed her promotion examinations. She worked for four weeks with Ms. Browne, a primary school teacher. The work experience was arranged in order to:

- Develop awareness of the roles of the teacher
- Provide a sense of purpose and responsibility
- To give her a feeling of meaningful participation in the broader society
- To improve her communication skills

Step 8 Feedback and evaluation

Held discussions with:

- Ms Browne, the cooperating teacher
- Amethyst

Although Ms Browne stated that Amethyst performed satisfactorily, Amethyst stated that she would explore other options. The work experience helped her to develop a positive attitude towards work and learning.

Professional discussion

- *The counsellor adopted a well-thought through, responsive approach to allow client to prepare for and evaluate a real-life working situation.*
- *Career testing was not relied on solely to provide guidance in a situation that was unclear to the client.*

Questions

- 1. Work experience, attitude and personality are as important in career decision-making as are test results. To what extent do you agree with this assertion?**
- 2. The outcome of career counselling may or may not reflect the predictions of counselling development theory. Discuss, using this case as an example.**
- 3. If you were asked to help Amethyst with her career choice, what other experiences would you provide her?**

8

Category: Choice in Further Education

Title: Conflict; career or family?

Ronald, a sixteen-year-old high school student, was the first in a family of seven children. He lived with his mother and a step-dad in a small rural village. He was outstanding both in academics and sports but was facing a dilemma. He was trying to decide whether to go to college after he graduated from high school in July or whether to take a job he had been offered at the Sports Department.

Ronald had spent his three last summer vacations working at the Sports Department as a coach and the Director of Sports was impressed with his performance. His mother was putting pressure on him to take the job. She stated that the family needed money. Ronald was interested in pursuing a career in medicine.

Guidance Counsellor Interventions

Step 1 Assess his chances of going to medical school

Ronald's school records were reviewed prior to his initial interview. His records revealed the following:

- Consistently was top in his classes in mathematics, chemistry and biology for the past two years
- Is organized
- Likes listening to others
- Likes helping people
- Is patient and meticulous

Step 2 Complete Values Inventory

Survey of personal values was administered to him. The results indicated that he preferred to have definite goals and plan precisely for the future.

Step 3 Interview – Decision Making

Interviewed Ronald to provide him with the opportunity to examine his strengths, interests, accomplishments and experiences.

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Interests</i>	<i>Accomplishments</i>	<i>Experiences</i>
Empathy	Music	Several gold medals, one silver and other trophies	Coached for three summers
Thoroughness	Basketball, tennis, cricket		
Good listener	Medicine		
Intelligent			

Weaknesses

- Poor oral language skills
- Dislikes speaking in public

Step 4 Goal Setting

Ronald was asked to think about the following:

- His short term goals
- Long term goals

He was encouraged to select a specific school that met his long term goals.

Counsellor and Ronald did the following:

- Identified medical schools
- Identified and assess financial assistance
- Sent letters of inquiry regarding college admissions

Step 5 Mentoring

- Counsellor spoke with a doctor who agreed to be Ronald's mentor.
- Asked him to interview other doctors.
- Encouraged him to read literature that relates to the people in St. Kitts.
- Guided him into looking at reports on sugar plantation, poverty and diseases in St. Kitts
- Provided communication training
- Encouraged him to become involved in drama in order to develop his communication skills
- Created an awareness of how to prepare a budget in support of short and long-term career goals

Step 6 Job market exploration

Invited speakers to discuss new career options based on social and economic trends.

Step 7 Parent conference

The counsellor helped Ronald's parents to understand his youthfulness and his thoughts about having the opportunity to become a doctor. The counsellor and Ronald also discussed how scholarships, loans and grants can reduce existing barriers.

Step 8 Further exploration

- ? Helped Ronald to understand the situation he was in, and why his parents took that stand.
- ? Advised Ronald to solidify his efforts to become excellent in sports since scholarships are available in that department.
- ? Encouraged him to explore the possibility of a career in sports medicine.

Step 9 Final discussions

After several discussions Ronald concluded that he had great potential for college level training. Because of his economic situation he would work at the Sports Department until his younger sibling graduated from high school. The career counsellor reinforced his decision.

Professional discussion

- *Sixteen may have been too young an age to allow student to choose between medical career and working in Sports Department.*

Questions

- 1. To what extent should viable familial economic concerns influence career decisions of young persons?**
- 2. In what ways may collaboration between counsellors and parents influence clients' decisions?**
- 3. Identify useful actions the counsellor might take to increase the likelihood of (a) his going off to study sports medicine (b) his parents satisfaction with his choice of a career.**
- 4. What did the counsellor contribute to client's intellectual and social development as a young person?**

9

Category: Choice in Further Education

Title: I want to be a nurse

Twenty year-old Mike, was working as a hotel clerk but for the past two years. He has changed jobs with no particular plan. While speaking with him I realized that he enjoyed science and did well in physics but failed biology. He thought of being a nurse but was told that the course is overwhelming. He has a love for people and a great interest in caring and nursing them. He has plans of going to university but at this point he does not have the monetary support. He wasn't aware of the nursing course that is done at the CFBC so after having it explained to him, he was very much excited.

An appointment was made for him to see the Registrar at the College where everything would be better explained. He applied, and was accepted, with the condition that he took extra biology classes.

Mike explained to his employer about his plans for the future and left the job under a mutual agreement. Mike is now a first year nursing student and enjoys very much the practical experiences.

Professional discussion

- *Mike was provided with an option that afforded him the opportunity to pursue his career interest.*

Questions

- 1 How should counsellors deal with popular opinion and uninformed positions on the rigour of programmes in which clients are interested?**
- 2 In your opinion could Mike's eventual choice have an impact on his original plans for further education? Why?**
- 3 Suggest an alternative approach that the counsellor may have used to deal with this case. Give a reason for your suggestion.**

10

Category: Choice in Further Education

Title: Farming or electrical studies? Does he have a choice?

P, a 15 year-old male, is a member of a nuclear family that engages in peasant farming for a livelihood. P often has to miss school to help on the farm. He is very ambitious and wants to attend school regularly.

At age 15, P has graduated from 4a³ with an NCEC certificate. He did well and has been given an opportunity to return to school to do some CXC subjects. P is grateful for the opportunity because he wants to study electricity at the Vocational Division of the national college, CFBC. St. Kitts. The parents think it's a waste of time; they want him to stay from school and become fully involved in farming. They feel that they will be losing revenue on the farm. P is very depressed.

Case Transcript

P was usually very pleasant and upbeat. He suddenly seemed rather melancholy. The counsellor invited him to her office to investigate the sudden change.

Counsellor: Good Morning P. You have a lovely haircut!

Client:: Thank you.

Counsellor: How are you doing today?

Client : I do not know.

Counsellor: Did I hear you say you do not know?

Client: Yes, I just feel miserable right now.

Counsellor: Do you know what is causing you to feel that way?

Client:: I hate to miss school. I am upset. I hate farming!

Counsellor: Have you been missing school often?

Client:: Three days already this week.

Counsellor: Why?

Client:: My parents make me; I hate it, and I hate them!

Counsellor: So, your parents made you miss school. Why?

Client:: To help on the farm. I love school but they think working on the farm is more important than my education. I hate them.

Counsellor: So right now you are so upset that you feel like you hate your parents.

Client:: Yes, they are not interested in what I want. They say I have to become a farmer.

Counsellor: What would you like to be?

Client:: An electrician.

Counsellor: That's great! Did you tell your parents?

Client:: Yes, but they say I have to continue to work on the farm. They want me to stay from school at age 15. I want to go to CFBC and they feel that if I go there to study electricity I would be wasting time.

Counsellor: So you want to study at CFBC, that's wonderful. What can your parents do to change the way you feel about them right now?

Client:: Let me go to school everyday, let me go to college, let me choose my own career.
Counsellor: Would you like me to speak with them?
Client:: As long as you won't tell them that I was complaining.
Counsellor: Have no fear; I will speak with them without giving them a clue that you were complaining.
Counsellor: I believe today we got some insight into why you look so sad these days. I will meet with your parents as soon as possible and then I will meet with you again on Thursday.

Counsellor's First Visit to P's Parents

Counsellor: How are you doing? You have a lovely farm.
Parent: We are fine. Thanks for the compliment.
Counsellor: You have a very ambitious son. Congrats, he is doing well.
Parent: Thanks.
Counsellor: I have been noticing that your son does not look as happy as he used to and he has been missing school. How does he seem at home?
Parent: He doesn't want to work. Well, he has to work on the farm. We cannot do it alone. He has to become a farmer to keep up the family tradition.
Counsellor: Did I hear you say he has to become a farmer?
Parent: Yes, we need help.
Counsellor: Have you ever stopped to ask yourself what P wants?
Parent: He does not have a choice.
Counsellor: Would you both try to forget about your farm for a few minutes and let's think about P, and what he wants. How would you like someone to take away your farm and make you go into fishing?
Parent: You crazy?
Counsellor: Well, just imagine what it feels like for your son. Do you know what career he wants to take on?
Parent: He says he wants to be an electrician.
Counsellor: So why don't you give him that opportunity? He can still help on the farm sometimes.
Parent: I do not know; we have to think about it.
Counsellor: I would like to discuss the matter further with you so I will give you some time to think about it. I will give you a call in the next few days to decide on a date and time when I can visit you again. Thanks for having me.
Parent: Thanks for coming.

Counsellor's 3rd Visit to Parents

Counsellor: It's a pleasure to see you both again.
Parent: Nice to see you too.
Counsellor: I first wish to commend you. I see P in school every day now and he looks happy. Have you fully made up your mind about P's education and career?

Parent: To be honest, we have been discussing him everyday. After listening to you, we realize we were really not thinking about him and what he wants. We have decided to let him help on the farm on weekends and we will allow him to study to be an electrician. We plan to visit the college. We notice he seems happier at home too.

Counsellor: I believe you will never regret your decision. I will continue to encourage P to do his best, and I know you will also. Thanks a lot for your co-operation. I will keep in touch.

Case Analysis

The technique used in this case is solution-focused therapy. The focus in this type of therapy is to help the client to shift from talking about the problem to finding solutions to the problem. This model of therapy believes that people are constrained by narrow, pessimistic views of their problems into perpetuating rigid patterns of false solutions.

In the first session the therapist formed and maintained cooperation with the student. She first demonstrated her interest in the student by making him aware that she noted a change in his disposition. She also complimented him about his hair cut. She then proceeded to obtain a detailed statement of the problem, what happened, how it affected him, when does it occur most etc.). Notice she did not give advice too soon. Although a student may actually come for advice, unless you listen and really hear what is bothering him your advice will be of limited value.

In addition the counsellor obtained information of the frequency of the problem, she explored exceptions to the rule and she fleshed out clear concrete solutions. For example, she asked him “what can your parents do to change the way you feel about them right now?” Other techniques used were paraphrasing, reflection of feelings, and reflection of meaning — all aimed at encouraging the client to talk. Finally, note how the counsellor was able to get the parents to look objectively at their son’s problem. She simply turned the tables on them by doing a role reversal — creating a scenario that she knew was going to be viewed as unacceptable:

“Would you both try to forget about your farm for a few minutes and let’s think about P and what he wants. How would you like someone to take away your farm and make you go into fishing?”

Also of note was the need to go back to the parents to reassure them that their decision to let the son pursue his career of choice was one they will never regret. It was not enough to work with the student and not with the parents

Professional discussion

- *The counsellor created a non-threatening environment in which reasonable discussion could take place.*
- *The counsellor displayed tact and gentle firmness to engender parents’ trust.*

Questions

- 1 To what extent should viable familial economic concerns influence a young person's career choices?**
- 2 To what extent may collaboration between counsellors and parents influence children's career decisions?**
- 3 Identify other useful actions the counsellor might take to increase the likelihood of the parents' satisfaction with their son's choice of a career.**
- 4 In what way did the counsellor make a contribution to the personal and career-related growth of the client??**

11

Category: Choice in Further Education

Title: Computers, computers, computers or ...?

Sally is an 18 year-old student who is at present pursuing studies at the secondary level. She has two sisters and one brother, all of whom have pursued studies in computer studies. She finds herself at the crossroad where she realizes that the area she has chosen to focus on is not really an area that she is interested in. She is reported to have selected that area because it is the area her parents wanted her to pursue. Since she does not know what she wants to become (something she never thought about because her parents chose for her other siblings and were sure to choose for her as well), she was comfortable with the idea of becoming the other computer technician in the family.

Her mother is 64 years old, and holds strongly to the view that as long as she is paying for the examinations she will decide the focus of Sally's studies — the same philosophy held with the other siblings. Sally, though outspoken, fears running the risk of being disrespectful, (as she is often accused of) and often goes with what is easy and convenient. She is now confronted with the reality of having to plan how she hopes to obtain her career of choice, and realizes that unlike her other classmates who are all excited about their career of choice she does not know what she truly wants to become. Panicking she picked up the phone and made an appointment to see me.

The following are excerpts from 3 sessions her counsellor had with Sally in an attempt to help her resolve this anxiety-producing situation.

Case Transcript

Counsellor: Sally, I am happy you are able to meet with me today. I can tell by the way you sounded on the phone that the situation is causing you a great deal of anxiety.

- Sally: It really is. I've never felt so lost, confused and foolish like I do right now.
- Counsellor: What happened since our last session to make you feel this way?
- Sally: We had a career fair today, and everyone in my class knew exactly what information they were looking for except me. I was just wandering around like a lost sheep! (gasps) I really felt stupid!
- Counsellor: So you felt lost at the career fair today and that made you feel silly.
- Sally: That's an understatement. Could you imagine what it feels like to be in 5th form and don't know what you want to become?
- Counsellor: I guess I can only imagine. Why don't you tell me about those feelings?
- Sally: I guess the strongest feeling I am having right now is anger. I consider myself to be a smart person but my actions really say otherwise. I have been living for years in the shadow of my sisters. I mean, I live their dreams even when it is not convenient to do so. I feel like I have no choice.
- Counsellor: How so?
- Sally: I have watched my mother year after year choose what each of my siblings will become simply because she is the one paying for the exams. And you don't know my mother—whatever she says goes. There is no room for negotiation. As upset as they were they went along with her because they were not strong enough to tell her what they really wanted to do. I promised myself that I will not let that happen to me, but I watched my sisters grow to love computers so much that I thought that their experience will be mine as well. Although I can't type and hate the subjects I am doing to become the "computer technician" my mom wants me to become, I look at my sister's experience and study computers anyhow.
- Counsellor: Correct me if I am wrong, but what I am hearing is that you are pursuing something you have little or no interest in.
- Sally: Exactly! How do I fix it? And how do I help my mother understand that computer science is not the area for me?
- Counsellor: I know you have thoughts of your own on how you can do that. How do you think you should fix it?
- Sally: Well, I think, I first have to decide what I want to become, and the truth be told, I only went along with my mom because I still don't have a clue what I want to be.
- Counsellor: That's ok, we will work together to help you find your best fit. In addition, I understand your concerns, but please understand that though it is desirable for you to already know what you want to become it is not the end of the world that you don't. I am committed to working with you on this. Why don't we start there in our next session?
- Sally: Sounds good to me.
- Counsellor: Here's a little exercise for you that will help to make the process easier. When you get home, I want you to take two clean sheets of

paper; on one write all your strengths and weaknesses, (like this,-- holding up an example), and on the other sheet write your likes and dislikes. Do you think you can do that?

Sally: Yes, I can.

Counsellor: Be sure to bring it with you to the next session.

Sally: Thank you counsellor. See you next week.

Analysis

During this session, it was clear that the student was upset. My first task was to find out what was causing the anger and anxiety. I felt at this point it was important to listen and to make her aware that I am interested in and was in tune to her feelings—hence the reflection of feeling and paraphrasing. By accurately reflecting her thoughts and feelings she not only felt heard, but was more willing to open up about what really was bothering her. I then sought to decrease the anxiety the student was feeling by giving her ample opportunity to talk about what she was feeling (getting it out). Throughout the session I applied a cognitive behavioural approach to help the student to not only focus on her own thoughts but to recognize that with some restructuring of those thoughts she could begin to feel better about the situation.

Furthermore, through questioning I sought to make her aware that her cognitive evaluations – that is, how she perceived things - were the most powerful source of her emotional response. Note the type of questions asked. They all encouraged her to talk about her thoughts and feelings. Finally, I made her recognize that she could do something about her situation. Notice that even though she asked me what she could do, I turned the question around and made her tell me what she thought she needed to do—hence the suggestion came from her. It was then easy for her to accept the behavioural aspect (homework) to begin the process.

Counsellor: Hi Sally. I am happy to see you and I can tell that you are not as anxious as you were last session.

Sally: Yes, I am less anxious today and I really enjoyed the homework you gave me. However, I had a hard time writing about my strengths, but I did write something.

Counsellor: What about it was difficult?

Sally: Well I don't like to talk about myself like that. I prefer people to tell me.

Counsellor: I understand what you mean, but at the same time you should be comfortable and happy talking about your strengths. Did you notice what they are called? Strengths

Sally: (laughs) Do you like talking about your strengths?

Counsellor: Yes I do. I don't do it a whole lot but I do it from time to time. Guess what? I was once like you but as I grew older I became better at it. So tell me, what have you written?

Sally: Well I make friends easily, I am confident, I am very polite, I am beautiful, I can speak Spanish fairly well, I enjoy meeting people, I

- have a beautiful smile, I sing and dance well, people always tell me I speak well, I am an optimist.
- Counsellor: That sounds good to me. I can tell that you are an outgoing person, someone who enjoys interacting with people. Keep going—I am anxious to hear about your likes.
- Sally: I love working with people, I love to travel, I love Geography, English, Social Studies, Spanish and those kinds of subjects, I love sports—all kinds, I love to entertain and be entertained, I love plenty of interaction with people, like when there are plenty things going on at the same time, and where there are deadlines to meet.
- Counsellor: You certainly sound like an action-oriented person who has a deep love for people. I also noted that instead of “like” you used the word “love.” Am I to assume that you really (or should I say deeply) like these things?
- Sally: I really do!
- Counsellor: Based on what you said, I am hearing that you are a social being—who loves being around people and loves interacting with people. I am curious to hear about your dislikes.
- Sally: I hate boring activities—slow jobs and slow people. I hate office work, science subjects, computers somewhat (more so the typing part of it) because somehow I like e-mails and instant messaging.
- Counsellor: On the one hand you tell me you don’t like computers and typing, and on the other hand you love instant messaging and e-mails. They both involve typing. Help me understand what is going on there.
- Sally: Well, the instant messaging and emails are not like other typing, like in a job setting, plus I am talking with my friends, so it is interesting. In addition we have shortened form of words we use that makes the work less.
- Counsellor: Oh, I see. Anyway, based on what you have told me about yourself, your likes and dislikes, can you think of any area you may want to fit into that will support your personality?
- Sally: I guess in the area of tourism, marketing, teacher, hair-dresser, anything that gives me an opportunity to meet and interact with people.
- Counsellor: Good! Other areas include tour guides, sale representatives, tellers at banks, dental hygienist, personal service workers etc. Tell me, of all the areas you spoke of, is there one in particular that you are leaning toward?
- Sally: I always loved the tourism industry. I wish I can get into that industry.
- Counsellor: Any specific job or position?
- Sally: Yes, an air hostess, or a sales representative.
- Counsellor: Very good! Based on your strengths and the things you like, you have most if not all of the qualities that are required. Now I need to get you focusing on the subjects that will help you get into this field.

- Sally: Right now? Can I take until the next session to decide? I need to think about it some more. Besides I don't know what my mom will say.
- Counsellor: Okay that is fine, besides I want you to be sure and comfortable with whatever you decide.
In the meantime, do I have your permission to go and talk to your mom?
- Sally: As long as you don't make her angry with me.
- Counsellor: I will be sure not to let on that you sent me.

Analysis (partial)

In this session, in the absence of Myers Briggs, the CPI and other testing tools such as SIGI and type Focus 2, I sought to help the student to decide on a career by examining her strengths and weaknesses, as well as her likes and dislikes. As much as possible I endeavoured to get her to generate the answers herself. That not only empowered her, but challenged her to look closely at herself and her capabilities. She now has a more positive self esteem and reports feeling a lot happier now.

Session with MOM

- Counsellor: Hi Mrs. P, thank you for seeing me at such short notice.
- Mrs. P.: From the time you told me it concerned my daughter I became interested.
- Counsellor: I am happy to hear you take such a keen interest in your children. I notice Sally is about to leave school — have you ever discussed with her what she wants to become?
- Mrs. P: Funny you should ask that. I have some strange children, they never know what they want to become. They seem like they had intended for me to feed them for the rest of their life. I am the one who usually choose for them “to kinda keep dem off de street”. If they came and said, “Mamma, I want to become a doctor” I will support them. But the last one like you say, is about to leave school and she does not know what she wants to do yet.
- Counsellor: So how do you plan to deal with her indecision?
- Mrs P: Well, like the others I want her to become a computer technician. The others did it and they seem to like it. Plus, all the school children now fighting up themselves with computer. I am doing what I think is best, based on this modern age.
- Counsellor: Given all that you just said, am I understanding you to say that if Sally, for example, came and told you that she wants to become a cashier, you throw your support behind her 100%.
- Mrs. P: Yes I will! That will make my day.
- Counsellor: I am happy to hear that. Perhaps you can initiate a conversation with Sally, to find out if she knows what she wants to become. And what ever is her decision I want you to support it fully. Can you do that?
- Mrs P.: Counsellor, of course I can. I used to choose and pay for their subjects only because they took forever to make up their mind,

and I can't see my children amount to nothing. I want the best for all of them.

Counsellor: I can see that. That's good. Allowing your children to make their own choice will be the best decision you will ever make. Here is where we will stop for today. Thanks again for letting me come to speak with you.

Mrs. P: Thank you too, counsellor. I wish you could help Sally make up her mind about what she wants to become. Anyway, I will ask her like you suggested.

Counsellor: Thank you Mrs. P. I will stay in touch.

Analysis

It was important to meet with the parent because the "identified patient" is quite often not the patient in the case. And as we saw earlier, Sally claimed that the only reason she was doing Computer Science was because her mom will not let her do anything else because she was paying for it. We later found out in a previous session that the real reason was that she did not know what she wanted to become. Now we are hearing Mom's side of the story which is bringing much clarity to the case. Neutrality is important if one is to get the facts in a case. With this information, one can now provide the type of guidance to Sally that is informed and insightful.

Professional discussion

- *This solution is a good example of complete process. The treatment achieved the intended purpose of helping Sally to realize she had to make decisions concerning her career.*

Questions

- 1. Strong parental influence may create dissonance in the young person's ability to appropriately select a career. Show how the treatment in this case offset potential friction between parent and child.**
- 2. Suggest an alternative approach to dealing with this case that would also build the self-confidence of the client.**

12

Introduction to SVG cases

For the past eight years, the clientele at the DASGS (a division of the SVGCC) were A' Level students who sought career advice and counselling on the under-mentioned issues:

- ? Students who require advice on first degree programmes in specific fields of study. This includes information pertaining to universities, matriculation requirements, grants/scholarships and student loans.
- ? Students who have no idea about what course of study they wish to pursue after A' levels, or even if they should further studies.

- ? Students who do not possess a portfolio of courses that translates into any particular career option, as a result of being forced to take 'ad hoc' courses across disciplines because they did not possess the initial matriculation requirements for the courses of their choice.
- ? Students who are being pressured by their parents to pursue courses of study that would lead to careers in the medical profession, but who have no interest in this profession.

The following two case studies will describe the processes I have employed during actual counselling sessions.

Category: Choice in Further Education

Title: "What do I need to know about a Bachelor's in Psychology?"

RH required advice on first degree programmes in specific fields of study. This included information pertaining to universities, matriculation requirements, grants /scholarships/and student loans. (This procedure used for RH, a final year student, is typical for general enquiries about specific fields of study).

When asked about careers in Psychology I turned to several sources:

- ? The British Psychological Society has published a brief guide to courses and opportunities in psychology, entitled Studying Psychology. It offers a definition, describes careers (Clinical, Counselling, Educational, Health, Forensic, Occupational, Psychotherapy, Research). In addition, it graphs the type of work that psychologists do (clerical and secretarial, teaching and learning, social, welfare and health, administration and operational management, psychologist, marketing, sales and buying and others). The booklet also briefs students on Psychology at A' Level and underlines the fact that A' Level Psychology, although not a requirement for a first degree, enhances further studies in that field. For RH, I outlined the potential of Psychology for various careers and also lent her the booklet for further perusal.
- ? Another resource that I made available was a website that provides such information to students. The one recommended to RH is no longer available but the following is a good substitute:
http://www.prospects.ac.uk/cms/ShowPage/Home_page/Options_with_your_subject/Your_degree_in_psychology/Where_to_start/plfbaXac
- ? Since many of our students migrate to the USA, I also invited RH to use GOOGLE or any other search engine to investigate some other sites: e.g.
<http://www.socialpsychology.org/facq.htm>
<http://www.hhdev.psu.edu/hdfs/undergrad/FAQ.html>
- ? In addition, UWI is a primary institution for our A' level graduates: Barbados (recently), in addition to Trinidad and Jamaica, offers a first degree in Psychology; Trinidad in Social Work and Jamaica in Social Policy Administration.

http://www.sta.uwi.edu/admissions/programmes/fac_ss.asp
<http://www.sta.uwi.edu/fss/ungrad/regulation/degree/campus.asp>

- ? For Canadian Universities, RH was informed about brochures in the Learning Resource Centre left by representatives of several universities after they staged exhibition fairs at our institution, which all students are encouraged to attend.
- ? I have found that an excellent source of information for students about the various in's and out's of degree selection is the lecturers themselves and past students. Later that year, I actually had recent past students address the Upper and Lower Six Form Psychology classes and chat with them about their experiences, from A' level's to them entering University. RH, as well of several others, took ample advantage of this opportunity.

RH also inquired about which universities were the best. This issue was a difficult one. I explained that the 'best' universities depended on the type of psychology programme being pursued, as well as matriculation requirements. At this point, I explained about my own search into a first degree and described my process of selection.

In addition, I brought RH's attention to the fact that university programmes tended to be rated by an objective board and stars are awarded (somewhat like a hotel rating system). RH could check for these ratings for both British and American universities. I also explained about the need to select an accredited university, what that meant, and that the ratings of the programmes offered were not necessarily the overall rating of the university. For example, a university may have an overall rating of 4 but the psychology programme in question might be rated at 2 or 3, perhaps because the programme is not fully developed, or is experiencing problems. This may indicate that the university is much better at another field of study (e.g., Management) where ratings may be very high. Therefore, that university will not be a good choice to pursue a psychology programme.

The chat with the past students helped to clarify points about the UWI and USA university procedures for RH; their various experiences gave RH more pointers on what to look for in a university and more importantly, what to avoid.

Entrance Requirements:

In addition to providing information to RH on the general matriculation requirements for the Faculty of Social Sciences at UWI, RH was advised to check the UWI website:

- Minimum of five (5) CSEC CXC, inclusive of Mathematics & English and two (2) approved laboratory Science Subjects;
- Passes in at least two 2-unit CAPE or GCE Advanced Level subjects
- <http://www.mona.uwi.edu/admissions/forms/InstructionBooklet.doc>

I explained that universities in the USA require SAT scores. This fact was already known to RH who then identified a Peace Corps volunteer who was currently tutoring students for the SATs. For each individual university, the entrance requirements are clearly stated and RH had no difficulty accessing these. The local UWI office in St. Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG) was also recommended as a good source for seeking information on universities as RH could peruse booklets at the centre, speak with staff and/or the Director.

Grants/Scholarships/Student Loans

I indicated to RH that the government of SVG pays the economic costs for years 2 and 3 for all Vincentian students, contingent upon the student performing well at the university. The reason that economic cost is not paid for year 1 is because the local UWI extension in SVG offers the first year of UWI studies via distance learning. The government therefore tries to encourage Vincentians to pursue the 1st year from home. In return for the government paying economic costs, civil servants as well as private citizens are bonded to return and serve either the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines or the State.

Since RH was not in the least interested in becoming a civil servant before pursuing studies at university, I explained the general bonding process: The bond period is generally the period of study, plus one additional year, e.g., for most civil servants it is 4 years for UWI study, and 5 years for US/Canadian study. Two sureties are required for the bond. Thus, if the student breaks and refuses to pay the bond, the sureties are required to repay the bond on the student's behalf.

I emphasized the fact that students should try to be ethical and honour their bonds, or at least take responsibility for the repayment if the bond is broken. It was further explained that the repayment conditions would need to be negotiated with the Services Commission department.

RH was informed that UWI graduates were now free to move to any country within CARICOM and work without a work permit, under the skilled CARICOM Freedom of Movement Act. However, RH was cautioned that if this option was pursued before honouring the bond, students and/or the sureties would still be responsible for the bond repayment.

On the issue of scholarships it was explained that these were available from universities and were actually advertised on their websites. Scholarships are also advertised on the bulletin board of the Services Commission department and in the Government Gazette. Various scholarships are available from UWI. However, RH was also told that to be eligible, students must hold a high GPA, as well as be able to adequately justify the need for a scholarship. Bursaries are also available from UWI and carry the same requirements as UWI scholarships i.e., high GPA and need based. Some of this information was familiar to RH since a sibling was an alumnus/alumna of UWI.

RH was then briefed about student loans: A maximum student loan of \$120,000 is available to each student. In order to qualify for loans certain conditions must be fulfilled e.g., there must be the required collateral to secure the loan, except in very special circumstances (underprivileged students). Loan particulars can be obtained from government website at <http://www.gov.vc/govt/index.asp> and any commercial bank.

Below is an extract from the actual website:

- **What amount can I borrow?**

The maximum limit on loan is one hundred and twenty thousand Eastern Caribbean Dollars (EC\$120,000). The borrower under the programme will be charged interest on loan at the rate of 8.5% per annum on the amount withdrawn and outstanding from time to time. Students may choose to have their interest capitalized during the period of study. Each borrower shall be required to repay the loan by monthly installments over a period of not more than twelve (12) years commencing not later than three(3) months after the date of the student's employment after completion of programme of study or six (6) months after completion of the programme of study (whichever first occurs). The student or the guarantor is required to provide acceptable collateral to the lender who reserves the right to decline any at its sole discretion.

RH was very enthusiastic to know what opportunities were available in the field of Psychology. Planning a career path was done with diligence and care. Over several months, as information was assimilated, RH would discuss what universities were of interest and applications were submitted.

At present, RH is finishing the final year of a double major in Biology and Psychology. RH was then unable to decide what area of study to pursue and we discussed interests and inclinations. RH did not want to pursue a career in medicine. My advice, after listening, was to encourage RH to volunteer at one of the following institutions to narrow interests: General Hospital, Mental Health or a Home for retired persons. After volunteering for two years while at home for vacation, RH has now decided on a Master's in Psychotherapy.

Professional discussion

- *The counsellor was thorough in providing complete and relevant information. An alternative approach could have been arranging orientation sessions on university level education organized through the Resource Centre.*

Questions

- 1. To what extent should career counsellors be responsible for doing the research for students who request assistance in choosing college programmes?**
- 2. To what extent should counsellors continue to provide services for students who have graduated from their institution?**

13

Category: Choice in further education

Title: Carl's Dilemma - To study or not to study?

Carl, a then recent A' level graduate, decided to seek advice on whether or not it made sense to try to pursue further education or to begin work immediately after graduation.

For many students, a university education directly after graduating from A' levels is simply a dream for various reasons: they have no means of supporting themselves, no one to act as guarantor of a bank loan, poor grades at A' levels, and a family that needs their financial contribution.

The first step was to try to ascertain the primary factors that would influence this momentous decision.

A series of questions were asked. Answers obtained are listed after each question.

- 1. What are your A' Level grades?**

When I learnt that Carl's grades were C, D and B, I was able to inform him that he met UWI's matriculation requirements. I further explained that during the first year at university, courses across the board are generally required and this helps students to decide in which area they wish to major.

- 2. What area of study interests you?**

Business

- 3. How are you planning on financing your study?**

Carl indicated that he was interested in learning more about UWI. I explained to Carl that if he chose to go to university, he would have to be responsible for all fees, including economic costs for year 1. However, the Government of SVG would pay economic costs for the second and third years. Consequently, he would then have to get the fees for tuition, room and board, books/supplies, travel and miscellaneous expenses. I further recommended the UWI website for a breakdown of these fees.

However, after discussing the issue of fees, Carl indicated that this would be a major problem. His family was poor and it was really a strain for him to even

complete his A' level education. He had three other siblings (all at school) and only his mother worked (as a clerk in a store). His father had left the country and had another family. Carl indicated that his father had never looked back after leaving. Further probing brought to light that there was an uncle who worked on a cruise ship, who might be willing to help, but that he had only started this new job about three months ago.

4. At what level in school are your brothers and sisters?

Carl said that two brothers were in third and fourth form respectively and that his sister was just four years old. Carl explained that he strongly felt it was his responsibility to take some of the strain from his mother and help to support the family. This financial factor formed the crux of the matter. There were four paths that I proposed to Carl:

? Check for entrance scholarships being offered at UWI. However, most UWI scholarships are generally offered only to students who are already in the programme and hold at least a B+ average.

<http://mysta.uwi.edu/documents/undergrad%20handbook%202006.pdf>

? Another option would be to register for pertinent courses via UWI Extramural Centre. This would significantly reduce costs. I recommended that Carl check with the staff at the Extramural Centre to find out which first year courses are offered.

? Pursue a level 1 degree course offered in Accounting, Economics or Management via UWI. I also explained that other accredited universities offer a first degree via distance education.

<http://www.dec.uwi.edu/prospective/handbook.php>

<http://pcf4.dec.uwi.edu/viewpaper.php?id=160&print=1>

Carl was provided with these websites and I recommended that he speak with the DASGS business lecturers about opportunities available at UWI and elsewhere.

5. Work and save

Carl could also start working and so help his family financially and at the same time register at the UWI Extramural Centre or begin an accredited university distance programme. A more long-term option might be to begin to save money for university. In either case, he might be able to ask his uncle for assistance.

I also let Carl know about the benefits of working as a civil servant:

If you are a public servant, you are eligible for study leave with pay (full pay for 1 year, and half pay for 2 years), after three years of permanent employment in the service. Therefore, it may be advantageous to enter the service and work before embarking on further studies.

Civil servants are bonded for the cost of the salary received while on study leave, plus the economic costs paid by the government. The bond period is generally the period of study, plus one additional year, i.e., for most civil

servants it is 4 years for UWI study, and 5 years for US/Canadian study. Two sureties are required for the bond. Thus, if any student breaks the bond, the sureties are required to repay the bond on the student's behalf, if the student refuses to pay the bond. It was stressed that students should try to be ethical and honour their bonds, or at least take responsibility for the repayment if the bond is broken. The repayment conditions will need to be negotiated with the Services Commission department.

Carl was also informed that UWI graduates were now free to move to any country within CARICOM and work without a work permit, under the skilled CARICOM Freedom of Movement Act. However, Carl was cautioned that if this option was pursued before honouring the bond, students and/or the sureties were still responsible for the repayment of the bond.

Carl was not particularly impressed when I took him through the salary structure for A' level graduates in the Public Service. This process was achieved through the use of the Estimates. Therefore, he was more interested about what the private sector had to offer. I mentioned that the starting salary at a bank was much better than that of the public sector. Suffice to say, he was very enthusiastic to learn more and I encouraged him to speak with another past student who had joined a bank two years previously.

When next I saw Carl, he was already in the process of applying for a position at the same bank and needed recommendations. He was enthusiastic about learning about banking and upgrading his skills. He had spoken to his uncle who agreed to help in his long term goal of pursuing higher studies.

It is now three years since Carl joined the banking staff. He has informed me that he will be taking up a position at UWI to pursue a degree in Business commencing the new academic year.

Professional discussion

- *The counsellor provided the various realistic options that were available to the client. Although informal, the follow-up provided an evaluation of the counsellor's work on the case.*

Questions

- 1. To what extent was the counsellor's approach in this case practical and exemplary? Provide specific examples.**
- 2. How did the counsellor deal with the sensitive issue of financing higher education? To what degree did this treatment influence the career choice of the client?**

14

Category **Choice in Further Education**

Title: Is there an escape route?
 Khomar
 Age: 22

History:

Home/Social: Left to look after siblings from age 16 after mother migrated to the USA. She sends barely enough back home to take care of previous debts with little left over for food. Father is not at home but occasionally provides money. Has some gang involvement although not actually a gang member. Friends on the “block” have “watched his back” and helped him out when things are tough since they know his situation.

School: Khomar is a recipient of the school’s financial aid programme. Since coming to college Khomar’s performance has fluctuated. During Year One he performed below his potential but still managed to end the year with a B average. Year two began with a marked improvement and he attained an A or better grade for all semester one courses. During the start of Semester two, he has missed some classes due to not having money for transport, but his schoolwork has not been affected.

Meeting with Career Counsellor:

Khomar came to see the counsellor because he learnt that one of his friends had received a partial scholarship to study in the US. Of special interest to him was that his friend did not have to take the SAT exam. His request was that the counsellor should help him find a school, any school that did not require him taking the SAT exam but still provided him with a full scholarship. He did not care what he studied as long as it was related to Business. He is eager to leave home and go to the US because he is fed up of having to look after his siblings.

Professional discussion

- *The case provides a wealth of information on matters that may have serious effects on both further education and career choices. It provides a valuable resource for counsellors to identify a number of key interventions of critical importance.*

Questions

- 1. Suggest an effective way in which the counsellor may approach dealing with the client’s previous experience. Give at least two reasons why your method has a high likelihood of being successful.**
- 2. Discuss the role of the career counsellor in situations that require crisis intervention.**

- 3. Social, psychological and economic pressures can hinder the emergence of well-reasoned choices. How does this case provide an example of these pressures?**

15

Category: Choice in Further Education

Title: Androna's Plight

Androna

Age: 19

History:

Home/Social: Lives with both parents in the agricultural belt. Her mother is a farm labourer while her father is ill and cannot work. There are two younger siblings in the household. Most of the time Androna receives assistance from teachers and family friends. She is very reserved and does not make the first move to initiate a conversation. She is a member of a dance troupe and seems to enjoy dancing. The owner of the business where she works during the holidays pays for Androna's schooling.

School: A recipient of Financial Aid, Androna is in the school's feeding programme. She spends quite a lot of time in the Student Support Services building and has become friends with the staff. Androna wanted to do languages but was encouraged by her sponsor to choose the sciences instead. She admits that she has to struggle to even get a passing grade and says that her heart is not in the sciences.

Meeting with Career Counsellor:

Androna came to see the counsellor to ask her help in deciding what career to pursue. She shared her doubts about the sciences and expressed that she did not want to disappoint all the people who had such high expectations of her. It was her opinion that if she had changed her subject choices her sponsor would feel that the money invested in her education was wasted.

Professional discussion

- *This case presents a conflict for the client. Androna is grateful for the assistance and encouragement of her benefactor, but needs to take crucial decisions about her future. There is no evidence that the counsellor made any significant input into the client's decision-making dilemma.*

Questions

- 1. To what extent does extra-familial assistance put pressure on a student to choose a career path?**
- 2. Discuss a strategy of counselling intervention in such a situation.**
- 3. Emotional needs can run counter to ability and interest. Discuss.**

4. What questions might the counsellor ask the counsellee to help her decide on the choice of a career?

16

Category: Choice in Further Education

Title: Where should I attend College?

Name: Ken

Age: 16

Class: 5A (5th Former)

Reason for Referral for Career Counselling

Ken is concerned about whether he should attend college in Montserrat or in England. He wants to be a psychologist and is not sure that the subjects the college offers in Montserrat will help him in pursuing his chosen career.

In working with Ken, the counsellor explored the subjects that the college has to offer. These subjects were discussed with regard to the way in which they might add value or help to advance his career goals. The counsellor also helped Ken to look at the pros and cons of going to college in England versus going to college in Montserrat. Ken expressed concern about the cost of his education in England if he decided to go there. The counsellor asked Ken to do some research regarding the cost of college in England and to discuss this problem with his parents to gain support during the decision-making phase.

Professional discussion

- *The counsellor may have helped the client to look at other alternatives, such as temporary employment to help raise some funds for further study.*
- *It is not clear from the facts that the client is fully knowledgeable about the nature of the proposed career and career path; other career options might have been introduced.*

Questions

- 1. Suggest three different approaches to deal with choices in further education locally/regionally as opposed to study outside the Region.**
- 2. Career education holistically conceived, should extend over the primary and secondary education cycles. How may this conception be implemented realistically in educational systems?**

Group 2:

These cases deal with the processes involved in helping clients choose careers. The paucity in the numbers may be a reflection of the greater concentration on pursuing further education instead of moving directly into the world of work.

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Category: Choosing a career

Title: Does job attachment work?

Susan was enrolled for Spanish and Computing at 'A' levels and General Paper. She represented one of many students who did not possess a portfolio of courses that translated into any particular career option as a result of being forced to take 'ad hoc' courses across disciplines because she did not possess the initial matriculation requirements for the courses of her choice. Consequently she was worried about which career, if any, she would be best suited for. The most crucial step was to ascertain Susan's personality, interests, skills/abilities and goals in order to match them with an occupation that would be satisfying in most, if not all, aspects. There are several types of tests that could be used to enhance this process:

For personality evaluation, the Myer-Briggs test is an excellent choice. However, the full hardcopy test is very expensive and difficult to access. An on-line version of this test at <http://www.discoveryourpersonality.com/careerreport.html> is quite useful, but again, quite expensive. A relatively good alternative is the 'career to suit personality' inventory at http://quiz.ivillage.co.uk/uk_work/tests/career.htm. This site freely offers both the test and report. The report provides insight for both the student and counsellor into which careers options are best for the student in question. Further, the site provides other support material for persons who are already in careers and wish to explore other options, as well as both general and specific issues that affect workers.

However, in Susan's case assessment was accomplished through the use of the **Career Key** (Jones, 1987- 2004, based on the Holland's theory). The Career Key is a self- scoring test that facilitated the matching of Susan's skills to that of a suitable career. After Susan completed and scored the test, I was then able to explain what the scores meant based on **Holland's theory**. Susan's scores were as follows:

- **0** for a **realistic** personality - This suggested that she was not a person who would flourish in a work environment that demanded order, had definite parameters and clearly delineated lines of authority.
- **1** for **investigative** personality – This suggested that she was not suited to a research environment.

- **10** for **artistic** personality – This suggested that Susan would enjoy a flexible environment that allowed her to demonstrate her creativity.
- **11** for **social** personality – This suggested that she is a ‘people- person’ and would do very well in a career that sought to help others.
- **4** for **enterprising** personality – This suggested that Susan had some skills in this area but she was not very interested in the business sector where entrepreneurship and consummate selling skills are crucial. In light of her being evaluated as having a social personality, skills in the enterprising area could be translated to mean that she would do well in promoting (selling) for example, life changing ideas, to people.
- **10** for **conventional** personality – This suggested that Susan could also give a good account of herself in those fields where there is “systematic manipulation of data, information, numbers or monies” (Jones, 2004, p.9).
-

Upon review, Susan acknowledged that although she now realized the truth in the test results, she had been unaware of several aspects of her personality until taking the test.

After discussing the meaning of the various aspects of the test, the next step was to narrow the scope of actual occupations to those that were of great interest to Susan. This was done while bearing in mind her Spanish and computer-based knowledge. The following occupations were highlighted and discussed:

- Graphic Designer
- Multi-Media Artist
- Reporter
- Primary School Teacher
- Tourism: Tour Guide, Receptionist, Promoter for advertisements in Spanish- Speaking Countries (not on actual list by Jones, 2004, but applicable to SVG)
- Bank Teller (due to financial benefits)
- Human Resource Assistant

I then recommended at least one person in each field from whom Susan might seek advice about the specific career. One month later, Susan returned to provide me with an update on her progress. She was very enthusiastic about a career in tourism; she was thinking about volunteering her services at the tourism department during the summer holidays to get practical experience. However, I later learnt that Susan decided to work as a receptionist/tour guide for a hotel through a contact established by a relative three months before she graduated.

Susan has worked at this hotel for the past three years. Her duties also include ensuring that all computer records on guests, hotel and kitchen inventory, including payments, are current. She has indicated there have been a few opportunities which even allowed her to put her knowledge of Spanish into practice. I asked whether or not she had considered continuing her studies in, for example, Hospitality Management. Susan then stated that an enormous benefit derived from where she worked was that she could receive on-the-job training in any area that she wished and that that approach best suited her. Further, she had some degree of flexibility, worked in an environment that was 'people oriented' and enjoyed her chosen career.

Professional discussion

- *Case demonstrates judicious use of personality measures; client had the chance to examine her individual strengths and values.*
- *Counsellor has used a follow-up technique that exemplifies interest in client's welfare beyond the actual initial intervention.*

Questions

- 1. Discuss the extent to which diagnostic and skills-matching assessment may help in guiding job selection.**
- 2. What techniques may counsellors employ to help clients reach their career goals when job opportunities are not immediately accessible?**

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Category: Choosing a career

Title: Preparation for the future

Ken was referred for counselling during his final year at school. His parents had divorced when he was four years old. He lived with his father, his paternal grandmother and a younger sister. His father had a full-time job as a salesman but he also worked part-time as a herdsman. Ken helped his dad take care of the animals.

Ken was concerned about his inability to pinpoint a working environment in which he felt he could find fulfilment. His careless ways often upset his teachers. They often compared him unfavourably to his sister. His general academic performance was below average and he seldom did homework. His difficulties in school, in part, were attributable to his lack of academic skills. He just cannot wait to get out of school.

Ken is shy but warm and friendly when he is approached. He is interested in animals and he loves gardening. His favourite subject at school is art.

Step 1 Interview - Decision Making

I interviewed Ken to provide him with the opportunity to examine his strengths, interests, accomplishments and experiences.

Strengths	Interests	Accomplishments	Experiences
Creativity	Gardening	Won art competition	Cattle and sheep rearing
Tidiness	Loves nature		

Weaknesses

- Impatience
- Poor self-concept
- Seemed to lack confidence

Guidance counselor Interventions

Step 2 Counselling sessions

I assisted Ken in the acquisition of social skills and the implementation of these behaviours. This took the form of role-plays, modelling the desired behaviours and small group sessions to practice the newly learned skills. I helped Ken to deal with the trauma that resulted from the divorce. I counselled him in terms of loving and caring.

Step 3 Training Programme Contract

I discussed Ken's reading problem with a reading specialist. She agreed to assist him two afternoons per week. Also, I obtained his father's permission to have him enrolled in the after-school reading programme. Ken wanted to take part in the reading programme and a contract was drawn up between himself and the reading specialist.

Step 4 Discussion with teachers

I asked his teachers to do the following:

- Build up his confidence by recognition of work he has done
- Help him in the area of classroom relationships
- Give credit for effort rather than results

Step 5 Interest Inventory

Ken completed an interest inventory in order to introduce career considerations.

Step 6 References

I directed Ken to references that describe these occupations in detail.

Step 7 Self- knowledge

I encouraged him to examine his likes. His drawings depicted landscapes and animals. I pointed him to Art as being very important, provided him with Art

materials and asked him to symbolically express his feelings, goals and strengths.

Step 8 Site visits

I organized visits to various work sites in which he showed keen interest.

Step 9 Evaluation

I evaluated the site visits.

Step 9 Job market exploration

I invited speakers to discuss new career options based on social and economic trends.

Step 10 Work ethics

I discussed the influence of job attitude on work proficiency and job satisfaction.

Professional discussion

- *The counsellor displayed valuable professional expertise in assisting the student to discover his talents in order to fight adverse circumstances. It would be interesting to follow up on the progress of this client as he enters the market place or pursues further education.*

Questions

- 1 To what degree should career counselling involve the use of family background information when that information contains potentially negative influences?**
- 2 Evaluate the model used in this case and advise on its use in career counselling.**

19

Category: Choosing a career

Title Do you want to be a nurse?

Seventeen-year old Mary Doe came in stating that she needed help in identifying some possible occupations except nursing. She said that her mother was a nurse and wanted her to be a nurse too. But she was just not interested in the field of nursing or anything to do with “hospital and medicine”. She had commenced the Nursing Programme but was failing the courses.

As assignment she was given an “interest journal” to complete over the period of a week. This activity encouraged her to identify interests and to consider how her interests might inform her career decisions.

Her journal entries were centred on her weekly activities. Those that rated highly were consistent with her social and recreational activities. Three top careers emerged from the assignment: social worker, clinical psychologist, and teacher.

We role-played how she could inform her mother of this decision. A follow-up decision revealed that she would follow the *Clinical Psychologist* path. She was able to convince her mother that she would be helping people with that career; in addition she could work with a medical professional.

Profession discussion

- *The counsellor took all relevant matters into consideration. The role playing and the interest journal were used judiciously.*

Questions

- 1. How important is a parent's role in influence the career choice of their children?**
- 2. What options may counsellors use to advise on possible career adjustments of clients when these clients were influenced by their parents?**
- 3. If career interest of an adolescent varies, can you justify the use of interest inventories in high schools/colleges? Please explain.**

20

Category: Choosing a career

Title: To be or not to be a teacher

An 18-year old student who completed secondary level of the education system was interested in becoming a primary school teacher. He has completed a well-balanced curriculum in secondary school. He visited the counsellor and requested some information.

The counsellor inquired about his CXC passes which he had at the General Proficiency Level. He has obtained eight passes, including English Language and Mathematics.

In the interview the counsellor asked him the following questions:

- ? Do you have a sincere love for children?
- ? What is your real interest in pursuing teaching as a career?
- ? Do you have the temperament to be a successful teacher?
- ? Is this the only career in which you are interested?
- ? Have you read any books on teaching as a career or any related subjects?

- ? Have you recently volunteered, spoken to or observed current teachers carry out their assignments?
- ? Have you been involved recently with children at camps, youth groups or church activities?
- ? Have you considered an area of specialization – Mathematics, Language Arts or any other area?
- ? Have you spoken to or visited a school recently, to observe student behaviour?
- ? Have you heard of the *Career Key*? Have you completed it in order to have an idea of your suitability for teaching?

He decided to complete the Career Key although he was cautioned that the key was not 100% accurate. Having completed the *Career Key*, he is now convinced that he should pursue a career in teaching.

He proceeded to apply to the Ministry of Education for a position as a teacher. In the meantime, he continued interacting with students in his community and at church. He worked on preparing for an interview. He was successful at the interview and was placed as an assistant to the Grade 3 Senior teacher who was responsible for assisting him in his new role.

As he worked along with the Senior Teacher he was still undecided on his area of specialization. He will work for three to four years before he will be eligible to enter formal teacher training. In the meantime, he attended sessions every Friday.

Professional discussion

- *The study shows exploration of choice with inclination and competence.*
- *Excellent use has been made of an appropriate assessment instrument.*
- *There is evidence of honing of skills in preparation for an interview.*
- *There seems to be more room for more open-ended questioning.*

Questions

- 1. Comment on the extensive nature of the questioning by the counsellor.**
- 2. What information is missing in this case?**
- 3. How much did the actual counselling contribute to this young person's appointment as a teacher?**

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Category: Choosing a career

Title: Following Dad: Is that the best fit?

Joan's majors are Chemistry and Biology. She chose this "Double Major" because she wants to go into the field of medicine. However, she is not doing well in these science subjects. On close scrutiny of her grade slip, it was observed that her grades in the Arts subjects (her electives): for example, French, Spanish, and English Literature – were excellent.

Exercise: She was given the "Pie of Life" to do as an assignment.

Purpose: To focus on how she spends her time now and how she hopes to spend her time in the future

Activity: She was required to draw a circle and divide the circle/pie into "slices" according to how much of her time was spent in various activities over the course of a week.

Discussion: Her "pie of life" did not reflect anything related to the medical field. Upon further investigation, it was revealed that her father was a doctor and she thought she should be a doctor too. No one was forcing her into that field; it was just her wish to follow in her dad's footsteps.

At her final session she decided that she would look into a career. But she was not prepared to commit as yet. In the meantime she would do all her electives.

Professional discussion

- *Counsellor may have probed some more to discover the variance between client's career desire and her actual fields of competence*

Questions

- 1. Identify an additional evaluative tool to use in helping to chart a career path. How will the two instruments complement one another?**
- 2. How would you have reacted to the results of the "pie of Life"?**
- 3. Evaluate the use of information by the counsellor.**

22

Category: Choosing a career

Title: Narrowing the choice

Francis is a fifth form student who is not sure as to what he would like to do in the future. He is not sure as to what courses he should take at college. He seems to be a well-balanced student who performs reasonably well in the Arts, Sciences and Business areas. He is aware that he would have to narrow his subject choices shortly since he plans to attend Community College in September. I attempted to find out from Francis what were his hobbies, the subject areas that interested him most, and what he was very passionate about.

He enjoys reading and writing short stories. He is also good at science & mathematics. I invited Francis to go through The *Career Key* booklet and if he so desired, he could do the Personality Questionnaire. At a follow-up session Francis stated that he had discovered his personality types which were *Investigative* and *Artistic*. He now has to look at the jobs that come under these headings and the prerequisite subject areas. In addition he has decided to go to T.A. Marryshow Community College and enquire about the courses offered.

Professional discussion

- *The counsellor placed much confidence in the Career Key. It is useful to remember that there are different ways in looking at careers. Recent conceptualizations of career development see careers as evolving and adapting throughout one's working life.*

Questions

- 1. Social and psychological development contributes to making feasible career decisions. Apart from using the career key, how may counsellors help students to select relevant educational options that contribute to career development?**
- 2. What are some advantages of exploring occupational families in relation to current offerings at the college level?**

23

Category: Choosing a career

Title: Stuck in a job?

Nedra is a 25-year old Administrative Assistant at a small hotel. She has been employed there for five years and feels that she has not grown since, according to her, there is not much room for development. She is not enjoying the job any more since it has become too routine. I asked Nedra what she really wants to do and what were her interests at present. She articulated that she wanted to be in a job where she would be able to use her accounting skills.

Nedra has A' Level certificates in Accounting and Business Administration. She also stated that she was taking evening classes in Advanced Accounting. Nedra attempted to develop some realistic goals for herself along with an action plan. She decided to complete the Accounting Course by August 2007. In addition she would send out job applications to larger Hotels and Accounting Firms in the country, to enquire from friends and other acquaintances about job openings and to visit the Job Centre, an employment agency, to enquire if there were openings in this field.

Professional discussion

- *The counsellor skilfully helped the client to explore her choices, given her present qualifications and study interests. This case suggests that more general guidance activities should be made available to secondary and tertiary education students.*

Questions

1. **Under what conditions are academic qualifications not translated directly into job opportunities? Discuss.**
2. **Assess the apparent result of the counsellor's intervention in this case.**

24

Category: Choosing a career

Title: Low status classes and academic pursuit
Class: 5P (5th Form Pre-vocational Programme)

Reason for Referral for Career Counselling

Nicole is in the Pre-vocational class which is designed to give students technical and vocational skills. Students in this programme seldom take CXC due to their low academic abilities. She came to the counsellor for advice on the requirements for a job as a secretary.

Nicole was asked why she wanted to be a secretary. She thought that with the subjects (Office Procedures, typing and IT) she was pursuing that that was the most suitable job for her. She was encouraged by the counsellor to study diligently since the decision to take CXC depended on whether the various teachers considered her capable. She was also encouraged to return for help with exam / study, interview and resume preparation.

Professional discussion

- *If Nicole agrees with the suggestion of the counsellor she may be fortunate to do CXC and perform well enough to achieve her career goals. Nicole's other interests may also influence her striving for academic success.*

Questions

- 1. Should career choices be determined solely on students' placement in streamed classes? What other factors ought to be taken into account?**
- 2. Discuss the role of Aptitude Tests in guiding the counsellor's suggestions to students on career choices.**
- 3. What can schools do to help students increase their chances of getting the type of jobs in which they show an interest?**

25

Category: Choosing a career

Title: Thinking ahead
Name: Amanda
Class: 3A

Reason for Referral for Career Counselling

Amanda came to the counsellor for advice regarding what subjects to choose to enter 4th form. She related that she did not know what her career interest was. Amanda worked closely with the counsellor to identify her personal and professional goals. Using The Canada's Occupational Handbook (Moving on to a career), the counsellor measured Amanda's occupational interests and aptitudes inventory. The interest inventories indicated a high interest in Social Sciences and Humanities. When shown the career options under this heading, Amanda displayed a keen interest in becoming a Social Worker. The counsellor worked jointly with Amanda to explore the subjects needed for the pursuit of the above career.

Professional discussion

- The student is likely to have gained a good idea about her interest and ability, and so may have an easier task making informed decisions in selecting courses and later in selecting a career. In this case other options (with science or mathematics emphasis) may be left open for further exploration.*

Questions

- 1. What is the appropriateness of administering aptitude tests in relation to careers at the Form 3 level?**
- 2. What are the criteria that are necessary to employ in evaluating occupational information?**

Group 3: Overcoming obstacles

The few cases in this section analyze situations that have created obstacles to clients' seeking employment, or to difficulties experienced in pursuing higher education. The cases demonstrate ways in which counsellors have helped their clients to face and at least attempt to overcome trying conditions in their striving for education or career development.

26

Category: Overcoming obstacles

Title: Dropping out and coming back

Angie who recently gave birth, had dropped out of school. She expressed that she had a very emotionally unstable upbringing and was ill-treated at home and had left school without achieving much. After becoming pregnant she worked as a waitress in a low-scale restaurant and spent her time caring for her son. She had not been able to get a job that she felt comfortable with. She wanted advice about what to do next.

It was evident that she had ambitions and interest in becoming an accountant. It was also realized that when she attended school she was in the top five. Now, having missed the opportunity in earlier years to test out her capabilities, she needed the chance to make a difference in her life.

The career adviser suggested that she should take classes with the adult and continuing education division at the CFBC. She took the advice and is now taking classes in accounts and principles of business. She is doing very well.

Angie has expressed her satisfaction and now she is on a job attachment where as long as she continues working hard, the firm will be employing her when she has completed her exams. in June.

Professional discussion

- *The counsellor guided the client into further/adult education which led to her securing a job attachment with a view to being employed permanently.*
- *The case demonstrates that with counselling previous adverse situations may be reversed.*

Questions

- 1. Explain the interaction of personal and career counselling as seen in Angie's case.**
- 2. Discuss the role of career counsellors in the light of clients' social, economic and domestic difficulties, as demonstrated by this case.**

3. How may self-image, self worth, and self-esteem be influenced by early socialization?

27

Category: Overcoming obstacles

Title: Dropping out and coming back (2)

Darren at 18 had not got much out of his time at school. He said that he did not take it seriously. He was not able to do his examinations because he was expelled from school.

It became clear that Darren is very ambitious and intelligent but associated himself with the wrong group of friends. He has great interest in computers and in fixing them. After expressing his interests, it was made possible for him to see the head of the Technical Division at the College. Some days after, a test was prepared to assess his capabilities. To the lecturer's surprise Darren passed the test with 96%. It was evident that he surely deserved a second chance at life.

After discussing this special case a decision was made to enroll him to do the IT (information Technology) course at the College. To date Darren has been working diligently and has had the best grades in his class so far.

Professional discussion

- *Empathy and objectivity on the part of the counsellor played a critical role to initiate student motivation.*

Questions

- 1. How useful might have been referral to a personal or career guidance professional before Darren's expulsion?**
- 2. What role did environmental factors play in this case?**
- 3. Comment on the flexibility of entry requirements for alternative educational opportunities for "late arrivals".**

28

Category: Overcoming obstacles

Title: Resources for practical subjects

Jenny, a fourth form student, has difficulty deciding whether to continue doing Art as well as Clothing and Textiles for CXC. These are two subject areas that she particularly likes and always obtains good grades. However, these subjects are somewhat more costly to take since there are times when she is not able to get the required materials needed for the class. She also thinks that in the near future being successful in these areas can be very rewarding.

When the counsellor explored the issue with Jenny it became evident that Jenny enjoyed and wanted to do manual things. Jenny was able to do a personal inventory where she was able to find out more about herself. She discovered that she had an aptitude for creating things and being imaginative. In addition she always dreamt of becoming an interior decorator. The key issue then for Jenny was being able to purchase what she needed for the class. This issue was looked at and Jenny was able to come up with some practical ways to deal with the problem. She decided to speak with the Head of Department as well as her Form Teacher. She would also try to get a holiday job which could assist her to purchase the items needed for her classes.

Professional discussion

- *The counsellor approached the problem in a very practical way. The counsellor allowed Jenny to discover a solution that was realistic and within the range of resources Jenny could garner.*

Questions

- 1. To what degree does this case fit into a possible career counselling framework?**
- 2. What significance does the counsellor place on solving the immediate problem of the student?**
- 3. What does the student discover about herself as she deals with her problem?**
- 4. Financial considerations and not a person's original career choice often determine the career path pursued. Do you agree? Consider your position in the light of a career being seen as a lifelong pursuit.**

29

Category: Overcoming obstacles

Title: Am I in the “bunch of failures”?

Paulette, a 16 year-old student was brought to the counselling office by the school probation officer. Paulette had dropped out of school for four months and had spent her time doing hair braiding. During the course of the interview she indicated that school was boring and it would not make any difference to her life or circumstances since her family was a “bunch of failures.”

The counsellor decided that it was important for Paulette to see that she could effect changes in her lifestyle. She told Paulette to take the initiative to set up an appointment with her form teacher. Two weeks later Paulette returned feeling very happy about the conference with her form teacher. She reported that the teacher was very encouraging and made her feel very special. During this second interview the counsellor quickly made the point that this was an example of how people can control the outcomes of their lives if they were willing to take the first step.

Paulette’s mother was invited to several parenting workshops that provided information on strategies to support parents who wanted to become better career development allies for their children. Her mother initially was very reluctant to attend the workshop sessions, but eventually she agreed to attend the first meeting. She continued to attend the meetings and in time became a positive influence in Paulette’s life.

Paulette and the counsellor further discussed several options and opportunities that Paulette had and what she could do. The counsellor then helped her identify and develop the skills needed to prepare an educational plan and build the study habits needed to succeed in school.

The counsellor continued programmes with Paulette that connected the world of work with the world of learning. She organized an Employers’ Forum that allowed prospective employers to inform students about the work environment. The counsellor also organized a career fair, service projects, and short-term work placements. She followed up with group discussions to clarify and solidify what students had gathered.

Paulette volunteered to work at the school cafeteria. Her attendance at work was excellent. Her confidence began to grow and her grades improved. During a visit to the counsellor, Paulette recalled that her first job, when she was seven years old, was helping her mother sell mangoes and sugar cakes. The counsellor asked her if she had ever considered becoming self-employed. She outlined its benefits and challenges and encouraged Paulette to examine the motivation, skills and background required for successful entrepreneurship. Paulette agreed to think about what she heard and to talk to family members she knew who were self-employed about becoming involved in that activity.

Professional discussion

[This case was submitted after the workshop.]

Questions

- 1. How important is the work experience of the parents to the aspiration level of the child?**
- 2. How important is the educational background of the parent to the student's interest in education, and the level of attendance at school?**
- 3. To what degree do parents influence students' perception of school? How may this influence affect student behaviour in relation to career choice?**
- 4. What actions may schools initiate to reduce the rate of student dropout of which Paulette is an example?**
- 5. What are the most pressing issues facing Paulette? What role might the counsellor continue to play in overcoming these challenges?**

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