

# Indian Journal of Career and Livelihood Planning



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Journal of the  
Indian Association for  
Career and Livelihood  
Planning (IACLP)

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## IJCLP

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# Indian Journal of Career and Livelihood Planning

Journal of the  
Indian Association for Career and Livelihood Planning (IACLP)

The Indian Journal of Career and Livelihood Planning (IJCLP) is published by the **Indian Association for Career and Livelihood Planning (IACLP)**. The IJCLP is an electronic journal published online. It is peer reviewed by a panel of distinguished scholars both from India and abroad.

## Objectives

Career guidance is rapidly emerging as a strongly felt need in non-Western contexts. The requirement for models and methods of guidance and counselling that are relevant to the culture and economies of these countries, is an urgent one. Blending theoretical and academic writings with application-oriented articles, the IJCLP carries papers that:

- Draw upon the wisdom of different cultures to consider both universal and specific principles for guidance and counselling, socially and economically relevant to the contemporary situation.
- Support the development of culture-resonant models for guidance and counselling in countries where these efforts have been few and far between.
- Discuss labour market dynamics and economic development in reference to the realisation of the individual's personal potentials.
- Consider the relevance of traditional crafts and livelihoods to the modern context.

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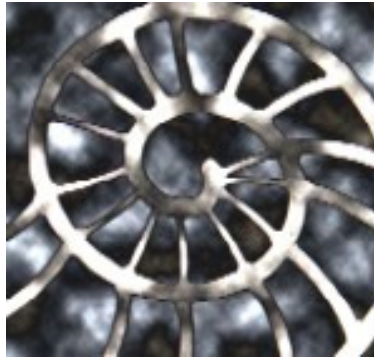
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### IJCLP—work in progress!

- ISSN application is in process.
- Negotiations are ongoing with two international publishers for future management of the IJCLP.



### About the IACLP Logo



Career development is often understood to be linear in its course, moving from one point of accomplishment to another. Common experience tells us that a career rarely develops in a linear and sequential manner, moving seamlessly from one success to another. In reality, new possibilities open, paths diverge and expectations may need to be re-adjusted.

Ancient Eastern philosophies present a cyclical approach to life whereby actions of the past qualify the present and the actions of the present qualify the nature of the individual's future existence. Life is portrayed as a spiral: non-linear in its progression; characterised by continuous elaboration and construction; and by adaptation, discovery and renewal. Nature too is full of examples of spirals ranging from the structure of galaxies, to the shell of a snail and the blossoming of a rose bud.

The Indian Association of Career and Livelihood Planning draws upon the image of a spiral to describe career development. Accordingly, career development is understood not merely as achieving mastery over age-specific developmental tasks. Instead, it is portrayed as a collection of overlapping movements whereby the individual's engagement with work is an ongoing process of renewal. These movements may not necessarily always point in the 'forward' direction. The world of work may require new learning to face new challenges, it may require the individual to return to earlier learnings, it may also require the individual to let go of earlier positions and begin anew. A healthy career develops upon previous development, whereby one constantly learns from the past while remaining open to the new in the present, accepting all experiences as integral to development.

It is these images and sentiments that the IACLP logo tries to capture.



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## Editorial

### ***Career Counselling and Livelihood Planning: Challenges and Opportunities***

**Sonali Nag, Gideon Arulmani and Anuradha J. Bakshi**

Humankind has given itself the name *homo sapiens* implying that we as a species, through the exercise of intelligent action, undergirded by wisdom accumulated across generations, are capable of transcending a merely need-based engagement with our surroundings. In fact, by calling ourselves sapient we refer to ourselves as being wise, endowed with the ability to discern. It is this wisdom and intelligence that qualifies human beings' ongoing encounter with the environment. The human being is capable of directing effort, both intellectual and physical, toward constructions and fabrications, both material and non-material, that can endure for durations of time beyond the phase of the fabrication and the construction. This is the human activity called work. Human work in this sense transforms, adapts, forms and shapes. Hannah Arendt (1958) names *homo sapiens* in this garb, as *homo faber*—man the maker, the working man. This, of course, extends to the woman as well.

The meaning and purpose of work has changed over time. Shaped by the exigencies of the times, influenced by ideologies and tenets, transformed by revolutions, work today includes the notions of “livelihood” and “career”. The idea of a personal career is a relatively modern one, linked perhaps to the Industrial Revolution, when the labour market began to demand occupational specialisation. This led to the emergence of specialisations within disciplines (e.g., career psychology, labour economics, and sociology of work) which have guided theorising and model building in relation to career guidance and counselling. A critical point to be noted, however, is that most of the theories that undergird career counselling today have emerged in Western cultural contexts. The meaning attributed to work, livelihood and career varies across cultures and societies. Eastern philosophies present constructs that have a direct bearing upon the meaning and purpose of work, occupation and career. Central to the Indian orientation to existence is *dharma*, which refers to a code of responsibility. “Right living” is a principal value which calls for an engagement with life that is mutually supportive, nurturing and upholding rather than exploitative or manipulative. Work, therefore, is understood as a duty and a contribution. *Samsara* is a philosophic construct that describes an individual's existence as spanning lifetimes, beginning, developing, ending, and beginning once again. Development is not conceived as unidirectional, progressing from a start to a terminal point. Instead, development is seen as a constantly regenerating cycle that builds upon earlier development (Arulmani, 2011). *Karma Yoga*, qualifies the notion of *samsara* and exhorts the person to be vigorously engaged with life but without selfish intentions. Karma and *samsara* encourage action and uphold the self-mediation of circumstances. “Effort” is commended and the individual is persuaded to influence the future through deeds performed thoughtfully and consciously in the present (Arulmani, 2011). In the ancient Indian *ashrama* system, human development is conceptualised as occurring in stages, with each stage carrying clearly defined roles and responsibilities. During the early stages of one's life, the purpose of work is closely connected with the creation of wealth. Exerting effort to achieve personal gain is encouraged. As one grows older, and matures, vigorous engagement with work is expected to go on, but with a different intention. The purpose of work during the latter stages of one's life is to serve without motivations of personal gain. The philosophic scaffolding provided by the Indian approaches, therefore, give work a certain kind of meaning and purpose. Other cultures would imbue meaning to work in different ways.

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Those implementing interventions with roots in worldviews that differ from the perspectives of the community for whom the intervention is meant, could face challenges of relevance, community participation, and ultimately, programme effectiveness (Reese & Vera, 2007). There is an urgent need for models and methods of guidance and counselling that are relevant to the culture and economies of these countries. Career guidance is rapidly emerging as a strongly felt need in non-Western contexts. There is a requirement to collate extensive descriptions and inferences from systematic research in multiple settings that can inform theoretical models and sensitive methods of guidance and counselling that are relevant to different cultures and economies.

The Indian Journal of Career and Livelihood Planning (IJCLP) is a peer-reviewed publication, established to support the development of culture-resonant theories, models and methods of career guidance and counselling, with a specific emphasis on developing world contexts. As discussed, all cultures have their own ways, grounded in tradition and experience, of engaging with the world of work. The need at hand is to draw upon these traditions and customs to create career guidance techniques and methods that would have contemporary relevance.

Career decision-making is influenced by a wide variety of cultural, economic and psychological forces. The first paper in this the first issue of the IJCLP presents a survey led by Anuradha Bakshi, that examined *influences on career choices* as perceived by youth in Mumbai, one of the largest cities in the world. Bakshi and her collaborators use their findings to discuss the influences of self vis-à-vis those of social class, gender, the family, and teachers. A striking finding is the minimal role played by professional career guidance services and implications this has for the practice of career guidance. Radha Parikh draws the reader's attention to the issues that surround the *career development of women*, providing an overview of the manner in which education, empowerment and legislation have, historically and more recently in the past 50 years or so, contributed to the Indian woman's personal and economic development. Writing from Germany, Jolanta Kavale examines the concept of "need". Her review paper shows the multi-layered nature of the construct of need and presents ideas of how *needs assessment in career guidance* could be optimised. In the next paper, Rachel Valles draws the reader's attention to the existential question of *purpose in life*. Her paper presents information from an intervention study aimed at helping high school students grapple with the purpose of their lives. An interesting finding from this work is the close association noted between the stated purpose in life and having career goals and objectives. Gideon Arulmani, in the final paper of this issue presents *cultural preparedness* as a theoretical framework within which to view the development and delivery of career guidance services. Focusing on career beliefs and their influence on orientations to work and career, he presents two career counselling techniques to work with clients' career beliefs.

The first *National Conference of the Indian Association for Career and Livelihood Planning* was held in November, 2011, in Shillong, Meghalaya. Hosted by the Meghalaya Association of Professional Counsellors (MAPC) and the Martin Luther Christian University (MLCU), the conference focused on the theme "Looking Within". There were excellent paper presentations on topics such as Traditional Livelihoods and Occupations, Entrepreneurship, Local and Global Economies, Influences on Career Development, and ICT and Career Guidance. Maribon Sangma, President of the MAPC and head of the conference organizing committee, presents a report on this important milestone in the history of the career guidance movement in India.

A particularly special feature of this inaugural issue of the IJCLP is brief contributions from the journal's international board of associate editors. The comments and observations of these leaders in the field are presented as *Tips for Career Counselors*.

We welcome you to the first issue of the Indian Journal of Career and Livelihood Planning and look forward to your participation in forthcoming issues.

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## Comments, Tips and Advice from our Associate Editors

**Anita Ratnam**, Specialist in Development Studies; expert in Institutional Leadership in civil society organisations; Founder and Director, Samvada, Bangalore, India.

The launch of the IJCLP is to me an event of historical significance. I firmly believe that career and livelihood planning can go a long way in making India a more inclusive, equitable and sustainable society. As we help young people reflect on their identities and aspirations, respect their abilities and aptitudes, recognize their autonomy, and realize their rights as well as responsibilities, we shape not just individual lives, but the culture and structure of our complex and changing society. I look forward to the IJCLP evolving into a platform for sharing insights and nurturing knowledge building for the profession.

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**Dr. David M. Reile**, Managing Director, CDA & R/S Foundation, USA.

Congratulations to all who have contributed to the inaugural edition of IJCLP. What a wonderful achievement! To Career and Livelihood Planning professionals, may I encourage you to remember the importance of your professional relationships. Reach out to colleagues, meet frequently together, share ideas, mentor each other, and encourage one another. Your influence and impact will grow, the more you collaborate.

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**Dr. Girishwar Misra**, Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Delhi; Fellow, National Academy of Psychology (NAOP), India; Editor, Psychological Studies.

Contemporary transformations in the world of work are making choice and entry to occupations a complex and challenging process. Indeed, the expansion of the horizon of work life needs enhanced skills of career guidance. In particular, we need to go beyond dispositional measures and move toward a contextualised understanding of the features of work self-concept. I hope that IJCLP will help prepare counsellors by promoting a nuanced understanding of the individual and the context in which career construction unfolds.

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**Dr. Glenn C. Kharkongor**, Professor, Vice Chancellor, Martin Luther Christian University, Shillong, Meghalaya, India.

Career and livelihood planning has reached maturity as a discipline in its own right in India with the launching of this journal. This important milestone is a tribute to the pioneering efforts of the editorial team, whose persevering zeal and tireless efforts have created a rising awareness and appreciation for career counselling in our country. For the small but growing band of qualified career counsellors in India, a forum for sharing research and ideas was very much needed and the IJCLP has come at the right time.

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**Dr. Hazel Reid**, Reader in Career Guidance and Counselling; Director of the Centre for Career & Personal Development, Faculty of Education, Canterbury Christ Church University, UK.

Greetings to all readers and subscribers of this first issue of the Indian Journal of Career and Livelihood Planning! It has been a pleasure to be involved in this significant development for career guidance and counselling. Times are troubling in many parts of the world, for numerous reasons, and in such times career guidance and related activities can bring hope, encourage resilience and foster adaptability. The work is important for all our biographies—so keep on keeping on!

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**Helmut Zelloth**, Senior Specialist in Vocational Education and Training Policies and Systems, European Training Foundation, Italy.

The first issue of the Indian Journal of Career and Livelihood Planning is definitely a major milestone in the Indian history of career guidance and counselling and it is exciting to think about what is still to come with the next editions. For me it has been a great honour and pleasure to be involved and to see the spirit and energy of the authors and editors to drive things forward in career guidance in India. When doing the review I felt that the authors of this first edition are protagonists of a historical moment and a long-lasting event which will have many interesting and important stories to tell to the readers and subscribers. My tip is 'Think and compare globally, build and join nationally, and act and sustain locally'. Again my compliments and congratulations that you finished the first and most crucial phase of such an important project in such a short time!

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**Leong Jenn Yeoong**, Head of Department for Student Development, Assumption Pathway School, Singapore.

Congratulations to the Indian Association for Career and Livelihood Planning (IACLP) for the successful launch of the first issue of Indian Journal of Career and Livelihood Planning. What the association is doing is indeed ground-breaking and I believe that this endeavour will bring about greater connectedness and make a difference to a country which is set to be one of the leading economies of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I am privileged and indeed humbled by this opportunity to work and partner with all of you in this endeavour.

As a career guidance and counselling professional, I believe that forging partnerships is crucial and this can take place at three levels. The first level is collaboration with your clients in helping them to develop new dynamic career stories. The second level is helping and working with people within your organisation to advocate client-centric programmes and enable the first level of collaboration to take place; and finally, the third level where fellow career guidance professionals come together to create platforms for resources and best practice sharing which will enable society to create their own stories of the future. The IACLP represents one such platform and I hope that despite our diverse cultures and settings, we come together, united in our goal to contribute to the betterment of society.

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**Dr. Malavika Kapur**, Professor and former Head of the Department of Clinical Psychology, National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS); Professor, National Institute for Advanced Studies (NIAS), Bangalore, India.

To quote Prof Girishwar Misra, as mentioned in his keynote address at the Jiva conference in 2010, to be prepared for the unknown and the uncertain is an important aspect of career choice that is often overlooked: there is a need to face these with courage. One must also have a series of choices not just a single one that you pin all your hopes on. One must be able to choose from other choices if one option falls through. It is important to think creatively and make your own career that has a bearing on your own unique talents, and explore the need for it, and market it.

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**Dr. Mantak Yuen**, Associate Professor, Centre for Advancement in Inclusive and Special Education University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China.

Here are ideas I would like to share: As career guidance practitioners we need to equip ourselves with up-to-date knowledge on career development in diverse cultural and social contexts. We need to strengthen our interpersonal and group skills for facilitating people's career planning and decision-making. Information technology and multimedia can be of great value in career education programmes. Always evaluate processes and outcomes from our services. Congratulations on the first issue of IJCLP!

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**Dr. Mark Watson**, Professor of Psychology, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, South Africa.

Greetings from South Africa to you—the reader of this new and exciting journal! In this second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, career and livelihood planning takes place in constantly changing social, political and economic contexts. It requires of us as career practitioners to regularly update our theoretical knowledge and our practical counselling skills. It is my hope as one of the Consulting Editors that reading this journal will assist you in that process.

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**Dr. Mary McMahon**, Senior Lecturer, School of Education, The University of Queensland, Australia.

Congratulations on this inaugural issue of an exciting new career journal! Career and livelihood planning is a critical service for individuals and communities. I believe that assisting people to plan their lives is a privilege. Engaging with others to hear their stories and learn from and with them facilitates the construction of meaningful future plans. This important work and the growing Indian profession of career and livelihood planning will be well supported by this new journal and the leadership it offers.

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**Dr. Nirmala Almeida**, Associate Professor and Head, Human Development Specialisation, Nirmala Niketan of College Home Science, University of Mumbai, India.

The long awaited and eagerly anticipated first issue of the Indian Journal of Career and Livelihood Planning is off the blocks and running! I am sure that this Journal will be a springboard for research productivity in an area that is mushrooming but under-researched in the Indian context. For budding and blossoming career guidance practitioners, keeping updated, sharpening career guidance skills, and evaluating guidance services should be accorded high priority as accountability is a key feature of career guidance practice.

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**Dr. Renette Du Toit**, Research Manager, EE Research Focus; registered research psychologist; member Health Professions Council; member Career Guidance Consulting Group under the leadership of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), South Africa.

After a long contemplation of the human condition, Sigmund Freud nominated work and love as the two essential ingredients of a healthy and well-adjusted personality. Just think about the immense opportunity (and responsibility) that career development practitioners have in assisting an individual with making fundamental choices about his/her work-life! Do it, live it, and enjoy it; it is important and meaningful work.

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**Tony Watts**, Founding Fellow and Life President, the National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling (NICEC); Visiting Professor, the University of Derby and Canterbury Christ Church University, UK.

I warmly welcome this new Indian Journal. It represents a seed from which many new flowers can bloom. Career guidance has much to offer to India; India has much to offer to the field of career guidance globally. A journal is a symbol of serious engagement, to ensure that practice is grounded in sound theory and research. The work is too important to be based on anything less.

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# Influences on Career Choices as Perceived by Youth in Mumbai

*Anuradha J. Bakshi, Hetvi N. Gandhi, Riddhi Shah, & Kinjal Maru*

## Abstract

The aim of this research was to survey the (a) career choices and career shifts of youth in Mumbai, (b) youth perceptions of influences on their career choice, and (c) their satisfaction with career choice. Gender differences were examined in relation to each aspect of the aim. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used in the survey. Sixty-five youth, male and female, 18-to-28 years old, from middle- and higher-income families participated in this mixed-methods survey. Career choices of youth were largely class-specific and gender-specific. Youth ratings for importance of influence on career choice were highest for self, followed by mother, father and teachers. The lowest rating was for professional career guidance services, mainly because of non-use. Most frequently obtained combinations of important influences on career choice were “self and family” and “self, family and teachers”. Youth were mostly either very or extremely satisfied with their career choice. Youth justified their importance ratings for various influences on career choice and their rating for satisfaction with career choice. Some gender differences in findings were observed. For example, men identified a higher number of important influences on career choice than women. Implications for career guidance practice are discussed.

**Keywords:** influences on career choices, youth, role of self, role of family, Mumbai, India

Identity development neither begins nor ends in adolescence or early adulthood. Similarly and more specifically, neither are decisions relating to choice of a career or occupation limited to adolescence or early adulthood. Brown and Brooks (as cited in Patton & McMahon, 2006a, p. 5) define career development as “a lifelong process of getting ready to choose, choosing, and typically continuing to make choices from among the many occupations available in our society”. At the same time, choosing a career remains an extraordinary developmental achievement in adolescence and early adulthood. Even though career trajectories no longer may be singular, linear or necessarily stable (Bakshi, 2011), the choice of a career represents a coming of age for youth.

The salience of even an initial career choice can be interpreted using Paul Baltes’ life span theory. Career choice is exemplary of development as selective adaptation, a key idea in Baltes’ life span theory. It both opens

as well as closes opportunities; in Baltes’ words, exemplifying a gain-loss dynamic (Baltes, Lindenberger, & Staudinger, 2006). In other words, in choosing one career over another we select to optimise certain characteristics and competencies over others. Each choice allows the building of particular strengths; at the same time each choice precludes other competing choices—that is, one choice is at the cost of other choices. Ontogenetic development is crucially tied to the minor and major choices made by an individual, ranging from how one spends one free hour in the evening (e.g., go for a walk, read, play sports, watch TV, hang out with friends, play with younger sibling) to key choices such as that of a career. As a result of structure-function bidirectionality (Thelen & Smith, 2006), it is these choices that make who we are both biologically and psychologically. Clearly, career choice is substantially meaningful in helping determine developmental outcomes in adulthood.

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A preliminary version of this paper was presented at the IAEVG-Jiva Conference on Career Guidance and Counselling, Bangalore, India (October 8-10, 2010). This research was supported in part by a scholarship from The Promise Foundation, Bangalore.

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In similar vein, personhood both impacts and is impacted by career choices. Indeed it is a person who decides to start in a particular career or occupation. This decision to start in a particular career or occupation could have been made with varying degrees of self-awareness, deliberation, liberty, and contentment. Despite varying degrees of deliberation or liberty in making that decision, undeniably the decision is a portal to particular activities, experiences and (hierarchically ordered) social relationships. In participating in these, as well as contributing to creating these experiences (in small or large ways), personhood and other aspects of development are clarified and built. In the careers literature, these ideas resonate with Savickas' description of "postmodern conceptions of a self that is formed, maintained, and revised through interpersonal relationships and work roles, and which evolves during a life course of contribution to and cooperation with a community" (Savickas, 2005, p. 68).

Choosing a career path is pivotal for youth; it is also challenging and in fact burdensome (Gottfredson, 2005). The concepts of a psychosocial moratorium and identity crisis (Erikson, 1968) are corollaries of a society characterised by a confusing multitude of choices, including career choices. In the past 100 years the menu of occupations and lifestyles has expanded to include a considerably larger number of choices, many of which are less limited by sociopolitical boundaries (Gottfredson, 2005). In India, with caste-based occupational role allocation gradually breaking down especially in urban areas (Arulmani & Bakshi, 2011), and with the proliferation of newly-emerging occupations, the choice of a career has become a more complex decision for youth and families to make. Within India, Mumbai is the most populous city with a population of 1.3 million; in fact, Mumbai is one of the world's most populous cities. Mumbai is also the financial, commercial and media-and-entertainment capital of India, an industrial hub, home to many Fortune Global 500 companies, and has major ports (<http://www.mcgm.gov.in/irj>). It is clear, therefore, that an impressive range of career-related opportunities are generated in Mumbai. Understandably, selecting a career path is a fairly challenging process for youth who are residing in Mumbai.

Who or what enables youth to make a particular career choice in today's times? Who has had a say in whether a youth becomes an engineer, a lawyer or a photographer? To

what extent is the process through which youth select their career paths self-directed or one that is largely influenced by others such as the family? There are some answers to be found in both Indian (e.g., Akhilesh, 1991; Arulmani, 1995) and nonIndian research (e.g., Millward, Houston, Brown, & Barrett, 2006). However, there is a need for additional research in this area (Whiston & Keller, 2004). Other than the need to remedy the overall insufficiency of empirical evidence in this area, Whiston and Keller (2004), for example, have strongly recommended that family influences on career development be examined in cultures characterised by a high degree of interconnectedness—India is one such culture. Moreover, because majority of the extant research in this area is quantitative, they have urged that researchers use diverse methods in examining family influences on career development.

Accordingly, the objectives of this research are as follows: (a) To survey the career choices and career shifts of youth in Mumbai. (b) To examine youth perceptions of influences on their career choice using mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative). This includes ascertaining the perceived role of a variety of influences such as self, family, friends and professional career guidance services. (c) To examine youth's satisfaction with career choice. Moreover, gender differences are examined in relation to each of these objectives.

## Method

### Participants

Purposive sampling was used to select 65 youth from Mumbai. Eligibility criteria included age (18 to 28 years) and that the person was from at least a middle-income family. Care was taken to ensure that the sample was heterogeneous with regard to gender, community, and occupation/educational stream. Thus, the participants were 38 (58.5%) women and 27 men from middle-income and higher-income families, in the age range of 18 to 28 years ( $M = 21.98$  yr,  $SD = 2.18$  yr). The main religious communities represented in the sample are Hindu ( $n = 34$ , 52.3%) and Jain ( $n = 23$ , 35.4%) whereas the main ethnic communities represented are Gujarati ( $n = 25$ , 38.5%), Kutchi ( $n = 17$ , 26.2%) and Maharashtrian ( $n = 10$ , 15.4%).

A little over half of the youth were studying ( $n = 34$ , 52.3%), 10 were both studying and working (15.4%), and 21 were working (32.3%). Majority of those studying were enrolled in degree courses (41 out of 44): 26 were completing their Bachelor's degree (e.g., B.A., B.Com., B.Sc., B.Arch., B.Eng., Chartered Accountancy), 14 were completing their Master's degree (e.g., M.A., M.Com., M.Sc., MBA, MMS, MCA-Ed.Tech.), and one was studying in preparation of admission into MD. Almost all of those who were working and not currently studying had a university education (19 out of 21). Examples of occupations of those working are interior designer, architect, lecturer, physiotherapist, engineer, and accountant.

### Procedure and Measures

An interview schedule soliciting contact information, background information, and all information necessary for meeting the research aim was constructed by the first author. The interview schedule was piloted and found to be yielding all relevant data.

Telephone interviews were conducted with 35 youth, email interviews with 14 youth, and face-to-face (individually-administered) interviews with 16 youth. The youth answered questions about their current career choice such as: *Have you made a career choice? What is your career choice?* They were asked about whether they had shifted careers within a broad discipline or across disciplines, when, and what the shift had entailed.

Next, their perceptions of the importance of each of a variety of influences on their career choice were sought using a 5-point Likert scale. This scale ranged from 1 for 'least important influence' to 5 for 'most important influence'. Using this scale, youth rated the extent of importance of influence of mother, father, another family member, teachers, friends, career guidance services (e.g., school or college counsellor, career guidance centre, career guidance workshops or fairs), media, and self, on their making a career choice. Importantly, the youth justified each of their influence ratings. For instance, if a youth had rated her father as being a less important influence (scored as 2), she explained why and how her father had played a less important influence on her career choice.

Lastly, the youth indicated how satisfied they were with their career choice on a 5-point

Likert scale ranging from 1 for 'not at all satisfied' to 5 for 'extremely satisfied'. The youth also provided a justification for their satisfaction rating.

### Plan of Analysis

Data was analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Descriptive statistics were computed; when needed tests of comparison (e.g.,  $t$  tests,  $\chi^2$  tests) and relationship (i.e., Pearson's  $r$ ) were computed. The qualitative data analytic strategy used is thick description. Thick description is a strategy that permits readers to interpret the data firsthand (Patton, as cited in Highlen & Finley, 1996).

### Results

#### Career Choices and Career Shifts

Almost all of the youth from Mumbai stated that they had currently decided on a career: 62 out of 65. Examples of those who were undecided include a 20-yr-old woman enrolled in MA (History/Psychology) and a 21-yr-old man completing B.Sc. (Information Technology).

At the same time, the career choices of many youth were not stable: 25 youth (38.5%) had changed their decision once in the past. For example, a woman had changed her educational path from commerce to fashion designing: *"After 10<sup>th</sup>, my friends had decided to choose commerce, and I didn't want to get separated from them. So I also chose commerce. After 13<sup>th</sup>, I completely lost interest in the field and looked out for options based on my interest. This is when I decided to join the fashion designing course."* Another woman explained: *"After B.Com. I wanted to do something different than normal M.Com., so I decided to do interior designing"*. A 23-yr-old man shared that he had shifted from a commerce-related job to acting, another from commerce to photography. Other youth had switched specialisations within a discipline (e.g., B.E. in IT to B.E. in Electronics and Telecommunications) or switched to allied disciplines (e.g., Human Development to Human Resource Development).

The career choices of the 62 youth from middle- and higher-income families were largely class-specific and gender-specific (see Table 1). The class specificity is indicated by the medium to high occupational prestige of career choices (i.e., preschool teacher to researcher and engineer). Notably, all selected careers required formal education;



**Table 1.** Career Choice of Youth in Mumbai.

Career Choice of Youth in Mumbai	<i>f</i>		
	Male n = 27	Female n = 38	Total n = 65
Unclear about career choice	2	1	3
Engineer	8	1	9
Researcher (e.g., Environmental Science Researcher)	1	1	2
Accountant/Financial Consultant/Banker/Lawyer	4	6	10
Businessperson	3	0	3
Manager (Corporate, HR, Event, Travel & Tourism)	2	5	7
ICT-related (e.g., Web Designer, 3-D Animation Production Artist)	3	1	4
Counsellor/Teacher (Preschool, School, University)/Special Educator/Owner of Preschool	0	12	12
Creative Arts/Design (e.g., Architect, Interior Designer, Fashion Designer, Photographer, Actor/Director, Journalist)	3	7	10
Dietician/Physiotherapist	0	4	4
Merchant Mariner	1	0	1

this was also for the types of businesses that a few aspired to own or to expand. With regard to gender-specificity, engineering was a career choice predominantly made by men whereas careers related to counselling and education were chosen only by women. Also, more women than men had selected creative arts/design-related careers (e.g., interior designer).

#### Youth Perceptions of Influences on Their Career Choice: Quantitative Findings

The number of influences on their career choice that youth rated as at least somewhat important ranged from 1 to 7, with a mean of 3.63 and a standard deviation of 1.54. The number of influences on their career choice that youth perceived as more or most important ranged from 0 to 6 with a mean of 2.46 and a standard deviation of 1.36. Low magnitude but significant gender differences were obtained: men identified a higher number of important influences on career choice than women. Thus, on an average, men identified 4.19 influences ( $SD = 1.50$ ) and women 3.24 influences ( $SD = 1.46$ ) as at least somewhat important in making their career choice ( $t = 2.56, p = .013$ ).

The means and standard deviations of youth ratings for the importance of each type of influence on career choice are presented in Table 2. The number and percentage of youth who identified an influence as playing a more or most important role with regard to their

career choice are also presented. Across all youth, the mean rating for self was highest: 4.18. In fact, 80% of the youth from Mumbai stated that they themselves had played a more or most important role in making a career choice. The mean importance rating was lowest for professional career guidance services: 1.29. Only, 2% of the youth from Mumbai stated that professional career guidance services had played a more or most important role in making a career choice.

After self (although much lower than the rating for self), the mean importance ratings were highest for parents. Forty-two and 43% of the youth rated their mother and father (respectively) as having played a more or most important role with regard to their career choice. Further, it was noticed that the importance of influence of various family members on youth's career choice was scattered across each type of family member (namely, mother, father, brother, sister, cousin, uncle, aunt, grandmother, grandfather and brother-in-law). In other words, a youth had been influenced in an important way by a family member: however, the mean rating for each specific family member was low. In sum, it was important to ascertain the importance of influence of one or the other family member in making a career choice. Therefore, a new variable was constructed which measures the youth's perception of the highest influence that a family member (whether mother or father or brother etc.) had played with regard to his/her career choice. For each youth, this variable's score is the youth's highest rating for any family member. Importantly, the mean rating

**Table 2.** Youth Perceptions of Influences on Their Career Choice.

Whose Influence	Rating <i>M (SD)</i>			More or Most Important Rating <sup>a</sup> <i>f (%)</i>		
	All Cases <i>N</i> = 65	Men <i>n</i> = 27	Women <i>n</i> = 38	All Cases <i>N</i> = 65	Men <i>n</i> = 27	Women <i>n</i> = 38
Self	4.18 (0.85)	4.26 (0.71)	4.13 (0.94)	52 (80)	23 (85)	29 (76)
Mother	2.83 (1.50)	2.93 (1.52)	2.76 (1.50)	27 (42)	13 (48)	14 (37)
Father	2.78 (1.61)	3.59 (1.53)	2.21 (1.42)	28 (43)	<b>18 (67)</b>	<b>10 (26)<sup>d</sup></b>
Other family members <sup>b</sup>	2.12 (1.50)	2.44 (1.65)	1.89 (1.35)	15 (23)	8 (30)	7 (18)
Family <sup>c</sup>	3.74 (1.36)	4.15 (1.29)	3.45 (1.35)	44 (68)	<b>22 (81)</b>	<b>22 (58)</b>
Teacher	2.37 (1.55)	2.37 (1.50)	2.37 (1.60)	20 (31)	9 (33)	11 (29)
Friends	1.78 (1.29)	2.04 (1.43)	1.61 (1.18)	9 (14)	4 (15)	5 (13)
Media	1.63 (0.96)	1.85 (0.99)	1.47 (0.92)	3 (5)	1 (4)	2 (5)
Career Guidance Services	1.29 (0.72)	1.26 (0.76)	1.32 (0.70)	1 (2)	1 (4)	0 (0)

Note.

<sup>a</sup> The youth had rated each influence on career choice on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 for 'least important influence' to 5 for 'most important influence'. These columns refer to the number (and percentage) of youth who rated each of the influences as a 'more important influence' or 'most important influence'.

<sup>b</sup> Represents youth perception of the highest influence that a family member other than parents (e.g., brother, sister, cousin, aunt, uncle, grandfather and grandmother) had had on his/her career choice.

<sup>c</sup> Represents youth perception of the highest influence that a family member (including parents) has had on his/her career choice.

<sup>d</sup> Significant differences are in bold

for the influence of family was 3.74, with 67.7% of the youth identifying one or the other family member as having played a more or most important role in the youth's career choice.

Next in importance were teachers, with 31% of the youth rating teachers as a more or most important influence in making a career choice. Interestingly, a few youth added one or two of the following as more or most important influences on their career choice: parents' friends, dentist, family GP, guru, girlfriend and master's research project.

Table 2 also includes youth's ratings of importance of various influences on career choice by gender. Significantly more men than women rated two of the influences as more or most important. Sixty-seven percent of the men versus 26% of women rated their father as having played a more or most important role in making a career choice ( $\chi^2 = 10.48$ ,  $p = .001$ ). Also, 81% of the men versus 58% of the women rated one or the other family member as a more or most important influence on their career choice ( $\chi^2 = 4.02$ ,  $p = .045$ ).

Most frequently youth identified self and family members as more or most important influences on their career choice ( $n = 15$ ,

23.08%). The next most frequent combination of more or most important influences on career choice was "self, family members and teachers" ( $n = 14$ , 21.54%). Self featured in combination with other influences judged as more or most important in the ratings of 43 youth; likewise, family member(s) featured in combination with other more or most important influences in the ratings of 38 youth. Nine youth rated only their own self and six youth only their family member(s) as a more or most important influence on career choice.

### Youth Perceptions of Influences on Their Career Choice: Qualitative Findings

The justifications for rating self as at least a somewhat important influence in making a career choice indicate a fair degree of self-awareness and knowledge of the world of work in the youth who participated in this study. Forty-one percent of youth included their own interest in the chosen field as part of their justification. In fact, the youths' justifications for the importance of the self included one or more of the following: interest; liking for particular activities; dislikes; their experiences which clarified their interest/liking; their judgement of what they were good at; and their knowledge of the skills, activities and prospects in a profession. Some of the youth described a match between own interests/liking for particular activities and the

skills and activities of the profession they had selected. A 20-yr-old woman explained: *"In my second year B.Sc. course I was managing college events and I enjoyed doing that a lot. So, I decided to make event management a career."* Another 20-yr-old woman studying to be a Chartered Accountant justified: *"...I always wanted to find out the reason for paying taxes and then I was also interested in math and accounts in college."* A 26-yr-old woman working as an Interior Designer clarified: *"I always wanted to do something creative and which requires lot of imagination and a field in which I can work with people so I chose interior designing as my career..."* A 22-yr-old man working as a Web Designer stated: *"There was pressure to find a job. However, choice of career was due to interest and aptitude as well as because of good opportunity to make money"*. A 23-yr-old woman working as a supervisor in a preschool specified: *"I love kids; kind of community I am in, I am not allowed to get into a full-time career so took up career which allows me to work part-time..."*

Youth justifications for ratings of importance of influence of others on their career choice were varied. For example, youth had rated fathers as having a more or most important influence for reasons ranging from being a source of inspiration, a role model who also provided practical career-related experiences, to coercion. For example, a 20-yr-old woman studying Interior Designing explained: *"He is my role model and after seeing his work in this field I felt I want to join this field and design places... My dad gave me a chance to get the practical knowledge on site and visualize the things."* In comparison, a 24-yr-old male engineer stated: *"This was a dream of my father to make me an engineer which after some time became my passion."* Whereas, a 25-yr-old male engineer said: *"He forced me to take up engineering"*.

Youth provided similar reasons for identifying mothers as more or most influential in making a career choice. For instance, an 18-yr-old student explained why she had rated her mother as a more important influence: *"She did a lot of hard work to make us educated...She is a role model for me."* While, a 23-yr-old man studying and working as an actor explained: *"Because she was the one who always wanted me to get into this career and also the first break that I got in acting was through her reference."* Likewise, a 24-yr-old

man studying for admission into MD said: *"My dad is a doctor. My mother wanted me to continue in the same field as that of my dad."*

Youths' reasons for identifying others as less influential with regard to their career choice included absence of pressure from parent, freedom to make own choice, and lack of interest from parent. Furthermore, indicative of possible gender biases, only women cited these reasons. A 23-yr-old woman working as a tour consultant justified: *"Because he (father) never was concerned as to what I do with my career"*. A 24-yr-old woman working as a physiotherapist clarified: *"Because my mother was not worried, she was okay with whatever I did. She was not much aware of this field and listened to the information I got."* Interestingly, some youth rated their father as having less influence on their career choice because he had provided only financial support; other youth rated their father as having had a more or most important influence because he had provided financial support. Justifications for mother's role in influencing career choice did not include the provision of financial support.

### **Role of Professional Career Guidance Services on Career Choice of Youth**

As many as 84.62% of the youth, rated professional career guidance services as the least important influence. This was largely because of non-use (see Table 3). For example, only two of the youth had had a career-related interaction with a college counsellor. In fact, 52 of the youth (80%) had had no experience of professional career guidance services, 3 shared that the experience was unhelpful, and most of the remaining 10 rated their experience as a somewhat important influence on their career choice. For example, a woman whose career goal is to be a counsellor explained that she considered her college counsellor as her role model and an indirect influence on her career choice. Also she had visited a career counsellor who had suggested that she select Arts and a career in which she had to deal with people because she liked working with people. In clarifying the rating of somewhat important influence, this student added: *"But the decision of going into counselling was mine."* Two of the youth mentioned that they had benefited from the career guidance services that had been organised by their community.



**Table 3.** Use of Professional Career Guidance Services by Youth.

Type of Professional Career Guidance Service	<i>f</i> <i>n</i> = 65
Not used at all	52
Career-related interaction with a school counsellor	2
Career-related interaction with a college counsellor	2
Attended a career workshop or fair	6
Visited a career guidance centre	3
Identification of own interests, aptitudes, strengths	8
Information on different careers	7
Suggested matches between own strengths and available careers	6

### Satisfaction with Career Choice

Ratings for satisfaction with career choice (for the 62 youth who had made a career choice) ranged from 2 (slightly satisfied) to 5 (extremely satisfied) with a mean of 4.29 and a standard deviation of 0.73. Largely, the youth were either very satisfied ( $n = 27$ , 43.55%) or extremely satisfied ( $n = 27$ ) with their career choice. There was no significant difference between the satisfaction of men and women. Satisfaction with career choice was not correlated with importance ratings for self ( $r = .029$ , *ns*) or family ( $r = .202$ , *ns*) as an influence on career choice. Satisfaction with career choice was modestly correlated with number of influences on career choice identified as at least somewhat important ( $r = .327$ ,  $p = .005$ ).

Youth who were moderately satisfied with their career choice explained that their current choice was their second preference as they had not been able to get in the field they were most interested in because of less than adequate academic performance, or that they were dissatisfied with their salary. A 19-yr-old woman studying in her third and final year of B.Com. justified: *"My first preference was always BMS (Bachelor's in Management Studies). But because of less percentage I couldn't manage to get into it and finally had to continue for TY (third year) B.Com. I have rated moderately satisfied because now I am doing it with interest as I can get into MBA in marketing after doing my TY B.Com."* A 26-yr-old woman working as an interior designer justified: *"When I work, I enjoy; when I'm paid—not satisfactory."* An example of those who were very satisfied includes a 25-yr-old man working as an architect who explained: *"Because I like what I am doing but now I have to work under someone else which I don't want*

*to do whole my life. I want to have my own office. So once I have my own office, I will be extremely satisfied"*. Youth gave different explanations for being extremely satisfied with their career choice such as many opportunities to learn, financial benefits, doing what one loved, not having compromised own interests, and doing very well/getting positive feedback and promotions. A 24-yr-old man working as an Instrument Design Engineer justified: *"I am learning everyday a new thing and I am also growing as a person. I was very shy person in my school and college days but now my confidence has increased very much..."* A 23-yr-old actor explained: *"Because I am very proud about the fact that I have not compromised my dreams, my calibre and my interests..."* A 21-yr-old woman working as a preschool teacher shared: *"Because I get along with the kids very well and they find me quite approachable. It completely matches my interests. I am into a profession that gives me opportunities to do what I like the most."*

### Discussion

The key findings in this study pertain to youth perceptions of influences on their career choice. Youth ratings of the extent of importance of each of various influences (e.g., mother, father, teachers, friends and media) on career choice were highest for self; next highest were the ratings for the influence of mother and father, followed by the influence of teachers. As many as 80% of the youth rated their own self as a more or most important influence in making a career choice as opposed to 42, 43 and 31% of the youth who rated their mother, father and teacher(s) as more or most important influences.

How may these findings be interpreted? What do these findings indicate about the roles

of the family and self in career development of youth? In understanding these findings, it is important to underscore that the youth in this study rated and described the influence of self and others on their *particular* career choice, not career in a broader sense. In other words, they described who or what influenced them to choose, for example, to become an engineer (instead of a lawyer or an actor).

In a broader sense, the role of the family is outstanding as an influence on ontogenetic development including career development (see Kerka, 2000). Family members including one or both parents, older siblings, and uncles etc. could role model specific competencies and challenges related to particular careers as well as general work competencies and risks. More broadly, many of the settings in which children and youth participate are dependent on choices of parents. Thus, parents' decisions and choices of where to live, what to provide materially and relationally in the home, which school to enrol their children in, how to structure out-of-school time for children, impacts children's development in ways that would be meaningful for later success in the world of work. There is support for these ideas in the socialisation literature: the family is acknowledged as a key influence in the socialisation of children and youth (Parke & Buriel, 2006). In family systems theory, parents are also conceptualised as providers of opportunities, who regulate (e.g., make available through own choices, mediate, initiate, arrange, and monitor) children's utilisation of material and social resources within and outside the home (Parke, Burks, Carson, Neville, & Boyum, 1994).

The findings of this study do not diminish the magnitude of the role of the family in preparing and facilitating individuals for work roles both directly and indirectly. However, neither is the influence of the family on the individual unilateral or unidirectional. The youths' reporting of the salience of the self in making a career choice is congruent with socialisation and careers theory: The role of individuals in their own development is an important and more recent theme in multiple literatures.

Thus, within the structure of opportunities provided by family members, children and youth exercise choices that impact their development considerably as well. Given two hours of leisure time in the evening, one youth may choose to read a book, another may work on giving his bicycle a new look. Moreover, children and youth also influence

parents in modifying the structure of opportunities. Children's suggestions of how they wish to structure their out-of-school time may lead to joint decisions or even child-initiated decisions. In the socialisation literature, the view of children as passive recipients of parental influence has been replaced (starting in the 1960s). In the new paradigm, children are viewed as equally active agents, contributing to their own socialisation and therefore, development (Parke & Buriel, 2006). This theme receives exemplar attention in action theory. In action perspectives, from adolescence onward, the role of the individual as an active coproducer of own development changes to include intentionality. Adolescents (and later adults) intentionally contribute to their own development by setting developmental goals, matching action to these plans, monitoring and evaluating actions, and reconstruing goals and/or modifying circumstances (Brandtstädter, 2006).

Compatible with socialisation and action theories is the developmental-contextual theory that Vondracek, Lerner and Schulenberg have contributed to the careers field (see Patton & McMahon, 2006a; Whiston & Keller, 2004). In this theory too, there is explicit acknowledgement of the dynamic interaction between the individual and changing contexts (including the family). Vondracek et al. explain that work roles are influenced by the roles that a child learns in the family setting (as cited in Whiston & Keller, 2004). Moreover, there is a mutuality of influences between the individual and contexts—each influences and is influenced by the other. Patton and McMahon, in describing developmental-contextualism as one of the advancements of career theory, state that Vondracek et al. call special attention to self-determination and the personal agency of individuals.

There is evidence in this research of the reciprocally impactful key influences of family (and other social groups) and self. Part of this evidence has to do with the class and gender specificity of career choices of youth in this study. Despite most youth rating their own self as more or most important in making a career choice, all career choices were class specific and many were gender specific. Clearly, it is within a pool of careers, which would largely garner family approval (i.e., a pool of careers congruent with family expectations and aspirations, and family standards and lifestyle), that the youth have explained why they

specifically chose to become, for example, a counsellor or a photographer. Their notions of autonomy and possibly “free will” appear circumscribed within the limits of what would meet family approval. Of course, this is exemplary of a systems view: the roles of the self and the family are interconnected rather than disparate, and therefore, judgements of own role subsume the role of the family.

In fact, this finding is consonant with many threads in the literature. It echoes Gottfredson's theory of circumscription and compromise. She states that adolescents' “occupational aspirations...reproduce most of the class and gender differences of the parent generation” (Gottfredson, 2005, p. 72). This finding is also an example of the contextual affordances and limitations that enable or constrain the agency of individuals, described in Vondracek, Lerner and Schulenberg's framework (as cited in Patton & McMahon, 2006a) and in action perspectives (Brandtstädter, 2006). Illustrative of such affordances and limitations, are the values, beliefs, expectations, aspirations and standards that families coalesce for their unit as a whole, and define specifically for a member of the family, including the daughter or son. Lapsley and Heppner (2009) found that adolescents from privileged families (in USA) perceived that they had plentiful choices with regard to occupations. However, their role models and learning experiences focused on a rather constricted range of upwardly mobile occupations and the adolescents had positive outcome expectations only for these occupations. Lapsley and Heppner concluded that the desire to maintain social class privilege substantially curtailed the range of occupational choices for these adolescents. In similar vein, Arulmani and Nag-Arulmani (2004) have described social cognitive environments that foster ingrained ways of thinking about work and occupations. They draw our attention to career beliefs—namely, cognitions relating to work, occupations and career development that reflect and represent a distinctive social cognitive environment. They add that career beliefs include positive and/or negative valences that facilitate or obstruct individual career development. Thus, an adolescent's proficiency and persistence or prestige beliefs with regard to education and career are drawn from the social cognitive environment of the family, social class and community.

Other evidence in support of the mutually impactful roles of the self and family

includes the finding that very few of the youth identified only their self or only their family as a more or most important influence on career choice. Outstandingly, the youth identified self *and* other influences as more or most important influences on their career choice. “Self and family” or “self, family and teacher” were oft-repeated combinations of influences.

How do these findings compare with other researches on youth and career choices? Two large-scale studies, one conducted in India and the other in U.K., are especially relevant. Arulmani (1995) studied 654 young Indian professionals, 25-to-28-years old, who had been working in various fields for 2 or 3 years. The youth were interviewed about the influences on their career choice. Across the youth in the Arulmani study, the most represented influence on career choice was that of parents (46%), followed by parents and self (24%). Least represented was the sole influence of self (4%). There are some important similarities and differences across the current study and the Arulmani study: 70% of the youth in the Arulmani study reported that parents had influenced their career choice, in comparison with 58.46% of the youth in this study identifying parents as a more or most important influence, and 73.85% identifying parents as at least a somewhat important influence on career choice. Influence of family members (parents and others) in the Arulmani study was 85%, in this study was 67.7% as a more or most important influence. The sharpest difference has to do with the reported role of the self: 28% in the Arulmani study versus 80% in this study. What do these differences reflect? Research efforts need to be directed in order to clarify whether these differences indicate a change in times, or are representative of the contrast between a Mumbai versus non-Mumbai Indian sample in self-awareness and knowledge of the world of work. In this study, youth justifications for high ratings for influence of self included own judgements of what they liked, disliked and were good at, their knowledge of the skills needed in a profession etc. There is also indication in this study of the possibility that fewer families in Mumbai exercise coercive control over their adolescent children than families in other parts of India.

Interestingly, the conclusions from the current study are congruent with those obtained in job perception and job preference surveys in U.K., in particular a school survey of 2447 students and a college survey of 537

students (see Millward et al., 2006). Millward et al. (2006) concluded that their results (with regard to job preferences) indicated that the youth “were highly active in making their own decisions about what they want based on what they know they can and cannot cope with, combined with knowledge of what they are good at” (p. 36). Youth heavily depended on their own personal instincts or judgements of what was right for them. Personal experience was the foremost source of job knowledge, acquired through work observation, actual work experiences, or through talking to family or friends in those jobs. In making job decisions there were three outstanding influences: family advice/role models/informal chatting, work experience, and inspired by own interests/enjoyment. Students rated parental advice as the most used and most helpful source of career advice.

Important parallels can also be drawn between the two studies regarding the role of career guidance services. Although almost 50% of the youth in the Millward et al. study had used career service as against the 20% in this study, yet, compatible with this study and other research in India (e.g., Arulmani & Nag-Arulmani, 2005; Bakshi, 2011), Millward et al. conclude that in making job decisions “(o)verall, the informal and personal sources presided over the formal and impersonal sources of information in their impact on decisions made” (p. 58). Thus, they report that 14% of students found formal methods of career advice useful, and only 4% of all students found interviews with career advisors useful in making job decisions. Likewise in this study, of the 13 youth who had experienced professional career guidance in one or the other form, 3 outrightly said that it was unhelpful and most of the remaining judged it as a somewhat important influence on their career choice. In the Indian context, even in a megacity such as Mumbai, there is an urgent need to address relevance, access, quality, utility and cultural resonance of professional career guidance services for traditional populations such as youth.

The gender differences obtained in this study also merit discussion. All gender differences were in favour of men; therefore, it is possible that these differences are indicative of gender biases. Thus, men reported a significantly greater number of influences on their career choice; and, more men than women reported one or the other family member as an influence on career choice, particularly fathers. It appears that families even in megapolitans like Mumbai are more

focused on enabling (at times even controlling) the career choices of sons; they are somewhat less concerned about the career choices of women/daughters. This may spring from beliefs about traditional gender-stereotyped role allocation in families: with marriage and child rearing defining a woman's identity and an occupation defining a man's identity (DeFrain & Olson, 1999). Plus, in Western and Northern India in particular, there is a notion that the daughter does not belong to her family of origin but to her in-laws; throughout childhood the daughter is being raised for somebody else, the daughter is not “ours”. In fact, ingrained patriarchal orientations and traditions in India have had regrettable consequences: discriminatory practices towards girl children have been rampant (e.g., Agrawal, 2005). Social reformatory, UN (e.g., UNICEF), and NGO-related action in this area has some history; career counsellors too need to address gender-related issues and support both genders in clarifying their occupational or career choices and making selections that maximise human potential.

## Conclusion

Before concluding, it is necessary to take note of the limited scope of the current study: that is, a relatively small sample size and participants who are socioeconomically privileged and from a single city. Clearly, it is imperative that youth perceptions of influences on career choice are investigated with a larger sample size and with participants drawn from multiple cities/regions, rural areas, and different socioeconomic groups.

Despite the limited scope, this study helps steer us towards directions that appear valuable. These include the following implications for career guidance practice: To reiterate, in Mumbai and many other parts of India, access to and cultural-relevance of professional career guidance services even for student populations are as yet largely unaddressed and require substantial attention and effort. The *Jiva* approach to culturally-resonant career guidance and counselling developed by Arulmani is a notable exception (see Arulmani, 2011). Research evidence is clearly favourable for this model. For example, Arulmani (2011) found that urban high school students from lower SES homes who participated in a culturally-resonant career guidance intervention had a dramatic reduction in negativity of career beliefs. Clearly, such a model can be adopted and/or adapted by



career counsellors in other parts of the country.

In addressing quality, career counsellors will do well to be sensitive and responsive to the mutually impactful roles of the self and the family. Prescriptive modes in career guidance practice must be replaced with those that accept, respect and strengthen the role of the individual as an active coproducer of own development. Patton and McMahon (2006b) recommend that individuals play a more active role in the career counselling process. Compatible with a systems view, the identification and realisation of career-related

aspirations of individuals by individuals must be scaffolded carefully with cognisance of the varying nature and extent of control that families exercise over the career choices of their sons and daughters. In other words, career counsellors must recognise and work with acknowledged and unacknowledged influences of the family: "Who says that I have to become an engineer or a doctor or a lawyer?" Even when youth say "I say", the pool from which they are making a choice itself calls attention to the conjoint influence of the family.

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# Empowerment of Women: Two Wings of a Bird

Radha Parikh

## Abstract

Women and men though created equal in all respects have not enjoyed equal status in society. Women have had to struggle to attain higher education and career opportunities all over the world and more so in India. This paper begins by tracing some traditional and mythological brainwashing messages before examining three approaches—education, empowerment and legislation—that have helped women progress over the last 50 years. Yet, there are more empowered women in the urban culture while change is gradual in the rural culture. When men support women, both can actualise themselves.

**Keywords:** women's status in India, gender rights, empowerment, career counselling

## Introduction

"The world of humanity has two wings—one is women and the other men. Not until both wings are equally developed can the bird fly." (Abdu'l-Baha, 1976).

The symbol for a man is from the symbol of Mars (♂), formed by rotating the Venus symbol 135 degrees; the cross was later changed to an arrow making it resemble a shield and spear; and from the symbol of Venus (♀), a hand mirror symbolizing beauty is the symbol for a woman. Are men really from Mars and women from Venus? (Gray, 2004). Are their behaviours stereotypical in this age of information technology? While such compartmentalizing has rapidly changed in some western cultures, the change is more gradual in some others.

What is man without woman? Without a mother, he can have no life. Without a wife, he cannot create life. Yet many Indian women go through life long ridicule and abuse at the hands of their men—father, husband or brother (when they are widowed and return home as a dependent). Is this changing today? How can the eternal life cycle in a culture that believes in 'karma' or 'the inevitable', be changed? The *Hitopadesha* talks of a '*Vasudaiva Kutumbakam*' where the world is one family. Upanishad in India over the ages is symbolized by '*tat tvam asi*' (that art thou) to elaborate the importance of self-

possession, as further demonstrated by Mahavira (Jain) and Gautama (Buddha), that the soul is apart from the body and that we must have the awareness and self-possession to not let material possessions possess us (Radhakrishnan, 2006). Yet in this same Indian culture, one half of the human race has allowed physical and emotional mastery over the other half to become a way of life. Such behaviours cannot but interfere with development of a culture.

The 1995 Beijing World Conference on Women and the follow-up 2000 conference helped expand the concept of 'gender mainstreaming' or equality. Today, even as men make them feel vulnerable through public ridicule, women seek a voice in economic and political life. Undoubtedly, there is an imperative need for long-term and continuous effort to ensure that all women have economic security and dignity as equal human beings. A three-pronged approach over the last many decades has helped to improve the status of women: education, empowerment and legislation. Some international developments are worthy of mention here:

- a. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) was established under United Nations Development Program in 1984. Five important dimensions of women's empowerment were chosen by UNIFEM: economic participation,

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economic opportunity, political empowerment, educational attainment, health and well-being, with a view to help improve the status of women in these areas.

In the World Economic Forum's (WEF, 2012) Gender Gap Index, India was placed 53<sup>rd</sup> out of 58 countries with a score of 3.27 (out of 7), indicating the need for more activism. For example, the alarming fact is that the maternal mortality rate in India is the second highest in the world in spite of technological and other advances. Around the world, women occupy only 15.6% of Parliamentary seats, with less than one-seventh in administration or managerial positions. In 55 countries, there are no women in Parliament (UN Database, 2010). With numbers speaking for themselves as far as status of women is concerned, a lot of advocacy is needed to transcend the prevalent cultural practices that impede women's development. What will work best is probably a systematic process-oriented approach with women having to take the lead, supported by men.

### Traditional and Mythological Brainwashing

In the Indian mythological story of Savithri and Satyavan, Savithri supposedly married Satyavan knowing his life span would be short. Three days before his death, she starts fasting and praying and follows her husband to the forest where he goes to chop wood. When Yamraj (the God of death) comes to take him away, he is baffled when he sees Savithri stoically following him and grants her a boon. First she wishes for her father-in-law to regain his kingdom. Again she follows Yamraj and for the second wish he grants her a hundred sons and when she smartly asks him how is that possible with a dead husband, Yamraj relents at Savithri's wit and persistence, and allows her to have her husband's life back as the final wish. And we all know the story of Ram and Sita—how she follows him to live in the forest, renouncing her palace life, is then kidnapped by Ravan and rescued by Hanuman and Ram. Sita is again sacrificed by Ram when a whispering washerman talks ill of this royal couple, despite Sita having walked into a flame to cleanse herself of even the presence of Ravan's aura. These are the mythological and religious stories we grow up with; and these are the role models an Indian woman is expected to live up to. No will of her own; no desire which is not related to the husband's life and progress!

Since men have traditionally interpreted Hindu scriptures and writings, the parents, brother, and later the parents-in-law decide what a girl should do, or how she should behave. With veiled, bowed head, she is not allowed to exercise a mind of her own. More so, for women in rural India who have no choices and whose lifestyles are well-defined; they have little education and are expected to marry, reproduce and take care of the household. While men rule outside the home, women have active control over the household through the performance of religious rituals which give psychological support to the women, and also empowers them in the home, as men have to submit to their dictates as far as these religious or social rituals are concerned (Wadley, 2008).

While men's rituals are aimed at good crops or prosperity, women focus their rituals on family welfare by worshipping deities or the banyan tree, offering milk to snakes, worshipping the brother (*Rakshabandhan* tying a *raakhi*—an amulet around the wrist of the brother for his protection); or the husband (*Kaduva Chauth*, fasting for the husband's long life the entire day without food or water). The common understanding is that real source of a woman's beauty is her love for her husband.

Widowhood changes everything in an Indian woman's life adding more constraints to her activities and movements. Without a man to support them, widows with only young daughters face legal, financial and physical hardships. Apart from the fact that poorer rural widows who work in the fields get paid half the wages that a man earns for the same job (Wadley, 2008), men feel threatened by these widows moving into their realms in wage-earning or professional roles. Indian cinema has effectively portrayed the economic and sexual exploitation of poor rural (unmarried, married or widowed) working class women by the local *zamindars* or landlords. Monstrous customs continue to flourish in parts of rural India in spite of the active involvement of nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), women's advocacy groups and media, in publicising the shameful facts of individual cases. Often widows are not aware of the presence of social workers and activist groups in the community that offer support; and when they have such information, they seldom approach the groups for advice related to socioeconomic reasons; the only exception being for help-seeking when it is related to the education of their children (Bates, 2007).



"The husband is the main pillar of her life. When he dies, then there is nothing for women" (Wadley, 2008, quoting Saroj, a Brahmin widow). In ancient Hindu tradition, a woman's hope of salvation depends upon her marriage and hence once widowed, she is expected to throw herself on the husband's funeral pyre and commit 'Sati', a practice which turned out to be a fiery tragedy for 18 year-old Roop Kanwar in 1987 but ended with legislation to protect widows (see Joseph & Sharma, 1997). Thanks to women's movement and women media professionals, it was discovered that Roop, after 7 months' marriage was dragged to the funeral pyre of her husband by his relatives, burnt alive, screaming for help and died receiving none. The public outcry over this controversial Sati death termed 'a socially sanctioned murder', helped promote the Abolition of Sati legislation (Joseph & Sharma, 1997).

### **Status of Indian Women**

#### **Are Women Altruistic by Nature?**

In traditional societies like India, women tend to lack a clear perception of individual 'self-interest'; they suffer from a false form of consciousness that values family well-being more than their own well-being; 'forced altruism...as a means of survival' (Sen, 1990). What does 'forced altruism' as applied to women mean? Who is an altruist: A person who does good deeds without focusing on rewards or consequences—the act for the sake of the act, with no gains in sight. Then how can there be 'force' in altruism? Women have traditionally considered the welfare and betterment of their families and their husbands, before considering their own conditions, be it in terms of food, shelter or occupation. Perhaps they had no choice. If they do not do so, they may end up without a home or husband as Indian men whose wives are both emotionally and economically dependent, could use it to their advantage and abandon the women if they behave in a contrary manner and are not completely submissive to the men's demands and needs. Wife-beating was and continues to be used as a corrective measure to instil discipline and control over women.

Many women's lives in rural India are dominated by poverty, lack of education, caste discrimination, early marriage, multiple children, and work for survival. Women are condemned if they elope or become pregnant prior to marriage. For men the parameters of dishonour are different. Men are honoured for

having land and wealth, and are dishonoured only when caught stealing, gambling or eating taboo foods (see Wadley [2008] for a case study of a village in UP). Eating practices too favour the males in a joint family household: it is only after men have eaten, and then the older women, that the younger daughters-in-law eat. Such customs remain typically true for most parts of rural India, with some urban families to date, waiting till 10 pm for the head of the family to return from his shop or commercial enterprise before eating supper. They support the powerful control mechanism of the male head of the family and his successors. This locus of control explains the 'forced altruism' of women. Steeped in folklore and mythological stories of sacrificing women, most Indian women do not perceive injustice for what it is but believe that true obedience to their husbands and in-laws would bring them honour and peace. Women can learn to empower themselves completely only when they learn to come out of these cultural stereotypical moulds and models set out for them.

#### **Violence against Women and the Girl Child**

Women face other types of abuse such as physical violence at home. Domestic violence includes actual abuse or the threat of abuse that is physical, sexual, verbal, emotional and economic. Harassment by way of unlawful dowry demands to the woman or her relatives is also covered under this definition. In addition, even before experiencing the turmoil of a turbulent life like this, a woman's chances of survival are grim with the unlawful yet prevalent selective sex discrimination in unborn children and aborting of unwanted girl babies. Female foeticide is common in many parts of India, more prevalent in some states and, it is the subtlest form of domestic violence. There is an increase in Indian female life expectancy by 20% in the last two decades of the 20th century (Haub & Sharma, 2006) and yet in contrast, there is a decrease in the number of girl babies that were born, showing a discrepancy in the female: male population ratio in many states with low literacy rates like Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, and Rajasthan. As many as 10 million girls in India have been killed by their parents either before or immediately after birth over the past 20 years (Dance with Shadows, 2007).

#### **Education**

Education and training to the extent of at least a Bachelor's or Associate degree is

essential for nearly all the highest paid jobs around the world (Gordon, 2006). In India, women rarely got permission for higher education in the parental or husband's home; as a result, the choice of career was very limited for women in the last century.

In 1911, Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain opened the Sakhawat Memorial School in Calcutta for Muslim women in 'purdah' (veil covering head and sometimes face). She was systematic in transporting the girls from conservative families in covered carriages and teaching them in classrooms where they could continue the purdah system to ensure that there was no violation of religious norms. Her progressive-minded late husband had taught her to write in English in the evenings. Within three years of her marriage, she started writing extensively on women's conditions contributing to the growing awareness of the status of women (Forbes, 2000). Around the same time, Sister Subhalaxmi supported by an Irish feminist, established schools for young child widows in Madras overcoming great opposition, and later the Lady Willingdon College and Practice School for training teachers was opened, headed by Sister Subhalaxmi (Forbes, 2000).

Current information from the UN Database shows remarkable improvement in 15-to-24-year-old Indian woman's literacy rate from 1991 to 2007 (49.31% to 77.13%, UN Database, 2010). The district with the lowest literacy rate is in Uttar Pradesh—Shrawasti (7.7%) while the district with the highest literacy rate in the country is located at Aizwal, Mizoram (96.26%). State-wise Kerala heads the literacy list (87.7%) and Bihar ranks lowest on the list (33.1%) (Census, 2006). From the Census figures, it is clear that the infant mortality rate and the female foeticide numbers are related to the low literacy rates of women.

The vast disparity in male: female employment ratio still exists but it is on the decrease with total number of women employed in both the public and private sectors increasing to about 50 lakhs in 2000 as compared to 22.3 lakhs in 1983 (Advani, 2004). Although women work for longer hours than men in addition to their housework, their chances of seizing new and better paid work opportunities are poorer than men's. Their access to political power is severely limited. Their remuneration is lower than men's for the same job performance (Cuellar, 1996). Women suffer reduced access to paid employment for a variety of reasons ranging

from lack of contacts to innumerable household chores. Widows in several societies face additional barriers to employment and re-marriage (Chen, 2000). If women received the same educational advantages as men, they would demonstrate their capacity for scholarship too and thus aid in women's movement.

## Empowerment

It is shocking to read that of the 1.3 billion people living in poverty around the world, 70% are women (UN Database, 2010). Women's cultural identity is that created by the dominant "other" culture dictating norms and standards for living. Since women tend to be excluded from higher education, they lack better paid jobs and overall, poor working women in India occupy menial positions related to agriculture, construction, domestic service, vending, low-status clerical work, nursing and prostitution. Economic empowerment of women can be achieved through some of the following measures:

## Poverty Eradication

Poor people tend to spend a far greater percentage of their income on health care than the rich; thereby, incurring heavy debts. Social security represents a guarantee by the whole community to all its members, of the maintenance of their standard of living or at least of tolerable living conditions. Measures for social security that cover social insurance, employers' liability, social assistance, provident fund and gratuity, sickness and maternity benefit, employment injury benefit, old-age benefit and invalidity, survivor's benefit, and unemployment and family benefits have to be implemented systematically in all sectors as part of poverty eradication (Jhabvala & Subrahmanya, 2000). The first measure taken to address the issue of poverty was the Workmen's Compensation Act, 1923, to provide workers with financial compensation for accidents incurred at work. Next was the Employees' State Insurance Act (ESI), 1948. Soon after, it was followed by the Employees' Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952. The case of the specific needs of women employees was also considered resulting in the Maternity Benefits Act, 1961. These legislative measures protect women employees' security.

## Providing Equal Opportunities

Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833) was one of the pioneering early reformers who

worked toward improving the condition of women. He was even called the “champion of women’s rights” (Forbes, 2000). He fought against child marriage, polygamy and widow burning (*Sati*). The Colonial British rule of that period criticising ancient Indian culture and the role of women, also helped somewhat in recognition of a more equal status of Indian women.

In the engineering institute where the author has been teaching for the past seven years, the percentage of women in engineering has shown a gradual but significant increase from 10% in 2004 and 2005 admissions to 25% from 2009 to 2011. Likewise, while the M.Tech. programme is competitive and there are fewer girls (barely 5%), the M.Sc. in Information and Communication Technology programme at this institute has a good representation of girls (nearly 40%). Many of the local Gujarati girls, who may have married after graduation and never worked, appear to now be empowered by this programme. They are able to compete and complete their postgraduate degree successfully to get placed in well-known IT companies in India with a good pay package. The pay is lucrative enough for the boys they marry to ‘allow’ them to continue their professional pursuit. With access to a gender cell on most campuses, female students are acquiring the self-confidence to express their grievances when harassed by their male peers or instructors and register complaints to address issues. This freedom of access to a grievance cell for their assistance has resulted in female students’ and employees’ active participation in campus life with fewer concerns related to their minority status.

### Micro Credit

Indian microfinance has been supported by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) and the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI). Two main models have been the (a) Self-Help Group (SHG) Bank Linkage Programme (SBLP) which covered about 14 million poor households in March 2006 and provided indirect access to the banking system to another 14 million, and (b) the Microfinance Institution (MFI) model which served 7.3 million households including 3.2 million poor households (Ghate, 2007). Together they have reached one-fifth of all poor households in India. The SHGs are informal associations of up to 20 women who meet once a month to save small amounts (Rs. 10 to Rs. 50). After saving regularly for 6 months, the women use

the money to lend small amounts to each other for interest which is ploughed back into group funds. After maintaining satisfactory records of these transactions, they become eligible to be ‘linked’ by the local bank branch under a NABARD-sponsored programme called the SHG Bank Linkage Programme (SBLP). The main advantage of this model is the empowerment and participation by millions of rural women in India.

### Support Services

Four hundred mobile crèches for children of migrant construction workers were set up in Mumbai, Delhi and Pune, initiated by a Gandhian, Meera Mahadevan, in 1969, and more than 250,000 children have been served by these daycare-cum-school centres (Singh, 2000). The women labourers are able to work without worrying about the safety of their children.

### Legislation

India has ratified various international conventions and human rights instruments; thereby, declaring a commitment to securing equal rights for women. Key among them is the ratification of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1993. Right from its inception as a democracy, some of the articles of the Constitution of India 1950 were drawn to remove social and economic inequality (provide equal rights for women) and to make equal opportunities available. But in reality the right to social and economic justice did not quite happen the way it was envisaged. Subsequently, the Hindu Succession Act, 1956, was passed to ensure that women have rights to property. It is surprising to read that a theosophist and activist like Annie Besant, the elected President of Indian National Congress, 1917, talked discouragingly of western education for women and women’s professional roles stating: “...India needs nobly trained wives and mothers, wise and tender rulers of the household, educated teachers of the young, helpful counsellors of their husband, skilled nurses of the sick, rather than girl graduates educated for the learned professions” (Jayawardane, 1995). It would be a grievous injustice if such double standards are continued in the education of boys and girls.

The National Commission for Women was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990 to safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women. The 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments (1993)

to the Constitution of India have provided for reservation of seats in the local bodies of Panchayats and Municipalities for women, laying a strong foundation for their participation in decision-making at the local levels. But rural women find it difficult to survive in a male-dominated culture. In villages with a female *sarpanch* (elected head of the village) for example, the husband or son usually conduct the administrative duties, ensuring that women have no authority roles. So this reservation proves futile for women.

However, there are some further legislative safeguards to protect women. The Ministry of Women and Child Development had issued a notification to bring into force the 'Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005' effective 26th October, 2006. This Act was passed by Parliament and seeks to cover women who are or have been in a relationship with the abuser where both parties have lived together in a shared household and are related by consanguinity, marriage or a relationship in the nature of marriage, or adoption. The Protection from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, is an important step to protect women from being victims of domestic violence and to prevent occurrence of acts of domestic violence.

### Some Suggestions for Career Counselling

In India, students are often not aware of the choices available to them, and are uninformed about which optional subjects will help them in choosing the right career after graduating from high school. They believe in either opting for professions that are traditionally respected—such as engineer or doctor. Girl students typically opt for stereotypical roles such as nurses or teachers. When faced with low marks in Science or Math while graduating from high school, girl students, in particular, reluctantly look for other options as admission in professional courses will be denied to these students. If we were to look at the A to Z of careers listed in Harper-Collins' Encyclopedia of Careers (Ghose, 2003) to examine career choices available for Indian students—there is a wide variety of choices ranging from Acting to Management to Engineering or Fashion Designing or Writing. From this it is evident that when a 10<sup>th</sup> grader completes high school and jumps into the traditional Science stream of Math, Physics, Chemistry (MPC), (s)he has no idea that the higher secondary optional subjects chosen may not in any way be geared to support what (s)he will do in life, given the above choices. What does a career in Travel and Tourism or

Multimedia and Modelling have anything to do with intensive study of Chemistry and Physics?

School administrators could initiate systematic aptitude testing for all high school students to guide them in choosing the right electives. Also, before graduation from high school, if there is additional career advising and career counselling available, students will probably select courses of study that they enjoy and which will assist in a career choice of personal preference, rather than as a means of ensuring admission to certain popular professional courses to compete with peers. The Career Preparation Model (Arulmani & Nag-Arulmani, 2004) elaborates on the impact of the socioeconomic environment of students and their helplessness at making career-related choices and decisions. Misguided perception about jobs being unavailable, despite higher qualifications, is an additional factor that needs to be taken into account for career guidance. It is clear that students from lower socioeconomic groups need to be supported in realising that specific skill literacy training along with a higher degree contributes to their employability. Moreover, employers today are looking for more than just an academic qualification (Arulmani & Nag-Arulmani, 2004). Soft skills training and participation in extracurricular activities on campus assists in enhancing one's personality and professional behaviour. Career counselling for girls should address some further gender-related issues:

1. The 19<sup>th</sup> century Nobel Prize winner Marie Curie, an exceptional scientist known for her research in radioactivity was one of few women Laureates but with the passage of the century, we hardly have too many more women scientists. Sunita Williams has been in the news extensively because she is unique in the status of a 'woman astronaut' who has spent the longest time in space. Apart from flying, Sunita Williams enjoys diverse hobbies like running, swimming, biking, triathlons, windsurfing, snowboarding and bow hunting. Extracurricular activities need as much promotion as academics, for women to develop their strengths. In India, over 80% of women scientists are married and have difficulties with cultural and organisational constraints which eventually lead to many of them dropping out of research (Kurup & Maithreyi, 2011). Some women who are leaving their imprint on industry: the face behind Hallmark products is Kalika Patankar; the head of



Apeejay industries is Shirin Paul (Kanitkar & Contractor, 1992). The newspapers carry reports on women CEOs and women bankers as minority marvels (that women can achieve such leadership positions like men): Chanda Kochhar, CEO of ICICI Bank; Shikha Sharma, M.D. and CEO of Axis Bank; Kalpana Morparia, JP Morgan; and both Chanda Kochhar and Shikha Sharma were award winners for their banks' excellent performance (Coutinho, 2010). The world is witnessing parity here: women who are able to compete with men and excel in different careers.

2. The Government of India in its 50 years of education report (GOI, 1997) on the status of women's education stipulated that women should only opt for subjects of study such as 'Home Economics' and 'Household Arts'; in effect that they should not compete in the same fields as men. Like men, women also seek self-fulfilment through higher education and careers. But while husbands and wives may be equally well-educated, their roles continue to differ: one is perceived as the breadwinner and the other as the home-maker. This is so even when the wife is a professional and earns as much as or more than the husband. If things are out of place in a home, it is the wife we look at for perfection; hopefully the roles will become more interchangeable.

Furthermore, career counsellors can sharpen their relevance by becoming sensitive to the wide range of initiatives that support the social empowerment of Indian women. This can be achieved through measures such as minimum high school education, provision of health care and free medical services, availability of free midday meals in schools providing nutrition, supply of hygienic drinking water, and good sanitation in the housing and shelters provided. The 2005 legislation for women's protection addresses some of these issues. When women have access to such basic amenities which are part of human rights, they will have the time and dignity to handle the more subtle issues related to the rights of a girl child and abuse/violence of their

emotional and physical selves by husbands and families. They will be able to support each other and guide young girls in their educational endeavours.

Young girl students can be empowered by teaching them decision-making, self-awareness and self-confidence in primary school through extracurricular activities, self-defence (Judo/Karate), and sports. The choices and options they have at an early age will impact their interest in higher education and their career choices. It will also help them to understand the importance of self-determination in guiding their own lives and to identify their strengths and tackle their weaknesses. Clearly there is a need for trained school career guidance counsellors who can assist in the process.

### Conclusion

Today young women in India have better opportunities. For the poorest women, agriculture or construction labour, baby-sitting, nursing or maid service, are not the only options. Today career options are more diverse for various social groups.

All over the world, including in some of the repressed tribal cultures where women had no voice, women are finding their feet today and asserting their needs more than ever before. Gruesome practices that were tantamount to torture of women are slowly fading away with the strong (both) male and female activist voices. In cultures where the norm for the girl child was 'let her not be born' it's now 'let her voice be heard' and we are certainly hearing it from different voices today.

In India, the ancient laws of Manu state that: "Women must be honoured and adorned by their fathers, brothers, husbands, and brothers-in-law, who desire (their own) welfare. Where women are honoured, there the Gods are pleased; but where they are not honoured, no sacred rite yields rewards" (Buhler, 2006). Today women are struggling for their identity. When men assist them to attain this goal, both men and women will be more at peace and humanity will soar in strength to greater achievements.

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# Needs and Needs Assessment in Career Guidance and Counselling: Lack of Scientific Exploration and Justification?

Jolanta Kavale

## Abstract

Almost all modern societies agree that career guidance and counselling should be offered based on the needs of those who apply for the service. Thus, proper and timely application of needs assessment becomes an indispensable part of developing as well as evaluating career guidance and counselling interventions, programs or policies. However, it is argued that there is a lack of scientific exploration and justification towards understanding of needs and how they should be assessed. This leads to misinterpretation and an ambiguous understanding of needs in career guidance and counselling. This paper provides an overview of the conceptualisation of needs as well as needs assessment from neighbouring disciplines. A particular focus is on the incorporation of needs assessment in the area of career guidance and counselling.

**Keywords:** needs, needs assessment, career guidance

## Introduction

Need is the most frequently used normative concept associated with development and human wellbeing. Wiggins (1987, p. 4) states that "...the political administrative process as we know it in Europe and North America could scarcely continue (could scarcely even conclude an argument) without constant recourse to the idea of need." Similarly, McLeod (2011) noted that the concept of need has a central role to play in policy-making.

Following the statement above, "need" is increasingly seen as the key normative term serving as an anchor for various policy-initiated career guidance projects, programmes or single career guidance and counselling interventions. Scientific research, policy as well as career counsellors in their practice are aiming at providing career guidance services which meet the needs of the applicants or at least are oriented to applicants' needs. Countries have initiated legal acts and guidelines which included the term "need" as the key normative reference point for policy definitions of lifelong career guidance services. For instance The Department of Education in the UK specified that "the overall objective of an effective careers education and guidance programme is to enable learners to manage their own career

development successfully, confidently and with due respect and care for their own *needs*, those of others and of their wider communities" (Department of Education [DE] Entitlement Framework Circular, 2005). In India, the Jiva project "has been designed to address the livelihood planning needs of Indian young people through relevant and culturally grounded career counselling services" (Arulmani, 2010). In Germany, the National Forum for Guidance in Education, Career and Employment agreed that the general aim of the National Forum is to promote the professional delivery of guidance in education, vocational training and employment sectors in Germany, to give stimulation for the (further) development of guidance services which meet the different users' needs (NFB, 2006). Similarly in another EU country, Lithuania, among seven quality assurance indicators of career guidance, one criteria of "Expedience" specifically addresses the importance of service based on needs: "Expedience—the services correspond to individual needs of inhabitants and society" (Baltriene & Augutiene, 2006). Internationally, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDFOP) emphasized that career guidance services "should be widely accessible on a lifelong basis, to serve the needs of individuals, the economy and wider society" (CEDEFOP, 2009, p. 13).

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Apart from countries and institutions, career counsellors are focused on obtaining the resources for intake needs assessment in order to better understand their applicants and their performance deficiencies.

The persistent dominance of the term “need” as a normative term in the scientific and policy discourse as well as in the practice of career guidance and counselling, raises the importance of proper and timely application of needs measurement or needs assessment. This can be seen as an indispensable part of developing as well as evaluating career guidance interventions, programs or policies. However, it is believed that there is a lack of scientific justification towards understanding of “need” and how it should be assessed in the field of career guidance and counselling.

### Background

This paper draws on selected work in the area of career guidance which focused on needs and needs assessment of career guidance participants. As often demonstrated by the research, “need” can be widely interpreted by the career guidance researchers, as “attitude”, “perceived solution to a problem”, “belief” or “wish”. Often, the ones whose needs are being measured are asked by the researchers to identify their own deficiencies and thus to describe their “needs” in the form of beliefs of what is good or what is desired. The career guidance research by Gonzalez in Spain on the career education needs of secondary school students employed a “needs assessment instrument” which aimed at “assessing youth attitudes and beliefs about work as well as their career plans” (Gonzales, 1997, p. 215). In Canada, Witko, Bernes, Magnusson, and Bardick (2005) explored the career guidance needs of high school students using the Comprehensive Career Needs Survey by Magnusson and Bernes (2001). Throughout the study, the borderline between needs and wants is blurred. Indeed, one article from this study was titled “Senior high school career planning: What students want”. The authors specifically emphasized the importance of assessing needs by “hearing directly from the students, rather than inferring what it is that they need” (Witko et al., 2005, p. 37). However, the notion that perceived or felt needs are an appropriate and useful mechanism for managing needs is doubted by various philosophers and researchers. Particularly, McLeod (2011) argues against the view that one can know one’s own needs (as

one can know some kinds of desires) by feeling them.

Among the researchers who sought more objective indicators which could signify the need for career guidance and counselling services were Fouad et al. (2006). In their study titled “need, awareness, and use of career services for college students”, the researchers distinguish between measuring need, and measuring the levels of awareness and the use of career guidance services. They provide a diagnostic type of testing format, aiming to determine the gaps or needs by measuring the study participants’ levels of psychological distress, and of psychological well-being. The researchers concluded that the study demonstrated that students “have career decision difficulties and psychological distress, *indicating a need* for career counselling and career services” (Fouad et al., 2006, p. 416, emphasis is mine). The assumption that the needs can be detected mainly by third persons, by the symptoms observed or reported is expressed by McLeod (2011). Based on that argument, if, for instance, one knows the level of psychological distress in healthy people under normal or relaxed circumstances, then higher levels of psychological distress, particularly if correlated with lack of career information or ability to engage in meaningful conversations on the pertinent issues with trusted people, can be described as needs requiring career guidance and counselling. On the other hand, a moderately higher level of distress may also serve as an opportunity to concentrate and actively generate high stake decisions about a person’s life and career goals or future career directions. In general, it may be noted that as a result of the lack of exploration of the concept of “need”, career guidance and counselling research has often resulted in respondents giving answers about their wants, levels of satisfaction, beliefs, hopes or preferences. Such an approach provides little or no scientific knowledge about the nature and scope of needs in the career guidance field. It also prevents successful planning of career guidance interventions where the interventions are intended to be based on more objective outcomes rather than wants and desires.

The scientific studies on “needs” actually list a number of so called satisfiers (Mallmann, 1980). For instance, “education may be regarded as a satisfier of the need for understanding” (Jackson, Jager, & Stagl, 2004). In career guidance needs research, the

satisfiers which are often labelled as “needs” are information and advice, professional guidance and a comprehensive career curriculum (Witko et al., 2005). Other “needs” inputs and satisfiers include additional help with finding jobs and careers, understanding the guidance programme, developing self-understanding, career awareness, exploration and planning, interpersonal relationships, value clarification, selection of courses and acquisition of decision-making skills (Chuenyane, 1983). Compared to inputs or satisfiers in the career guidance field, much less is known about gaps in outcomes, for instance, decreased levels of psychological distress, improved school or work performance, higher family-work balance. Real needs and the relationship between needs as objective deficiencies and the means offered to satisfy them remain uninvestigated.

### **The Challenge of Defining and Assessing Needs: Need versus Desire and Dissatisfaction**

Although the assessment of “felt needs” in the form of beliefs about what is good or desired by the person carries a positive notion of inclusiveness and democratic participation, it does not solve the problem of “adaptive preferences”; Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen argues that subjective perceptions of utility “can be moulded by social conditioning and a resigned acceptance of misfortune” (Sen, 1991, p. 133). This kind of acceptance and even choice to remain in an unfavourable environment should be considered beforehand. Particularly, in the presence of the claim that people “should be the experts of their own condition” (Clarke, Newman, Smith, Vidler, & Westmorland, 2007, p. 61) one should still be knowledgeable about the “comfort of misery” before asking vulnerable groups about their felt deficiencies.

Moreover, it is further argued that even dissatisfaction which is often assumed to be a sign of need, does not necessarily indicate an objective lack or deficiency. According to Nussbaum (2007) “people may also become accustomed to having more than others, and they may protest if those unequal privileges are curtailed; but their great dissatisfaction does not dispose of the question of equal justice” (p.14). Thus, it is evident that there is a wide room for interpretation of the term “need” as well as methodological problems regarding the application of needs assessments. It is clear that there is no common understanding related to these

normative terms and scholars such as McLeod (2011) have called for “a more promising epistemology of need than has so far been contained in the literature”. This problem signals that there should be a broader scientific exploration and justification towards understanding of “need” in the area of career guidance and counselling. A review of how need is conceptualized and analysed in other disciplines could provide useful insights.

### **The Concept of “Need” in Neighbouring Disciplines**

Although largely taken for granted by career guidance and counselling research and policy analysis, the concept of “need” is explicitly analysed in different areas of social, economic and medical research and philosophy studies. However, even in such areas as social policy research which analyses the social word with its language and thinking, it is admitted that despite its centrality “the concept of needs was largely taken for granted in social policy analysis until the 1980s” (Lister, 2010, p. 167). Moreover, even nowadays the politics of needs interpretation is still observed, and whose expertise decides what is counted as a need, is a contested area (Lister, 2010). It remains a challenging problem for needs research to define a need. Clarke and Langan (1998, p. 260) further state “though the condition of being in need may be regarded as self-evident, the question of how the needs of different individuals, or groups of individuals, are met in our society is not so straightforward. It is immediately apparent that there is considerable scope for conflict over the ways in which society defines and meets the needs of particular individuals or sections of society.”

Addressing the lack of scientific exploration of the concept of “needs” and what it means to be ‘in need’ Dean (2010), Doyal and Gough (1991), Lister (2010), and Watkins, West-Meiers and Visser (2012), for example, explicitly analyse the concept of needs and needs assessment. The majority of these authors distinguished between needs and wants and provided a classification of needs: thin and thick (Dean, 2010); basic and intermediate (Doyal & Gough, 1991); individual, organisational and societal needs (Watkins et al., 2012).

Despite the explicit analysis and dedication towards making the concept of need more transparent, some of the works mentioned above add even more confusion to the issue of needs conceptualisation and

interpretation. For instance, Lister (2010) by providing highly valuable real-life examples on the interrelationship of societal and individual needs somehow adds more perplexity towards interpreting needs. Lister (2010) provides an example of a societal problem related to several cases of homicide committed by the mentally ill. The situation evoked governmental reaction to enforce supervised chemical treatment on people with mental illness. The mental health charities expressed the contradictory belief that such action will lead to a greater reliance on chemical treatment as the easy option, whereas stopping the medication can lead to improved quality of life among the mentally ill. According to Lister (2010), this particular example, illustrates the clash of needs of individuals with mental health problems as interpreted by the government versus mental health campaigners. However, more than the clash of different interpretations of need, notice the different perceived solutions or *satisfiers* in this example. Following such alternative logic, there is only one need—the need to stop homicide. It is highly unlikely that mental health activists will be opposed to recognizing this need. Therefore, the clash exists only in terms of different solutions offered by the government and the activists. In this particular case, the activists seem to be addressing the need in a more systemic and strategic way than the government.

Similar misinterpretations of what is need and how it can be assessed are present in other similar ontologies and conceptualisations of human need, without even considering a bigger number of empirical studies on “needs” where the concept of needs is addressed only implicitly if presented at all. Nevertheless, there are some additional resources for those career guidance and counselling researchers and practitioners who would like to apply needs assessment in their work.

### **Needs and Needs Assessment: The Alternative Model**

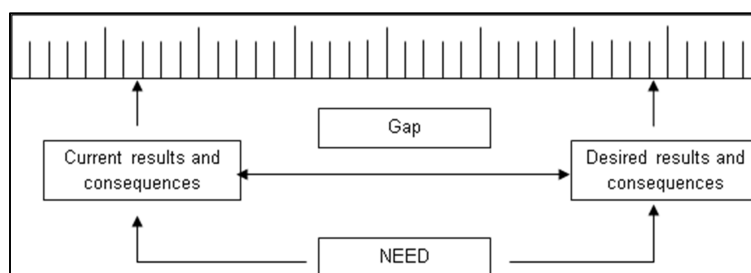
Roger Kaufman places significant attention on the conceptual analysis of the term “need” by noting that the correct understanding of the word “need” is “critical in creation of a better world” (Kaufman, Oakley-Browne, Watkins, & Leigh, 2003, p. 113). “How ‘need’ is defined is pivotal in determining how objectives are selected” (Watkins & Kaufman, 1996, p. 11). Kaufman was the first to urge always using “need” as a noun and

never as a verb (Kaufman, 1997; Kaufman, 2006; Kaufman, Rojas, & Mayer, 1993) for “to use ‘need’ as a verb, is to see it as a means” (Kaufman & Grise, 1995, p. 12). Using needs as a verb means “to jump from unwarranted assumptions to foregone conclusions” (Kaufman et al., 2003, p. 116).

In a recent book published by the World Bank titled “A guide to assessing needs: Essential tools for collecting information, making decisions, and achieving development results” Watkins et al. (2012) define need as gap in results. Needs are seen as the differences between current achievements and desired accomplishments (see Figure 1).

Real, objective needs are described through discrepancies of present and desired accomplishments. Assuming that “what should be” is the desired result and “what is” is the data which indicates the current status of the results, the definition of need is the gap that emerges between ‘what should be’ and ‘what is’ (Kaufman et al., 2003). Thus, needs are directly related to the objectives we have. According to Kaufman, if need is a gap in results, then there are three type of needs—one each for gaps in outcomes (gaps in societal needs), outputs (gaps in organisational results) and products (gaps in individual results). In this framework, non-results, that is gaps in process or inputs, are referred to as quasi-needs (Kaufman, 1990). Most complex problems (Kaufman et al., 2003) require identification of needs at multiple levels. For instance low school performance of one student may indicate the need on the individual level (e.g., unhappy love relationship—need for reciprocation in romantic relationships), organizational level (e.g., frequent change of teaching staff—need for a low turnover of teaching staff) or even societal level (e.g., economic or/and ecological crisis—need for economic stability). In many cases, the needs occur on many levels simultaneously. Thus, by applying needs assessments one could systemically address needs at multiple levels in order to view the whole complexity of the problem, rather than attempt to reduce the complexity by focusing on the immediate parts of the problem.

Needs assessments are proactive, before-the-fact identification of the gaps between current results and the desired ones. It is a series of results-based comparisons between what is and what should be or could be. In general, it can be stated that needs

**Figure 1. Needs as Gaps in Results.**

Adapted with permission from R. Kaufman, A. M. Rojas, and H. Mayer (1993, p. 4).

assessments are important to improving the quality of decisions: "In all cases, needs assessment offers a careful process for assessing gaps between current results and desired results (that is, needs) and then for applying that information to identify the available options so that decisions can be made" (Watkins et al., 2012, p. 3). In relation to evaluation, needs assessments serve a different function, for they are used to answer questions such as 'what would be necessary to deliver?' rather than, 'did we deliver what we set out to deliver?' (Kaufman, 1990).

The attempt to objectively measure needs might be criticised in terms that it does not allow any subjective participation of individuals. However, as stated earlier, people very often have unequal capabilities in recognizing and objectively assessing their own needs. A similar example is given by Endacott (1997): "the nurse on night duty who is feeling sleepy at 4 a.m. will probably need to sleep but may as well state 'I need a cup of coffee' as she feels that the coffee may help her to remain awake for the remainder of the shift". Endacott goes on to cite Attwood and Ellis who say, "real needs can be defined as those which are objective deficiencies that actually exist and may or may not be recognized by the one who has the need" (as cited in Endacott, 1996, p. 474). Similarly, a person who spent all his life in the poor district of an impoverished country will not necessarily express a need for a career. He or she is also not likely to identify the potential satisfiers: career guidance and counselling services which may lead to the successful career.

### **Needs and Needs Assessment in the Area of Career Guidance: The Challenges**

It can be assumed that needs assessment in the area of career guidance and counselling remains a challenge for scientists, policymakers and practitioners. This is particularly so because lifelong career

guidance and counselling are conceptualised as complex interventions within open systems, with needs not only belonging to individuals, but also to organisations and societies (IAEVG, 2009; OECD, 2004; Watts, 1999). Even school-based career guidance, which was earlier focused primarily on the young person's wishes and desires, is now seen as the action field of numerous stakeholders: businesses, schools, employment agencies, parents, universities and colleges, and community initiatives. All these stakeholders declare their own needs in the area of school-based career guidance in pursuing their own developmental goals.

Kaufman et al. (2003) define complex intervention as large scale intervention or "...a method for involving the whole system, internal and external clients in the strategic thinking and change process" (p. 95). Career guidance and counselling is more often addressed from the open system perspective and viewed as a complex intervention. Such concepts as "stakeholders" and their "needs" become central terms in the scientific discourse as well as the dominating theme in policy documents. Therefore, what has been previously proclaimed in silence—that the purpose of career guidance and counselling is to ensure that not only individual needs but also the needs of the whole society must be met—now is declared more and more openly. Such a tendency is observed in the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN, 2010) report: "Over the last decade increasing attention has been given to guidance at European and national levels. It is recognised as a crucial dimension of lifelong learning, promoting both social and economic goals: in particular, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of education, training and the labour market through its contribution to reducing drop-out, preventing skill mismatches and boosting productivity" (ELGPN, 2010, p. 7).

Hence, career guidance and counselling in the broadest sense are now perceived as a system and means to provide not only for individual but also organisational and societal development. Such a shift in career guidance perceptions and conceptualisation moves away from “single provider-client” type of services, towards viewing career guidance as a complex system of stakeholders (e.g. families, businesses, schools, community members, NGOs, state institutions etc.). Assessing needs at mega (society), macro (organisations/institutions) and micro (individual) levels is assumed to be required. This, in turn, creates demands among practitioners for certain competencies in the area of need recognition and assessment.

### Discussion and Conclusion

The question of what are the needs of individuals, families, other organisations and societies which can be potentially satisfied by career guidance and counselling, seems to be a pertinent one. However, it is also important to emphasise that “what the clients may want in guidance is in fact not what they need” (Plant, 2011). It seems that only by

appropriate and timely identification of needs, adequate, sustainable and cost-effective career guidance solutions can be offered. Thus, needs assessment is viewed as the first and inevitable step in planning of career guidance and counselling interventions.

However, it can be assumed that needs assessment in the area of career guidance and counselling remains a challenge for researchers, policy makers and practitioners. Moreover, needs are not clearly defined also in other social disciplines. The approach to needs interpretation and assessment by Kaufman (e.g., Kaufman, 1997, 2006) seems to be a useful framework, from which career guidance and counselling could borrow epistemological and methodological ideas. This includes a systems view in which there is a multi-level needs assessment. It is our proposal that the overall aim should be to provide deeper and wider exploration of needs and needs assessment in the area of career guidance and counselling by applying different theoretical and empirical resources. Subsequently, after reaching this aim, appropriate training for practitioners could be introduced.

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# Creating Awareness among Students aged 13-15 years towards the Development of a Purpose in Life

Rachel Valles

## Abstract

This paper explores the role of schools in helping 13-to-15-year-old students explore and define their purpose in life. The main objective was to support students in envisioning a happy and worthwhile future. Ninth standard students ( $N=180$ ) of a school in Mumbai participated in this study. The value education periods in the school schedule were used to introduce concepts and themes that would provide foundations for decisions about their personal mission and vision. The students' statements of purpose in life have been examined. Also examined are student perspectives of what hinders them in identifying and pursuing a life purpose. Guidelines are proposed for creating a programme that would help school students to identify and pursue a meaningful and worthwhile purpose in life.

**Keywords:** adolescents, sense of purpose, meaning in life, school counselling, career counselling, value education

## Introduction

"A sense of purpose and future signifies goal direction, educational aspirations, achievement motivation, persistence, hopefulness, optimism, and spiritual connectedness" (Bernard, 1991, p. 67). With the help of clinical observations, Erikson demonstrated that when young people do not dedicate themselves to a purpose while growing up, it becomes progressively more difficult for them to acquire inspiring belief systems later on in life (Erikson, 1968; Marcia as cited in Damon, Menon, & Bronk, 2003).

An adolescent spends a great deal of time in school. The system of schooling has tremendous impact on the lives of adolescents. As stated by one adolescent student, "My school is my second home and my teachers are parents who I have adopted". Damon (2008) in his book "The Path to Purpose: Helping our Children find their Calling in Life" stated that "(s)tudents need schools that are more than test-prep training grounds. They need schools that stir their imaginations and give them a chance to discover their deepest and most enduring interests. During their crucial formative years, they need schools that help them decide what kind of person they wish to become. Ultimately, they need schools that provide knowledge, mentoring, and encouragement that will help them identify their own moral north star, a compelling purpose to guide them through their journey in life" (p.7). Clearly,

schools play a pivotal role in shaping the lives of students and aiding in the development of a meaningful, worthwhile life purpose.

In this paper, the proactive model of counselling and guidance is adopted. Acknowledging the fact that prevention is better than cure, the emphasis of school counselling has shifted from a provision of services to only students in crisis to provision of services to the entire student population. School counsellors are now expected to reach out to all students in the areas of academic achievement, personal/social development, and career development, ensuring that today's students become the productive, well-adjusted adults of tomorrow (The American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2004). In this regard, it is extremely beneficial if the school counsellor facilitates the students to develop a life purpose.

The career counselling literature also has witnessed a major shift in paradigms. Recognising the importance of the meaning theme, many contemporary theorists view career development as an existential venture. A number of career development leaders have embraced a holistic approach. Savickas (1997) has laid emphasis on the reflective and interpersonal processes through which individuals derive meaning and direction in their vocational activities (<http://www.vocopher.com/pdfs/careerConstruction.pdf>).

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Miller-Tiedeman (1999) has viewed the process of career guidance as an internal journey requiring the use of a life-career compass (personal experience, intelligence and intuition) to find one's way through life. Hansen (2001) has emphasised integrative life planning, where family and work, spirituality and life-purpose, and diversity and inclusivity are closely knit. Guindon and Hanna (2002) write about the importance of synchronicity in understanding career development, and also suggest ways of capitalizing on it in career counselling (<http://vocationalpsychology.com>). These newer perspectives suggest that a variety of life-occurring events work in tandem in adding meaning to life.

The benefits of having a purpose in life (PIL) have been demonstrated in nonIndian research. Crumbaugh and Maholick's (1967) classic study demonstrated that PIL could be used to distinguish between psychiatric patients and non-patient populations. This study heralded the beginning of a trend in which researchers examined the relationship between PIL and a number of maladaptive behaviours and outcomes (Damon et al., 2003). Damon (1995) studied the effects of purposelessness and classified them as personal effects which included self-absorption, depression, addictions, in addition to a variety of psychosomatic ailments, and social effects which included deviant and destructive behaviours, a lack of productivity, and an inability to maintain stable interpersonal relationships.

Instilling a sense of purpose is a beginning step in helping people value their own lives and what they do with their life (<http://www.pasadenaisd.org/parentuniversity/parent73.htm>). Boyle (2010) followed 900 community-dwelling older men and women, without dementia, enrolled in the Rush Memory and Aging Project. He and his associates found that those men and women who maintained a greater sense of purpose in life as they aged had more than a 50% reduced risk of developing Alzheimer's disease. Specifically, they found that study subjects who scored highest on the purpose in life measurement scale were 2.4 times more likely to remain free of Alzheimer's disease (compared to those who scored lowest). Additionally, they also found that those who developed mild cognitive impairment reported lower purpose in life scores and had a higher number of depressive symptoms (<http://www.worldhealth.net/news/sense-purpose-slashes-alzheimers-risk/>). Therefore,

having a sense of purpose is connected to psychological, socioemotional, physical health, and productive behaviours (Damon et al., 2003).

Seligman (2009) reviewed 19 studies from the past 20 years that used the Penn Resiliency Program (PRP), which included more than 2,000 8-to-15-year-old school students. Students who took the PRP and the Positive Psychology Program (PPP) in which they were helped to develop a sense of purpose reported more enjoyment and engagement in school. The teachers reported that these students were more curious about what they were doing, loved learning and showed more creativity in school. The programmes also aided in prevention of depression and improvement of grades ([www.physorg.com/news168874535.html](http://www.physorg.com/news168874535.html)).

In this study, the aim was to facilitate adolescent girls and boys in developing their purpose in life. This paper also addresses the following two questions: (a) How can adolescents be introduced to the concept of purpose? (b) What can schools/educational institutions do to promote the awareness about developing a purpose in life?

## Method

**Participants.** All students of ninth standard ( $N = 180$ ; 139 boys and 41 girls) of an Indian Council for Secondary Education (ICSE) school in South Mumbai participated in this study. Students' ages ranged from 13 to 15 years. For the most part, the students were from affluent families. Multiple religious communities were represented across the students (mainly, Hindu, Muslim and Christian).

**Procedure.** The value education periods of 30 minutes duration held once a week for 4 months were used to conduct interactive sessions with students in order to help them identify their purpose in life.

**Measurement and plan of analysis.** Examples of variables include personal and environmental hindrances in identifying and pursuing a purpose in life, and areas addressed by students in their statements of purpose in life. Student responses have been analysed quantitatively as well as qualitatively. For qualitative data analysis, techniques of theme extraction and thick description were used. For quantitative analysis, frequencies and percentages were computed.

**Box 1.** Examples of Activities that Were Used to Help Students Develop a Positive Purpose in Life.

- Students wrote down three good things that happened each day for a week. After which the students answered the following questions: What does this mean to you? How can you increase the possibility of having more of this good thing in the future?
- Students reflected and shared about: What's special about me? What is my role in life?
- Students were encouraged to make a commercial portraying the strengths that they possess.
- Students answered the questions such as: If you were given a chance to be born again which eminent personality would you like to be born as and why? What qualities of that person would you like to imbibe and inculcate in yourself.
- Students examined the lives of inspirational people. They made PowerPoint presentations on selected eminent persons.
- Students were encouraged to write out personal mission and vision statements in the form of a quotation, a story or a personal anthem (e.g., any song that inspired or motivated the student to work towards his/her purpose in life such as "We are the World", "Heal the World").

**Results**

**Activities that were used to help students develop a positive purpose in life.**

Various activities/exercises were conducted with students to help them develop a positive purpose in life (refer to Box 1). For example, students were encouraged to write down three good things that happened each day for a week. After which the students answered the following questions: "What does this mean to you?" and "How can you increase the possibility of having more of this good thing in the future?"

It is interesting to comment on the adolescents' selection of eminent persons whom they found inspirational. Across the boys, four eminent men and two eminent women were represented. The men included American music super heroes such as the deceased Michael Jackson (1958-2009), and retired American sports heroes such as Michael Jordan. The men also included Leonard Da Vinci (1452-1519), Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), and a current activist fighting corruption in India, Anna Hazare. The women included the Noble Peace Prize laureate (1979) Mother Teresa (1910 -1997) renowned for her exceptional service to the poor and Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949), an Indian independence activist, politician and poet.

Across the girls, five eminent women were represented. These included women from other countries such as Florence Nightingale (1820-1910), Princess Diana (1961-1997), and J. K. Rowling. The two Indian women were Kiran Bedi, renowned for her service in the Indian police force and for the welfare of prison inmates, and Medha Patkar, an environmental issues activist.

**Student perspectives on what hinders them in identifying and pursuing their purpose in life.**

Students were asked: What are some things you have wanted to do and have not been able to accomplish for a long time? They were also asked to make a list of desired behaviours and reasons for not being able to accomplish the desired outcomes. Student responses on what hindered them in identifying and pursuing their purpose in life were classified into personal and environmental hindrances. The most frequently expressed personal hindrance shared by girls was lack of self-confidence; whereas, boys most frequently stated that they did not know how to manage time (refer to Table 1). Procrastination was the second most frequently mentioned personal hindrance, common for both boys and girls. With regard to external (or environmental) hindrances, girls most frequently mentioned lack of guidance from parents and other significant people in their lives. In contrast, boys most frequently mentioned peer pressure as an external hindrance.

**Students' statements of their purpose in life.**

Sixty-five percent of the students needed to develop their purpose in life. Half of the number of girls had already defined a purpose as opposed to the boys (refer to Table 2). As one adolescent girl stated, "When we have a purpose, we have an aim in life and we get to know what we want and where we are going". As explained in the method, students who did not already have a purpose were supported in identifying a purpose in life. It was interesting to note that the school counsellor observed that the students who already had a purpose were focused, in control of their behaviour, made practical choices, avoided giving in to peer pressure, were assertive, possessed leadership qualities and were less likely to be referred to the school counsellor for discipline-

**Table 1.** Student Perspectives on What Hinders Them in Identifying and Pursuing Purpose in Life.

Hindrances	Boys ( <i>n</i> = 139) <i>f</i>	Girls ( <i>n</i> = 41) <i>f</i>	Total ( <i>N</i> = 180) <i>f</i> (%)
<b>Personal</b>			
Lack of time management skills	99	18	117 (65.00)
Procrastination	87	20	107 (59.44)
Overconfidence	86	10	96 (53.33)
Lack of confidence in oneself	45	25	70 (38.89)
Lack of planning	28	12	40 (22.22)
<b>Environmental</b>			
Peer pressure	95	17	112 (62.22)
Lack of role models	89	14	103 (57.22)
Lack of guidance from significant others	75	25	100 (55.56)
Family problems	42	22	64 (35.56)
Financial problems	30	13	43 (23.89)

*Note.* Multiple responses were obtained.

related issues than those students who did not have a purpose. In the value education classes, the students wrote their purpose in life. The content analysis of these statements yielded interesting findings. The students' statements of life purpose addressed multiple areas. These could be classified into career, relationships, personal development, social service, and monetary (refer to Table 3).

Career (85%) was closely interwoven with the students' life purpose and was found to be the most recurrently expressed area. Considering that the students were studying in ninth grade and had selected their subjects for the upcoming 10<sup>th</sup> board examinations, it was not surprising that their statements of life purpose revolved around making a career choice. Responses ranged from the typical "I want to be a doctor like my dad", to aspiring for highly specialised fields of study such as, "When I become an astrophysicist, my purpose in life will be accomplished". In fact, the life purpose statements of some students displayed a combination of awareness of specialty career areas and social sensitivity: "I want to be a forensic accounting expert so that I can investigate into money scams". "My purpose is to become a criminologist to help criminals change and become better". A few students (8%) also indicated that they would like to switch streams after tenth grade and take up a course of study that they enjoyed doing rather than their parent's choice.

The next most addressed area in students' statements of life purpose was relationships (62%). Some students included family relationships in their life purpose statements. Thus, one student's purpose in life was, "Good happy relationship with my family members". Students expressed a desire to serve or support family members: "To look after my parents"; "Help my siblings to become the best"; "I desperately want to grow up fast so that I can pay my parents back with gratitude". Students in stating their purpose in life also addressed relationships with friends. Thus, they said: "Have friends for a lifetime"; "Make my friends happy"; "Reach out to my friends when they need me". Some students' stated that their life purpose had to do with romantic relationships. Examples include: "Badly fall in love with a girl"; "My purpose in life is to fall in love with all the beautiful girls like Angelina Jolie, Emma Watson, Kristen Stewart, Miley Cyrus etc." One student said that her life purpose was to have a "Good relationship with my spouse".

The life purpose statements of half of the students included personal development. For example, "To overcome failure"; "Develop the skill of patience and understanding"; "To be happy and content in whatever state of life"; "To feel proud of myself"; "Learn new things"; "Get good education and knowledge"; "To be admired and respected by those around me".

**Table 2.** Student's Development of a Purpose in Life.

Purpose	Boys ( <i>n</i> =139) <i>f</i>	Girls ( <i>n</i> =41) <i>f</i>	Total ( <i>N</i> =180) <i>f</i>	%
Students who needed assistance to develop a purpose	96	21	117	65
Students who already had a purpose	43	20	63	35

**Table 3.** Areas Addressed in Students' Statements of Purpose.

Area	Boys ( <i>n</i> = 139) <i>f</i>	Girls ( <i>n</i> = 41) <i>f</i>	Total ( <i>N</i> = 180) <i>f</i> (%)
Career	123	30	153 (85.00)
Relationships	102	10	112 (62.22)
Personal development	67	23	90 (50.00)
Social service	38	25	63 (35.00)
Money-related	22	2	22 (12.22)

*Note.* Multiple responses were obtained.

Students who indicated social service (35%) as their purpose in life, for instance, stated that they desired, "To get rid of global warming" ; "Betterment of the country"; "Remove the word poor from our country"; " I want to help all those who are not getting their necessary requirement".

These students were from affluent homes and were in possession of the latest expensive mobile phones, gaming and music equipment. Despite that or perhaps because of the comfort of affluence as a lifestyle, only 12% students identified a money-related life purpose. Examples of such a life purpose included "Get a good job and to have lots of money", "To make enough money to buy a good house, BMW car and have a good life".

### Discussion

In this study the importance of purpose in the lives of students has been emphasised. There has been very little research done in this area. Therefore, this small exploratory study does make a contribution.

Interactive methodology, which entailed experiential activities, motivating stories, audio-visual presentations, debates on controversial life changing issues, examining lives of inspirational people, vignettes, role plays, workshops, quiet reflection, guided introspection, sharing of insights and peer mentoring, was used to elicit active participation from students during the sessions. The students were able to identify personal and environmental hindrances that limit their brainstorming possible solutions, listing out suitable and workable targets and devising a personal action plan to achieve higher goals. Students were also assisted in identifying principles, values, relationships, situations and goals that are of importance to them and that would contribute in enriching the quality of their lives. Guidelines have been proposed for creating a programme that would cater to students developing a positive purpose in life (refer to Box 2).

The areas of purpose identified by students in this study are in partial keeping with De Vogler and Ebersole's (1983) identification of eight categories into which most young people's purpose could be

## **Box 2. Guidelines for Creating a Programme to Help Students Develop a Purpose in Life.**

**Target group:** Adolescent students aged 13-to-15 years.

### **Aims of the programme:**

1. To make adolescent students aware of the need for a purpose in life.
2. To facilitate development of mission and vision statements that would promote the purpose.
3. To help student develop knowledge and skills required for effective development of a purpose in life.

### **Content of the programme:**

1. Concept of Purpose in Life
2. Need/importance/ benefits/ advantages of a purpose in life
3. Differentiating between types of purposes: noble versus ignoble
4. Exploring the different areas that purposes can be classified into: relationships, career, personal development, social service, and money-related.
5. Identifying habits and behaviours that hinder the development of a purpose
6. Remediation of the habits and behaviours
7. Effect of purpose in life on self and others
8. Skills to be learned by adolescents: Introspection, observation, generation of possibilities, perspective taking, managing one's emotions, problem- solving.
9. The Role of educators/facilitators:
  - Teachers
  - School counsellors
  - Peer mentors

### **Methods that can be employed to disseminate the information:**

An important aspect in a programme is the medium through which the information is put across to the participant. Some methods that can be used are role-playing, group activities, experiential activities, print and electronic media, sharing sessions, and debates on ethical issues.

### **The Purpose in Life programmes can be conducted in:**

- Schools: The program can be conducted on the school premises since school is the place where the adolescents spend much of their time. Purpose of Life sessions could be integrated into the life skills/value education curriculum.
- Career Guidance Centres.
- Organisations working with adolescents (e.g., clubs, social groups, networking sites).

classified. These categories were relationships, service, growth, belief, existential-hedonistic, obtaining, expression, and understanding. Some of the students in this study identified a life purpose that entailed social service. Fry (1998) interviews with youth revealed that their "valuation systems," although predisposed toward self-enrichment is combined with concerns for others outside

of themselves, and interpreted as non-selfish and other-oriented.

Damon et al. (2003) have clarified that purpose plays a positive role in self-development as well as a generative one, helping a person to contribute to society. A sense of purpose gives students a feeling of accomplishment, knowing that they have positive goals to work toward, that is, a sense of direction in life. A purpose gives

adolescents a mission for their existence and a vision to look forward to every day. A purposeful life can help boost adolescents' confidence, increase good cheer, and allow them to monitor their behaviours towards achievement of positive goals. The benefits of such a purposeful life can then extend beyond adolescence into adulthood.

### Conclusion

Adolescent students are faced with many aspects of purpose such as career, relationships, personal development, social service, and money-related. Since a large and valuable part of life is spent in school as students, the role of schools in helping students develop purpose in life is crucial. The knowledge, skills and attitudes that evolve along the path of discovery of their purpose, enables students to plan and decide, making choices not only about career and employment but also about personal management and contribution towards society.

### Recommendations

The following are a few recommendations with regard to the development of students' purpose in life:

- Conducting an in-depth Indian research on students' purpose in life across all levels (e.g., primary school, high school, college/university).
- Developing modules to make parents, teachers, school counsellors and administrators aware about the need and methods to assist students in developing a purpose in life.
- Including strategies for assisting students/youth in developing a worthwhile purpose in vocational and career guidance sessions.

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# The Cultural Preparedness Approach to Working with Career Beliefs

Gideon Arulmani

## Abstract

The Indian workforce is strongly influenced by the labour market which today offers job opportunities that are unprecedented in scale and variety. Beliefs and notions play a significant role in choice of educational pathways and careers. This paper presents the construct of the cultural preparedness as a framework within which to develop and offer career guidance services that are culture resonant and that keep the personhood of the individual at the centre of the career decision-making process. A feature of culture preparedness is career beliefs, which are strongly held convictions about the process of career choice or about the world of work. Types of career beliefs and the impact they have on career decision-making are discussed in the paper, taking the position that healthy career development is rooted in the dynamic interaction between an individual's personal potentials and the offerings of the labour market. Based on these theoretical concepts, this paper presents two career counselling techniques that could be used to help the career chooser and the family become aware of career beliefs that could hinder the flowering of personal potentials.

**Keywords:** cultural preparedness, social cognitions, career beliefs, career beliefs diary, adolescents

## Introduction

This paper begins with two anecdotes from a research project focused on understanding orientations to work, livelihood and career, amongst high school students from a wide range of socioeconomic status groups. Just before the project began in a high school that catered to boys from disadvantaged homes, a group of boys came up to the researcher. With a glint of mischief in their eyes they asked the researcher what he was doing in their school. The researcher explained that this was a research project that was aimed at understanding how young people make career decisions and prepare for the future. The group burst out laughing! The researcher asked them why they were laughing. "Because you have come to *our* school," one of them said. "You must go to schools where the rich kids study. They're the ones who *want* to study." The researcher asked them what their plans were. "I can tell you," one of them said quite confidently. He went on to say that his father had already planned that he would begin working as soon as he finished school in a pavement shop that fixed bicycle punctures. "All this planning and so forth is only for those who can afford to be unemployed. I will get about Rs. 100 a day. That's something. Anyway it's better than

spending more money." The researcher asked him what he would do for the rest of his life. "Ah... who knows," the boy replied, "Fate will decide."

Consider the response of another batch of students who differed from the group described above only in terms of their socioeconomic status: this was a group from more privileged homes. "We are waiting eagerly for your workshop," one of the boys said. "Why?" asked the researcher. "Because it will help us with our career development," came the prompt reply. "Have any of you thought about your careers?" asked the researcher. "I have," said one. "I am going to become a Management Consultant. It is the way to make easy money. All I have to do is get to the USA and do my MBA in Harvard. And then I can join a consultancy firm like McKinsey."

What a contrast between the two groups! One group was sceptical of the value of education and career guidance. The other believed that education was the key to success and prosperity. One group had an immediate and short-term view of career development while the other had a long-term view and was planning nearly 10 years ahead!

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Over the last decade or so, India has achieved the distinction of being one of the world's fastest growing economies. This has been stimulated by economic reforms and policies that have allowed the forces of globalisation to move the country into the arena of the free market. A consequence of economic expansion is a broadening of the range of job possibilities that are available. The labour market in India is clamouring for "labour" and workers too are responding with vigour. A closer examination of this phenomenon reveals however that more often than not, it is the opportunity that influences career choice, rather than the individual's own interests and talents. In effect we are seeing a labour market centric decision-making process, rather than a person-centred approach to the world of work. It is against this background that the relevance of career counselling in India must be understood. A successful career guidance programme would contribute to optimising the engagement of the individual with the labour market such that personal potentials are realised in the course of discharging work roles and duties. Yet, the career services could remain ineffective if they do not connect with local realities. If theories of career development and the interventions that emerge from these theories are to be meaningful, they must be attuned to the ways of thinking and living that compose the fabric of a society (Arulmani, 2006).

### **The Cultural Preparedness Approach to Career Counselling**

An individual's engagement with life is strongly influenced by the cultural framework within which he or she has grown up. The learning that occurs between an individual and his or her culture is not only the result of interactions with present members of that culture but is drawn from a deep repository of experience that has accumulated and grown over the ages (Arulmani, 2009). The cultural preparedness approach argues that career development occurs under the influence of a wide range of factors. "Family and parents, social practices, religious persuasion, economic climate, political orientations, all come together to create a certain environment within which attitudes and opinions are formed about different careers" (Arulmani, 2010, p. 23).

### **Social Cognitions and Career Beliefs**

Social cognitions are patterns of thinking that have become habitual across members of a social group (Bandura, 1989). "Views and

sentiments, opinions and convictions, ideas and notions could cohere and create mindsets that influence people's conception of career. We use the term career beliefs to refer to this intricate network of cognitions about career decision-making and career planning" (Arulmani & Nag-Arulmani, 2004, p. 46). It is important to note that, these configurations of beliefs may not only be internalised within the minds of single individuals but may also characterise the group's habitual ways of thinking and may be transferred to the young in that community through a reciprocal process of social learning. Our research has repeatedly demonstrated that career beliefs have a significant impact upon the manner in which a career aspirant deals with career development tasks and that the long-term effects of career guidance maybe negligible if career beliefs are left unaddressed (e.g., Arulmani, 2011; Arulmani & Abdulla, 2007).

### **Types of Career Beliefs**

Our research has also shown that the content of career beliefs can be thematically classified (Arulmani, 2008; Arulmani & Bakshi, 2012). Some of the most common career belief themes we have identified have emerged during the course of our investigations in different cultural contexts. These include beliefs about persistence, proficiency, disadvantage, conformity, and prestige. *Persistence beliefs* refer to the individual's belief in the value of facing and attempting to overcome difficulties and hurdles that punctuate progress toward a career goal that includes persisting in education—sticking on, despite setbacks in achieving educational goals. These beliefs reflect a sense of determination and tenacity to achieve positive prospects. *Proficiency beliefs* describe the individual's recognition of the importance of acquiring formal qualifications to enhance personal proficiency for an occupation before entering the world of work. These beliefs reflect notions of adequacy or inadequacy in regard to education, employment and career achievements. The content of beliefs related to *disadvantage* reflects the individual's preoccupation with his or her socioeconomic status. It also shows the individual's sense of control over his or her life situation and the confidence the person has to direct the course of his or her life. *Conformity beliefs* refer to the manner in which the person engages with the unwritten norms that shape the career preparation behaviour of a community in a certain way. The content of these beliefs would reveal the career chooser's propensity

to comply with or fit into the social mould. Career choices could be significantly influenced by *prestige* beliefs. These beliefs reflect mindsets that place occupations on a hierarchy of prestige, restricting career preferences to what is given high social standing by the community of which the career chooser is a part. Career beliefs can also affect personal beliefs of self-efficacy for specific careers as illustrated in the Table 1.

### Techniques to Work with Career Beliefs

Career beliefs could lead to systematic biases in the interpretation of experiences which in turn could affect career decision-making. Career beliefs could become automatic and the person could be unaware of their influences. It has also been found that beliefs shared by the individuals of a community may cohere into a group behaviour pattern (e.g., Arulmani & Abdulla, 2007). In other words a group mindset could characterise a community as a whole. The effectiveness of career counselling would be higher when underlying beliefs that influence the individual's career choice making process are understood. Given below are suggestions for two simple methods that could help a counsellor work with career beliefs.

### The Career Beliefs Diary

This is a technique to help clients recognise career beliefs that are influencing their thinking and the potential outcome of such thinking patterns. The client is given an outline that (s)he is to use to record thoughts (s)he has when dealing with career preparation tasks, the emotions that arise in response to these thoughts, and the possible consequences of these thoughts and emotions. Over a period of time, a pattern of thoughts and emotions would become clear in the diary. This would further point to career beliefs that are prevailing in the diary keeper's mind and the possible effect they have on his or her career preparation. A case example is given below:

A 17-year-old student who was completing higher secondary education in about 3 months requested to be seen individually, after she had participated in group career counselling workshops held routinely for her class. During the first session she indicated that although a number of friends, teachers and parents suggested that she takes

up careers in the field of Design, she was still very confused. She was asked to start a Career Beliefs Diary. Given in Table 1 is an extract of a few entries from her diary. The target would be to help the career chooser understand the manner in which thoughts can become habits and how our thoughts can be a filter through which we interpret and give meaning to events. The content of a career beliefs diary could be used to help the individual gain deeper insights and lay the foundations for effective and fruitful career decision-making.

### The Vignette Technique

**What are vignettes?** Vignettes are meticulously composed verbal pictures, drawn from the everyday experiences of a client group (Wilson, 1998). They simulate actual occurrences and circumstances and are constructed with the objective of identifying attitudes and extracting views, ideas and beliefs. Vignettes place abstract impressions within a frame of reference to which the reader is well accustomed in order to facilitate easy comprehension and identification. The use of vignettes has been found to be valuable in situations where the re-creation of real life events is difficult and cumbersome (Wilson, 1998). Our use of vignettes has shown that they are effective in helping a career chooser develop deeper insights into the manner in which career decision-making is being influenced. Our experience has also shown that vignettes offer a certain 'distance' from one's personal opinions and hence provide an opportunity to move beyond socially acceptable responses and discussions (Arulmani, 2010).

**Developing vignettes to address career beliefs.** A key to constructing effective vignettes is that their content is distilled from the common and everyday experiences of the group with which the vignettes are going to be used. Given below are suggestions on how vignettes could be constructed.

#### Step 1: Identify common statements.

Career beliefs are often embedded in language, that is, the sentences and phrases commonly used by a group of people when they refer to career choices and career development. "Without science, you have no chance", "Arts has no future", "Polytechnic is only for those who can't afford", "Girls can study, but their first responsibility is family", are examples of sentences commonly used by

**Table 1.** Extracts from a Career Beliefs Diary

Date	Activity	Thought	Emotion	Action
14 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2010	Read about entrance examination to design school.	Oh God! I have to prepare a portfolio.	My work is not good to be shown to others.	Stopped thinking about design as a career.
15 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2010	Completed Art Class record books for internal assessment.	I will not get good marks.	Felt so scared that I will fail.	Didn't submit the book to teacher.
16 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2010	Have to go to principal for certificate to submit to design school.	He will say he won't give a certificate.	Everyone says I'm good, but I know I'm not...it's no use.	Postponed going to principal.

middle class Indian high school students and their parents (and in many cases teachers as well) when matters related to career choice are discussed. These statements reflect career belief patterns and clearly reveal the social cognitive factors which underlie career decision making. Drawing such phrases, idioms and terms into a career counselling interaction is pivotal to the cultural preparedness approach. The first step toward developing career belief vignettes is to collect such commonly used phrases and sentences that reflect ideas and notions related to career development.

**Step 2: Look for patterns in these statements.** Career beliefs may be expressed in different ways by different groups, but they may all link to a common career belief theme. Having collected a large number of sentences and phrases the next step is to identify patterns and common threads in a set of frequently used statements. At this stage in the vignette technique, the objective is to look for themes into which the statements can be classified. The career belief themes described under types of career beliefs in the section above could be used as a structure within which to examine statements.

**Step 3: Use statements to create vignettes.** The next step is to compose vignettes that capture the career belief content of the collected statements. Table 2 provides an example that shows the conversion of a collection of statements into a vignette that reflect Proficiency beliefs.

Vignettes offer a contextualised link to the client's career beliefs. Vignettes, such as

the example in Table 2, are useful during career development programmes to initiate focussed discussions and create a platform upon which career choosers could think about and become more aware of the social cognitive influences on their career decision-making.

### Dealing with Career Beliefs

Career beliefs are unreasoned persuasions. They may or may not be factual. They may or may not be facilitative of the career preparation process. The career beliefs diary illustrates a method that could be used to help career choosers learn about their career beliefs and become aware of the impact that such cognitions could have. The vignette technique gives the counsellor a method that could be used to draw upon everyday experiences to develop vignettes and stories with a broader scope that a client group could consider more deeply.

Once a career belief has been recognised, client(s) and counsellor could together explore the belief and the manner in which it influences career development. These explorations would be even more meaningful if the counsellor collates data and specific information to support discussions related to career beliefs with clients. Further, the counsellor's prior understanding of career beliefs could inform the development of the career counselling intervention that would be most relevant to a particular group. Examples of complete interventions developed on the basis of a deep understanding of social cognitive environments are the Yes Programme for Employment Skills Development developed in the Republic of

**Table 2.** Developing a Proficiency-Belief Vignette from Statements.

Statements Commonly Used by Adolescents and Parents	Vignette
Without science, you have no chance.	Agnel is in class 10 and he has been studying hard. He is very good with numbers. He maintains the class accounts and also helps his mother maintain the home accounts. He is really interested in business and wants to study finance. However, it is best he takes up science for his higher secondary and studies engineering. This will make his career safe. After that he can always take up a post graduate course in finance or accounts if he wants.
Arts has no future.	
Polytechnic is only for those who can't afford.	
If you are intelligent and get high marks you must take science. The next level is commerce. If you get very low marks you take arts.	
Engineering is a must for a successful career.	

Maldives (Arulmani & Abdulla, 2007) and the Jiva Approach to Career Development developed for the Indian context (Arulmani, 2011).

### Discussion and Conclusion

Career counselling that draws upon career beliefs could help the career chooser become more aware of how career choices are often obstructed by social cognitions of which he or she has no awareness. A career counselling aim here would be to draw the individual's attention to the importance of personal interests, preferences, talents and aptitudes, and how they, rather than unreasoned career beliefs, can play a defining role in career decision-making. It is important to note that the intention of such an exercise is not to oppose the client. Nor is it meant to point the client toward "healthier" ways of thinking. Instead, the objective is to bring into sharper awareness of the career chooser, the impact that career beliefs could have on opportunities and life chances (Arulmani, 2010).

A final point to keep in mind is that career beliefs are social cognitions. This implies that it is not only the individual's mind and ways of thinking that are in operation. Career beliefs are transmitted across generations. Drawing the family into the counselling process and highlighting the impact of career beliefs on career development is important, particularly in collectivistic societies (Arulmani, 2010). A further, critical point to be considered is the fact that career beliefs are not located only around the client and his or her community. The counsellor too views life from within a specific social-cognitive perspective. It is eminently possible that the counsellor's social cognitions are imposed on the client and his or her family. When this happens career counselling merely perpetuates another set of career beliefs (Arulmani, 2010). The quality of cultural preparedness for career development could differ from one culture to another. The cultural preparedness approach gives a careers programme a uniqueness that sharpens its contextual relevance. It is this relevance that would contribute to the durability of its outcomes.

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## News and Reports

### First National Conference on Career and Livelihood Planning

*Maribon V. Sangma*

The first national conference of the Indian Association for Career and Livelihood Planning (IACLP) was organised and hosted by the Meghalaya Association of Professional Counsellors (MAPC) and Martin Luther Christian University (MLCU) on November 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>, 2011, in Shillong.

The theme of the conference was aptly “Looking Within”. There were two objectives: The first was to discuss human potential in relation to career and livelihood planning. The second was to examine career development in the context of North East India's indigenous orientations to work and livelihood.

The Conference Chair, **Prof. Glenn C. Kharkongor**, Vice Chancellor of MLCU, Shillong, in keeping with “Looking Within”, urged delegates to acknowledge and maximise the use of our own rich cultural resources, in particular, those of Meghalaya. An excerpt from his message:

Meghalaya's indigenous peoples, as other tribal communities in the North East, have old traditions of indigenous knowledge. From generation to generation this oral knowledge has been handed down even when challenged by modern forces of development. The beliefs and practices of classifying forests into sacred forests was an indigenous mechanism of ensuring protection of the environment and mitigating climate change. The practice of mixed cultivation is a method of ensuring that diversity of species support the balance of the ecology as well as ensuring a sustainable food supply. The use of certain medical plants for fishing is an indigenous technique for conserving aquatic life and sustainable use of rivers. Climate and seasons are part of this knowledge, such as the prediction of the onset and severity of the monsoons. Wild fruits and vegetables are the source of dietary staples and micro-nutrients such as vitamins and minerals. Indigenous health care and the use of various medicinal plants are the source of the curing of illness and disease.

Traditional occupations and the conservation of natural resources are integral to many livelihoods in the North East and this heritage has immense potential for modern applications in entrepreneurship and careers.

**Dr. Gideon Arulmani**, the President of IACLP, in his message stated that the conference theme “Looking Within” moved us closer toward building a culture-resonant careers service for the North East as well as for our country, India. He also framed his message in a series of relevant questions and answers:

#### *How can Career Counselling contribute to social inclusion?*

A single, standardised intervention cannot adequately address all career development needs. An inclusive programme would be sensitive to the nuances of culture and socioeconomic status.

#### *How can Career Counselling link human potential with the world of work?*

The purpose of career counselling is not merely to respond to the market driven, short-term interests of employers. Career counselling should be a bridge that carries the individual into a person-centred engagement with the labour market.

#### *How can the effects of career counselling be sustained?*

Sustainability improves when interventions integrate with local contexts. Indigenous knowledge is not only a repository of ancient practices. It can guide the formulation of research and the creation of relevant applications. Careers programmes that resonate with prevailing practices would be sustainable.

*What are the key competencies that career counselling professionals need to have?*

- Use qualitative and quantitative data, with longitudinal and cross-sectional information to identify clients' potentials.
- Help clients develop a self-mediated approach to career development rather than passive dependence on system-generated opportunities.
- Develop knowledge of the world of work.
- Build employers' awareness to place the person, not the profit margin, at the heart of employment practices.

The conference participants comprised counsellors, students, lecturers, from various schools, colleges, and universities and experts in the field of psychology and mental health. These participants were from a number of states in India other than Meghalaya such as Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Assam, New Delhi, Maharashtra, and Karnataka. A number of NGO representatives, government officials, policy makers, and bureaucrats attended and conducted the sessions.

The conference was inaugurated by **Ms. Ampareen Lyngdoh**, Hon. Minister for Urban Affairs, Government of Meghalaya. She spoke on the importance of the conference for the youth of the state and region, and drew attention to the important connection between career and livelihood. She placed emphasis on the need for benchmarks and standards in the counselling profession.

The first thematic session was on new directions in career guidance and addressing needs of special populations. There were four presentations in this first session. One of them was **Mr. Carmo Noronha's** talk on *Disability and Livelihood*. He highlighted the importance of self-determination for achieving true equality. He said that, "(t)he human rights approach to development means empowering people to take their own decisions, rather than being the passive objects of choices made on their behalf." He concluded that most urgently of all, it is time for non-disabled professionals to recognise the right of disabled persons to self-determination and therefore to gracefully step to one side, into a role where they, as professionals, are no longer on top but rather on *tap*—as allies.

Also in this first session, **Dr. P. S. S. Sundar Rao**, discussed *Careers and Stigma*, and suggested some ways to overcome stigmatisation such as: providing adequate support in a job to increase self-confidence, providing additional training opportunities, promoting community-based activities, educating employers to make them more employee sensitive, and creating facilities for group counselling of employees.

The second thematic session, also with four speakers, was on entrepreneurship, the market, and local and global economies. The speakers included **Mr. R. M. Mishra**, IAS, who made a brief presentation on the government plans for expanding livelihoods in strategic areas of the state such as the river banks and forest areas. He mentioned that planning, strategizing, documenting, capacity building, and implementing these plans is part of the long-term approach to accomplishing the goal of strengthening the livelihoods of the common people in the state.

**Ms. Patricia Mukhim**, in her talk on *Women and Entrepreneurship* presented the local and regional economic situation of the women in Northeast India and Meghalaya in particular. She pointed out that the challenges of sustaining the family were particularly overwhelming for women. These challenges include gendered ideologies whereby gender stereotypes persist and encumber women entrepreneurs. A pertinent example she provided was the difficulty that women face in accessing credit. She suggested documentation and thorough study of women's contribution to the economy in Meghalaya.

The third thematic session was on self, family, school and community influences on career development across the life span. In this session, Dr. Gideon Arulmani, described the various influences on career development of Indian youth today. He shared research findings and clinical experiences on the responses of youth and their parents in relation to career interest, career preparation and career beliefs. He strongly positioned the need for career counsellors to take into account both the developmental stage of youth as well as cultural background whilst designing and implementing career-related services.

**Prof. Srinivasa Murthy** spoke on *Development of Human Resources for Mental Health Care in India*. He pointed out the changing nature of mental health care in India, the tasks comprising the

provision of mental health care, the roles for non-physicians in MNH care, Indian experiences, and the way ahead for career counselling.

The fourth and final thematic session was on livelihoods and occupations. An example of a presentation in this session is that of **Mr. Phrangkumar Kharbamon** on *Community-Based Tourism*. He suggested that going the way of community-based tourism in the region, implies acknowledging that tribal people have the right to their lands, they also have the right to decide what happens on their lands, to determine their future and way of life. Rather than patronising tribal people we need to see them on their own terms as dynamic and complex societies. The things they create and produce are to be seen as a way of life and not merely artefacts for the export market. He pointed out that we must not force a traditional lifestyle to make it a product for tourism. We must instead create systems to sustain and preserve a way of life.

There were many other interesting features in the conference. This included the viewing of a documentary film on social media; and, a drama on career- and livelihood-related challenges such as bribery, corruption, addiction, terrorism, and politics. A youth panel discussion also underscored similar issues, that is, issues related to unemployment, and dropping-out in the North-East. It was noted that substance abuse, corruption, and a lack of direction were some of the roadblocks in career development of unemployed, drop-out youth. Sources of livelihoods like silkworm harvesting and silk weaving, fruit and vegetable preservation were being disregarded as career options by youth. Instead, some youth chose to join the underground movement and other unlawful activities. The panel called for partnership among like-minded institutions and organisations in developing strategies to help young people plan their careers and livelihood in ways that uphold their wellbeing. In addition, two survey presentations were made; one on career information and awareness amongst high school students in Meghalaya, and another on traditional medicine as livelihood.

The conference ended with the following recommendations:

- Promote organic local produce in places such as Mawtari Village of Meghalaya State which will generate employment and improve economic condition of people around these areas.
- Preserve natural scenic places and encourage community involvement in the promotion of tourism.
- Strengthen public-private partnership in carrying out programmes and projects related to livelihood and career planning for the youth. Institutions and organisations like MLCU and MAPC should submit specific proposals to the government for capacity building on the related issues discussed.
- Reduce unemployment in people with special ability by increasing their knowledge of available schemes.
- Conduct more baseline surveys and other researches for developing evidence-based intervention for youths who have dropped out of school and are unemployed.

We gratefully acknowledge the sponsors of this first national conference of the IACLP: IACLP, The Promise Foundation, Meghalaya Times, and the United Bank of India.

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**Maribon V. Sangma,**

President: Meghalaya Association of Professional Counsellors (MAPC);

Secretary: Indian Association for Career and Livelihood Planning (IACLP); and

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## Conference Announcements

### International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG)

- **2012:** Mannheim, Germany.  
October 3-6, 2012.  
Theme: *Career Guidance for Social Justice, Prosperity and Sustainable Employment: Challenges for the 21st Century.*  
Website: <https://www.iaevg-conference-2012-mannheim.com/home/>  
e-mail: Karen Schober <karen@schober-brinkmann.de>
- **2013:** Montpellier, France, 2013.
- **2014:** Québec, Canada, June 2014.

### National Career Development Association (NCDA), USA

- **2012:** Atlanta, USA.  
June 21-23, 2012.  
Theme: *Building on the Dream.*  
Website: [http://associationdatabase.com/aws/NCDA/pt/sp/conference\\_info](http://associationdatabase.com/aws/NCDA/pt/sp/conference_info)
- **2013:** Boston, Massachusetts.  
Website: [http://associationdatabase.com/aws/NCDA/pt/sp/conference\\_info](http://associationdatabase.com/aws/NCDA/pt/sp/conference_info)

### India Career Development Association (ICDA)

- **2012:** New Delhi, India.  
May 26 – 27, 2012: National Conference on Career Development.  
Theme: Preparing for the Road Ahead.  
Website: <http://www.icda.in/index.htm>
  - **2013:** New Delhi, India.  
March 27 – 29, 2013: International Conference.  
Theme: Colours of Career.  
Website: <http://www.icda.in/index.htm>
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- All manuscripts will first be scanned by the editorial team. If considered suitable for the IJCLP, the manuscript will be sent for blind review.
- Authors may expect to receive the reviewers' comments in about 4 to 6 weeks after the manuscript has been sent for review. At this time, should the paper be accepted for publication, authors will be informed of the date of publication. Authors are free at this time to indicate their willingness to continue with the review process or to withdraw the paper.
- Review responses are categorised as follows:
  - Accept with minor changes
  - Accept with major changes
  - Not suitable for IJCLP
- Authors are expected to return corrected manuscripts within 2 to 4 weeks of receiving the reviewers' comments.
- Manuscripts, particularly if re-submitted after major revisions, may be sent for a second round of reviews.

#### Article Formatting

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- Title Page should carry:
  - The name(s) of the author(s).
  - The full title.
  - Affiliations of the authors and a 100-word Author Note.
  - The corresponding author's postal address, email address, telephone number.
- Abstract: All manuscripts are to carry an abstract of 150 to 250 words, presented on the page after the Title Page.



## Information for Authors

- **Keywords:** All manuscripts are to carry 6 to 8 key words, presented below the Abstract.
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  - Manuscripts are to be submitted as soft copies in Microsoft Word using the 12-point Times New Roman font.
  - Heading levels are not to exceed three levels.
- **Citation and referencing:**
  - In-text citations are to follow the APA style, that is, references are to be cited by name and year in parentheses. For example: (Rajendran, 2010); Rajendran and Shah (2011) ...
  - The reference list should follow the APA format. The full reference of all in-text citations are to be listed in the reference list.
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  - The reference list entries should be alphabetised using the last name of the first author of each citation.
  - References by the same first author should be arranged by year of publication, the earliest first.

## Type and Length of Articles

The IJCLP accepts articles that have a research and theoretical focus as well as those that are oriented to application and practice in the specific and allied areas related to career development, career psychology, work psychology, career counselling and livelihoods. The types of articles and their length are as follows:

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- Short Papers: 2000 to 3000 words including abstract and references.
- Observations: 1000 words.
- Letters to editor: 250 words.

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