# Lecture 11
# Developing Career Alternatives

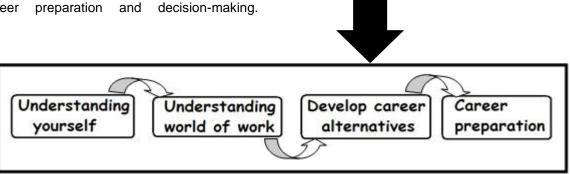| Intended Learning Outcome |
|---|
| **At the end of this module, it is expected that the participant will be able to:** <br><br> 1. Will be able to describe what career alternatives are. <br> 2. Will be able to teach students to draw upon their knowledge of self and the world of work and develop individual-specific career alternatives. |

## 8.1. What are Career Alternatives?

At this stage in the carer guidance interaction the career aspirant has reached the stage where he/she has been able to identify interests and talents. Most importantly the person has located the link between her interests and aptitudes and combined them to identify potentials. The person has also gone through exercises that have helped him/her become more aware of the influence of cognitive factors such as career and self-efficacy beliefs on career preparation and decision-making.

Furthermore, she has gone through a variety of activities that are designed to enhance her awareness of the world of work.

As shown in the figure below, the next step in the career education process is to help the career aspirant arrive at *a set of careers* that she would be most comfortable with and for which her interests and aptitudes are best suited – these are the person's Career Alternatives.
.



Career Alternatives are a set of two to three options that provide backup options should the first choice fail to materialise. They are a small group of options that match the individual's potential profile. Too *many* options do not allow the career aspirant to develop a clear focus for career development. Too *few* options do not allow for flexibility in career development.

Career Alternatives emerge from the information the student has gained about him/herself and about the world of work. Students sometimes commit the error of planning for just one career. Career Alternatives are a set of two to three options that provide backup options should the first choice fail to materialise.

An essential resource required in order to identify career alternatives is the *Career Dictionary.* This is a list of careers that have been classified into families based on the same

theoretical framework that was used to help the student identify his/her potential profile.

## 8.2. Identifying Career Alternatives

The counsellor and the career aspirant work on career dictionary together, using information about interests, aptitudes and the world of work. The counsellor would point the career aspirant to those sections of the career dictionary that contain careers linked to his/her interests and aptitudes.

To illustrate:

Sameena's potential profile indicated that her interests and aptitudes were the highest in the areas of *Spatial* and *Personal* skills. Based on this information she along with her counsellor, examined careers in the Spatial and the Personal sections of the career dictionary as well as careers that require a combination of personal and spatial skills. Some of the careers

she discovered in the Spatial section were fashion design, architecture, product design and toy design. In the Personal section she came across careers such as behavioural sciences, career counselling, hospitality industry and so on. Apparel Merchandising was a career she found in the section that combined Personal with Spatial skills.

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

## 8.3. Socioeconomic Status and Career Alternatives

### 8.3.1. Working with economic disadvantage

The development of Career Alternatives in a context where career aspirants face *poverty and socio-economic disadvantage* requires certain special considerations. As we know, prevailing socio-economic conditions create career beliefs and self-efficacy conceptualisations that pre-empt disadvantaged young people from even considering Career Alternatives for themselves. The counsellor's role in this situation goes beyond merely enlisting suitable career options. The objective is to help the young person develop viable Career Alternatives. The following steps may be kept in mind:

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

- Analysis of cognitive factors such as career and self-efficacy beliefs are particularly important when working with the disadvantaged. Counselling interventions must address *negative career beliefs*.

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

### 8.3.2. The middle-class predicament

The *middle-class groups* on the other hand present a picture that is typical across cultures. Middle class offers a comfortable life style, with enough left over to give the children in the family a start in their lives. Middle class families have usually been able to accumulate sufficient resources to offer their children a foundation upon which they could build their lives. However, these resources are limited. In the absence of surpluses, the middle-class family's primary concern is the *utilisation of existing resources in a manner that would yield the highest benefit*. Making effective career choices and developing a career plan that would optimally use the family savings is therefore an important concern for such families. Furthermore, the middle classes have tasted the fruits of prosperity and have also equipped themselves with the wherewithal to rise to higher levels of prosperity. The middle classes in almost all cultures are simultaneously confronted by the threat of *slipping back* to lower levels of social standing and the real possibility of *rising up* to higher levels along the status continuum. Indeed, it is this group that has *everything to lose and everything to gain*. As a result, the highest levels of aspirations and the strongest motivations for success are noted amongst the middle *Career success* is one of the most important mechanisms available to these families to ensure that they keep moving higher up along the socioeconomic continuum.

As a result, a middle-class home is most likely to expect their child to have chosen to go to *college* after high school. By contrast, finding a *job* is what a large majority of lower income families are likely to expect from their children on completing high school.

### 3.4. Gender

Gender could have a strong influence on the process of identifying career alternatives. Social expectations requiring the making of a career choice and pursuing independent earning seem to be *higher* for boys. For girls on the other hand career seems to be *secondary* to responsibilities associated with marriage and raising a family. An important implication to be noted is that given prevailing attitudes toward work, male dominated careers are held in higher value and esteem and are therefore better paid. Socialisation-based differences between male and female could result in women *under-utilising* their career talents and being underrepresented in a number of higher status and higher paying fields.

### 3.5. Age and Developmental Stage

A further point to be noted is that Career Alternatives are closely linked to the career chooser's *age and maturity*.

Career Alternatives would be *broad* at the *high school stage* of career development. For example a 15 year old high school student may arrive at Engineering, Behavioural Science and Design as her career options. Career *exploration* rather than commitment to one career path, is still the target at this stage. Creating a framework for exploration is an important task before career counsellor.

Career Alternatives continue to play a role as development progresses. Of the three chosen at the high school stage, *one* would selected as the final option. At the next levels of education (e.g. after higher secondary) the young person in the illustration above may zero in on the Behavioural Sciences.

It is important to note that as age and education progress, specialisations emerge within the broad chosen an option. For example, within the Behavioural Sciences is a vast array of careers (e.g. Clinical Psychology, Child Development, Human Resource Management). Helping the individual develop an awareness of the scope of these choices would contribute to the effective development of Career Alternatives.

For a more detailed description of these concepts please refer to the following open access, downloadable book:
http://www.thepromisefoundation.org/files/documents/Career_Counselling_Handbook_PrePrint_Manuscript_1.pdf

Open access papers are also available through this link:
http://www.jivacareer.org/project/page/research.html

## 4. Conclusion

Identifying Career Alternatives is the third theme in the process of career guidance. It brings together two sets of information: the person's potential profile and the world of work. The objective at this stage is to facilitate career *exploration* in such a way that career option linked to the person's potentials are listed as alternatives. An important guidance target is to ensure that the final decisions are made *after* career exploration.

**Building the Career Overview and Finding Career Alternatives**

During this step, participants briefly explore the world of work and link their potentials to career options.  The participants are required to have their Career Alternatives worksheet and the Career Dictionary before them.

An essential resource required in order to identify career alternatives is the Career Dictionary.  This is a list of careers that have been classified into families based on the same theoretical framework that was used to help the student identify his/her potential profile.

Ask participants to look at their Career Dictionaries and instruct them as follows:

"Look at the Potential Profile Table and write the names of your 3 highest potentials under Potential 1, Potential 2 and Potential 3 in the Career Overview section of the worksheet. As we have discussed earlier, you are most likely to succeed at careers that are linked to your potentials. So look at your Careers Dictionary. This is a book of career names and career definitions. Careers have been classified according the main potential required. Therefore, the Dictionary has 5 sections: Linguistic, Analytical-Logical, Spatial, Personal and Physical-Mechanical. Go to the sections that are *your* high potentials. Select 4 careers under each potential and write the Career Name into your Career Overview. You should have 12 career names (4 x 3) in your Career Overview."

Participants could then start on their Career Overview. Make yourself available to answer any questions that individuals might have.

Once the Career Overview is completed, participants are to encircle any five careers which they would want to explore further in order to finalise their Career Alternatives. Instruct them to choose at least one and maximum 3 careers from each potential.

# MY CAREER ALTERNATIVES

## POTENTIAL PROFILE

| Assessment Method | Weightage | L | AL | S | P | PM |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Accomplishments | 90 | 46 | 63 | 29 | 32 | 38 |
| Interest Profile | 60 | 24 | 51 | 18 | 22 | 24 |
| Priority Interests | 42 | 14 | 28 | 7 | 7 | 14 |
| Self Rating | 8 | 3 | 7 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Total Marks (TM) | 200 | 87 | 149 | 57 | 65 | 82 |
| Final Score (TM/2) | 100 | 44 | 75 | 29 | 33 | 41 |

## CAREER OVERVIEW

POTENTIAL 1: **Analytical Logical**

Chartered Accountant
Cost Accountant
Economist
Investment Banker

POTENTIAL 2: **Linguistic**

Lawyer
Journalist
Copywriter
Company Secretary

POTENTIAL 3: **Physical Mechanical**

Ship Engineer
Livestock Producer
Orthotist
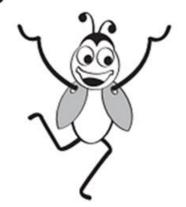Physiotherapist

## CAREER ALTERNATIVES

OPTION 1 : **Chartered Accountant**

OPTION 2 : **Cost Accountant**

OPTION 3 : **Investment Banker**
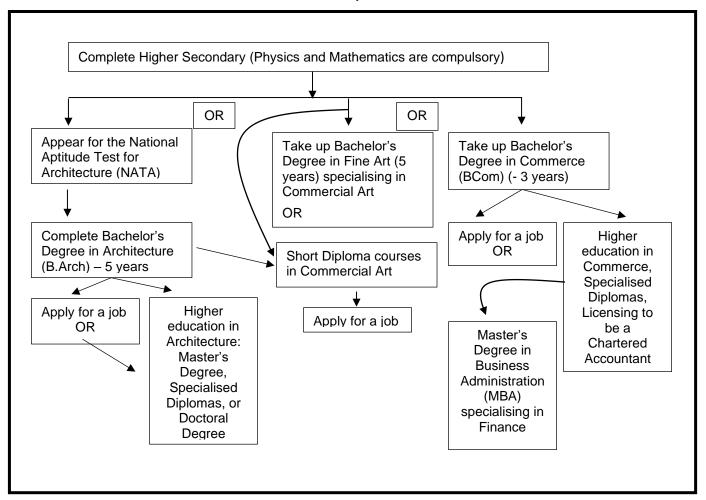
OPTION 4 : **Lawyer**

OPTION 5 : **Orthotist**

# Career Preparation

The student would now require advice on how to plan his/her career development. An important information to be given here is about the Educational Milestones for each option. This would include the following:

- What is the immediate next step?
- Which are the main educational institutions?
- What the next steps until the person can apply for a job in this field?
- What are the steps to be taken to progress in this field?

Given on the next page is a career development chart showing how the student can plan his/her next steps for the options chosen based on Indian Educational Milestones.

## Career Development Chart

Complete Higher Secondary (Physics and Mathematics are compulsory)

OR     OR

Appear for the National Aptitude Test for Architecture (NATA)

Take up Bachelor's Degree in Fine Art (5 years) specialising in Commercial Art
OR

Take up Bachelor's Degree in Commerce (BCom) (- 3 years)

Complete Bachelor's Degree in Architecture (B.Arch) – 5 years

Short Diploma courses in Commercial Art

Apply for a job
OR

Higher education in Commerce, Specialised Diplomas, Licensing to be a Chartered Accountant

Apply for a job
OR

Higher education in Architecture: Master's Degree, Specialised Diplomas, or Doctoral Degree

Apply for a job

Master's Degree in Business Administration (MBA) specialising in Finance

## Career Development Information

Here the student would be supplied with Career Development information specific to each of Career Alternatives such as:

- Eligibility information to enter the course leading the career chosen.
- Addresses and contact information colleges and training providers.
- Institutes of National importance.
- Statutory Body if any.
- Associations pertaining to that career if any.
- Government resources such as schemes and scholarships if any.

**Career Preparation for Other Groups**

As we have seen in our earlier lectures, career developmental tasks align with the person's career developmental stage.  We have focused on an important career developmental stage – namely the high school and the higher secondary stages.  The key career developmental tasks for this stage are focused around: Self-Understanding, Understanding the World of Work, Developing Career Alternatives and Identifying Educational Pathways.

It must be kept in mind that older age groups face other career developmental tasks.

**Students who are completing education:** Some examples of career guidance interventions for older students, particularly those who are completing education are:

- Skills to gain work experience.
- Self-Presentation Skills:  Example: Writing a CV, cover letter and preparing for an interview.
- Job search skills.
- Job application skills.
- Anticipating and planning career shifts

Similarly other age groups require other forms of career guidance support.

**Other target groups**

It maybe also noted that career guidance services could also vary according to the type of group. Career guidance could vary by:

- socioeconomic status
- gender
- existence of special needs
- indigenous groups may require specific forms of guidance
- persons pursuing traditional occupations could also be included for career guidance and livelihood planning services could be provided.

Each career developmental stage and different types of groups present with their own set of career developmental tasks.  If you are interested in other age groups or other types of groups, you could consider other courses on career guidance that target the needs of these persons.