Career Psychology and Career Counselling:
Core concepts for a Work and Education curriculum.

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1. Historical milestones in the evolution of work and career

The tendency to work is a natural and inherent human characteristic. Indeed it is the human being's highly developed ability to consciously and intelligently direct personal effort and energy toward goals and targets that lie at the heart of not just our survival but of our progress and development as a species.

The meaning of work has undergone significant changes over time. It has been moulded by ideologies, shaped by the tenets of a variety of philosophies and transformed by revolutions.

1.1. Social-Cognitions and the emergence of a work ethic

Work by itself is *neutral*. However work is not performed in a vacuum. As with other human activities, work occurs within a social context – a context characterised by patterns of beliefs and ways of thinking. It is within this environment that specific meanings and values are attached to work. Philosophies tend to create mindsets and attitudes, which in turn influence behaviour. This influence is particularly significant when entire societies begin to think in a particular manner, internalise belief structures and demonstrate certain mindsets. Psychologists use the term *social cognitions* to describe patterns of thinking that have become habitual across social groups (Bandura, 1989). Social cognitions seem to have played a significant role in the evolution of work as well. Mindsets engendered by social and moral frames of reference give a particular colouring and interpretation to the meaning and purpose of work. Prevailing ideologies create what we have referred to as *social-cognitive environments* (Arulmani & Nag-Arulmani 2004). Within these environments, values are attributed to work and to occupational clusters. Social-cognitive environments foster the evolution of a *work ethic* – a collection of social cognitions about work, which then guide and influence people's work behaviour. For example, a certain work ethic may place a positive moral value on hard work based on the belief that work has innate value and must be pursued for its own sake. Another social-cognitive environment may promote a work ethic wherein some forms of work maybe attributed with a higher level of prestige than others.

> Work and Education: Pointers for curriculum framework
> It is essential that work education programmes (e.g. SUPW/WE) are aware of the manner in which social cognitions affect orientations to work. An important component of a work in education programme would be to address such notions about work and career. *Arulmani,G & Nag-Arulmani (2004)*

1.2. Division of Labour

Looking back at the evolution of work, historians have pointed to the possibility that in primitive societies, each individual secured personal survival by developing mastery over a wide range of tasks and skills. It is possible as a result, that developing expertise for a *specific* set of work skills was not a felt need during the earliest stages in the evolution of work. Small groups of individuals (families perhaps) through various activities such as hunting, fishing, building a shelter, rearing animals, farming and so on, produced the means of existence for themselves and their dependants. While it is possible that one individual in the group was better at hunting and another was better at fishing, it is likely that all individuals were expected to be effective at all the tasks and skills related to survival.

With the passage of time, it is likely that skills linked to the satisfaction of particular groups of human needs began to cluster together and people began to develop *expertise* for specific sets of skills. Specialisations began to evolve and thus emerged occupational categories such as fishermen, farmers, cattle breeders, weavers, healers, traders – a list that will continue to grow for as long as human needs exist.

Across civilisations, the initial approaches to the division of labour seemed to be governed by the principle that a systematic division of work into categories would contribute to order and progress in society (Tilgher, 1930). Interestingly, even the earliest writings indicate that the most effective basis for the allocation of occupational roles ought to be the person's natural tendencies. These ability and skill based approaches to the division of labour were perhaps the earliest precursors to Career Psychology. However, as described below, with the passage of time, person-centered methods for the division of labour were overcome by a variety of social, moral and religious philosophies that defined the framework for the division of labour.

1.3. Classification of work roles: The varna and caste systems

Two important systems within Indian thought address questions pertaining to the division of labour – the system of varnas and the caste system. According to the varna system allocation of work responsibilities was based on the well-known four-fold classification of occupational roles. One of the most important points to be noted about the varna system is that occupational role allocation was based on the individual's natural tendencies – or *gunas*. Accordingly, the work roles linked to the pursuit of knowledge, teaching and religious duties were assigned to individuals who manifest the *sattvik guna*. Within the varna system these were the *brahmins*. Activities that required high levels of dynamism, energy and sharp reactivity were likely to be best executed by those of a *rajasik* disposition. These were the *kshatriyas*. In similar manner, the occupations carried out by the *vaishyas* were characterised by a combination of *rajas* and *tamas*. And finally, the *shudra's* work roles were said to be *tamasik* in character. The ultimate objective of this system seems to have been to put the different traits and qualities of the human individual to proper and productive use and thereby maintain a well organised and balanced society.

One of the outcomes of the system of varnas was the system of *caste*. Over the centuries the caste system grew into a vast network of sub-castes based on which a wide spectrum of occupational roles were classified. The four-fold classification of the varna system became a theoretical framework and faded in importance. The complex network of sub-castes based on occupational characteristics and work specialisations began to control the social order. Caste laws prescribed the duties and job responsibilities that a person of a certain sub-caste was expected to perform. Breaking these rules entailed serious punishment, leading ultimately to expulsion from the caste. The perpetuation of the caste system was ensured when it was made hereditary. This division of people along caste lines into watertight compartments led to a high level of rigidity in occupational mobility. Movement across occupations became almost impossible and was in fact prohibited.

This shift in the social-cognitive environment caused profound and long lasting changes in peoples' attitudes toward occupational categories. The roots of caste run deep into the Indian psyche and have become intertwined with personal and occupational identity.

> Work and Education: Pointers for curriculum framework
> The mindsets engendered by social discrimination seem to have an impact at behavioural levels as well. An effective work in education programme would help the low caste young person break the *psychological* stranglehold of caste and rise above its influence. Simultaneously such a programme also needs to address the attitudes of young people who do not belong to lower castes and sharpen their sensitivity to the forces of discrimination. *Arulmani,G & Nag-Arulmani (2004)*

1.4. The Protestant Reformation and the Industrial Revolution: Influences on Western conceptions of occupational role allocation

Discontentment with Church, its dogmas and way of functioning gradually grew into a massive political and religious upheaval in Europe during the sixteenth century. According to Luther's reformatory theology, all people – priest, noble, king and peasant, were equal in the eyes of God. The Reformists emphasised that work was a 'calling' and Luther preached that work was a vehicle through which every individual could serve God. Weber, a German sociologist who later analysed the impact of the Protestant Reformation, described this new set of beliefs about work as the *protestant work ethic* (Weber, 1904).

Another important milestone in the evolution of work in the West is the *Industrial Revolution* which transformed the concept of production. Goods could now be produced at greater speed, in larger quantities and at significantly lower costs. The skilled artisans of the older order gradually found themselves to be redundant as machines began to mass produce products that were formerly hand crafted. One of the most important outcomes of the Industrial Revolution was the creation of numerous *new* areas of occupation. This new work environment called for new sets of skills and expertise. Traditional systems of occupational role allocation were no longer relevant.

1.5. The birth of the notion of a 'career'

With the Industrial Revolution, the issue of *matching people for jobs* surfaced as a question that needed an urgent answer. The industry needed workers with specific traits and abilities, while the potential worker needed *guidance* toward jobs for which he or she was best suited. It is in response to these questions, at this point in the evolution of work that Vocational Guidance surfaced as a discipline. Frank Parsons, who is today acknowledged as the father of Vocational Psychology, developed for the first time in 1909, a method to suit the new industrial work order (Parsons 1909). Accordingly, persons could be matched for jobs on the basis of their traits, abilities and talents. Within our examination of the history of work, the vital point to be noted is that Vocational Guidance as a discipline was a natural outcome of the Industrial Revolution, with the protestant work ethic providing a strong philosophic framework. People now began to approach work as a field of activity within which they could follow a path of growth and reach for higher levels of personal development. Thus was born the concept of career which will be discussed in Section 2.

1.6. The impact of colonisation on the meaning of work in India

An examination of the world of work as it prevailed in India indicates that over time, individual workers came together and organised themselves into professional groups – or guilds, which were called *shreni* (Thapar, 1966). Prevailing caste rules significantly influenced the formation and maintenance of guilds. Since caste had by now become hereditary, occupational mobility was restricted.   Children learned the family profession and found employment within the guild to which the family belonged (McCrindle, 1901). Functioning on the backdrop of a work ethic characterised by *determinism* and *interdependence*, the world of work in India seems to have been robust, with vigorous participation in trade and commerce. This pattern of work role organisation seems to have continued from around 300 B.C up until the West began to colonise India.

The concept of a personal career emerged as a response to needs expressed within the western, industrialised culture. The idea of *choosing* a personal career was not intrinsic to the cultural and economic environment that prevailed in India at that time in history. The occupational choices before the young person in pre-industrial India were restricted. Since one's occupation was almost certainly going to be the family trade or industry, career choice was not likely to have been a matter for deep consideration. So different was the Indian environment at the time that one cannot help but wonder if the idea of a personal career would have emerged in India at all, had this cultural environment remained insulated from western colonisation.

The impact of Western influences through colonisation and its ramifications on Indian social and economic life are well known. The forces of industrialisation and mechanisation have had a similar impact on work

behaviour in the Indian context as they have had in the West. Work has grown from being merely linked to survival needs or to community dictates to something far more complex, requiring increasing amounts of specialisation and training. As in other parts of the world, work in India now carries connotations related to gender, socio-economic status, prestige and self-actualisation. With the rapid changes in the world of work leading to increases in opportunities and the breaking down of older social mechanisms for occupational role allocation, career decision-making is as much of a reality in India as it is in the Western world.

> Work and Education: Pointers for curriculum framework
> While cultural norms would continue to foster variations in social cognitions between the West and India, the outcomes of colonisation and the more recent trends toward globalisation have, for better or worse, initiated a convergence in career preparation requirements. It is therefore essential that a work in education programme incorporates skills for career preparation as an important aspect of its curriculum.
> *Arulmani,G & Nag-Arulmani (2004)*

The evolution of work has continued and the idea of a career is moving into yet another phase of development. We are today witnessing the emergence of a new work ethic within a post-industrial society.

1.7. Post-industrial society and the emerging work ethic

Around the world, workers and young workers-to-be, face a new horizon. Contemporary society is described to be post-industrial and career and work have taken on new meanings.

1.7.1. Changes in conceptions of time and space
Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have transformed ideas of space and time within the world of work. Today networks allow for the creation of virtual workspaces that need not have specific geographical locations. We are on the threshold of a work environment that will take us beyond the execution of a specific set of duties, during a set work shift, at a specific location. It is not uncommon for workers in the information age to use a variety of ICTs to enter a virtual work place within which they may daily interact with people who live in different parts of the globe and together complete units of work without ever 'meeting' each other. This de-linearisation and de-synchronisation of time and space (Tractenberg, Streumer Jan, & Van Zolingen, 2002), has created a new social-cognitive environment within which new patterns of thinking about the world of work have emerged.

1.7.2. Redefinition of skill requirements
Skill redundancy is a factor that has become closely associated with unemployment. Today, changes within the world of work are so rapid and continuous that skills that were relevant even six months ago could be redundant in the here and now. Career Psychologists compare industrial age jobs with the information age and point out that in the past work was broken up into simple units that were repetitive requiring minimal amounts of critical thinking or judgement (Yankelovich & Immerwahr, 1984). Jobs in the information age in contrast, are described as 'high-discretion' jobs and a new work ethic has emerged today where the worker-*machine* interface has given place to a worker-*knowledge* interface (Miller, 1986).

> Work and Education: Pointers for curriculum framework
> A concern that has been consistently expressed is that the forces of globalisation and technological advancement would lead to the loss of individual identities. A relevant work in education programme would foster career preparation skills with particular emphasis on life-long learning and skills to maintain personal autonomy, freedom of thought and judgement within a shifting, changing and diverse work environment.
> *Arulmani,G & Nag-Arulmani (2004)*

2. Work as career

2.1. Career: work imbued with certain characteristics

Career is an artefact that has emerged within the broader framework of the human activity called work. Work, is as old as the history of mankind. Career on the other hand is a relatively newer construct whose emergence coincides with changes that characterise the evolution of work. All careers are forms of work, but the reverse may not be always true. As an area of human activity, work is broader, more ubiquitous and wider in what it encompasses. Career therefore is work imbued with certain characteristics.

Career is a mechanism whereby society utilises the services of its members to contribute to its well being, progress and development. The larger society in return compensates the individual for delivering a particular service. An individual's career therefore has its being in the dynamic interaction between the garnering of personal gain and the services she renders to society at large.

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

> Work and Education: Pointers for curriculum framework
> A work in education programme would help the young person understand the meaning of career and highlight the important characteristics of a career some of which are:
> * The necessity of exercising choice and volition
> * Suitability for a career in terms of personal interests, talents and aptitudes
> * Skills for career preparation   *Arulmani,G & Nag-Arulmani (2004)*

3. Career development - the Indian situation

The information presented in this section is drawn from research conducted over a period of 8 years through career guidance workshops and counselling sessions for 12,568 Indian young people in the age range of 14 to 22 years (Arulmani & Nag-Arulmani, 1996; 1998; 2004). These young people were from a wide range of socio-economic status groups from different regions around India and were in high school, pre-university, higher education courses or were already employed. This information is generalised to Indian culture as a whole. However these findings could provide a basis for further investigation.

3.1. Social and cultural influences

3.1.1. The influence of significant others

Study 1: Parental influence
The strongest influence on career choice seems to emerge from the wishes parents had for their children. The highest degree of comfort with career choices was expressed by those who had worked along with their parents and been actively involved in choosing their careers.

Study 2: Parental education and employment status
We found that the number of students intending to study further (college or diploma) *decreased* with parent education. The majority of students who had no career plans, had parents who were illiterate. Among students whose parents' employment was uncertain (occasionally employed or unemployed) a large percentage expressed the intention to forego further education and begin working immediately.

Conversely, almost all students who expressed the intention to study further and prepare systematically for a career, had parents who were comfortably employed.

3.1.2. The influence of prestige

Study 3: Subject choices
The Indian educational system has categorised subject specialisations into the humanities, commerce, science and vocational groups and students are expected to choose one of these streams as their area of specialisation. A majority of the students placed science courses at the highest level of prestige, followed by commerce and the humanities. The majority of the sample described vocationally oriented occupations as being of low value and associated with those who were not doing well in life.

Study 4: Degree vs. diploma
A large majority of the sample placed a college degree at a higher level of prestige than a polytechnic diploma. This opinion persisted across socio-economic status groups. See Box 1 for illustration from a sub group within this sample comprising students who were first generation learners from a scheduled tribe background.

Box 1
"I must go to college": Interaction with a group of first generation learners from a tribal background (Dhule, North Maharashtra)

Interviewer: Now that you have come up to high school, what are your plans for the future?
Student 1:   It is my dream and my family's dream that I go to college.
Student 2:   Everyone in my village expect me to go to college. I want to go to college too.
Student 3:   I will bring great pride to my village when I go to college.
Interviewer: What kind of job do you think you will get after finishing college education?
Student 1:   I don't know.
Student 4:   I am going to college for the college degree. I don't know about jobs.
Interviewer: If you get a better job through a polytechinic diploma, will you go to a polytechinic?
Student 3:   No. I want a degree.
No specific career goals seemed to be linked by this group to going to college other than 'I must have a degree'. The impact of prestige was so significant that a large number of students intended to pursue college education, even if this did not lead to direct employment.

Study 5: Mindsets of vocationally trained youth
One of our deepest insights emerged when we focused on the young people who were already in vocational courses or were pursuing vocationally oriented careers. The majority indicated that they initially had misgivings about vocational courses and took them up because they had no other option. However, once they entered the course, and tasted the occupational success that results from vocational training the majority of this group showed strongly positive attitudes toward vocational careers.

3.1.3. The influence of gender

Differential gender-role socialization – a process that has shaped and moulded behaviour across civilisations, has a significant effect on career development. Certain careers have grown to become gender-linked.

Study 6: Occupational roles as perceived by students from disadvantaged homes
The following information was obtained from students in the sample who came from socio-economically-disadvantaged homes, who were planning to drop out of school. Almost all boys indicated that their need

to drop out was linked to the urgent necessity of initiating independent earning to supplement family income. Conversely, among girls drop out was linked to taking up household responsibilities.

Study 7: Occupational roles as perceived by middle class parents
This information was obtained from middle class parents. The reason behind a majority of parents seeking career counselling for their girls was the intention of providing them with a secondary option, with marriage and family being the primary concern. In some instances planning a career for the girl was linked to enhancing her marriage prospects.

> Work and Education: Pointers for curriculum framework
> A work in education programme that is strongly grounded in social and cultural realities would:
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> - Incorporate the influence of significant others into the career decision making process. This would involve parent-education and the promotion of career development as a collaborative effort between family and career aspirant.
> - Actively address social-cognitions pertaining to occupational prestige and gender.
> - Actively address the negative connotations attributed to vocational courses. This would involve awareness building about the relevance of vocational qualifications to the labour market. An effective programme would demonstrate that choosing vocationally oriented courses is a function of interest and personal suitability and not of social class. Such a programme would help the higher social classes understand that vocationally oriented courses do offer viable career options. *Arulmani,G & Nag-Arulmani (2004)*

3.2. Stage of economic development

3.2.1. <u>Rural - urban shifts</u>
The forces of urbanisation in post-independent India have led to a steadily growing rural-urban shift. Young people who have completed basic education in a rural school come to the cities in search of further education. Many of them exhibit severe difficulties with academics and perform at levels much below their true potentials. Their lower proficiency with English (which is the most common language of instruction at post high school levels) is one of the factors associated with their poor academic performance. They often fare poorly in the highly competitive entrance examinations into professional courses. The dynamics of occupational prestige moves them away from vocational courses that have higher employment prospects toward college based education, which has a long gestation and often does not lead to employment. The result of the impact of such forces compromises their career prospects and often keeps them trapped in the vicious cycle of under employment or even unemployment.

> Work and Education: Pointers for curriculum framework
> Urbanisation is a reality that a work in education programme in India must take into account. Young people from rural backgrounds present unique career development needs that must be addressed. There is a pressing need for career counselling services that are designed for rural India. Such services could have the following objectives
> - prepare those who are planning to leave their rural homes to pursue career development in an urban environment.
> - highlight the value of careers that could be pursued within the rural environment after training and education. *Arulmani,G & Nag-Arulmani (2004)*

3.2.2. Economic cycles and career choices

One of the factors that contribute to the manpower mismatch in India is the tendency to link career choices with occupations that are sometimes merely artefacts of economic cycles. The so called boom in the computer science industry is a prime example. Large numbers of students chose these career paths in response to the burgeoning demand. When the market righted itself however, it was quickly realised that the quality and depth of training imparted to many of these students was not adequate and that they had not acquired the foundations essential for success in this field.

> Work and Education: Pointers for curriculum framework
> A work in education programme is not chained to economic cycles. It is the personhood of the career chooser that lies at the heart of career counselling. Using sound counselling techniques to help the young person make a career discovery is the real task before the sensitive counsellor. *Arulmani,G & Nag-Arulmani (2004)*

3.2.3. Career development lag and skill literacy

A *career development lag* is a delay between qualifying for a career and actually entering a career. Our observations (Arulmani, 1995, 1998, 2000) have indicated that the longest lag periods are associated with the lack of *skill literacy* in the career aspirant. Skill literacy is the fluency that a person develops for the practice and application of the theoretical concepts that comprise a body of knowledge. Skill literacy could be developed through practical diploma courses, work experience, voluntary work, internship programmes and so on. A student who has moved from one degree course to a higher one without the actual development of skills, is an unattractive prospect in the employment market place. The lack of career opportunities that this person experiences is not always because there are no opportunities. Quite often it is because such a person is inadequately prepared for the market place.

> Work and Education: Pointers for curriculum framework
> It is vital that SUPW tasks and work experience opportunities:
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> • Are designed to be culturally relevant: Planning work experience opportunities for a child from an environment where hard, physical work is already at the center of her existence, is very different from planning a programme for an urban child who is used to a 'maid who washes his clothes' and 'a driver who takes him to school'.
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> • Are linked to career developmental stages. When a child is presented with an SUPW task that he or she is not developmentally ready for, the task may be executed with low meaningfulness and in a routine manner. When structured within a developmentally relevant careers education programme, integration between work and education is spontaneous and such experiences make significant contributions to the young person's career maturity.
>
> • Differentiate between learning a trade/craft and imbibing a work ethic: Work experience is often reduced to a 'class' in the timetable when the child learns a craft or a trade. This is a useful and necessary contribution to enhancing skill literacy.   A deeper issue however is related to absorbing a work ethic. Preparing the materials for the craft class, cleaning up after the class, discussing the purpose and meaning of work, addressing dignity of labour and the meaning of manual work, would transmit a work culture and facilitate the absorption of a work ethic. *Arulmani,G & Nag-Arulmani (2004)*

3.3. Socio-economic Influences

Study 8: Orientation to career preparation: Differences across SES groups

A large preponderance of young people from the lower SES group in our sample, placed a lower value on education and were predisposed to leaving school early. It was their intention to begin to work at the

earliest. The middle SES groups in our study however was strongly predisposed to pursuing further education and developing their careers as comprehensively as possible. It must be added however, that uninformed career choices could continue to present the young person with career development difficulties. For example, the orientation to a college education amongst the low SES groups does not always pave the way for successful employment. College based courses (particularly the non-professional degrees) require long term study and higher levels of investment. In addition, these courses are not designed for skills development. Driven by factors related to prestige, low SES students intending to pursue college education are at risk to spending their meagre family resources on courses that could lead them not toward employment, but toward the ever growing ranks of the educated unemployed in India.

3.3.1. Social-Cognitive factors: The Influence of Career Beliefs

One of our most consistent observations over a decade of working with Indian young people and their families on issues of career development is that habitual ways of thinking – social-cognitive environments, strongly influence career development. A conglomerate of attitudes, opinions, convictions and notions seem to cohere together to create mindsets and beliefs that underlie people's orientation to the idea of a career. "Further study does not bring a better job," or, "A girl's first responsibility is to be a mother," are typical examples of common beliefs related to career development in the Indian context. Beliefs can become so deeply ingrained that they may not even be identified by their holders as beliefs - they are more like unquestioned, self-evident truths (Krumboltz, 1994). These assumptions and beliefs predispose the individual to making career decisions in a certain manner. We have referred to these deeply held convictions about activities linked to career development as *career beliefs* (Arulmani, 1998, 1999, 2000).

Study 9: Career belief themes across socio-economic status groups

Our field observations pointed to the possibility that differences could exist between the career beliefs held by higher and lower SES groups. Presented below is information that we have gleaned from our research that examined three kinds of career beliefs.

Proficiency Beliefs:
Beliefs held by the Lower SES Group in this sample reflected a lower emphasis on acquiring *work skills proficiencies*. They tended to drop out of formal education and showed a strong tendency to enter the world of work as unskilled labourers. This could be the result of the high degree of pressure on lower SES groups to begin earning for survival at the earliest. Conversely, the Higher SES Group's responses revealed that they placed a higher value on acquiring skills that would enhance their proficiency for an occupation. The anecdote presented in Box 2, provides an illustration.

Box 2
Fate will decide – an anecdote (Srirampuram: an urban slum, Bangalore)

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

Control and Self-Direction Beliefs:
The Lower SES group demonstrated a lower orientation to exercising *control* over the trajectory of their lives. Their responses reflected *helplessness* in the face of barriers to career development. They showed a

strong tendency to view the future in terms of the deprivations they were experiencing in their present situation. The higher SES groups on the other hand showed a stronger orientation to *creating* opportunities for themselves. Their responses reflected a high motivation to engage with career development tasks and fight against the odds.

Persistence Beliefs:
We found that the *persistence* toward career goals is lower and less consistent among lower SES groups. Their responses reflected a strong predisposition to sacrificing long term gains for more immediate gains in the here and now. The responses of higher SES groups on the other hand reflected a long term orientation to the future with evidence of planning, setting goals and preparing for the future.

> Work and Education: Pointers for curriculum framework
> Cognitions and beliefs emerging from socio-economic and cultural sources influence skill development, interpretations of self-observations and world-view generalisations. Career beliefs emerging from the community could contaminate the individual's ability to generate a suitable array of occupational possibilities. It is important to address underlying belief structures drawing both the individual and the family into the counselling process. *Arulmani,G & Nag-Arulmani (2004)*

3.3.2. Social-Cognitive factors: *The interaction between self-efficacy beliefs and career development*

Self-efficacy beliefs are thinking patterns that reflect the individual's confidence in personal ability to be successful in the performance of specific tasks. Low self-efficacy beliefs for a set of tasks would predispose the individual to avoiding these tasks.

Study 10: Self-efficacy beliefs in the context of career preparation among high school students

This study of high school students, found that self-efficacy *further education* and *formal work skills development* increased with SES. The need to earn pushes the low SES young person into the world of work. The lower SES young person is surrounded by role models who have all begun earning immediately. Conversely, the higher SES group is surrounded by role models who went on for further education and who endorse the value of obtaining formal qualifications. The lower SES young person is strongly persuaded to begin working immediately while the other group is persuaded to obtain qualifications. As a result, self-efficacy for postponing entry into the world of work and obtaining further training is lower amongst the lower SES groups.

Our work has revealed that when career counselling addresses self-efficacy beliefs in a consistent manner, significant changes are seen the lower SES group's orientation to career development. The anecdote in Box 3 provides an illustration.

Box 3
Learning to think differently (Madiwala, an urban low SES area, Bangalore)

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

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4. Career counselling: Relevance across different SES groups

4.1. Is career counselling relevant to the Indian context?

Typically, career counselling interventions are most effective for individuals who have a degree of choice. When there is some choice but little consideration of career development issues, the information and frameworks provided in career counselling have positive and cost effective results. It must be noted however, that as economic development progresses, choice increases, and career counselling becomes crucial to long term progress. As the array of work and options widens, it becomes increasingly difficult for young people to understand and navigate a personal pathway through the array. Repeated empirical investigations in Western industrial and post-industrial societies show consistent, moderate positive outcomes for a variety of career interventions, including individual and group counselling, classroom interventions, workshops, and so on (Spokane, Oliver 1983). Effective utilisation of human resources, even in the absence of other resources in a developing nation can have beneficial effects on both the efficiency and effectiveness of its labour force, the growth of its economy and the well-being of its inhabitants.

4.2. Perceived need – the urban context

The foregoing discussion has highlighted the relevance and importance of career counselling. A decade ago in India, career counselling was not perceived as important or relevant. Presently however the need is a pressing one. Given below is information from one of our surveys that highlights this change in perceptions. This survey was conducted in a middle-class, urban context.

Changes in perceptions about career counselling:
A survey of 141 senior educators

Question asked	Yes this is an urgently felt need		Unsure		No this is not relevant to our situation	
	1993	2003	1993	2003	1993	2003
Would your students benefit from professional inputs in career counselling?	15%	95%	35%	0%	50%	5%

Our other surveys of students and their parents living in urban areas have also revealed that overwhelmingly large numbers across the country feel the need for support with making career decisions.

4.3. Perceived need / the rural / disadvantaged context

Findings from our research have indicated that the prevailing system of education combined with various social-cognitive variables prevent the poor from attempting to change the trajectory of their occupational lives. Investigations into career aspirations have indicated that low SES young people and their families tend to limit their occupational aspirations to their social class. A home that is characterised by illiteracy and severe economic hardship, may not possess the wherewithal to raise the eyes of the young within that family toward wider horizons. The pressure to earn pushes the low SES young person into the world of work as an unskilled labourer and thereby keeps him or her trapped to the cycle of poverty perpetuated by meagre earnings.

The survey reported above (Section 5.2.) was conducted in a context where awareness regarding career development was high. Our experience in the rural and disadvantaged sector indicates that career counselling is *not* an immediately perceived need. In fact, such programmes are viewed initially with scepticism and cynicism. However, when a *relevant* programme is offered, not only the young person but also the community is quick to perceive its relevance and usefulness. It has been our consistent experience that career counselling could serve as a tool to empower the disadvantaged young person with new mindsets along with career preparation skills to plan effectively for a prosperous career. Box 4 provides an illustration.

Box 4:
Career counselling as a tool for empowerment and social change. (Sandur, Karnataka)

Our services were retained by a large mining company, located in a remote tribal area. Although the company had set up a fairly good school for the children from this area, the outcomes in relation to personal development were poor. We discovered that the strong career belief prevailing amongst this group was that they were helpless to build their lives and change their economic situation. Self-efficacy for career preparation with extremely low and any orientation to career planning was absent. We addressed these issues through career counselling workshops for those who had attended this school but had dropped out.

When we returned to the same village five years later, we were put up in a new, well-managed lodge. Waiting at the entrance was a bright young man – the proud owner of the lodge. "I was one of the students who attended your workshop 5 years ago", he said. "Before I joined the meeting, I thought all this was a waste for people like me and my family. But in the workshop I learned that I too had talents. I learned in the workshop that I could learn Hotel Management. I completed my high school and then I went to the company and asked for a scholarship. I studied in the city and came back to start this lodge. It is a great success and now I charge the company good money, to accommodate its guests! I also conduct classes like you did, to help youth in this area to make career plans!"

Work and Education: Pointers for curriculum framework
It is essential that the present discussions on work and education take into account the urgent need for effective methods for careers education. In absence of a culturally relevant careers education programme, attempts at vocationalisation, integration of work-experience into the educational system are likely to continue to receive a lukewarm response. A comprehensive curriculum for careers education could provide a framework within which the aims of Basic Education and work experience programmes could be meaningfully located, with contemporary relevance.
Arulmani,G & Nag-Arulmani (2004)

5. Organisational and professional Structures for Counselling Services in India

5.1. Policy and Recommendations

The importance of career counselling has been emphasised in India from as early as 1938 when the Acharya Narendra Dev Committee underlined the importance of guidance in education. Various committees and commissions (e.g. The Mudaliar Commission, 1952; the Kothari Education Commission, 1964-66) have subsequently made recommendations for the formalisation of guidance and counselling services at a national level.

5.2. Current availability of services: Government structure

Policy formulations resulting from the recommendations of commissions and committees, have provided an organisational structure for the delivery of career counselling services through government agencies such as the Central and State Bureaux of Guidance.
Impact: Government sponsored guidance bureaux have not been able to make much headway – the reasons cited being the paucity of funds and the lukewarm attitude towards guidance on the part of state and central educational authorities (Bhatnagar & Gupta, 1999).

5.3. Current availability of services: Private initiatives

Career counselling is offered by *private* organisations (e.g. human resource development companies, non-governmental initiatives, psychological clinics, counselling centres and child guidance units). A few boards of education (e.g. ISCE) have begun to offer careers advice through a distance-testing system. Careers cells have also begun to appear in private colleges and universities.

Impact: In contrast to Government services, programmes offered by private organisations and individual counsellors have been received with great enthusiasm. The demand for these services is much sought after and is growing rapidly. Services offered by the private sector however are characterised by the following limitations:

• Most of the services are restricted to specific geographical areas and have not been able to expand to a national scale.

• Services offered by private organisations are concentrated almost exclusively in the cities and most often target the higher economic status groups. The career development needs of young people from rural or less privileged backgrounds are most often left unaddressed.

5.4. Availability of Training Programmes

The National Council for Educational Research and Training offers a one-year post graduate diploma in guidance and counselling. A few university departments of psychology and education offer training at the post graduate level in within which Career Counselling is a module. Private organisations offering training in counselling skills sometimes include career counselling as one of the topics to be covered.

Evaluation: Career Counselling is most often treated as a 'chapter' in a course on counselling and a student does not receive sufficient inputs either in theory or skills. For example the MSc in Psychological Counselling offered by Bangalore University has allocated just 10 hours in a 4 semester programme for Career Counselling. Courses oriented toward theory with little or no provision for skills development. Most often, the curriculum is a direct replication of western ideas of career counselling with almost no inputs on the socio-cultural and socio-economic influences on career decision-making behaviour as it occurs in the Indian context.

5.5. Service Delivery in the Present Context

'Counselling' is a term that is loosely used in India and Career Counselling could be offered by anyone at all. Qualified career counsellors are few and far between. Most often, well-intentioned individuals and social service clubs who are 'interested in youth' assume the role of career counsellors. In the school / college context, career counselling is a responsibility commonly carried by the teacher deputed to be the student welfare officer.

Evaluation: An evaluation of the content of career counselling programmes presently available in India reveals that these services could be grouped as follows:

- *Type 1*: Services that focus on psychological testing. These services test the young person and provide him or her with information about personal interests and aptitudes. Tests used are most often imported from the West and not standardised or normed for the Indian cultural context.

- *Type 2*: At the popular level career counselling has almost become synonymous with obtaining information about different careers. Career counselling workshops for students are often limited to presentations from professionals about their respective careers. The majority of services presently available fall into this category.

- *Type 3*: These are services that are rooted firmly in a culturally validated theory of counselling. Such services are able to first of all discriminate between the different needs presented by different groups. They focus on the identification of personal interests and aptitudes, skills for decision-making, conflict resolution, career path planning, integration of community influences and lead finally to career alternatives that the individual could explore further. Such services if at all available are available only rarely.

Formal vocational guidance services have been described to be a part of economic development, where the division of labour that follows industrialisation eventually extends to a point where traditional mechanisms of role allocation start to break down and formal guidance services are required to supplement them (Watts, 1996). Vocational Guidance and Career Counselling in India are currently at this stage of development. Guidance and counselling that would facilitate effective career decision-making therefore assumes a special urgency in the Indian situation.

Career Psychology as a scientific discipline is in its infancy in India. In contrast to the Indian situation, a number of other Asian countries such as the Philippines, Taiwan, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Singapore, China and Japan have begun to seriously work toward adapting existing models and developing new techniques to address the career development needs of their young people in a culturally relevant manner.

India, with one of the largest manpower pools in the world has lagged far behind. Although organisational and professional structures have been put into place, they do not seem to be oriented to the dynamics of career development in the Indian context. Career counselling as a theoretically grounded, model driven service for the Indian young person does not seem to be available for large scale use. The tremendous changes in the world of work place a high degree of pressure on the urban Indian young person to make effective career choices. At the same time, without systematic career counselling inputs, the disadvantaged and lower income groups and those living in rural areas are allowed to remain victims of underemployment and unemployment. In the absence of effective systems for career counselling, the career decision-making process could continue to be influenced by the various psycho-social, educational and socio-economic factors that lead to career choices that are ineffective. The need to put mechanisms into place that would address these needs, is an urgent one.

6. Strengthening Career Psychology as a discipline for the Indian context

6.1. Research, Model Building and Curriculum Development

6.1.1. Basic indicators for curriculum development

India is urgently in need of a model for career counselling – a model that has been derived from systematic research and interpreted within a valid theoretical framework. It is also essential that this model is a dynamic one and constantly remains pertinent to labour market trends. Efforts to develop such a model could keep the following indicators in mind.

- An effective model would provide a clear indication of the nature of the impact of psychological, socio-cultural, socio-economic and educational factors on career development behaviour. This framework would guide the development of counselling techniques, psychometric devices and the

standardisation of intervention techniques, including a system for categorising and updating careers information. An effective intervention would necessarily be able to accommodate the demands imposed by age, language, cultural difference, socio-economic status, disadvantage and deprivation, special needs and similar variations.

- An effective model of career counselling would describe the parameters for the systematic training of individuals who provide career counselling services. It is essential that career counselling interventions are designed to suit the *needs* of the career aspirant. An effective Career Psychology curriculum would prepare the career counsellor to deal with these variations in career development needs.

6.1.2. Possible themes for research and further investigation

Our work in the area for the last 15 years has pointed to the following themes as possible indicators for further research:

- The identification of social-cognitive variables in the form of career beliefs and self-efficacy constructs that could influence career development behaviour.
- The manner in which career development needs vary across SES groups in the Indian context.
- The manner in which career development needs vary between rural and urban contexts.

As discussed earlier, curricula do exist in the area of guidance and counselling. These curricula could be re-examined and their salient points collated. It is anticipated that such research and model building exercises would offer insights that would inform the development of a curriculum for Career Psychology and career counselling that is contextually and culturally relevant to the needs of the Indian career aspirant.

6.2. Training issues

The curriculum could be offered as a framework for training for career psychologists as a specific paper within already existing postgraduate courses in counselling, education and social work. However, given the complexity of issues involved, the multidisiplinary nature of this field of knowledge, and the specific skills required, an exclusive postgraduate course in Career Psychology would be ideal.

6.3. Service delivery issues

A national body (e.g. an Indian Association of Career Counsellors) could monitor service delivery by focussing on the issues such as:

- Licensing of career counsellors
- Counsellor qualifications and best practice
- Support research and publication through a journal
- Equity in access to career counselling services
- Ethics of guidance and counselling

### *6.4. Strengthen existing systems and organisational structures*

As described above, the organisational structure in the form of guidance bureaux for careers education is already in place. It is essential that the functioning of these organisations is reviewed, their infrastructure strengthened and the skills of personnel upgraded. Provisions could be made for the forging of links between these organisations and the school system for the delivery of counselling services.

7. Work and Education: Pointers for curriculum framework

7.1. Develop a curriculum for work in education and career counselling

Points for curricular content have been presented as boxed items throughout this paper.   The authors of this paper have through their research and field experience presented a model for career counselling in the Indian situation described as the *Career Preparation Process Mode (CPPM)*. Interested readers are referred to their original writings for a more detailed account of the model and its development (Arulmani and Nag-Arulmani 2004). Described below is the *Career Discovery Equation*, a translation of the CPPM to the applicational level.

The Career Discovery Equation
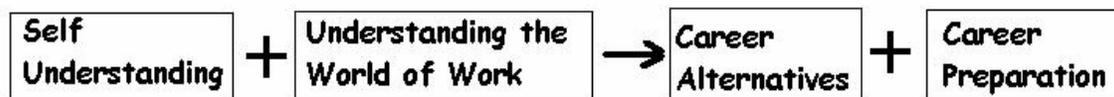
This is a model of skills for career counselling that we have used with effectiveness over a wide range of high school students across the country and maybe used the inform the process of curriculum development for counsellor training within the Indian context.

Careers education could comprise four interlocking components pointing to four skill sets as described below:

7.1.1. Skill Set 1: Skills to Facilitate Self Understanding

Self-understanding for effective career decision-making focuses on the following themes:

- *Personal interests and personal aptitudes*
  Comprehensive career counselling consists of methods whereby interests *and* aptitudes are assessed and compared with each other.

- *Self-efficacy cognitions*
  These are beliefs about oneself that reflect the confidence in personal ability to be successful in the performance of a task. Career counselling would attempt to promote self-efficacy for career preparation, particularly with the disadvantaged

- *Career Beliefs*
  These are strongly held convictions about the process of career choice and the world of work. Career counselling would address prevailing career beliefs and highlight their impact on career development.

- *Tests as a mechanism to facilitate self-understanding*
  Using psychological tests to identify an individual's career interests and aptitudes has been and continues to be a topic of intense controversy. Such devices are useful when they are:

  - standardised and statistically validated for the group for which they are intended
  - age appropriate
  - administered by a qualified psychologist / counsellor
  - scored accurately
  - interpreted on the basis of accurately developed norms

Tests are sometimes accorded (both by the counsellor and the client) a status of infallibility. A psychological test is merely a tool that could yield information. It is vital that career counselling is not

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reduced to a variety of test taking exercises and that the career aspirant is not limited to the results of aptitude and interest tests.

A vital task before the career counsellor is to help the career aspirant make the links between *test and career information*. Merely giving the client information about her interests and aptitudes does very little to help her resolve the various career development tasks that she faces.

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

The world of work comprises all the different career opportunities open to the young person. Career choices are often limited to the careers that the young person knows or has heard about. Facilitating an understanding of the world of work widens the young career chooser's horizons.

7.1.3. Skill Set 3: Skills to Facilitate Development of Career Alternatives

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

The development of Career Alternatives in a context where career aspirants face *poverty and socio-economic disadvantage* requires certain special considerations. 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 is to help the young person develop *viable* Career Alternatives. Careful generation of Career Alternatives at this stage could empower the young person who is a victim of poverty and disadvantage to build a future for himself.

7.1.4. Skill Set 4: Skills to Facilitate Career Preparation

- *The career development plan*
  This is a clearly enunciated blueprint for career development that the career aspirant develops along with the counsellor. This includes defining careers chosen, developing a description of the path leading to these careers, listing of the eligibility criteria, entrance examinations, important addresses and dates and deadlines that the career aspirant must follow.

- *Skill Literacy and Work Experience*
  Promoting skill literacy is an essential aspect of career preparation. Skill literacy refers to helping the career aspirant gain work experience through internships and placements.

- *The Career Development Bridge*
  Young people from disadvantaged homes tend to prematurely enter the world of work as unskilled labourers. The most immediate target before the career counsellor therefore is to help these young people begin to consider career development as a real possibility. The Career Development Bridge describes a stage-wise approach to career development. The counselling objective is to facilitate career development in short, affordable steps that lead toward long term goals. The role of the counsellor in this context is to first of all help the young person move from a 'no skill' status to at least a 'low skill' status. Subsequent career development would then be the result of encouragement, reinforcement and networking to help the disadvantaged move more deliberately toward prosperity. This form of career development is far more arduous and the disadvantaged young person could falter. Therefore on the background is the vital necessity of continued and regular counselling inputs that address career and self-efficacy beliefs.

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Arulmani, G (2005),
Career Psychology and Career Counselling: Core concepts for a Work and Education curriculum.

7.2. Integrate work and education / career counselling into the child's school life

For highest effectiveness, a career counselling service must be an integral part of the overall curriculum and implemented as a timetabled activity. One period maybe dedicated to the 'careers education class' when the student is systematically taken through various career development activities, by trained personnel. We have developed a 12-module careers education programme that has been variously implemented by teachers we have trained, for students in Class 9, 10 and 12. The highest effectiveness was noted when the programme was conducted during the middle of the school year (second term), with a concluding session about a month before the school year ended.

7.3. Teacher training

In a context where trained counsellors are few and far between, teachers maybe trained through short-term workshops on skills for the execution of the work in education / careers education curriculum. This is the practice in most countries and such services are provided by teachers and others for whom guidance is a secondary task. However for good practice to develop, however, it is desirable for the comprehensive provisions are made for training counsellors in a more comprehensive manner.

7.4. Teaching-learning material

It is essential that the work in education / careers education curriculum is accompanied by a student workbook through which the student progresses over the course of the year. Other supports such as career information data bases, information display areas, networks with local industries and professionals etc., could be added as the programme develops.

8. Educational systems and career development: General factors for consideration

8.1. Life-long learning as a guideline for curriculum development

The future world of work is no longer likely to offer jobs that could be pursued for the entire span of an individual's working life. The worker of the future is likely to be required to make several job shifts over one life time. This could be the result of skills becoming rapidly redundant or because the new world of work offers ever increasing opportunities for greater self-fulfilment. Career success is going to be dependent on the constant updating of knowledge and skills. Careers in the future world of work require broad learning foundations that leave the option open for ongoing learning and skill development. It is this point that an important point to be taken note of by any attempt at curriculum reform emerges. It is essential that educational systems reduce their focus on curricula that lead to *closed specialisation* paths Training courses with long periods of gestation leading ultimately to just one career possibility are likely to decrease in their relevance. Educational foundations that offer the flexibility for career change over the course of one's life are the need of the hour. This requires a closing of the gap between knowledge transmission and skill acquisition. Embedding work-related experiences in the school curriculum for example could contribute to the closing of this gap.

8.2. Re-examination of the structure of the Vocational Training Programme

As described above, vocationally oriented courses are according the lowest priority and equated with 'those who are poor and unable to afford college education'. Over and above such negative career beliefs about vocational training, it remains a fact that the structure of the programme at present does not offer possibilities for vertical upgradation of qualifications. Linkages between vocational education and college education are at best tenuous. This is another factor that contributes to the low attractiveness of vocational courses. There is an urgent need to make provisions for a vocationally qualified young person to use this qualification as the foundation for upgradation of skills and knowledge to a position of equivalence with those holding university degrees.

8.3. Career development needs from the informal sector

An overwhelmingly large number of low SES young people have entered the world of work as unskilled labourers. With the passage of time they have gained skills and are able to execute occupational tasks with a high degree of efficiency. However they remain 'formally unqualified' and as a result remain poorly paid. Vocational training programmes could be designed that provide these workers with relevant theory, places a value on their skills and experience, and allows them to obtain formal certification. This would go a long way in fostering positive career development amongst the vast numbers of highly skilled young people who are exploited merely for want of formal qualifications.

9. Conclusion

In the absence of effective systems for career counselling, the career decision-making process could continue to be influenced by the various psycho-social, educational and socio-economic factors that may not lead to effective choices. Students who have gone through comprehensive career counselling are far more discerning in their career choices. Research has also revealed that individuals who make career choices based on personal interests and abilities show significantly higher levels of job satisfaction and are more productive workers.

The development of Career Psychology in India is poised at a point when work and career are moving into a new phase in their evolution. No longer ascribed a position of under-development India is today described to be a developing nation. At the dawn of a new era the opportunities in the world of work are immense. Effective methods of guidance and counselling could play a vital role in drawing the young person and the worker closer to these opportunities.

Gideon Arulmani,
18th February 2005,
Bangalore, India

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